



DESTINATION IMAGE

Marketing of Finland

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ABSTRACT

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Finland is known almost everywhere in the world as a cold snowbound location that would most be suitable for winter holidays. This bachelor's thesis seeks to analyse destination marketing of Finland and the factors that have led to this image and reputation. Especially important in this thesis is the image of Finland and its perception from the view of potential German customers. The goal was to identify reasons based on the author's assumption for an image of Finland as mainly a winter location, through the examination of marketing material and an observation of the marketing communications tools and distribution channels used.

The thesis examines the marketing strategies of Finland, the brand identity and variety of products and services that manifest the basis of the country as a tourism destination. It discovers the tone of previous and current marketing and advertising campaigns and tries to provide recommendations for future marketing and advertising efforts resulting into a better image of Finland in Germany. Furthermore, this might result into positive influence on the visitor numbers of Finland and would encourage potential German customers to perceive Finland as an all-year-round destination.

Key words: destination marketing, brand identity, image, marketing communications

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
2.1	Focus of the Research and Research Questions.....	6
2.2	Research Methods.....	7
2.3	Concepts and Theoretical Framework	8
3	IMAGE AND DESTINATION MARKETING OF FINLAND	14
3.1	Factors of Destination Image Building, Destination Marketing and Branding of Finland	14
3.2	Marketing Communications and Channels.....	18
4	THE IMAGE OF FINLAND AS A DESTINATION – CASE STUDY GERMANY	20
4.1	Tourism in Finland and Tourist Consumer Behaviour of German Tourists.....	20
4.2	Finland and Germany – Historical Context	25
4.3	Factors of Finland’s Image Building	28
4.3.1	Finland’s Destination Marketing and Promotion to Germans	29
4.3.2	Survey Analysis on Effects of Finland’s Image on the Destination	33
4.3.3	Potential of Finland as a Destination: Four Seasons Management.....	44
5	MARKET ANALYSIS OF FINLAND AS A COUNTRY AND ITS DESTINATION IMAGE	45
5.1	SWOT	45
5.2	Requirements for Identity Development.....	47
5.2.1	Promotion and Advertising Channels	48
5.2.2	Development of new Marketing Strategies.....	51
6	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	53
	REFERENCES.....	54
	APPENDICES.....	56
	Appendix 1. Interview (via Facebook) 7 th of April 2013.....	56
	Appendix 2. Survey conducted by the author (in German).....	57

1 INTRODUCTION

Finland experiences a lot of stereotyping in its destination image that has been created primarily through the media by turning a certain type of man into a stereotype of a person representing the whole country. A good example is Matti Nykänen who won three times Olympic gold medal in Ski jumping and stands in Finland for a stereotypical image of a Finnish man who lives a certain lifestyle with blond hair and blue eyes. Another example is the quote made by Conan O'Brien, a famous comedian who went to Finland in 2006 to record a documentary and who said:

“Hello, people of Finland! Thank you that I am welcome in your beautiful country—while I'm here I'm planning to drink Koskenkorva (hard liquor), eat reindeer sausage and meet the great people of your country. Long live Finland.”

(O'Brien, C. Aired 10th of March 2006. Late night with O'Brien, NBC)

Other occurrences in media and the resulting stereotype result as well from songs by famous people as e.g. Monty Python and his song about Finland. This has partly an effect on the destination image and how people might feel about Finland and its inhabitants.

Based on the size of the country (in terms of population density and small amount of inhabitants), location and limited role and influence in history it is struggling to be attractive as a destination. Furthermore it can be assumed that due to its restricted marketing budget resulting from the country's situation in terms of the small amount of inhabitants, limited amount of companies and mostly absence of multiple internationally known popular brands in products, services and sight-attractions it has problems to provide satisfying multifaceted experiences for the regular tourist/customer. The image that Finland provides mainly outside its country is based on the few international appearances in the news and success stories in sports (hereby mainly in winter sports) and the economical success in the export business.

The efforts of marketing to other foreign countries can be perceived rather as a quite small attempt to draw more attention to the country as the marketing campaigns and adverts are only seen by those who are actively looking for information, as a result of their interest that might have been raised by the few icons Finland has cre-

ated in the world of media. Since 2006 Finland has received a great level of attention when Lordi won the Eurovision Song Contest. It was like a wakeup call to the rest of Europe that this not densely populated country exists. Falsely counted to Scandinavia it very easily loses its impact and greatness besides Norway and Sweden as they are simply more at the top of mind compared to Finland.

The destination image is quite poor in Germany as it is quite unknown among Germans due to the lack of information about Finland and its unseen economical presence on the international market among greater nations as the United States, Germany or Japan which draw more attention to their economical activities.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Focus of the Research and Research Questions

The research aimed to identify the image of Finland as a country and destination among German (potential) customers. It investigated the reasons for an image of Finland as mainly a winter location that appears often abroad as cold even in summer. The author examined the marketing efforts and marketing campaigns as well as other factors that influence the image of the destination (e.g. the effect of the country's economy on Finland's reputation and marketing which results also in touristic marketing). Hence it includes the reviewing of Finland's position in the world and in particular the relationship with Germany, factors that contribute to the image of the country and that influence the visitor flow.

The research focused on the image Germans hold about Finland and tries to come up with new ways to approach potential customers in order to boost up the interest towards Finland as an all-year-round destination.

Hereby it concentrates especially on stereotypes, marketing campaigns in and outside the country, books and literature about Finland, e-commerce and general presence in the media as well as the different usage of several marketing communications means and distribution channels. Furthermore it focuses on indirect marketing efforts created through intercultural cooperation and educational approach between Finland and Germany and possible effects through these on Finland as a potential destination for Germans.

Research Questions

The questions this research seeks to answer were:

- How does Finland's country image affect the tourism and tourism marketing (from the perspective of Germans)?

- What strategies can be developed to transform Finland into a destination of greater interest, particularly to German (potential) customers?

2.2 Research Methods

The research method used was mainly a quantitative research. For this research the author used secondary gathered data firstly - other researchers who have been involved with the topic previously - and/or secondly - tourism organization that can provide relevant and reliable statistical data to examine the current situation and to build the foundation of the author's thesis. Furthermore the survey of Saraniemi and Komppula from 2003 about the destination image of Finland found its way into this thesis, too. The findings were used to compare the results with the ones from the author's survey.

The research followed systematically a red line starting from the research question(s) until the drawing of the conclusions (McKenzie 2001) by the author. The charts, tables and other statistics helped to prove and support assumptions or on the other side disprove them and clarify the overall picture and claims. Moreover the research used secondary data in form of literature to fully achieve a sound understanding of the market environment to find a way to successful implement and integrate strategies effectively (Wang & Pizam 2011, 1).

For primary data collection a questionnaire was conducted to collect directly data from Germans concerning the country's image in Germany to allow the author to draw conclusions about how they perceive and imagine Finland in order to move into new marketing directions, concepts and investigate the branding of the country to expand Finland's destination image.

The limitations of the research can be explained through the small number of survey respondents and the lack of willingness of professional sources to provide information about the topic.

2.3 Concepts and Theoretical Framework

The concepts that this thesis follow are the image and image building of a destination and destination marketing as well as the branding and building an identity of a country. This is already a specialized field the thesis is moving into. At the very beginning the author starts with a short definition of tourism and a tourist: The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". This includes for example as well recreational purposes and refers mostly to stays of at least 24 hours. According to Wang and Pizam a tourist is someone leaving his residence to realize the wish to travel (spatial movement) (2011, 1). Leiper (1995) has included this classification and categorization in the following model (figure 1). Besides the geographical characteristics of traveling, the motivation and activities a tourist is engaged in enable a categorization (Wang & Pizam 2011, 2):

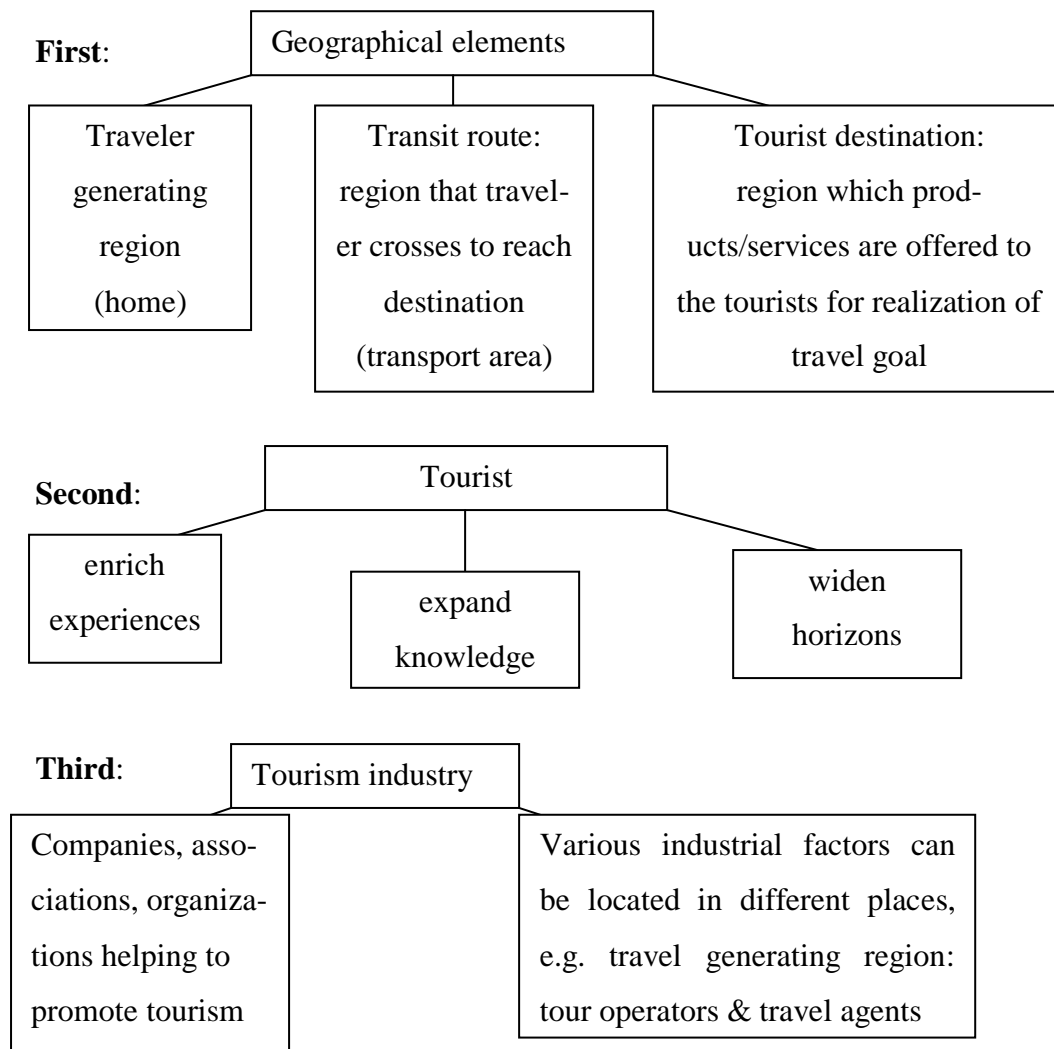


FIGURE 1. Three elements of tourism system, converted into a figure by the author.

The tourist destination hereby creates the stage where the marketing and management can be carried out to encourage the tourists' wish to enrich experience, expand knowledge and widen the daily horizons and simply strengthen the wish to visit a destination. The factors to decide for a certain destination are often influenced by the following variables: hospitality, tourism infrastructure, environment, economy, protection and safety. These components build one of the pillars referring to how attractive a destination appears to a potential customer and sets the basics on which a marketing organization of a country can operate and can turn out to either be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the individual situation of a country. The primary tourism industry builds on these components as it consists of: travel trade, transport, accommodation and catering and obviously tourist attractions. Different sectors and companies serve the products to meet different tastes and budget levels taking the individual tourist into account. The destination marketing and management depends also on the image the destination implies. Hence all these factors affect frankly how a country is perceived. The following model by Stabler (1988, figure 2) is a good model to demonstrate which factors are most important to form a consumer's tourist image:

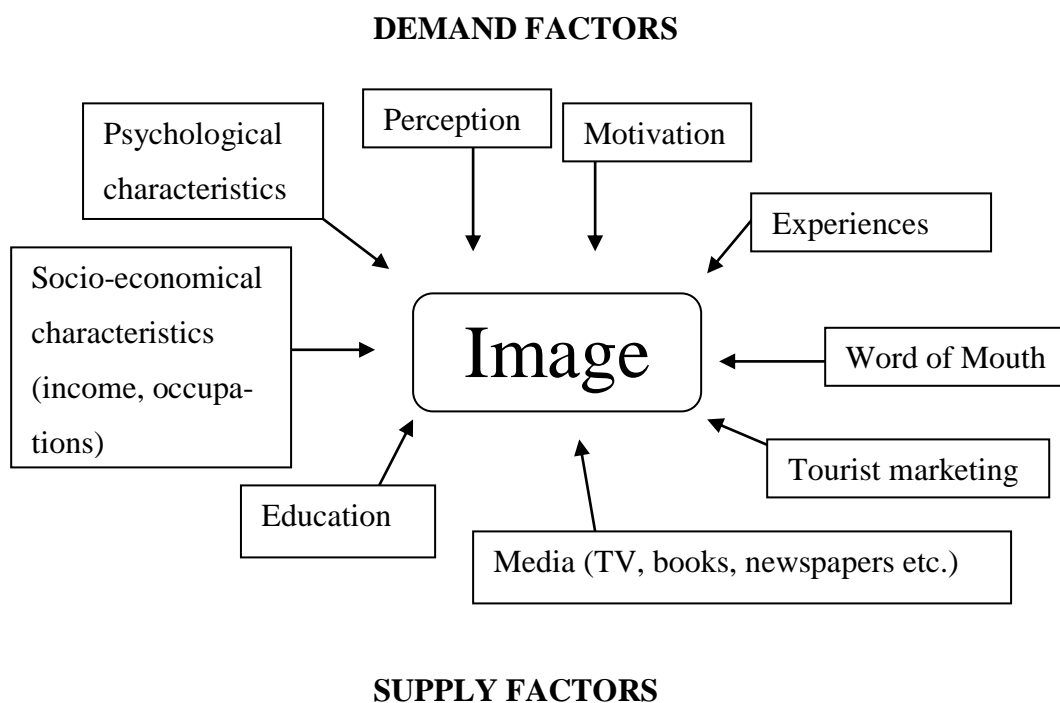


FIGURE 2. Demand and supply factors (Stabler 1988, in Goodall & Ashworth 2010, 133-159)

Figure 2 leads to the key concept of “Image of a destination” according to Lominé & Edmunds (2007, 98) which refers to mental attitudes, perception and beliefs people hold about a destination and how they feel about it (affective). In simple words, it means that they assume a reality and mix it with what they believe to know (cognitive). This image can carry an either positive or negative evaluation (evaluative) of the destination. (Kotler 1993 in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 20.) The image of the destination is obviously strongly influencing the decision-making process as different elements contribute to it, including hereby besides the above mentioned factors also misconceptions, impressions formed through experiences of similar or related places and lack of factual knowledge. Especially the last one is often a reason for the occurrence of stereotype and preconceived assumptions.

The portrayal of a destination is not only important in terms of a uniform culture but also meaningful for the image of the country that is represented to the rest of the world. Dealing with tourism can affect the national identity and help to easily point out assumptions as typical characteristics while creating the picture on the marketing stage.

The economic benefits of tourism, however real and significant they may be, do not constitute the only criteria for a state to encourage tourism... The opportunity for a citizen to know his own environment, a deeper awareness of national identity, and a sense of belonging to a culture are all major reasons for stimulating domestic and international tourism.

Philip Cooke, UK Tourism: It's all in the balance,
Tourism, No. 119, Winter 2004

So tourism is not only economically of great significance, it gives also the opportunity to the citizen to create a deeper relation with his country and to give tourists a proper insight into the culture and help to establish a better image and understanding in the foreigners' minds.

In a world of steady economic change and growth and the undoubtedly rising numbers of people travelling abroad there is a reason to rethink the marketing strategy and communication channels of a destination. In a world of competition regarding the multiple possible choices in form of the variety of countries to choose from as a destination, it is a long and exhausting run and struggle about potential customers/visitors. Due to factors such as population, economic affluence, business-expansion and age-related travel patterns in combination with other factors such as globalization of cultures and electronic

connectedness it comes just naturally to expect a growth in tourism business, especially in the economic sector as well as in leisure concerns. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 3-5.)

The real challenge lies not only in effective advertisement campaigns and marketing strategies, it especially roots in the challenge of turning companies into one productive means of the tourist machinery which can be used successfully by the country's destination tourism marketing apparatus (board) (Wang & Pizam 2011, 1-7).

The tourism production on a destination level is a combination of goods and services, produced by different companies which are independent with little interest in the needs of other enterprises which could create advantages on the long-run. That means on one side that a negative experience with a local tourism service provider can result into an overall carried negative image of other local providers which eventually lead to a general negative image of the destination as a whole.

The main problem is that the destination marketing management and tourism board responsible persons do not control, manufacture or take direct influence on satisfying the needs of the customers, especially when it concerns the marketing stage of a whole country: Too many different localities and local region-bounded service and product providers complicate the process and progress in creating an effective marketing strategy. They take the offers, make services and products available and try to market, promote and advertise them positively to reach the target and put a lot of effort to allure more visitors to a destination. The government should initiate here and motivate the enterprises in taking actions to at least indirectly connect their manufactured products to their home origin. It would facilitate to popularize the name on an international level, especially when the company has the opportunity to accomplish that.

“Tourist destination is only as strong as its weakest component.” (Wang & Pizam 2008, Preface)

As the tourism marketing and management organization of a country has no impact on quality, prices, attributes or means of delivery it has to take the products, services and offers it gets and this directly connects to the level of branding of the country regarding the presence or the absence of significant names (brands).

The destination marketing is as well bound to outer environmental conditions such as climate, the presence of sights, historical impact and the perception of the country on the international stage to draw attention among other destinations.

The concept of the image is very important in order to target potential customers, to build the right marketing strategy and to plan or implement campaigns that aim to modify the destination image (rejuvenation). Rejuvenation means that the destination reinvents itself through the creation of new markets by establishing new products and attractions. Substantial marketing efforts are necessary, especially in terms of advertisements and promotions in order to create and disseminate a new image. The marketing strategy that applies shall severely eminent to minimize demand-defluxions due to seasonality. (Decrop, A. in Dirk Glaesser 2006.)

To summarize the content “Destination Marketing in Tourism”: It means a visitor-centred approach to the economic and cultural development of a destination that balances and integrates the interests of visitors, service providers and the community to tailor experiences, products and prices that suit various individual preferences. (DMAI 2008, 46-48).

This requires a concrete scenario analysis of a destination (**Political, Economic, Social, Technological and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**) and the investigation of marketing communications tools. Marketing communications tools include amongst others sales promotion, personal selling, e-marketing (social media and networks, online advertisements), direct marketing, advertising, public relations and publicity, events and exhibitions. These elements are tools to compose marketing strategies and campaigns. Marketing and advertising indicate especially that attention is the main target all destinations are battling for. With the economic background and possible changes (upheavals) in mind it is merely necessary to create an intense “noise” level that draws the attention to the destination (for example in e-advertising/marketing).

The materials existing are subject to investigation and analysis as they contain cues and hints for a differentiated strategy that can modify the image of a destination to help answering the question: What kind of place is this compared to other destinations?

That goes hand in hand with the branding as a brand in relation to tourism is defined as a concept or subject that is aimed to ease the identifying of goods and services and distinguishing them from their competitors (Herstein 2000 in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 15.) The purpose of the brand is to add value to the destination and it has verifiable a huge effect on the place and therefore in marketing activities.

3 IMAGE AND DESTINATION MARKETING OF FINLAND

3.1 Factors of Destination Image Building, Destination Marketing and Branding of Finland

Finland's destination image is depending on different variables. It is directly connected with the national image, the popularity of products on a domestic and international level (including the establishment and presence of brands), the advertising campaigns/efforts concerning the marketing activities, the reputation and stereotyping. Furthermore it is depending on economical, political, social and historical factors.

Finland ranks in American magazine, Newsweek as the world's best country on the basis of criteria emphasizing the environment, education and quality of life. The most important indicators for this are the stable financial and economical situation, the safety issues and low crime rate. In 2005 two international studies ranked Finland as the safest country in the world according to the Finnish embassy. Safety has a direct influence on the global market place and strengthens the ability for competition. The Global Peace Index and a study of IMD (International Institute for Management Development) and WEF (World Economic Forum) prove Finland's safety and encourages not only investors but are also a good message for tourists.

TOP 10
(MOST PEACEFUL COUNTRIES)

RANK	COUNTRY
1	Iceland
2	Denmark
2	New Zealand
4	Canada
5	Japan
6	Austria
6	Ireland
8	Slovenia
9	Finland
10	Switzerland

FIGURE 3. Top 10 most peaceful countries 2012.

(<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2012GPI-Fact-Sheet2.pdf>)

This severely affects the economy, paves the path for investments, lowers the risk of fluctuations regarding financial risks and promises financial stability.

But this is not the only good factor Finland provides for the building of a positive national identity which undoubtedly has an impact on the destination image. Another variable that affects the national image is amongst others the infrastructure. Finland's expanded bus networks, railway tracks and conditions of streets comply with modern traffic standards as approximately in all European countries and assure a safe and reliable transport between all domestic locations (connections from one destination to another). (http://www2.liikennevirasto.fi/julkaisut/pdf3/lv_2011-03_finnish_railway_web.pdf)

Bus network (Source: <http://www.expressbus.fi/linja-auto-reitit-ja-pysakkikartat>) and railway network

(http://www2.liikennevirasto.fi/julkaisut/pdf3/lv_2011-03_finnish_railway_web.pdf, 26)



FIGURE 4. Expressbus operating map

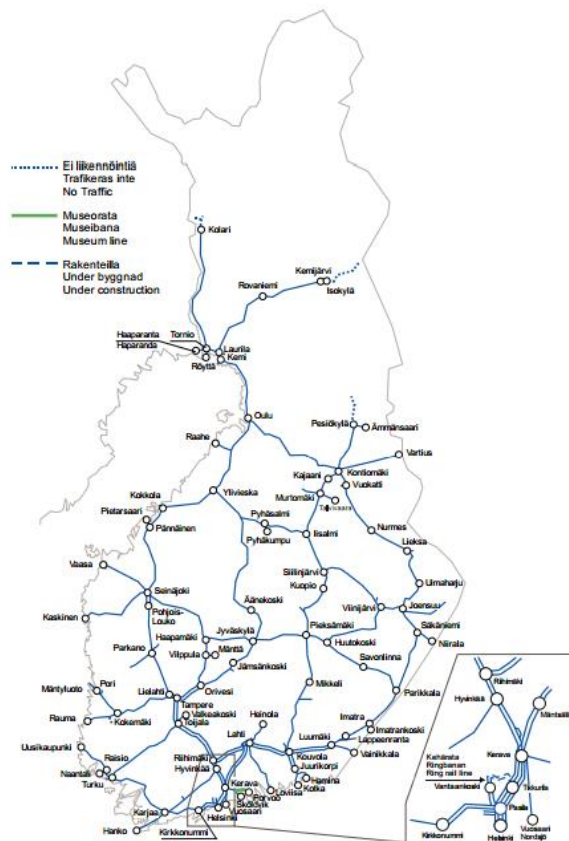


FIGURE 5. VR railway network

This proves that Finland's transportation system is well developed and creates a sound background for tourists to travel within the country. Furthermore Finland owns interna-

tional airports for the air traffic. The biggest one is Helsinki, but there are smaller ones with significant meanings for the tourism, too. There is one in Pirkkala, located close to Finland's 3rd biggest town Tampere, another one in Oulu and especially meaningful for tourists is the airport in Rovaniemi, located close to the "Home of Santa Claus" in Lapland region.

The author has conducted a small experiment to clarify what the capacity of accommodation looks like in Finland: With entering only "hotels Finland", the search engine Google maps provides around 16,000 possible results and proves that it indeed has the capacity to welcome a huge amount of visitors.



FIGURE 6. Accommodation locations Finland, Google Maps

The environment in the country affects the tourism. As mentioned before the economical, infrastructural and safety-proved conditions of the country contribute to the positive national image. One more factor that influences the image of a country is the reputation it creates through hospitality. The hospitality industry creates work places for over 130'000 professionals in Finland with the aim to use the expertise and professionalism to shape a positive image around the world with regard to hospitality services and connected institutions (restaurants, catering, products, accommodation, attractions, events and sights). (http://www.mara.fi/ext/cms3/attachments/mara_yleisesite_en.pdf)

Considered as a highly technological and civilised developed country along with Norway and Sweden as a part of Scandinavia, Finland is naturally concerned to take part in customer satisfaction activities and takes efforts to present a clean environment. Finland works constantly to reduce its ecological footprints. For Finnish companies in the hospitality business, environmental responsibility means sustainable use of natural resources, reduction of waste, and prevention of other environmental damage. Finland shows great effort in promoting to live “the green way”. In today’s society this will be rewarded not only by the environment itself but with influence on the decision-making process and buying behaviour of the customers and reflects a great responsibility of Finnish organizations which causes a positive effect to the image of the nation. It is one opportunity that can be effectively used for the destination marketing and branding of the country.

The hospitality industry is very labour-intensive and the service personnel is essential for good customer experiences. The resulting social responsibility is presented through great customer service and good value for money. The hospitality industry increases the safety and protection for customers through a self-monitoring system controlling food, alcohol beverages and cigarette consumption to achieve a reduction of risks and dangerous situations.

Through Finland’s positive attitude towards globalization and the openness and tolerance towards cultural diversity - despite the pride of the Finnish nationality - and working in an international environment, Finland is a country of rare racism-grounded violence and therefore an optimal travel destination for foreigners.

In comparison with other nations Finland has quite small influence on the international stage. The presence of Finland in the media is quite restricted by its limited historical meaning and its lack to stand out in public discussions. Recently Finland appeared only “negative” or than again “rather sensible” as it reacted to the possible break-down of the euro currency with deliberations about giving up on the European currency to not endanger its national economy. Positive image-shaping results especially from Finland’s highly praised education model and the appraisal of the PISA study that has been started in 2000 evaluating the skills of 15-year olds.

3.2 Marketing Communications and Channels

After the product or in tourism a service has been established it cannot be assumed that it is going to sell itself. In order to launch it to the markets and make people to want it, the product has to be communicated to the target group. (Holloway 2004, 191.)

Finland's marketing communications consists of sales promotion (participation of Finland as a destination in exhibitions), public relations, advertising in media and print media (catalogues, brochures, videos, newspapers and TV), social networks and e-marketing such as Visitfinland.com. These channels add up to a quite large amount of sources where people receive information from and what they learn from the media and the occurred events. The information given affects clearly their attitude and perception.

The problem in here is that most of the people do not perceive information of a place that is not located in their striking distance as essential to their lives so it will hardly bring them to verify the seen news by looking for firsthand sources to see what is really going on (Kunzic 1997 in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 28). In other words: Information that has been received through the media might be an "objective and true" reality for people that do not live there. (Adoni & Mane 1984 in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 28-29). Weimann has summed it up in 2000 in clear words: The main source of knowledge of the world is what they see in films and TV. (in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 30).

Finland is not clearly visible to other countries and nationalities as the quantity and importance in reports and articles displayed in the media is rather low. And even if they report about Finland, articles and documentations are often released in not very popular papers or channels seen only by a limited amount of people. They are in fact in general rather short and lately concern mainly political issues occurring from its position in the European Union (EU). Hence it affects its image, too, as it often depends in which context countries enter the spotlight and are reported about, e.g. crime, poverty, social and community events, culture, sports or violence. These factors have obviously an impact on how people position a country and might seriously support or damage a country's image depending in which tone the media reflects on current events and attitudes of a country.

Finland uses different channels to distribute its message and the internet performance is pretty outstanding compared to other marketing communications and channels. Especially the internet page covers all kind of topics and answers conscious and unconscious questions an interested traveler might have about the destination. The homepage updates steadily according to changing seasons, specialties and upcoming events. Marked by beautiful pictures and a convenient design it surely invites the visitor to explore the page and Finland. Highlighting the midnight sun, cottage holidays and snowy winters in an efficient modern environment, emphasizing the contrasts is a smart move to silence critical voices. People are visual beings and a pleasant neutral design attracts attention among young and old.

The inserted videos give a complex image about what to expect in each season from Finland. They especially emphasize the wide landscapes, the carpets of forests and lakes and targets especially sporty and active people as well as couples in the sunset, spending time together and being social and in silence at the same time. There are plenty of options to spend a highly active vacation or to just enjoy and relax as it seems. It is remarkable though that city-wise are almost only included impressions of Helsinki. That might be due to the fact that first-time visitors are usually interested in the capital as it is the calling card of a nation.

Finland's tourism marketing concentrates mainly on Internet, exhibitions, social media, videos on YouTube, catalogues and brochures. In some brochures and catalogues Finland owns quite a small share as they put together with other Scandinavian countries. The greatest competitor here is Sweden as it is slightly closer located to Central Europe than Finland.

Finland has to rely much on word-of-mouth communication as it appears in such low quantity in the world's global media. And that is always kind of risky as the opinion of travelers results from the reliability and hospitality of the individual place and its local service providers, they have experienced.

4 THE IMAGE OF FINLAND AS A DESTINATION – CASE STUDY GERMANY

4.1 Tourism in Finland and Tourist Consumer Behaviour of German Tourists

Finland as a tourism destination gets more and more popularity as the amount of visitors is growing constantly year by year. According to the Finnish Tourism Board and its released statistical data about the amount of visitors from 2007 – 2011, the amount of visitors has increased every year.

Table 1. Foreign passengers visiting Finland in 2007-2011

Country of residence	Year					
	2007 (1000 pass.)	2008 (1000 pass.)	2009 (1000 pass.)	2010 (1000 pass.)	2011 (1000 pass.)	Change 2010- 2011, per cent (%)
All visitors	5 736	6 072	5 695	6 182	7 260	17
Russia	2 070	2 331	2 192	2 561	3 261	27
Estonia	561	522	583	561	708	26
Sweden	768	765	753	712	681	-4
Germany	350	376	332	363	399	10
Great Britain	312	316	267	263	278	6
Norway	194	187	160	195	216	11
Japan	103	105	142	109	150	37
France	131	120	94	132	145	10
United States	120	114	104	89	121	35
Spain	83	116	123	110	120	8

FIGURE 7. Foreign passengers visiting Finland in 2007-2011 (13.11.2012, MEK; [http://www.mek.fi/w5/meken/index.nsf/\(Pages\)/Border_Interview_Survey?opendocument&np=F-10](http://www.mek.fi/w5/meken/index.nsf/(Pages)/Border_Interview_Survey?opendocument&np=F-10))

The amount of visitors from Germany has been steadily growing with an exception in 2009, this exception can be explained with the global impact of the recession and resulting restrictions in money availability of potential visitors for travelling. Visitors with residence in Germany made the 4th biggest share in overall visitors in 2011. The numbers for 2012 had not been published while the author wrote the thesis.

Taulu 2. Suomessa 1.1.-31.12.2011 käyneet muissa maissa asuvat matkustajat kuukausittain (tuhansia matkustajia)
Table 2. Foreign residents who visited Finland between 1 January and 31 December 2011; by month (thousands of passengers)

		Tammi	Helmi	Maalis	Huhti	Touko	Kesä	Heinä	Elo	Syys	Loka	Marras	Joulu	Yhteensä
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Asuinmaa / Country of residence	Ruotsi / Sweden	41	46	52	52	68	81	89	68	63	43	42	37	681
	Saksa / Germany	28	21	26	20	32	43	77	61	31	18	25	17	399
	Venäjä / Russia	397	174	203	211	266	274	324	350	258	260	256	286	3261
	Viro / Estonia	37	41	47	41	102	58	131	62	56	57	30	46	708
	Muu maa / Other country	141	153	151	101	179	243	366	316	174	112	84	191	2212
Vierailun pääsyy / Main reason for visit	Työmatka / Business trip	115	127	160	112	188	164	89	105	126	128	99	109	1522
	Tuttavat, sukulaiset / Friends, relatives	99	61	50	52	89	85	137	109	66	47	43	51	889
	Muu vapaa-aika / Other leisure trip	344	184	202	199	283	358	585	487	312	271	249	345	3818
	Muu matka / Other trip	57	43	45	45	75	72	124	123	54	31	33	54	756
	Monta syytä / Several reasons	29	20	22	17	14	19	52	33	25	13	14	16	275
Yhteensä / Total	643	434	480	425	649	699	987	857	583	491	437	576	7260	

FIGURE 8. Border Survey Interview MEK (Matkailun Edistämiskeskus) and Finnish Tourism Board, 2012

([http://www.mek.fi/w5/meken/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/5401f3506af29c49c22571fc0046a50c/\\$FILE/A172%20Rajahaastattelututkimus%202011.pdf](http://www.mek.fi/w5/meken/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/5401f3506af29c49c22571fc0046a50c/$FILE/A172%20Rajahaastattelututkimus%202011.pdf))

The survey that has been conducted showed that 42 % of the German visitors stayed in Finland for 1-3 nights and 33 % stayed for 4-14 nights. The lowest amount of German visitors were counted in December and the highest amount in July (see bubbles above in the figure). That might be mainly due to the Christmas holidays and New Year - events that people rather like to spend at home together with their friends and/or relatives.

Interesting in here is that the visitor amount is much lower in other months than within the summer period. This might be due to the holiday seasons in Germany (school related) on one side or it emerges in here already that the summer attractiveness of Finland are a lot stronger than assumed in the first place by the author. But the image in the media and the actual numbers might indicate a paradox in the marketing strategy and the image the majority of the potential German customers have built in their minds.

In general it can be drawn out from the table that from September to May the visitor numbers stay low in general. In here it is now important to encourage short trip traveling as Germany has various short-term holidays due to public holidays. The marketing should use this to motivate potential customers for short-term package travels throughout the year as this is in line with the preferred buying-behaviour of the Germans (high interest in all-inclusive packages, especially in summer holidays). Unfortunately until now the package travel purchase part concerning Germany is so low that it does not really affect the overall turnover of the tourism industry in Finland.

One third of the travels made by German tourists had Helsinki as a destination. This is quite logical as most visitors are interested to see the capital of a country as it often reflects the overall mentality and provides the most interesting facets of culture, history, architecture and spirit. It manifests and symbolizes the prestige and image of a nation.

It often depends on the image people obtain during their visit if they are willing to come back to the country and see more of it. (Puolivuotisraportti Saksa, Sveitsi, Itävalta, Jyrki Oksanen; 05.11.2012;

[http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/474365bf7fef2985c225730a0038c59d/\\$FILE/Saksa%20Sveitsi%20It%C3%A4valta%20Puolivuotisraportti%202012-2.pdf](http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/474365bf7fef2985c225730a0038c59d/$FILE/Saksa%20Sveitsi%20It%C3%A4valta%20Puolivuotisraportti%202012-2.pdf))

Travel reasons were 38 % business related and 37 % free time related. 15 % of the overall German travellers came to Finland to visit friends or family (or both). This does not really surprise as Germany is one of Finland's most important business partners and works closely together what makes travelling between the countries necessary. That might as well explain the 63 % share of men travelling to Finland found during a study in 2008 as they still remain majoritarian in Germany's managers and head departments besides the gender equality. This fact might also explain that the average age of the travellers is 45 years old and most of them belong to the age group of 45-54 as the managing position requires several years of career related work experience on one-side and reflects the slowly developing side effect of the demographical change in Germany on the other side. (MEK Saksa Index, 12.03.2013

[http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/\(Pages\)/Saksa](http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/(Pages)/Saksa))

A study conducted by Forsa on behalf of the "Stern" magazine in 2010 has shown that the main interest of over 60 % of the German travelers is to relax and be lazy. 70% of all people questioned stated that the most important factor of travelling abroad is to experience and get to know other cultures and widen the horizon. This means it is worth to have a closer eye to the consumer behavior of Germans. (n-tv.de, dpa 04.08.2010; <http://www.n-tv.de/reise/Faulenzen-statt-feiern-article1199541.html>)

Tourist Consumer Behaviour of German Tourists

Sun, beach and sea is something that is only partly available in Finland or in a different way as most of the Germans might perceive it. German tourists are mainly interested in recreation, relaxation and wellbeing while being on vacation. Beach, sea and sun are still the most important characteristics a travel destination of choice has to offer. Finland has indeed a big share of the Baltic Sea coast marked by rocky islands and picturesque coastlines along with sandy beaches. Unfortunately they seem to be not very popular for Germans as they are often in natural finish and lack of the paradise characteristics people often know from Mediterranean Sea images and presentation.

German tourists' main travel time is between June and September. They are mainly interested in beach/sun and recreation vacations according to ADAC Reisemonitor (24.02.2012). Their interest goes towards wellbeing, e.g. massages and swimming complexes. The leisure researcher Horst W. Opaschowski (1997, 212-214) has formulated the holiday expectations of tomorrow:

Expectations of Tomorrow:

1. Beautiful nature and a clean environment are a matter of course.
2. The desire for sun, beach and sea remains.
3. Artificial holiday paradises, that offer everything, become the holiday norm of tomorrow.
4. Holiday shopping expands.
5. Vacation becomes the „last adventure“.
6. The holiday world of tomorrow should include exotic nature and landscapes.
7. Young families discover swimming complexes.

These claims are underlined by the ADAC Reisemonitor 24.02.2012 findings and results from a survey interviewing people who had been on a long holiday trip in 2011.

TOP 10 of the decision criterias

(Scale values: very important/important)

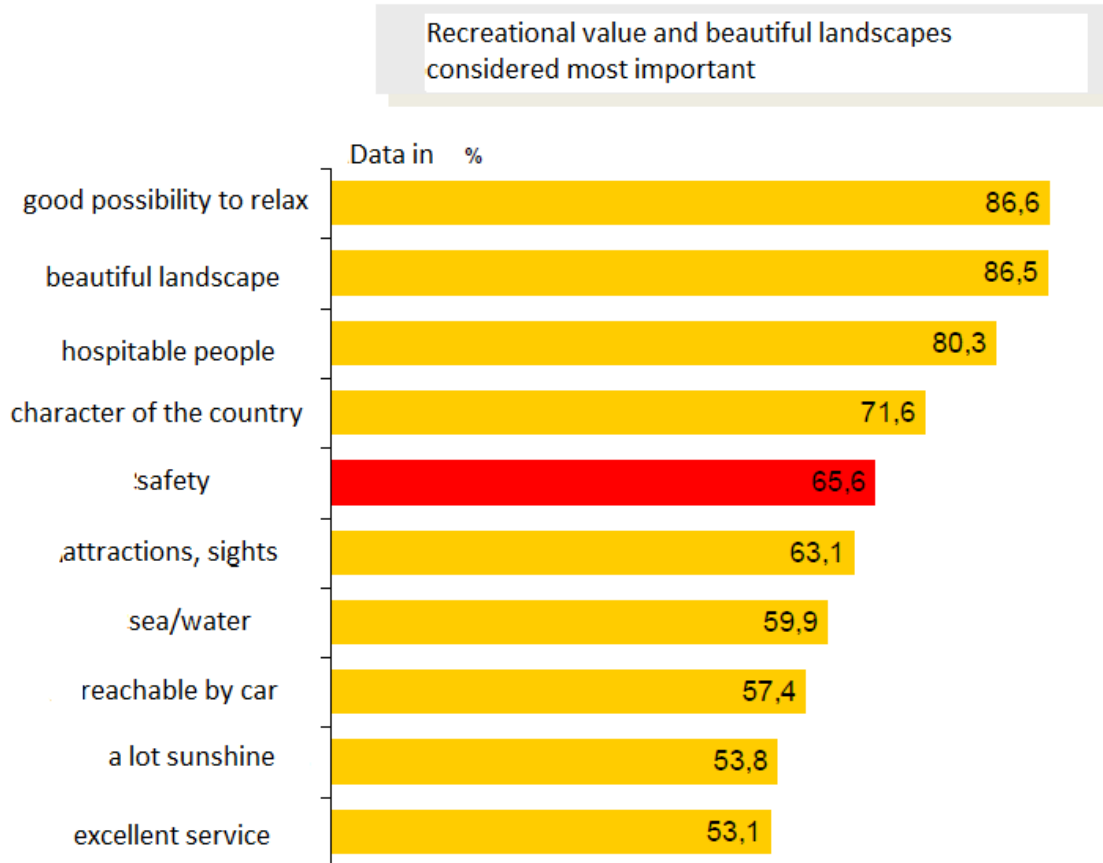


FIGURE 9. ADAC Verlag, Anzeigenmarketing, 24.02.2012

A reason for having trouble to encourage potential customers to come to Finland in different seasons can also be explained by the following statistics. A survey released by Focus Tomorrow Media from July 2011 has revealed that the more than the half of Germans elected with 51.4 % the summer as the most classly holiday period. All other seasons were presented with autumn 16.5 %, spring 19.3 % and winter 12.8 %.

Twenty percent of all travelers had decided in 2011 for a hiking vacation, while even 41 percent still preferred the beach holidays. Nevertheless that might offer good opportunities to allure the attention of hikers as Finland has great possibilities with its numerous national parks and forests and the hiking routes.

Most people are traveling with their partner – 37,8 percent and a quarter of Germans is planning their holidays as a family. Considering these facts it is natural that the main travel time lies within the summer period as the family members usually only have hol-

idays in summer at the same time. School vacations influence the travel time as well as the fixed holidays of the employees who often have to set their summer vacations by autumn of the previous year. 45 percent of the Germans travel on vacation time with airplanes. Over 54 percent rather prefer their own car to go on holiday, despite that 68 percent of all travelers spend their vacation in a foreign country.

80 percent of the German travelers are searching intensively the internet for their vacation destination. A conclusion can be drawn that this could mean that Finland can reach a lot of German potential customers over the World Wide Web through intelligent marketing strategies, creative campaigns and with the careful selection of the right e-tools and distribution channels. Rating Internet pages such as e.g. TripAdvisor etc. increase in meaning and preference. It is surely not surprising that one of the most important marketing and promotion is done via word-of-mouth. Interesting in here is that most of the Germans are reserving tour packages at least half a year before the actual travel time, which means that offers in brochures, catalogues and other information sources, for example the internet etc. for the summer vacations need to be released up to six to eight months before the actual travel time. The average preparation period and decision-making process takes place between two and four months before travelers leave to their final chosen travel destination.

Avis Car Rental in cooperation with Euromonitor International has found out that in comparison to the previous year 17 percent more Germans had planned a short holiday trip in 2012 – this tendency is increasing. The new trend is to have a couple more holidays during a year with a short trip duration.

4.2 Finland and Germany – Historical Context

The first contact Finland tried to build up with Germany was after the Russification-period and with the beginning of the First World War. From the activists' movement which had been founded while revolting against the Russian Constitutionality to prevent the total Russification emerged the so-called hunter movement that sent 2'000 volunteers to Germany for a military training hoping that Russia would lose the war. The hunter battalion was deployed at the front and collected important experiences which could have never been done in Finland.

After the October revolution Finland was endeavoured to achieve the independence as soon as possible and the declaration was signed on 06.12.1917 and accepted soon after by Russia, Imperial Germany and the Scandinavian countries. The achievement of independence on the other side could not calm down the tensions that had been built up within the country.

The senate set up an army which affected the socialists who feared a suppression of the working class. The army's leader Mannerheim prepared to disarm the Russian garrisons and officially the army became the army of the senate and the government. The established protective corps received valuable support of the from Germany returning hunter movement who had advantage through its military training and experiences. After the Civil war in 1917/1918 and with the war related tight connection to Germany the monarchy-oriented government presented a constitutional monarchy that led to the election of a German related Prince "Friedrich Karl von Hessen" as the King of Finland in 1918.

This changed soon with the breakdown of the Imperial Germany as a consequence of the lost First World War, and Finland found itself in a parliamentary election in 1919 with the overwhelming victory of the republican parties.

After Finland had suffered from the Winter War in 1939/1940 when it was attacked by the Sowjet Union because it refused to assign Karelian area for "safety interests concerning Leningrad" to the Sowjet Union, Germany was the only alliance partner that was left. Finland feared the complete annexation through the USSR. Due to its freshly acquired independence in 1917 and the resulting instability and forced to deal with the superior neighbour USSR, the small country Finland had sought safety with the Western powers but the support was missing.

As a logical consequence and after the disastrous results of the Winter War Finland turned towards Germany to win the areas back the USSR had taken forcibly. Germany supported Finland at war times with supplying prerequisites that allowed Finland to actually be at war. As a significant milestone for the history of Germany and Finland remains forever the decision of the Reich Chancellor in 1940 to dismiss the claims of the USSR and stand up for the maintenance of Finland's independency. The cooperation between Finland and Germany started to change when Germany failed to step further in the northern territories and after Stalingrad, as Finland lost the belief in the German

victory. Finland's government changed and they strived for withdrawal from the war. With the help of a delaying strategy Finland was able to avoid a formal official note about its loyalty with Germany and was able to prove its position through undertaken actions. (Hösch 1999, 45 – 50.)

After the separate conclusion of an armistice with the USSR in 1944 Finland fought against German troops to force them to a withdrawal from North Finland. They grounded and strengthened their national feeling with the myth of a “pure war” against the USSR emphasizing that the war was separately made and was not connected in any way with the German racketeering. (Jenni Roth, 04.11.2009;

<http://www.welt.de/kultur/article4583940/Finnen-kooperierten-enger-mit-Nazis-als-gedacht.html>). This national feeling and pride of their ancestors spread until today.

Finland was the only ally of Germany and at the same time a neighbor of the Sowjet Union that remained its independence and democratic constitution.

Finland was involved in the disputes between German Democratic Republic, the part that was strongly influenced by USSR, and the German Federal Republic which was influenced by the Western alliances but tried to emphasize its neutral attitude towards both superior countries to not end up between the fronts. The USSR tried several times to include Finland in the communistic system but it bridled vehement to become involved with the USSR again, especially when Western Germany (GFR) signed up for NATO. Finland became an associative member of the European Free Trade agreement at the beginning of the sixties and a full member in 1968 and this set the basics for being involved with Europe and loosened the binding to the USSR.

Furthermore it established different trade associations, conscious about the meaning of Germany as a trade partner. As the history has shown Finland and Germany had and still have a close relationship that might have been forced at times but has been overall evaluated good. The standing up for Finland's independence appeared more attractive than the annexation by the USSR/Russia. Reflecting the history of the country Germany and Finland have good connections that indeed might as well have an effect on the destination image of Finland (compared for example with the complicated relationship of France and Germany due to the actions that have occurred during the Second World War.)

Finland's reputation in Germany appears to a high extent in general positive attitude which refers more or less directly to the national image of Finland as seen from the German perspective and affects the opinion building of potential German customers towards Finland.

The close relationship and involvement of Finland with Germany as a trading partner and through history can be used to draw attention to Finland firstly as a country and then secondly logically resulting from that as a destination. Working so close together builds trust and provides a positive perception of Finns both as employees and individuals. This plays an important role when it comes to stereotyping and the population's reputation abroad and how they can affect the destination image of a country.

4.3 Factors of Finland's Image Building

Kotler et al describes the image of a place as the sum of beliefs, ideals and impressions people have towards a certain place that consists of four different image building factors (1993, 141). First is the cognitive approach and it refers to what someone knows about a place, followed by the affective approach which means how people feel about a place, third is the evaluative approach which reveals how someone feels about a place and its residents and the last element is the behavioural approach whether someone considers immigrating to/working or investing in a certain place.

These elements are influenced by media portrayal on one side, by education of the people on the other and by several environmental and national characteristics and traits such as hospitality, tourism infrastructure, environment, economy, protection and safety. There are a few more to mention that contribute to the image building and belong to one of the key words mentioned before such as: nature of population and its size (country's peripheral towns or big cities), status, political power, employment situation, number and character of national institutions located in the place (in country's core or periphery), historical background, advertisements and brochures, movies and television series filmed in the place, type of media coverage (low or high, highlighting criminal activity and social problems or cultural events and other positive news), entertainment options, tourist or cultural value, physical appearance and many other factors. (Avraham 2003, 26-28.)

Generally speaking Finland could get the highest evaluation in all categories as it is safe (ranking highest places in the “best place to live” for years), politically and economically stable, there are gender equality and low crime rates and even at European level a quite low unemployment rate. It is a modern country with functioning comfortable infrastructure and it provides best opportunities for financial investments and development.

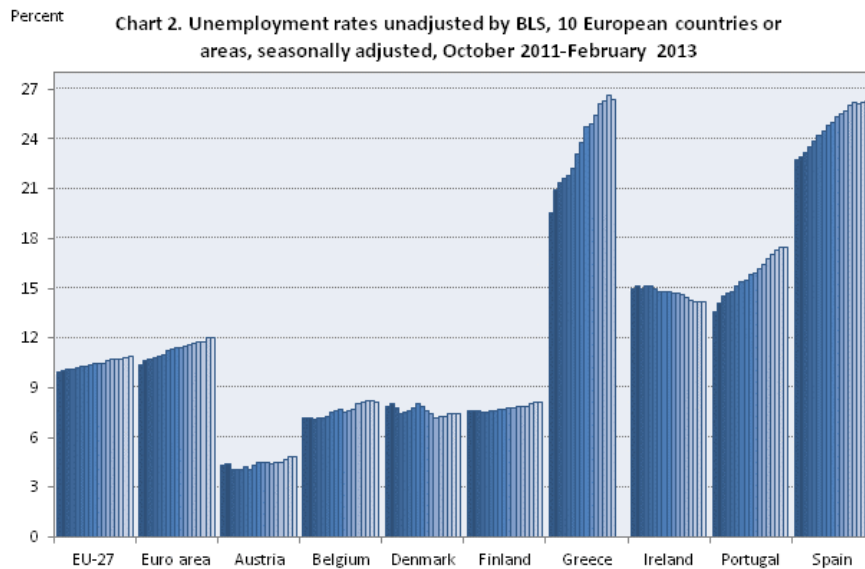


FIGURE 10. Chart of unemployment rates in European countries 2011-2013 by BLS (Bureau of Labour Statistics) EUROSTAT

People are usually well aware of the modernity of Finland as it is counted to the highly developed Scandinavian countries which stands for innovative technology and modern standards referring to politics, education, equality etc.

4.3.1 Finland's Destination Marketing and Promotion to Germans

In order to understand better how Finland is marketed to Germans the author interviewed a local tour operator to see how the national, local and provincial tourism cooperation can affect the destination marketing and local service providers' image.

One entrepreneur from Tampere thinks that the cooperation between governmental, local, provincial and national organizations lack efficiency as the organizations do not

really understand what the local operators try to sell as a tourist experience. The entrepreneur stated that any kind of cooperation is good but surely it should lead to an outcome eventually. The entrepreneur reveals that the contacts particularly to German customers have severely suffered from the webpage change of visittampere.fi and that they had to put much effort and own work into keeping customers or getting new ones as the web page appears “to be a catastrophe” still. The entrepreneur hopes that overlapping season marketing could contribute positively to sales.

People that are coming to Finland seek for pure nature, silence and peace. And that is what mainly is displayed on the marketing campaigns, too. But as the boards are only getting an outsider view of the products which local providers sell, it is hard to really meet and target the audience that comes into consideration. Services are sold to potential customers by people who are actually not able to value the experience that is offered through the product/service.

According to the interviewed entrepreneur distribution channels that go hand in hand with marketing communications and include as well tour operators and travel agencies turned out to be not very encouraging and supportive for a region as a destination.

The author sent random friends to different travel agencies to find out about the services travel agencies offer concerning Finland and this resulted into the following outcomes:

Hamburg: Sabrina Arndt visited to two travel agencies to find out more about travelling to Finland. She went first to the **Karstadt – Travel agency** where she was sent away quickly with the comment that only a few people would travel there anyway and due to that fact that is why they do not have any material. Nevertheless she received a catalogue with all Nordic countries which leaves only space for Finland on 7 pages out of 250 overall.

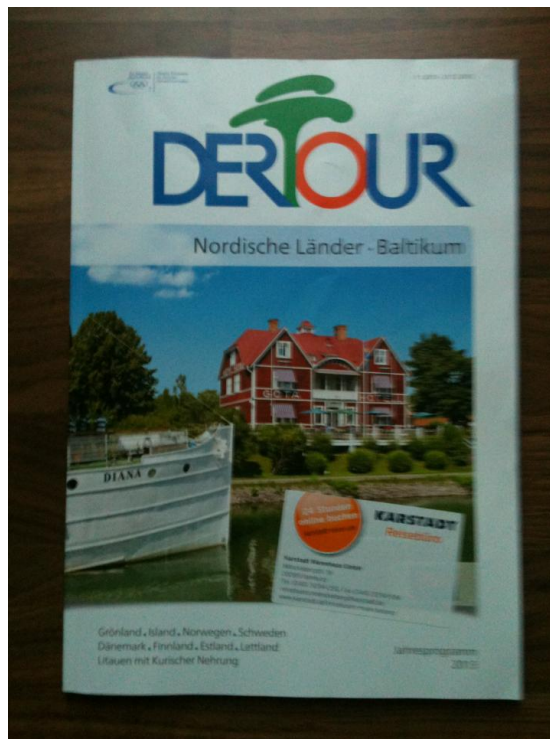
In general they offered all southern countries, anywhere where it is warm and where is water. For Finland there are offers for Helsinki – a hotel vacation, a round-trip (8 days different Finnish cities et al. Helsinki, Porvoo, Lappeenranta, Punkaharju, Kerimäki, Savonlinna, Tampere, etc.) as a complete tour for 1299 €, only for fixed dates and as a bus journey, furthermore an explore-Finland car trip for 12 days, Lapland holidays and a lake tour as a train trip for ca. 800 €. The offers appear quite expensive for an un-

known outcome and rather meaningless sights and attractions compared to other cities with ancient history and major roles on a global platform. The target audience for these trips is quite limited.

The second travel agency she visited had a nicer ambient and respond to the request as best as they could but she got the same catalogue as in the previous office with the hint that Thomas Cook would offer study trips for a smaller part of Finland but they are even more expensive.

Results that can be drawn out here is that tours offered for Finland are limited in some of the chosen distribution channels, referring to these particular travel agencies visited, and they seem to be not very interested in promoting Finland as an interesting travel destination. Prices are quite often way too expensive of those general tailored packages and quite often do not leave space or consideration to adjust the trips by taking personal wishes and customers' needs into account; this information is based on the two visits.

It has a serious effect on the destination and its image if the people who have to sell the products/trips do not have a clue about what they are actually selling. The message that is tried to reach the audience does not even have a chance to get through even to interested potential customers. The conclusion is that Finland's marketing organization and Tourism Board has to rely even more on their e-marketing to receive the attention. Also the design and presentation of Finland inside and outside (cover) of the catalogue is quite neutral and can also be described as boring. It serves as an information source but does not really point out the positive characteristics, panoramas and views of the country.



PICTURE 1. Cover page of the catalogue “DERTOUR” Nordic Countries, Balticum 2013 (Arndt 2013, 4)

A second assistant for this thesis went to another small travel agency “Ihre Traumreise” in Darmstadt in Germany only to receive the information that she would be too early for the Finland trips as the material and brochure will not be available before May and would end in September for the same year as the season would be over after that. This is a very good example why German tourists might not consider Finland for their vacation. Most of the people start looking for a travel destination often a year before the actual travel time. They usually already start making buying decisions 2-6 months in advance after checking out the travel destination options at least 6 months before if not even before that. A limit set from May to September also reveals that seasonality cannot even be promoted besides summer as the travel agency only provides offers and services for a limited period during the year. Short duration holidays can therefore not be booked in this certain premise aside from the summer season.

Experiences show that travel agencies are not prepared to promote and advertise Finland as an attractive holiday destination, often because they lack experience themselves and interest about Nordic Countries. So it can result from the disinterest and discouraging presentation and representation of agencies that potential travelers take countries as Fin-

land not even into consideration. The marketing on spot is simply very poor and lack professionalism to deal with the different needs of customers.

4.3.2 Survey Analysis on Effects of Finland's Image on the Destination

Research limitations occur due to limited sources and possibilities to publish and spread the created survey, thus the age group was restricted to respondents' average age between 16 and 34 years. The overall amount of respondents was 152. Altogether 15 regions from Germany were represented in the survey.

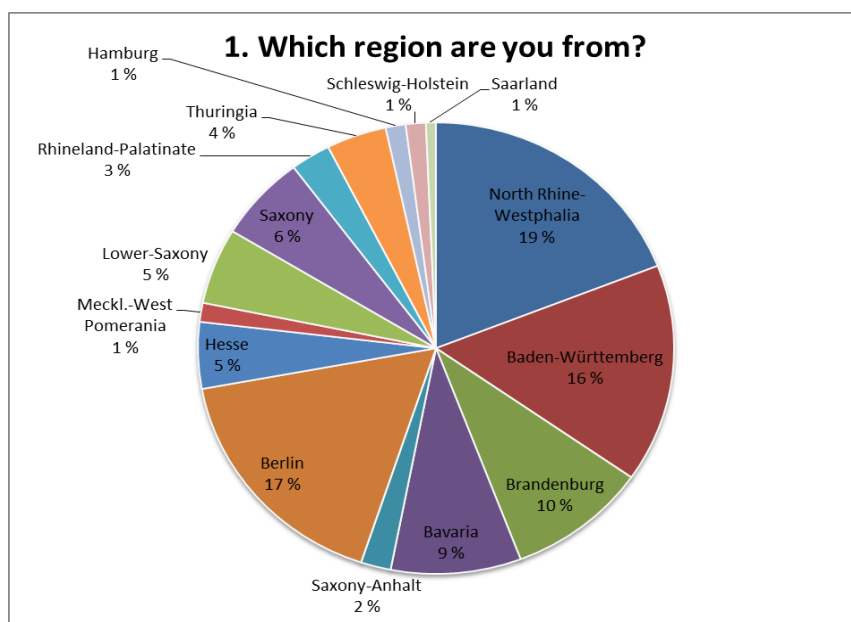


FIGURE 11. Question 1: Which region are you from?

Here are the findings of the survey conducted in January/February 2013:

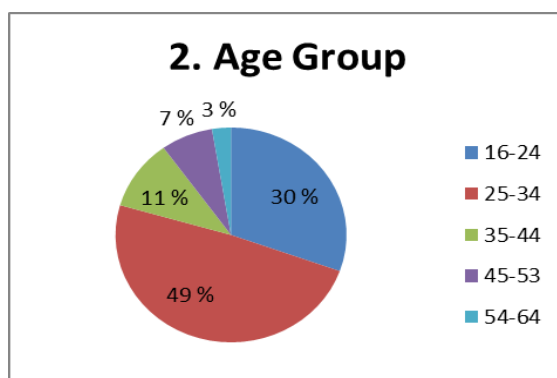


FIGURE 12. Question 2: Which age group do you belong to?

Due to limited access to a larger amount of people the respondents' age group is mainly 16-34 years old which might have an effect on general findings about Finland's destination image. The survey proved again that the image that these Germans associate Finland with has not really changed since 2002.

([http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/b431a49caee62f2ec225735b0032a953/\\$FILE/A140%20Suomen%20matkailumaakuva.pdf](http://www.mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/6dbe7db571ccef1cc225678b004e73ed/b431a49caee62f2ec225735b0032a953/$FILE/A140%20Suomen%20matkailumaakuva.pdf); paragraph and chart Saksa)

These respondents associated Finland with nature, activities (hiking) and snow along with coldness and darkness as the following pie chart states:

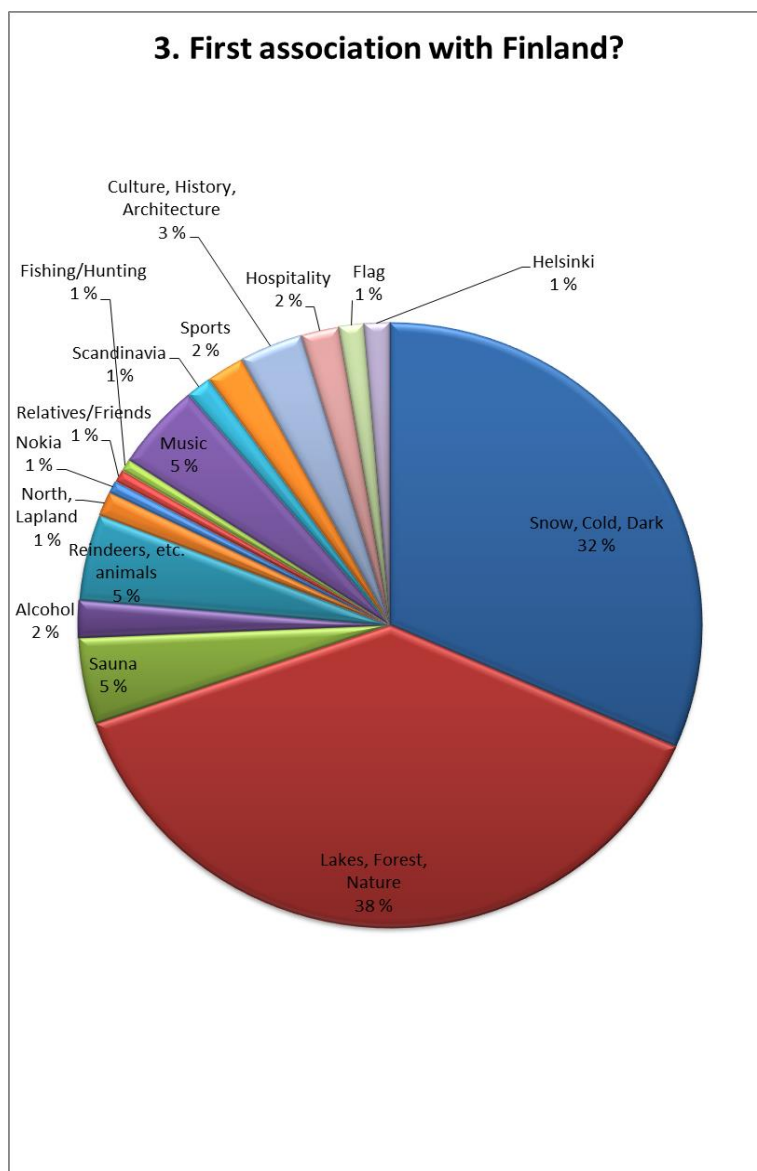


FIGURE 13. Question 3: What is your first association with Finland?

Music appeared as well resulting from bands (and brands) such as HIM and due to the shock rockers appearance of Lordi on the international platform through their performance and victory at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006. Significant is anyway that snow, coldness and darkness already present a large share compared with the small number of respondents. Saila Saraniemi and Raija Komppula found already out in 2003 that the first associations of the Germans with Finland are lakes (10,8 %), forests (7,5%) and coldness (6,1%).

According to Saraniemi and Komppula the associations that Germans have about Finland come mainly from school books and a few published articles and media appearances often dealing with winter and nature. Images and pictures presented do often have a reindeer or moose as a photo object.

Interesting is how Germans imagine a typical Finn in their minds, that of course gives the stage to stereotyping.

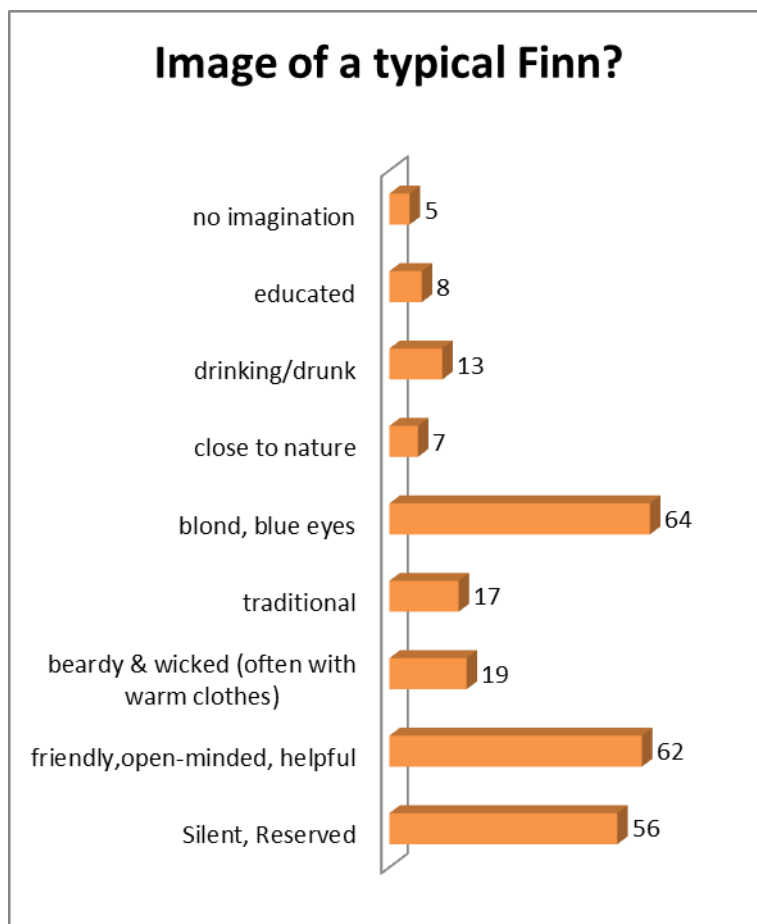


FIGURE 14. Question 4: Image of a typical Finn? (multiple choice)

The majority of Germans have an image of Finns as a blond person with blue eyes and often a beard, as a slightly wicked appearance. The character of a Finn is assumed as friendly, open-minded, helpful though silent and reserved at the same time. They imagine them as traditional persons, more or less drinking/drank with a good education and bound to nature. This can be surely examined as a typical Finnish stereotype. The result reveals that the reputation of Finns as a population and as persons is generally perceived positive. This is important as the reputation of a country's inhabitants contribute severely to a country's reputation as a destination. It is a basic component the marketing can work with and does not need to take care of (critical component spared from improvement efforts).



FIGURE 15. Question 6: Have you ever seen a Finland advertisement? If yes, where?

32 percent of all respondents could not remember to have seen a Finland advertisement. This reflects how little advertisement is visible on the German market, after all it is the majority here. Surprisingly 21 percent had seen an advertisement of Finland in the Internet or even on TV.

Only 9 percent, each for travel agency and for catalogue/brochure had seen an advertisement about Finland as a destination through the related distribution channels. This indicates that there is not enough material available and visible about Finland in Germany that could draw the attention of potential customers to the country and raise its attractiveness as a destination.

First rule in marketing is: If you do well, advertise. If you do bad, advertise even more. Regarding the apparently low traveller numbers compared to other traveller numbers and the results of the survey it is clear that distribution channels for advertising and

marketing have to be chosen more carefully to achieve a greater overall effect in terms of marketing.

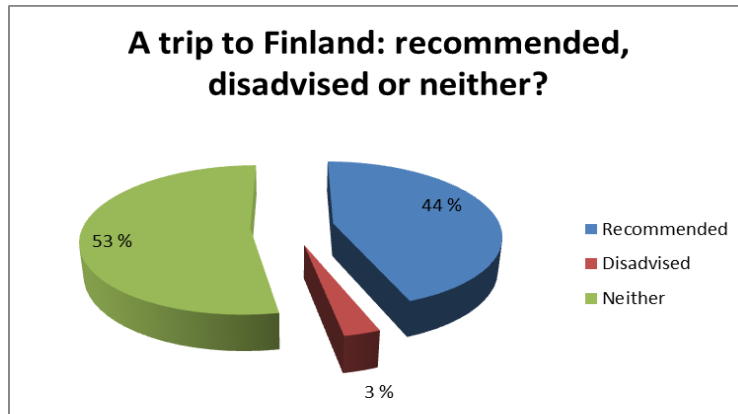


FIGURE 16. Question 7: Trip to Finland: recommended or disadvised?

For 53 percent of the respondents a trip to Finland was neither recommended nor disadvised. Interesting is that 44 percent got a recommendation and only 3 percent were disadvised to travel to Finland. This displays the potential of Finland as a destination as it seemingly left a positive impression of people who have been there and shared their experience in form of a tip to travel there to the 44% who got a recommendation.

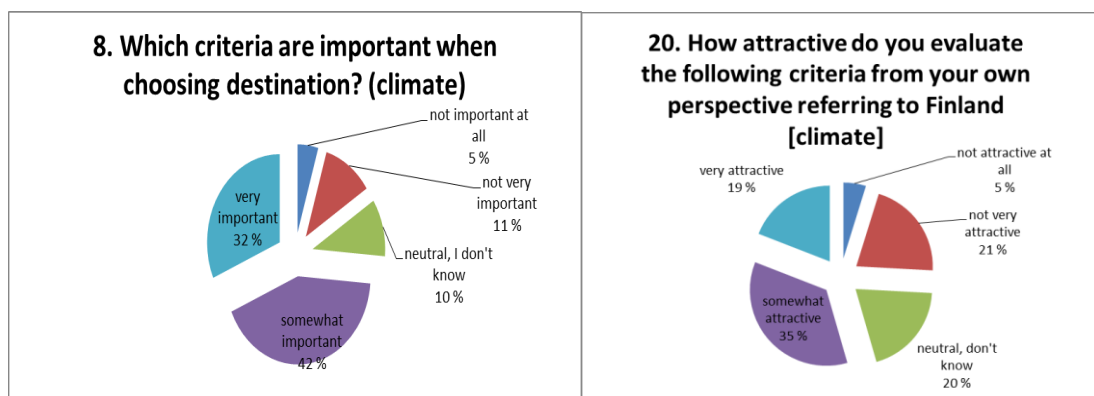


FIGURE 17. and FIGURE 18. Question: 8. and 20: importance factor climate of destination, chart comparison

Most potential customers think climate to be an important factor when choosing a destination and Finland seems to be only partly attractive in that factor. Almost half of all survey respondents do not really know about the climate in Finland or seem to consider it as not very attractive based on their knowledge about the country. This comes not very surprisingly as the main association with Finland is the climate reflected from “snow, cold and darkness”.

When asking for the influence of the political situation of a country while choosing a destination 55 % answered that it would be very or somewhat important and Finland seems to meet the requirements here as 70 % evaluate Finland's political situation as positive.

79 percent evaluated the hospitality attractiveness of Finland as high and positive.

69 percent considered the hospitality factor as important during the destination selection process.

29 percent (not very important) and 48 percent (not important at all) did not consider the distance from the residence to be an important factor. Located only two to three flight hours from Germany it is quite surprising that most people did not really know or were neutral about the flight distance or were not very pleased with it.

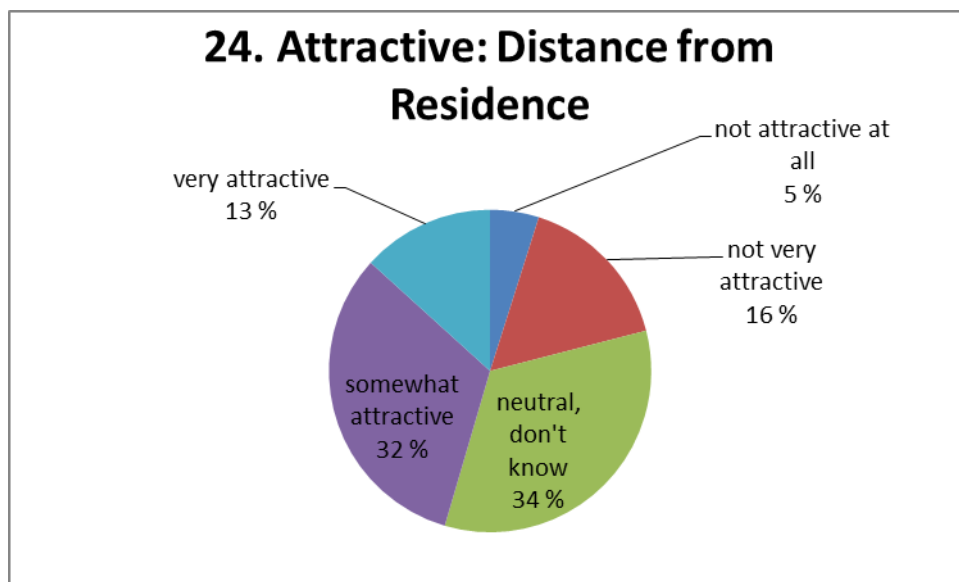


FIGURE 19. Question 24: How attractive do you evaluate the distance from your residence to Finland?

There is definitely work left for the marketing to promote Finland better as a short-durable easy-to-achieve-by-airplane -destination as the flight is only short-durable.

The answers in the survey concerning the components were very often “don't know, neutral” as people did not seem to have a comprehensive knowledge about Finland and therefore do not know what to answer. This indicates that the education in schools, the

information delivered through advertisements or other types of media are restricted and seem to be only partly accurate and generally insufficient.

50 percent were not sure about which entertainment possibilities there are and whether to find them attractive or not. The same happened when they were asked about evaluating the attractiveness of cultural specialities. 38 percent did not know what to answer or were indefinite about it.

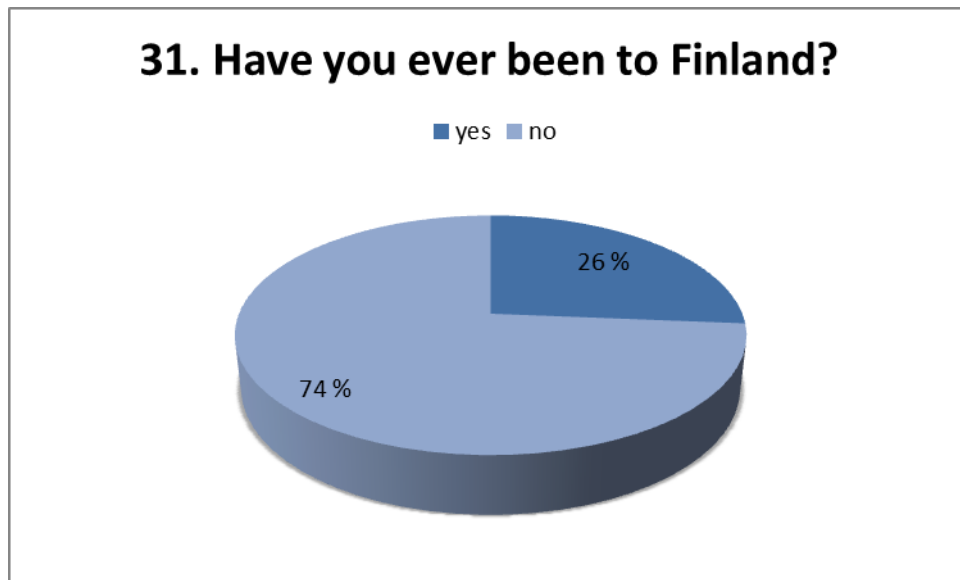


FIGURE 20. Question 31: Have you ever been to Finland?

26 percent of the respondents had been to Finland. And 77 % of all asked persons would like to travel to Finland at some point or even return for a further visit.



FIGURE 21. Question 32: Would you travel to Finland or travel to Finland once again?

The results of preferences for regions to travel to were very mixed. People did not only seem to prefer a trip to the capital Helsinki though it was frequently picked in this multiple choice question by almost all respondents and has a leading position.

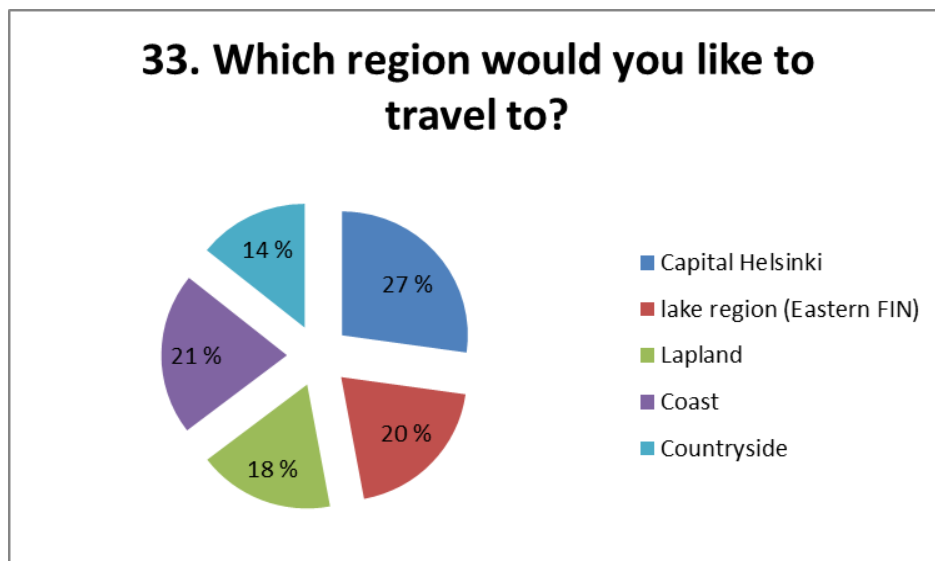


FIGURE 22. Question: 33. Which region would you like to travel to?

People were interested in different parts of Finland, sometimes also depending on which theme they would like to follow during their holidays.

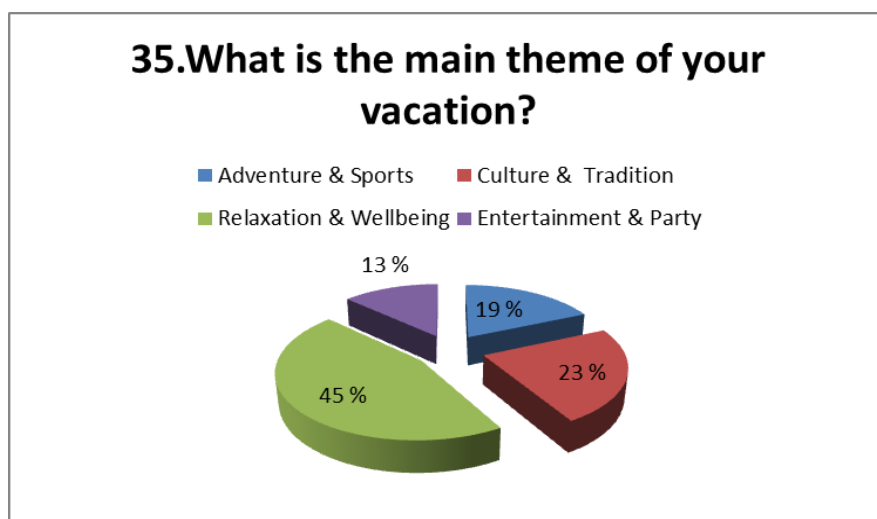


FIGURE 23. Question 35: What is the main theme of your vacation?

The majority of 45 % would like to relax and enjoy their spare time. Only a small amount is interested in entertainment and party. Cultural services and offers as well as sportive activities play a bigger role for their vacation.

People are interested in long holidays exceeding 7 days. That might result from the main vacation period of German tourists during the summer time, taking often 2 to 4 weeks off from work and the fact that the respondents were anyway most interested in Finland as a destination during the summer time.

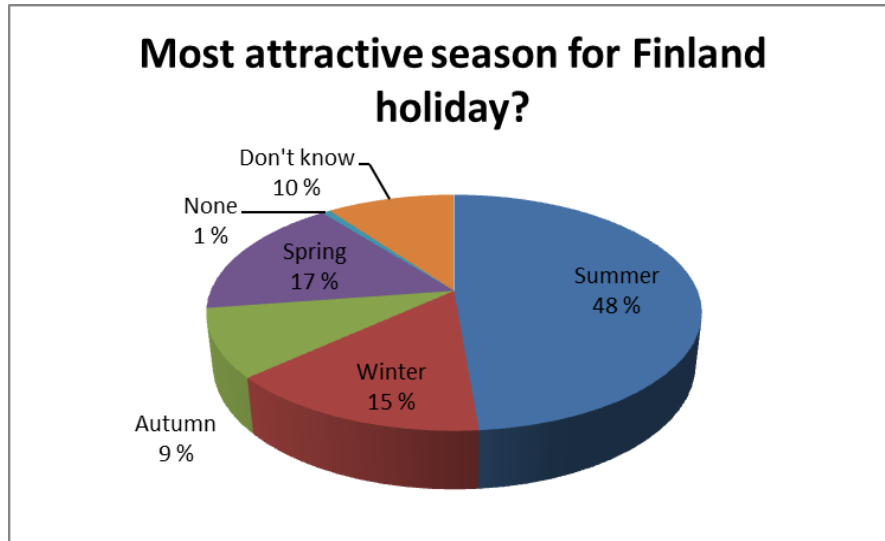


FIGURE 24. Question 38: Most attractive season for Finland holiday?



FIGURE 25. Question 34: Which kind of holiday offers do you expect most from Finland?

The majority of the respondents expects nature and relaxation from a Finland holiday. Culture and tradition as well as active holidays (summer and winter) are only expected

by 11-15 % of survey respondents. Nature and relaxation on their own might appeal some of the travelers as the majority would like to spend their vacation under the relaxation and well-being theme. There is real potential in these relating factors.

When asked why Finland is still quite unknown as a destination 36 percent answered that it is not only due to its climate and location (30%) but it is simply too little advertised.



FIGURE 26. Question 36: In your opinion: Why is Finland quite unknown as a travel destination?

12 percent thought that it is too insignificant in the world's history and 15 percent thought that it does not possess noteworthy sights. The effect now on Finland's image is that it needs to be clarified through marketing campaigns about its sights and attractions and a way to be found to intelligently advertise them as interesting and magnificent. Nobody declared it as too unsafe as a destination. Safety, being a basic component of the natural assumption while choosing a destination, is therefore not an issue Finland's marketing has to deal with.

The last question in the survey concerned the context in which people have heard the last time about Finland. From the results can be taken that word of mouth is a very important factor for Finland's advertising strategies and marketing, so it is extremely im-

portant to provide positive experiences at the destination to visitors that come there and this requires close cooperation between public and private sectors, tourism associations and tourist boards, product manufacturers, service providers and everyone that can contribute positively to the image of Finland as a destination, so that people are encouraged to talk about their positive experiences of Finland and spread the word in social media, to friends and relatives and other subjects/objects of social interaction and word of mouth distribution.

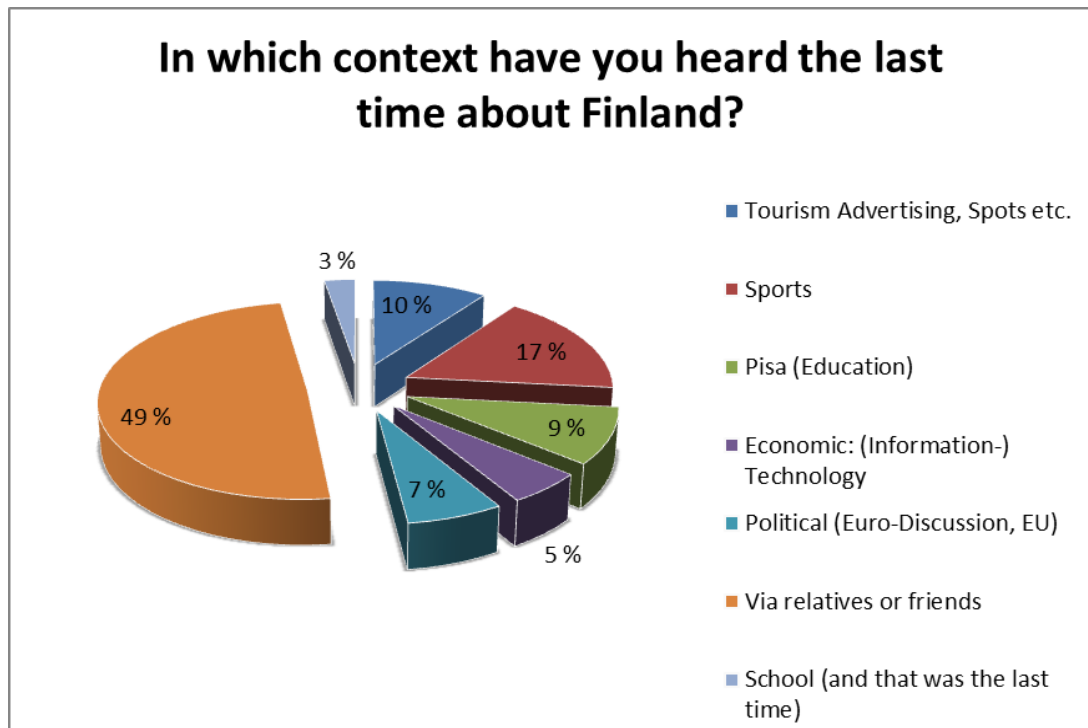


FIGURE 27. Question 39: In which context have you heard the last time about Finland?

Without the relative/friend component the coverage of Finland in the media (economically, politically, educationally related) appears quite unnoticed. Finland is only known by some through sports and athletics. It is important to stimulate the media to present and report a multi-faceted picture of Finland in order to change the perception of Finland in people's minds. All in all it is important to provide more information about Finland through appropriate channels and expand the amount of advertising material available on the market.

4.3.3 Potential of Finland as a Destination: Four Seasons Management

Experiencing Finland definitely means experiencing a year with strong contrasts and highlights in each season of the twelve months. Four seasons in Finland emerge the change of weather and its conditions over the year by showing all facets of each season. Stereotyping resulting partly from the image of Finland as a cold and snowy country has surely evolved and there is an on-going argument between stakeholders and marketers about stereotyping as stereotypes are recognized by potential customers. The key in here is to add more complexity to the stereotype. Marketing can hardly work with closed images (images which can hardly be changed by the inability to add more characteristics and create a more complex picture) – so the key is to take a stereotype and make it absurd – in order to add more accurate and real information.

It is essential to change the news which is brought to Germany telling often about the winter destination, polar circle and Santa Claus hometown. The aim is to spread more pictures with spring and summer atmosphere to change the view people have about Finland. For people who seek pure nature, silence and peace it is surely a great choice and sold as that over the marketing channels. But the marketing should also consider younger groups and other travellers as they might also be interested in long endless summer nights, socializing with Finns in the parks and at small lakes in the middle of the cities: interesting culture events and entertainment included. There are also some interesting historical sights left from Viking times and nature forces that might be interesting for visitors. The image should vary much more and focus particularly on activities and specialities that can be done in spring and early summer months to encourage visitors to short duration trips that go further than the typical cottage holidays which attract far more in summer than in autumn and spring.

5 MARKET ANALYSIS OF FINLAND AS A COUNTRY AND ITS DESTINATION IMAGE

5.1 SWOT

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as one of the Scandinavian countries it enjoys a reputation as technologically high-developed country (reflected from e.g. Nokia) and a role model for acceptance and tolerance concerning society issues (gender equality, equality of sexuality concerned issues within the society e.g.) - determined presence on political stage ("Euro discussion") in media - known for beautiful nature and a great amount of lakes "Country of the thousand lakes" - sauna: the real and authentic - strong educational background known due to PISA results - Finns have despite the modernism and influence of globalization a strong common sense for their nationality, Finnish food, habits and traditions - great hospitality: open-minded attitude towards foreigners - celebrities in sports - great opportunities for outdoor activities (hiking, canoeing, kayaking, paragliding, different kinds of outdoor sports) - cottage holidays: recreation & silence (main factor that is important for German tourists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "weak" or globally unknown, interesting but somehow "hidden" historical background (little impact on world's or Europe's history) → people go for cultural "drama" (war memorials, crisis etc.) - image of Finland as a cold country with quiet people - "Country without sunshine" - lack of "beach/sand vacation" in common sense - possibilities that is preferred by German tourists - Seasons appear short except winter - People are kind of scared of the Finnish winter - knowledge about Finland is often limited - lack of special sights/attractions that are diverse from other countries and highly interesting - limited offers in accommodation capacity and activity offers due to small amount of people and opportunities

<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - educate and widen image of Finland through excessive marketing and in creating more relationships with German educational institutions, participations in exhibitions etc. - build a network to spread videos (campaigns) and pictures, use more pages such as TripAdvisor and travel forums to report about Finland to draw attention - work on interaction and set up better cooperation by tourism board and German travel agents, travel bureaus, operators and tour providers - establish and promote brands (Nokia e.g.) - improve the cooperation between local destination service providers and Finnish marketing/promotion boards individually → focus on highlighting products, help to make local tour operators visible in order to create a diverse and varied palette of services that benefits all parties, from producers to service providers to marketing division - take the brand existing (strong example Nokia) and create something that does not hurt the company but creates benefits for the country in a global surrounding and as a destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited amount of special sights/attractions that draw visitors to Finland - perception of Finland as a winter destination seems to remain - tourism associations take local operators too little into account - negative image in Germany when abandoning the European currency - effect (?) - not capable of creating brands that connect with Finland as origin - capacity of destinations in terms of offers and services, rather niche markets - effect on nature and environment through higher visitor numbers (effect on carbon footprint) - little educational knowledge provided in schools throughout Europe turn Finland into a country easy to overlook - seasonality not existing if travel agencies have only May to September available as travel time

FIGURE 29. SWOT

5.2 Requirements for Identity Development

A successful change in a place image is contingent on a lengthy process and investment of time and other resources, cooperation with marketing professionals and local residents and constant checking of achievements, goals and objectives targeted. (Avraham 2008, 45).

Kotler et al (1999) describe place marketing as a common project of local actors in private and public sectors such as mayors, city managers, tourist bureaus, travel agencies, individual citizens and hospitality industries on one side and an issue of regional actors, economic development, country and state government and regional tourist boards on the other. This can be taken even further to national actors such as political leaders, inward investment agencies and national tourist boards. It goes one step higher to international actors such as embassies and inward investment agencies who are able to contribute to the whole problematic and to an establishment of a positive country image that is part of the destination image travellers create about the place. The more tools that can be used to contribute to the marketing the more likely it is to develop into a success story (Avraham 2008, 47). Stakeholders need to build groups and alliances in order to create and contribute effectively to innovative marketing strategies. Finland has already quite a huge network of companies working together and supporting each other.

Brands, product image and positioning may be even more important than actual place characteristics. Places with quite a weak image as Finland who does not belong to the mainstream tourism must concentrate on gaining awareness by creating a public picture and how simple would that be with such a strong brand as Nokia as the most significant brand out of all to improve the place's image in the international hierarchy. Nokia only needs attractive conditions, steady communication and cooperation willingness to support Finland better and more visibly. National and regional politics and associations/institutions should be in balance while marketing and should focus on benefits for the common good keeping on active discussions between local service providers and tour operators to really understand how to present and sell individual companies in their campaigns and advertisements.

5.2.1 Promotion and Advertising Channels

This chapter examines the devices and channels that are used to promote and advertise Finland as a tourist destination. The objects presented in here are more or less randomly chosen and shall provide information about what interested travellers might find out about Finland. It is especially significant to detect season related promotion to prove the author's assumption about a pretty one-sided presentation of Finland as a Santa Claus snowy winter wonderland throughout the year. The findings in here relate to randomly chosen brochures, travel guides, presentations in movies and some more impressions which could cross the eye of a potential traveller. This is often depending as a matter of course on coincidences but it is interesting to see what encounters the customer while trying to find an interesting destination.

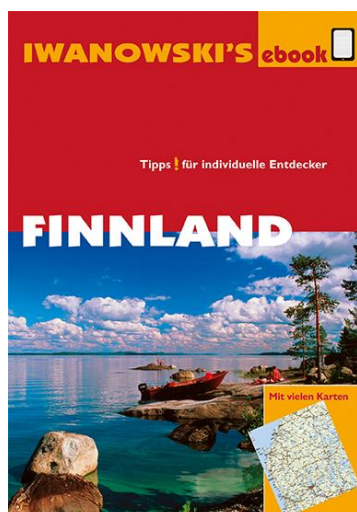
The influence of the media during the establishment of an image is significant according to Stabler's model (figure 2) who considered media as one of the main elements of image building. Impressions of media that are randomly chosen enable the traveller to create a first picture in his mind about the country and therefore also as a destination. So in fact it might be crucial for the development of further interest in a destination to picture a place rich on contrasts and that should already be displayed on the covers – when talking about print media and literature - to avoid category thinking: summer or winter as a main focus. As Avraham found out in cooperation with Ketter in 2006 (in Avraham & Ketter 2008, 167) it is indeed important to turn an extreme climate into an asset (Avraham 2008, 161-162). The problem in here is that seasons in Finland – can they really be considered as an extreme? The winter is quite long and might be cold as well, but actually Finland is a good example where seasons are full of contrasts and have special characteristics.

Moreover it is essential to consider the locations of Finland. It is a huge country regarding the area it covers, so the seasonality differs from north to south. Lapland is way too often in the centre of attention though it should be rewarded that they turned the extreme cold and short days of winter to an asset. From this focus on Lapland results a lot of prejudices concerning the climate about Finland as a whole. Due to its close historical relationship and geographical location with Russia, the stereotyping about Vodka-drinking lonesome hunting forestmen with a beard is still circulating around in Germany (see survey results).

It does not change the image when media items display and emphasize this image even more.

Entering “Finnland” in Google displays a whole spectrum of nature portrayed pictures, apparently taken mainly during warmer seasons of the year while entering “Finnland Sehenswürdigkeiten” (“Finland attractions”) mainly shows the dome in Helsinki that leaves the impression that this is one of the limited interesting sights to discover in Finland. This makes it understandable why visitors consider Helsinki most attractive besides being attractive as a capital in general. Interesting in here is that the search results for Finland and Finnland differ in their appearance. While German results show rather beautiful summer/spring pictures, the English search performance displays mainly winter pictures with an elk and large and wide winter landscapes with a lot of snow and ice. A pure white is the main trait in most of the pictures.

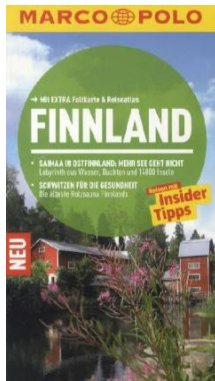
Travel guides, newspaper articles and brochures often display wide lake landscapes, pure nature, snow and Santa Claus, some architecturally interesting sights and other unique specialities.



PICTURE 2. Ebook Cover
(<http://www.iwanowski.de/shop/europa/finnland-reisefuehrer-von-iwanowski-das-ebook.html>)



PICTURE 3. Winter and Santa Claus
(<http://polpix.sueddeutsche.com/bild/1.1541059.1354625529/900x600/rovaniemi-finnland-weihnachtsmann.jpg>, Nassoufis, dpa/dpr, 2012)



PICTURE 4. Cover Marco Polo Finland 2012

(<http://www.weltbild.de/media/ab/2/043698226-marco-polo-reisefuehrer-finnland.jpg>)

The balance of pictures imaging winter and summer is surprisingly even though promotion texts praise far more often Lapland, Saimaa, Helsinki and Karelia than any other places in Finland. And even Turku named as a cultural capital 2011 promotes itself as the official Christmas town since 1996 with the following picture as an advertisement (Die Welt, 7.12.10

<http://www.welt.de/reise/staedtereisen/article11454029/2011-ist-Turku-Kulturhauptstadt.html>).



PICTURE 5. Turku, no date, pa/dpa

The article was reflecting and promoting once more the winter and Christmas charms of the country in a German newspaper. Finland does not really get away in the German media from its winter image as the focus lies constantly on Christmas, winter and snow.

5.2.2 Development of new Marketing Strategies

A problem that somehow was revealed during the thesis and research is the lacking cooperation between governmental efforts and companies with an actual brand such as Nokia in order to benefit the brand and the country on the platform as a destination. Nokia has always been associated with Japan and Finland lacks in popularity. It would just be a smart step and beneficial for the country image as well as for Nokia to put on a certain serial or even to all Nokia phones a sample video that presents a Finland commercial. This would draw attention to Finland and people would connect Nokia no longer with Japan but with Finland. The marketing budget of the tourism marketing board would allow to shoot videos and it would not do any damage or big financial support to include the video on the phones. Not to speak of the positive promotion that comes along with such an act and effort about how they support to their country's economy which eventually might raise the interest of some Nokia buyers in Finland, even in case there would only be small effects caused on visitor numbers. It is an effort easy to conduct but could cause a quite significant impact on the image of the country and raise the awareness about the country's existence itself.

Smart marketing strategies, campaigns and activities are what Finland needs to climb up to the top of mind. Results can be achieved even more often when the advertisement is noticed rather unconsciously.

Another strategy to allure visitors to Finland is to engage with even more efforts in educational programs, exchange and information-loaded projects that bring both countries together. Students need to develop an authentic image of Finland that can attract their interest by close relationships between the countries encouraging the exchange of knowledge and can help to deliver a more accurate image about Finland as a country and a destination. Education was already shown as one pillar of Stabler's model from 1988 (figure 2) how an image of a destination originates. Intercultural projects between Finnish and German schools and universities can positively cause an impact on the amount of tourists when they change the image of Finland from a light summer/extreme winter image to an image of far more contrasts. People learn and acknowledge facts and are no longer easily susceptible by stereotyping and prejudices due to the image created by the small media coverage in terms of presence, representation in movies and the

many times associated connection with Santa Claus and the polar circle in the foreground.

This strategy counts on the cooperation and support of government, educational institutions, German and Finnish embassies in Finland and in Germany and the encouragement of students' and teachers' wishes to expand and exchange by travelling to guarantee a lively exchange and cooperation willingness to turn this strategy into an effective way to positively influence the image about the country itself and especially as a tourist destination.

The establishment of valuable relationship is the A and O of a country that is so rarely presented in the media and draws rather little attention to it.

6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First of all the author has found out through conducting the survey and while writing the thesis that it is complicated and would need a sensitively planned marketing strategy to perceive Finland as a country of four seasons. This is not only due to the lacking information about the country's true environmental conditions but results from a lack in interest to travel in winter, autumn and spring as the main vacation period remains summer due to everyday duties and interest to enjoy the warm period of the year. Nevertheless the trend to short-term travels should be taken into account and to be followed intensively from now on to motivate people in travelling to Finland during autumn and spring. Package holidays remain of interest and should be tailored together for all kinds of budgets.

The recommendation for further studies is to find a realistic approach to a marketing strategy that will influence effectively on the perception of Finland. This means it is necessary to find out about intelligent and professional distribution channels that put a lot of effort in rejuvenation to turn Finland into a destination of greater interest beyond the seasons.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview (via Facebook) 7th of April 2013

Daniela Siegismund

Here are now a few questions for an entrepreneur:

1. Concerning German customers: Do you have more requests for activities in summer or in winter (evaluate)?
2. What are the main activities the customers are interested each for summer and winter?
3. Do you usually catch what kind of image they have about Finland?
4. What age group do they belong to usually?
5. Where did they find your enterprise? (From brochures, catalogs, via Internet)?
6. Do you think that it is essential to work with the tourism management and marketing organization of Finland?

Do their activities have any effect on your company and customer numbers?

7. What do you think could be improved between the tourism organization and local tour operators?
8. Are you satisfied with the way they "sell" Finland with regard to the tone and presentation in the marketing campaigns?
9. Do you think Finland could perform better in customer alluring if they promote a season-overlapping marketing strategy?

Thank you for the answers.

Appendix 2. Survey conducted by the author (in German)

Diese Studie dient einzig und allein dem Zweck das Bild, das die deutschen potenziellen Besucher über Finnland als Land und Reiseziel haben, zu identifizieren. Der Befragte bleibt hierbei anonym.

1. Aus welchem Bundesland kommen Sie?
2. Welcher Altersgruppe gehören Sie an?
3. Woran denken Sie als erstes, wenn Sie Finnland hören? (in einem Satz)
4. Wie stellen Sie sich den typischen Finnen vor? (in 3 Stichpunkten)
5. Mit was verbinden Sie Finnland hauptsächlich? (max. 5 Antworten)

Party

Mittsommer

Nordlichter

Sommerhütte

Sauna

Strand

Natur (Seen, Wald)

Sportler

Pisa-Studie (Bildung)

Nokia (Technologie)

Wintersport

Weihnachtsmann

Schnee

Muumins

Musik, Lordi (Eurov. Song Contest)

Kultur & Geschichte

Architektur

Gutes Essen

6. Ist Ihnen schon einmal Werbung begegnet, in der Finnland vorkam?

Internet, Fernsehen, Zeitung, Reisebüro, Katalogen/ Broschüren, Anderes, weiss nicht

7. Wurde Ihnen Finnland bereits ein Aufenthalt in Finnland empfohlen bzw. davon abgeraten?

Empfohlen, weil ...

Abgeraten, weil ...

Weiss nicht

Nach welchen Kriterien suchen Sie sich ihr Urlaubsziel aus?

Klima

Politische Situation

Gastfreundlichkeit

Sicherheit

Entfernung

Preis

Kulturelle Besonderheiten

Entertainment

Gute Verkehrsverbindungen

Unterkunftsangebote

Wie bewerten Sie auf die Attraktivität des Reiseziels Finnland bezogen die nachfolgenden Kriterien aus ihrer eigenen Sichtweise?(1 (unattraktiv) bis 5 (attraktiv))

Klima

Politische Situation

Gastfreundlichkeit

Sicherheit

Entfernung

Preis

Kulturelle Besonderheiten

Entertainment

Gute Verkehrsverbindungen

Unterkunftsangebote

31. Waren Sie schon einmal in Finnland?

ja, nein

32. Würden sie nach Finnland reisen bzw. erneut nach Finnland reisen?

Ja, weil_____

Nein, weil_____

Vielleicht

33. Welche Region würden sie bereisen?

Hauptstadt Helsinki

Seenplatte (Ostfinnland)

Lapland

Küste

Ländlichen Ort

34. Welche Art von Ferienangeboten erwarten Sie am ehesten von Finnland?

Natur und Entspannung

Kultur, Tradition

Musikveranstaltungen (Festivals, Open Air etc.)

Städtereise

Entertainment

Strand- und See (Bade-) Urlaub

Aktivurlaub Sommer

Sporturlaub Winter

35. Unter welchem Motto sollte ihr Urlaub stehen?

Abenteuer und Sport

Kultur und Tradition

Entspannung und Wohlfühlen

Unterhaltung und Party

36. Warum denken Sie ist Finnland als Reiseziel noch recht unbekannt?

Lage & Klima

Zu wenig Werbung für das Land

Keine nennenswerten Sehenswürdigkeiten

Ist als Reiseziel zu unsicher

Ruf der Landsleute

Weiss nicht

Unbedeutend in der Weltgeschichte

37. Wie lange würden Sie in Finnland verweilen?

weniger als 1 Tag

1-4 Tage

5-7 Tage

mehr als 7 Tage

Gar nicht

38. Welche Jahreszeit erscheint Ihnen für einen Finnlandurlaub am attraktivsten?

Sommer

Winter

Herbst

Frühling

Keine

Weiss nicht

39. In welchem Zusammenhang haben sie das letzte Mal von Finnland gehört?

Tourismus-Werbung, Spots etc.

Sport

Pisa (Bildung)

Wirtschaftlich: (Informations)-Technologie

Politisch (Eurodiskussion, EU etc.)

Via Verwandten oder Freunden

Schule (Geographie-Unterricht und da auch so ziemlich das letzte Mal)