# THE ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE AND PERSONALITY IN CO-BRANDING OF BALTIC REGION TOURISM DESTINATIONS – A CASE OF GERMANY AS A SOURCE MARKET

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PhD 2014

# THE ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE AND PERSONALITY IN CO-BRANDING OF BALTIC REGION TOURISM DESTINATIONS – A CASE OF GERMANY AS A SOURCE MARKET

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the

Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Food and Tourism Management
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July 2014

#### Acknowledgements

I received an incredible amount of support, guidance, assistance, and encouragement from a great number of individuals whilst researching and writing this thesis. I would never have been able to be where I am today without the guidance of my supervisory team, encouragement from friends, and support from my family.

My thesis is a result of the trust and confidence my supervisory team has invested in me as a young researcher. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Steven Rhoden for his guidance, supervision, and patience that made the past four years a rewarding journey. He supported and trusted me in all my endeavours, which provided me with the necessary flexibility and autonomy to develop into an independent researcher. I cannot value your incredible support, inspiration, understanding, sense of humour, and constructive criticism highly enough. You truly have a sympathetic ear for your students. I would like to thank Dr. Amanda Miller for her understanding and constructive criticism. I value your critical mind and appreciate our discussions that helped me to challenge my theoretical perspective. I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Stone for his support and insight. I will remember your sincerity and encouragement. I am also very grateful to Professor Dennis Reynolds for his willingness to become part of the team, for his unselfish and unfailing support, invaluable advice, and fatherly concern. I will never forget your sincerity, patience, encouragement, and intellectual stimulation, your mental acuity and instrumental support. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth M. Ineson for having been part of the team when the journey started. Your support, your intellectual input and guidance was always much appreciated. Thank you all for your patience in difficult times and being accommodating when I needed it the most, for helping me stay on track with encouragement and insight. I truly could not have wished for a better supervisory team.

Thank you also Aly Gonchorova, Dr. Shobana Nair Partington and Gail Garside for their friendly support and guidance regarding PhD administrative processes at Manchester Metropolitan University.

I would like to thank all the interviewees for sharing with me their perceptions and experiences of the Baltic States. I greatly appreciate their support, their willingness to give up some of their time, as well as their encouraging comments, and invaluable insight. I would also like to thank Maggie Hardman for her linguistic input, and insightful and encouraging comments. It would not have been possible to complete this thesis without their contributions.

On a personal note, no words can describe how indebted I feel towards my entire family and particularly to my mum and dad. I am unimaginably thankful for their strength, love and faith in me, encouragement, as well as unbroken, unconditional and invaluable support I have enjoyed, not only throughout the PhD process, but in everything I have done. Thank you for never doubting my decisions, supporting my adventures, and rescuing me when needed. You have the biggest heart and you continuously showed me that I could reach my goals. Finally, I would like to thank my best friend and my wife, who has supported me during this time, helped me unconditionally in keeping my life in proper perspective, and listened to my moaning and complaining. Thank you for believing in me

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when I didn't, and supporting me with every step of the way. You are my tower of strength who brings passion, laughter, and adventure into my life. I love you all and can only hope that I can return some of what you have given to me.

#### **Abstract**

Marketing and branding are inseparably linked, since the ultimate goal of marketing is to establish a brand in the mind of the consumer (Ries & Ries, 2002). Branding can be considered as one of the most meaningful and important aims and objectives of marketing (Cai, 2002). Interest in brand partnerships or co-branding, a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective objective to establish a brand more effectively compared to what a brand could achieve on its own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Chang, 2009) is increasing. However, literature to date has not addressed a topic of destination co-branding. Small destinations with a limited tourist offering may be particularly able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding. The Baltic States are individually small destinations, relatively new on the international tourism market and, thus, not high in volume or oriented towards the typical mass tourism (Coles & Hall, 2005; Hall, Smith, & Marciszweska, 2006; Nilsson, Eskilsson, & Ek, 2010). It is therefore important to understand potential marketing strategies and approaches that might increase the touristic appeal of the region. This thesis is the first attempt to fill this void in the tourism and marketing literature. The central question that this thesis will address is, what role destination personality and destination image play in the market perceptions of co-branding destinations, and their impact on tourist satisfaction, as well as behavioural intentions.

The primary research focuses on tourists' perceptions of destination co-branding, as influenced by the perception of the destination image and destination personality. It adopts subjectivism of ontology as the underlying research philosophy and an inductive approach. Semi-structured interviews with 26 tourists to the Baltic States were undertaken; 13 interviews with actual tourists and 13 with potential tourists. Data were inductively coded and categories of description were identified, organised into coherent themes and linkages between them were drawn, which resulted in a framework of co-branding as informed by perceptions of image and personality.

The findings demonstrated that apparent differences exist between actual and potential tourists in the clarity of their image and personality perceptions as they pertain to the individual states. Actual tourists can clearly identify commonalities and differences among the three countries, while potential tourists have difficulties recognising differences. Overall, Estonia's personality is described as modern, stylish and young; Lithuania seems backwards, distanced, rough and proud, Russian-Polish influenced, religious and held back. Latvia, the reflective, quiet and rural but also metropolitan country seems blurred and still needs to find its own identity. With regard to the image perceptions, these countries are perceived as each being unique in their own way, yet belonging together through their history and, as such, offering the perfect holiday destination. While Latvia does not play a prominent role in their image associations, Estonia is perceived as having Finnish or Nordic influences; Lithuania does not stand out and is not in the tourism spotlight. Co-branding, as a marketing strategy, was seen as beneficial, as it would increase the visibility of the individual states but also the competitiveness of the entire region on the international tourism market. The aim of co-branding should not be the assimilation of the destinations, but to emphasise their similarities and differences to create awareness, visibility and interest among tourists.

The contribution to knowledge of this thesis is in addressing the concept relevant to a highly competitive tourism industry through the lens of perceived destination image and personality concepts. It explores how it would affect tourists' perception of the region. It makes an original contribution to knowledge by first determining the current perceived image and personality of a region that has been largely neglected in academic research and still carries a negative connotation of the Soviet bloc in consumers' minds (Huettinger, 2008). Second, tourists' perceptions of a co-branding approach for the region with similar historical, geographical, and cultural background is explored. Finally, a model of destination co-branding based on the destination image and destination personality is built. The thesis shows that small destinations with a limited tourist offering would be able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding, as it offers great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire region when individual destinations target similar market segments and offer complementary products or services.

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#### **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

"The use of traveling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are."

Samuel Johnson English Writer, Poet, and Literary Critic (Johnson, 1984, p.323)

#### 1.1 Traveling and the agony of choice

'How should I spend the next annual holiday?' This is a question many people ask themselves as soon as the travel business releases new eye-catching offers, as soon as a spouse, significant other, or simply a superior asks for it in order to submit the holiday planning to a more senior organisational level. The challenge is the time needed to get an overview of the choice of products and services available, sometimes just a mouse-click away in today's globalised tourism market. Naturally, family often needs to be considered to decide what travel dates, trip length, travel expenses, forms of travel, travel assignments, or travel destinations come into question and which do not. Typically, quite a few choices can be ruled out at the outset; for example adventure trips might be unsuitable for families with children. Another problem is the choice of the destination, not least when it comes to the various likes and dislikes of family members. Not everyone wants to travel to a country that is extremely hot during the summer, where the point is to marvel at cultural assets all day, or where one is being entertained by Captain Jack Sparrow, Alice in Wonderland, Aladdin, Cinderella and the like. In this 'unlikely' event, compromise is needed; after all, travelling is a special and precious time. Information pertaining to interesting destinations worldwide is fortunately available on the Internet so that it isn't necessary to consult a travel agent. However, in years to come the tourism industry will yet again put countless trendy, exotic, often similar, and sometimes exchangeable travel destinations forward that can be purchased by the consumer as a last-minute, wellness, all-inclusive, independent, round-trip, cruise, group, or any other subtypes of offers. The consumer has the agony of choice between a myriad of destination choices, be it cities, regions within a country, or even regions across several countries to name but a few.

However, in times of direct booking, dynamic packaging, or apps for just about anything, the question has to be asked: what can destinations do to support the consumer in making educated choices about destination selection and thus, to differentiate one destination from another?

This question may be especially relevant for newer destinations on the international tourism market that are geographically small, have limited resources to promote themselves, and are perhaps located in regions that are not attracting immediate attention on the tourists' radar.

Europe is one of the most important tourism regions, if not *the* most important in terms of a being a destination as well as a source market and occupies an important place in global tourism (European Commission, 2008). In fact, six EU Member States are represented among a global top-ten holiday destination list (European Commission, 2010). Europe's tourism destinations appear to be divided into two parts; on one side the western and southern part of Europe, which still leads the tourism market, on the other the northern and eastern countries of Europe that have shown an incredibly positive development with regards to incoming and outgoing tourism, partly to and from the rest of Europe (European Commission, 2008). This thesis will focus on the northeastern region of Europe, specifically on the Baltic States; Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (see Appendix A for general country profiles of the Baltic States). Special attention will be given to commonalities and differences that ought to be considered when focusing on cross-

national marketing strategies.

The rest of the chapter will first provide a brief description of the three Baltic States including the recent state of the tourism industry and an assessment of the future tourism development within the region. Second, it will address the research gap in the literature and develop the aims of this thesis.

#### 1.2 The Baltic States – history, geography, and culture

Since the end of the cold war and the fall of the iron curtain, increasing attention has been given to predominantly cultural research focusing on Central and Eastern Europe (Huettinger, 2008). However the three Baltic States (Figure 1.1), Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have, for the most part, been long ignored in cultural research and are still being treated as a 'forecourt of Russia' (Huettinger, 2008), even though the Baltic States are relentlessly trying to make clear that they are oriented towards Western Europe and prefer to be considered as formerly occupied rather than being viewed as a former Soviet republic.

BALTIC STATES

GULF OF
BOTHNIA

Abroanman

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Figure 1.1. Political map of the Baltic States

Source: United Nations (2011)

It cannot be disputed that being a 'forecourt of Russia' is a stigma or stereotype that seems to stick to the Baltic States in a more persistent manner than desired. It certainly is a stereotype that might be reflected in tourists' perceptions of the Baltic region, which in turn probably negatively affects the tourism industry of this region; a region with enormous but partially unutilised potential.

In a number of publications the three Baltic States are regarded as an entity (e.g., Huettinger, 2008; Jaakson, 1996), partially because of their physical proximity. Even in

commercial circles, according to Huettinger (2008), the countries have typically been viewed in their entirety and often similar and standardised marketing strategies are applied across all three markets. This also seems to be a major challenge for the tourism industry and especially affects inbound business, as the three countries are relatively small, still surprisingly unknown to the majority of travellers and, in a small market, still not fully developed in terms of tourism offerings (Archdeacon, 2008). Even though the Baltic States have each initiated image campaigns and investment in their markets to promote their destinations, the lack of information about the countries beyond geographic location and affiliation to the European Union is problematic, to an extent that serious considerations were undertaken at the beginning of 2008 to change the English name of Lithuania to something 'easier' in order to boost its image among incoming / international tourists (Archdeacon, 2008).

The three countries of the Baltic States not only have a common cultural and political heritage with Poland<sup>1</sup> but have in the past also managed to preserve their cultural values, something that is reflected in their individually rich historic tourism offerings, and always maintained close relationships with Scandinavia in particular (Manning & Poljeva, 1999). At the same time the Baltic States share further similarities in that the countries' citizens have always regarded their identity as being more closely associated with those of Central and Western Europeans as opposed to belonging to the Soviet Union (Alas & Rees, 2005). Moreover, compared to other former Soviet Republics, the level of education in all three countries, including language skills and strong work ethics (Huettinger, 2008), is exceptionally high and considerable emphasis is put on western skills (Martinsons, 1995). This positive development is most notably observed in Latvia and Estonia,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For instance, in 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe, the largest country was Lithuania. Today's Ukraine and Belarus as well as certain regions of Russia and Poland were part of the so-called Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Later, as part of the Treaty of Lublin (1569), the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was founded merging the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This disappeared from the map in 1795, which led to most of Lithuania falling into Russian hands (Burant & Zubek, 1993).

countries that, after their breakup from the Soviet Union, quickly emphasised economic diversification and independence from state-run enterprises as well as from former Soviet republic trading partners (Martinsons, 1995). The Baltic states are often described as very entrepreneurially minded (cf., Hall, 2008; Huettinger, 2008; Manning & Poljeva, 1999; Nichols, 2001) as they have realised that their countries' success is closely linked to a workforce with an adequate skill set, who are able to lead companies that manage to create high-quality goods as well as services (Martinsons, 1995). It is argued that this stance has specifically contributed to the Estonian ability to elegantly handle the country's transition into an independent state (Alas & Rees, 2005) and previously has generally helped to successfully move forward to a market-based economy (Savchenko, 2002), despite occasional setbacks.

Siraliova and Angelis (2006) point out that all three countries constitute interesting emerging markets, not just due to their very centralised location within Europe and also between Europe and its main trading partners, a formerly very fragile position among imperialist forces (Martinsons, 1995), but also due to their historic affiliations within and outside Europe. The Baltic States are closely linked to continental Europe's main economies, Russia and Scandinavia, both geographically and historically (Martinsons, 1995). Besides such geographical closeness, to some extent these states share a cultural and political past with Poland and have strong historical links with Germany and Sweden (Huettinger, 2008). However, socio-cultural differences certainly exist, which result in certain differences pertaining to consumer behaviour or marketing activities such as advertising (Siraliova & Angelis, 2006). While there are commonalities observable between the Lithuanian and Polish culture (Siraliova & Angelis, 2006), Estonia's culture is said to be very similar to the Finnish culture and the Latvian culture is frequently said to have resemblances to the German culture (Siraliova & Angelis, 2006). Similarly, in a study

exploring culture dimensions of Latvian and Lithuanian students in accordance with Hofstede's indices and compared to Estonia and Scandinavian countries, Huettinger (2008) states that besides the cultural and political ties between Lithuania and Poland, Lithuania also has strong connections with Germany; additionally, business contacts exist between Estonia and Finland, whereas Latvia orients itself more towards Sweden and Germany.

To clearly understand potential cultural differences among the three countries it is worth reviewing the Hofstede model of cultural comparisons in more detail. From Hofstede's dimensions four independent criteria characterize national culture in terms of beliefs and values (Hofstede, 2001). First, power distance stands for human inequality and the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Huettinger's (2008) study demonstrates that all three Baltic countries – Estonia, Litva, and Lithuania – score low-moderate on this dimension. This suggests that these countries do not necessarily tolerate power hierarchy, tight control, vertical top-down communication, and discrimination by gender, family background, education level, race and occupation. They further do not heavily rely on authority, centralization and show great tolerance for the inequality in power and wealth (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Second, uncertainty avoidance represents the extent to shich members of a culture feel threatended by uncertain or unknown situations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). All three countries score moderately on this dimension (Huettinger, 2008). Explicit rules such as job descriptions, taking risks, and a need to control the environment or situations, thus, only moderately pertain to the Baltic States. Mole (2003), furthermore suggests that a superior is perceived as one of the team, but his or her taks is to lead and give directions. The third dimension pertains to the level of individualism or collectivism in the society. In collectivist societies people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people's

lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). All three countries score high-moderate on this dimension (Huettinger, 2008, Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This suggests that people in Baltic States have developed a sense of autonomy and favour personal achievement. They moderately favour job specialization and a competitive entrepreneurial climate. Additionally, their indivual performance is oriented towards rewards and nuclear family indepence is of relative importance. Latvians score a little higher on this dimension that Lithianians and Estonians. Huettinger (2008) suggests that this difference could be explained by the fact that Riga is in many ways more of a metropole with an international and very individualistic flare in comparison to Vilnius or Talinn. Further, it may be possible that the factor of experiencing transition and change has affected the results of the Baltic respondents (Huettinger, 2008). He suggests that as long as the economic success is based on grasping opportunities in these three countries, rather than being rewarded for continuity and stability, the value on this dimension will unlikely change. Lastly, the masculinity dimension represents the dominant sex role pattern in the culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Masculine societies for example have clearly distinct gender roles, where men are expected to be assertive, tough and focused on material success. Women on the other side are expected to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In feminine societies, as is the case for the Baltic States – all three score reltively low on this dimension – men take over the emotional gender role of women. For example, Lithuanian managers appear moderately feminine (Bajoriene, 1996) and pure Latvian circles as very feminine (Knudsen, 1994). Nevertheless, gender roles have been strongly influenced by soviet cultural and political ideology (Alas & Rees, 2005). Huettinger (2008) suggests that while it might be possible that Baltic people are masculine when it comes to gender equality or sexual harassment, they might be very feminine when it comes to work-life.

Business in Eastern Europe is often based on networking and relationships, thus a good cooperation is very essential. This combination represents a part of the Soviet heritage (Huettinger, 2008). Overall, all three Baltic States score very similary on all four Hofstede dimensions with only minor deviations. Interestingly, the three countries score very similary to Germany on the power distance and uncertainty avoidance; the two dimensions largely affecting thinking concerning organisations. On the two other dimensions, masculinity and individualism, the Baltic States are also very similar according to Hofstede, however, located closer to the Scandinavian cultures.

Based on these findings, Huettinger (2008) thus suggests multinational corporations to treat the three Baltic States as one market – particularly when it comes to human resources and management structures. This leads Huettinger (2008) to the conclusion that the three countries are similar in terms of their business values. Compared to some of the neighbouring countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Russia) they score differently on these same dimensions, whereas the German business culture appears to be closely related to the one in the Baltic States (Huettinger, 2008). Based on such similarities and common characteristics among the three states one can reasonably expect Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to be able to benefit from joint marketing efforts. However, differences might occur pertaining to consumer behaviour and advertising (Siraliova & Angelis, 2006). These authors further argue that these specific differences may potentially affect marketing strategy decisions in the region. In their study, using the example of the Baltic States, Siraliova and Angelis (2006) questioned whether businesses should follow a standardisation strategy across national markets or utilise an adaptation strategy to customise products or services to an individual market and, in conclusion, suggested some level of standardized marketing within the Baltic States. This is in line with Roper's (2005) study that aimed to assess the extent of marketing standardisation versus adaptation

strategies within the Nordic region, including the Baltic States. In contrast to Siraliova and Angelis (2006), who focused on the marketing of a wide range of consumer and industrial goods of multi-national companies, Roper (2005) specifically focused on European tour operators (i.e. non-durable consumer goods) active in the Nordic region. Roper (2005) argued that in comparison to industrial goods, there is typically a higher likelihood of industries marketing consumer goods in a more customised manner (i.e. adjusted to the local market) due to the fact that consumer goods, and specifically the non-durable goods and services (cf. Shostack, 1977)<sup>2</sup> among them, need to be aligned with local preferences, culture and customs. However, Roper (2005) concluded that in comparison to German and UK markets, the Nordic region consists of rather small countries and markets (e.g. Baltic states) and so he suggests a 'regiocentric' marketing approach, meaning the management of marketing regionally whilst giving sufficient attention to local concerns. This geographic streamlining of marketing activities has, according to Roper (2005), the advantage of creating and obtaining economies of scale and scope. Simultaneously, Roper (2005, p. 524) admits that this "think regional – act local" approach can be provoking and a juggling act for the entities and interest groups involved.

#### 1.3 Tourism development in the Baltic States

Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have been a favourite tourism destination for Finland and Russia's elite, since before the Soviet occupation (Nichols, 2001). Apart from a few tourism strongholds in and around the main capitals, tourism development was limited during the Soviet occupation and, for instance in Estonia, was mainly geared towards the Soviet elite along the highly attractive coastline (Unwin, 1996). Since their independence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The author argues that in order to be effective and successful, the marketing of services requires a fundamentally different approach due to their special characteristics (i.e. in tourism: intangibility, perishability, inseparability, and heterogeneity) than the marketing of products (Shostack, 1977).

in the early 1990s the three Baltic States have turned their attention away from the Russian market and focused instead on a wider range of tourists, specifically coming from Northern and Western Europe (e.g., Finland, UK, Germany,) as well as American tourists (Nichols, 2001). Nichols (2001) explains this shift towards the West as stemming from a latent political agenda that existed among Baltic tourism developers. He feels they employed the tourism industry as a foreign relations tool prior to European accession, specifically for the purpose of lobbying for admission to the European Union (Nichols, 2001). The three countries have in the past tried to strongly differentiate themselves from one another based on their individual offering of tourism services, monuments and their strong and distinct history and culture (Nichols, 2001). Despite these numerous differences with regard to culture, language and religion, the typical Baltic States tourist has, for the most part, been under the impression that they were traveling to different regions of the very same country. This is, in parts, due to the fact that these countries have been perceived to share the common struggle for independence from the Soviet Union (Nichols, 2001). Even today, this is a common theme that resonates in the perception of tourists. Since their independence, the countries have also rediscovered the strength of their rural environment and previously untouched areas for tourism development. Unwin (1996) points out that one main problem of tourism development in Estonia, and this is to some extent certainly also true for Latvia and Lithuania, has been trying to keep a healthy balance between the strong focus of economic activity in and around the capital Tallinn on one side and the culturally important rural areas on the other. It is therefore not surprising that a sustainable rural tourism in the Baltic States is nowadays being looked at as a potentially promising strategy to not only develop a healthy tourism industry but also provide an economic basis and infrastructural development for rural areas, which is and has been a key strategy of the European Union (European Commission, 2010; Unwin, 1996).

An important indication for tourism development is the number of tourist nights spent by residents and non-residents in a given area (European Commission, 2008). In 2006, the total tourist nights of Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany and France added together, reached 72% of the total nights spent within the entire EU-27 area<sup>3</sup> (European Commission, 2008). Against this background, the growth rates of tourist nights spent in Estonia (+17.7%), Lithuania (+13.1%) and Latvia (+13.1%) are quite astonishing and, even though they were of course lower in absolute terms, they represented the highest growth among all EU-27 countries (Figure 1.2) within this period (European Commission, 2008).

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EU-27 countries (with Croatia's entry into European Union named EU-28 as of July, 2013) are European Member States, consisting of the original 25 members (May 1, 2004) as well as Bulgaria and Romania, who joined the EU in 2007 with the Treaty of Lisbon. EU-17 countries (EU-18 with Latvia as of January, 2014) are those EU Member States that have adopted the euro as a currency (Estonia in 2011) and, thus have met the Maastricht criteria (www.europa.eu).

Figure 1.2. Evolution of tourist nights in collective accommodation (2000 – 2006)

Source: European Commission (2008)

A similar picture is observed with regard to international tourism. Between 2000 and 2006, the growth rate of nights spent by non-residents within the EU-27 countries amounted to an average of 1.2% each year, which was led by the new member states with an average growth rate of approximately 5.3% for international tourism, even though accounting for only 10% of nights spent (non-residents) with the EU-27 area (European Commission, 2008). Focusing on the distribution of non-resident tourist nights by country, Spain, France and Italy contributed with approximately 50.9% of all international nights

within the EU-27 area in 2006. Again lower in absolute numbers, it was the Baltic States that noted the highest average annual growth rates (Estonia +15.8%, Lithuania +15.6%, Latvia 17.9%) between the years 2000 and 2006 (European Commission, 2008).

The European Commission (2008) states that specifically in the years between 2004 and 2006, the development of the individual economic markets among EU-27 members was symbolised by a "two-speed Europe" (p.14). While an on-going and rather weak economic situation in the euro area largely absorbed or neutralised any positive effect of tourism expenditures and to some extent also changed consumption patterns of western Europeans in these years, the emerging European countries (i.e. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania) on the other hand, and particularly the Baltic States, experienced the strongest growth since the beginning of their transition (European Commission, 2008). This growth, partially originating in the accession effect that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania benefited from in becoming EU Member States in 2004 (Hughes & Allen, 2009; Jarvis & Kallas, 2008), has led to the assessment of the European Commission (2008) that the Baltic states would potentially even overtake other economically strong eastern European countries and by elevating their standard of living, also impact outbound tourism, an area with enormous growth potential.

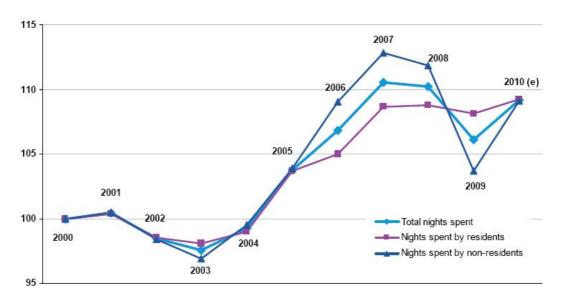
Europe's financial crisis, that reached its peak in the autumn of 2008, eventually resulted in the largest contraction of economic activity after the Second World War (European Commission, 2010). A couple of years after reaching this low point, and even though positive developments are detectable in several countries, the world economies in general and their financial systems in particular are still far off from their previous strength and from exuding confidence. Newscasts are, for the most part, dominated by bad news revolving around currently poor employment numbers, rising inflation and interest rates and currency devaluations as well as structural changes and reforms to financial systems,

not to mention insecurity among industry, governments and the consumer pertaining to unknown long-term effects of the economic crisis.

Additionally, during the economic downturn, the member states of the European Union were differently affected. Some countries suffered less than others, but it put the European idea under some pressure. Countries that had just been admitted to the European Union (i.e. Baltic States in 2004) had to endure economic ups and downs from experiencing an economic boom between 2004 and 2006 and subsequently the exact opposite starting in 2008/2009. They were hit by the deepest depression of all EU member states with a contraction of real GDP between 14-18%, which specifically meant for Estonia a decline of -13.9%, for Latvia approximately -18.0%, and for Lithuania a decrease of -14.7% (Bank DnB Nord Group, 2011). The Baltic States were among those member states of the European Union that were worst hit by this recent and on-going economic crisis and the 'trickle-down' effect from other industry sectors heavily impacted on the tourism industry of all three countries.

In the years 2008/2009, the accommodation sector of Europe's tourism industry suffered significantly. By far the worst year for tourism, according to the European Commission (2011a) was 2009, where the number of nights spent in hotels or similar establishments within the EU-27 countries (i.e. 27 current European Union member states) fell below the level of the year 2006 (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Number of nights spent in lodging, EU-27 (2000 – 2010)



Notes: Data for 2000, 2001 and 2002 include estimates for Malta (residents' nights); data for 2010 based on estimates using the available monthly data (see also the footnote to Table 1).

Source: European Commission (2011a)

From 2009 onwards, a slow recovery took place and the number of nights spent grew by approximately 2.8% among the EU-27 countries in 2010 (European Commission, 2011a). While some countries recorded a continuation of the negative growth of 2009 (i.e. Romania, United Kingdom, Italy, Slovenia, Greece), countries such as Poland, Malta and the Baltic states stood out with double-digit growth rates; Lithuania (+ 11.1%), Latvia (+11.6%), Estonia (+14.1%) (European Commission, 2011a). For detailed information on the current state of tourism in each of the three Baltic States, see Appendix B.

#### 1.4 The Current Baltic States Marketing and Tourism Situation

As of May 2014, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of their European Union and NATO membership. In the second part of 2013, Lithuania held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, to be followed by Latvia in 2015, and

Estonia in 2018. The countries have gone through a rapid and well-evidenced transformation. Estonia adopted the Euro in 2011, Latvia introduced it in January 2014, and Lithuania plans to do so in 2015. However, it is important to acknowledge that the Baltic States were among the hardest hit countries in the European Union and beyond during the 2008 financial crisis with an economic downturn of almost 18 percent (Gnaug, 2013). One consequence of entry into the European Union was an enormous emigration wave to the British Isles, mostly people between 20 and 29 years of age that are no longer part of the countries' respective economies (Gnaug, 2013). However, in the coming years, the Baltic States have the opportunity to be more present on the economic radar, especially in Germany as one of their key trading partners. With an impressive three-percent growth in 2012 (Gnaug, 2013), all three countries are slowly staging a comeback in the minds of Europeans and are improving their economic performance. At the same time Russia, its authoritarianism and a reinvigorated, more aggressive foreign policy under president Putin contribute to a raised awareness of the Baltic region (Gnaug, 2013).

This is a challenge for the Baltic States. Naturally, any political, economic, and social developments do not pass unnoticed. Consumers or tourists are being exposed to information pertaining to changes in the political, economic, or social landscape either directly or indirectly through various channels in a 'shrinking' globalising world. Being subject to this information, consumers develop their own impressions, feelings, associations, and perceptions about world affairs, and eventually form their own image about a country or region such as the Baltic States, whether positive or negative. Ultimately, consumers connect such information with countries or regions when making travel plans, sometimes to a destination's advantage, but often not. Destinations invest billions of dollars each year in prestige advertising, image cultivation, branding, and image-building. They aim to create a positive economic investment climate, to be

perceived as an attractive and safe travel destination, and to meet global tourism trends such as demographic and psychographic changes, an increased interest in more active and educational pursuits ("sight doing" vs. "sightseeing"), and greater environmental awareness among many other examples. Active development of tourism can contribute greatly to the elimination of unemployment as well as to the reduction of emigration. If, on the other hand, countries today are unable to invest in promotion, or have a poor image, it is likely to affect the decision making process of the consumer. Positive images are essential for any destination, whether at a city, island, country, or regional level, and it is especially important for emerging destinations such as the Baltic States, that have so far not received much attention, to position them well for investors, as well as for consumers, on the global tourism market. However, when building an image, a country or destination cannot just create a positive illusion that does not correspond with reality. The consumer or tourist's image perception needs to be taken into consideration before a destination tries to actively communicate a desired image that represents the destination well and resonates with the tourist before, during, and after a visit.

After their independence from Russia in 1991, the three Baltic States acted independently from one another and only started to co-operate over tourism based on an agreement concluded in June 2002. This had the objective of creating a foundation for co-operation in the area of tourism, based on equality and mutual benefit, and to encourage ties between Baltic States' tourist organisations with the aim of developing a joint tourism space (The Baltic Course, 2013). More specifically, the intent was to co-operate on a number of levels; tourist flow between the Baltic States, administrative co-operation between national tourism organisations, development of education in the area of tourism, and the creation of common marketing activities and publications, to name a few (The Baltic Course, 2013). With an amendment signed in October 2013, the three Baltic States

reacted to national and international changes (e.g., changes on international tourism market, accession to the EU) that have occurred since the initial agreement. The new amendment aims to integrate Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania more favourably in international tourism activities, being extremely concerned about their external image. In order to more effectively co-operate in the future, common tourism information offices and representatives are sought by all parties that allow the three countries to popularise themselves as a single tourism product and destination for short and long haul markets (The Baltic Course, 2013).

Destination marketers for the region will have to portray or brand the individual destinations in the mind of the consumer as one region that tourists are able to relate to, evaluate favourably, and link to positive associations. Both destination image and destination personality are central topics connected to the branding of tourism destinations and are widely discussed in the marketing and tourism literature.

#### 1.5 Research Gap

Marketing and branding are inseparably linked to each other, since the ultimate goal of marketing is to establish a brand in the mind of the consumer (Ries & Ries, 2002). Branding can be considered as one of the most meaningful and important aims and objectives of marketing (Cai, 2002). Branding helps consumers in their selection process, in that it guarantees that a product or service is relevant to the consumer or present in the consumer's mind.

In the tourism sector, there seems to be an expanding interest in brand partnerships or co-branding as a special form of brand extension (Chang, 2009), a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective objective to establish a brand more effectively in comparison to what a partner brand would be able to do on its

own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). For example, co-branding is an attractive means for marketers since co-branded products complement each other by adopting the salient attributes of each other (Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Recently, co-branding strategies have been observed in service industries, for example in restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, and theme parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2006; Young, Hoggatt, & Paswan, 2001). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the literature to date has not addressed the topic of destination co-branding, as informed by destination image and personality, a concept that is generally widely used in the marketing arena and particularly in consumer behaviour. Small destinations with a limited tourist offering may be able to particularly benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding, as such an approach can offer great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire geographical area. Each Baltic State individually as a country is comparatively (to other world tourism destinations) a small destination in itself (Hall, Smith, & Marciszewska, 2006; Lamoreaux & Galbreath, 2008; Nilsson, Eskilsson, & Ek, 2010). These countries are relatively new on the international tourism market and, thus, not high in volume or oriented towards typical mass tourism like other more established tourism destinations (Coles & Hall, 2005; Hall, et al., 2006; Nilsson et al., 2010). Being relatively new on the tourism radar and partially due to their turbulent history in the past, the three Baltic States have not yet received the level of attention they deserve among tourists or from academia, in terms of general tourism marketing research, or co-branding of destinations in particular (Andersson, 2007; Andrespok & Kasekamp, 2012; Jaakson, 2000). It is thus important to understand potential marketing strategies and approaches that might increase the touristic appeal of the region. This thesis is a first attempt to fill in this void in the tourism and marketing literature. A study on destination co-branding in consideration of the destinations' image and personality from a consumer (i.e., tourist)

perspective may fill this gap and potentially offer insight into new destination marketing and branding approaches for countries that individually seem too small to succeed on the international tourism market.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to the tourism marketing and tourism branding literature, in that it extends the understanding and current literature on destination personality, as well as on destination image. Second, this thesis will extend the understanding and current literature on destination branding. Even though an extensive amount of research has been conducted on the branding of destinations, the literature lacks an understanding of co-branding of destinations. Consequently, the central question that this study will address is, what role destination personality and destination image play in the market perceptions of co-branding destinations and their impact on tourist satisfaction as well as behavioural intentions.

#### **1.6** Aims

Based on the review of current tourism and marketing situation of the Baltic States and the academic literature in the destination branding, the research gap identified above allows for the identification of the following aims for this thesis:

- 1. To critically review the literature on tourism destination image, destination personality, branding, and co-branding.
- 2. To analyse the destination image and personality characteristics of Baltic countries as perceived by German tourists.
- To evaluate actual and potential German tourists' perceptions of co-branding of Baltic countries.
- 4. To establish a conceptual model for Baltic countries' destination co-branding incorporating destination image and personality perceptions of German

tourists.

#### 1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis focuses on examining the role of destination image and destination personality as foundations for destination co-branding and is divided into 10 chapters. Following the introduction (Chapter 1), a review of the literature related to marketing (in particular the concepts of branding and co-branding as they relate to tourism) is undertaken (Chapter 2). The literature review continues in Chapter 3, with a review of the concepts of image and personality in marketing in general, and in particular with the concepts of destination image and destination personality in tourism. Chapter 4 offers a synthesis on the relevance and importance of co-branding within the tourism industry, and the current destination image of the Baltic States (as outlined in the secondary data) is reviewed. Through the self-congruity concept, it is explained how and why destination image and personality could be beneficial for a co-branding marketing approach between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Chapter 5 of the thesis clarifies the methodological approach and explains the principles used for this study. The primary research was guided by subjectivism of ontology philosophy and an inductive approach. Semi-structured interviews with 26 tourists to the Baltic States (13 interviewees were actual tourists to all three countries; 13 were potential tourists to the region) were conducted. Data was analysed by a process of coding that represented categories of description. The results of the data analysis relating to destination personality and image of the Baltic States are outlined in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 respectively, and key categories associated with each of the concepts are identified. In Chapter 8, results pertaining to the evaluation of the potential for co-branding of the Baltic States are reported. The categories arising from the primary data and their relation to the literature, as well as a model of co-branding for the

Baltic States based on the image and personality of the three countries, are discussed in Chapter 9. Primary findings, the contribution to knowledge, strengths and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for future research, are presented in Chapter 10.

# CHAPTER II: MARKETING AND THE CONCEPTS OF BRANDING AND CO-BRANDING

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers and reviews contemporary, as well as seminal, literature about marketing, in particular the concepts of branding and co-branding. It commences with an overview of marketing and its role in tourism. Subsequently, it reflects on the underlying terminology, as well as theories, functions and concepts of a brand and branding in the general marketing literature, on which modern destination branding concepts are based. The review further looks into the distinctive particularities and characteristics of the application of destination brand development and branding concepts, specifically cobranding concepts, in a tourism and service context. In a subsequent analysis of the literature, the foundations are laid to explore the perceptions of co-branding of destinations

## 2.2 The concept of marketing

Marketing, as a term or idea, is by most people being perceived as an endeavour, a function, or even a department that one stumbles over in the business or corporate world (Kotler & Levy, 1969). To avoid confusion, marketing is regarded as the activity or general mission to identify and encourage consumers to do something that lies in the interest of a company's productive capacity (Kotler & Levy, 1969). As an umbrella term, marketing comprises, but is not limited to, activities such as the development of a product, its price determination, communication, and distribution, but also activities that give permanent attention to the constantly changing needs and wants of the consumer; activities

that focus not just on product development but also the alteration of products and design of services in order to meet these needs (Kotler & Levy, 1969). Regardless of whether marketing is considered a means to push or promote products, or whether it is understood as a means to steer customer satisfaction, it is most commonly perceived and reviewed as a business operation (Kotler & Levy, 1969).

There has been a general consensus within the past 50 years that it is the role of marketing that connects a company, or any entity for that matter, to its existing or potential clientele (Grönroos, 2006; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). When considering marketing as a phenomenon, it generally displays the customer orientation of an organisation (Grönroos, 2006). However, the definition of marketing has changed many times since the American Marketing Association was formed in 1937, when marketing was defined comparatively simplisticly as:

"Business activities involved in the flow of goods and services from production to consumption" (Gundlach, 2007, p. 243).

Over many years this definition remained untouched until it was revised in 1985 (Gundlach, 2007), the year when the American Marketing Association changed the definition of marketing to:

"The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals" (Gundlach, 2007, p. 243).

New to this definition was the fact that more emphasis was placed on the 'marketing mix' or in other words, the well-known 4 P's of marketing (i.e. product, price, place, promotion) as well as on the principle of an 'exchange' as a central concept of marketing (Bagozzi, 1974, 1975; Hunt, 1976). However, what the definition failed to emphasise was an alignment of the definition with the tactical and organisational activities

or functions of marketing, meaning that some of the main tasks of marketing are to connect the supply side with the demand side or producers of goods and services with the consumer, by establishing and nurturing relationships.

Thus, together with academic and practical progress and evolution in the field of marketing, another revision to the 1985 definition of marketing was deemed necessary in order to better emphasise this strategic importance of marketing, the organisational function and processes involved. Hence, in 2004, the American Marketing Association put a new definition forward, determining marketing as:

"An organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders" (Grönroos, 2006, p. 397; Gundlach, 2007, p. 243).

However, the understanding (2011) is that marketing is more than just a function or a department as suggested in this earlier definition. Thus, criticised by many scholars (e.g. Hunt, 2007; Shultz, 2007; Zinkhan & Williams, 2007) as to be unnecessarily narrow and emphasising marketing to be almost exclusively restricted to organisations, the American Marketing Association, in 2007, revised and approved the current definition. Marketing is now defined as:

"The activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

With this new definition, marketing is regarded as a somewhat broader activity in a company or an organisation that typically provides a long-term value instead of short-term benefits in the form of an exchange of money for stakeholders of an organisation. The phrase 'delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers' (American Marketing Association, 2013) is of particular importance as it not only reflects a central

phenomenon to marketing studies (Grönroos, 2006), by implying that value is encapsulated in products, services or solutions, which are directed to the consumer, but it also is a phrase that provokes controversy (Grönroos, 2006). Namely, the controversial aspect with this definition is that recent research in the area of customer value actually reveals a trend away from the value-in-exchange point of view towards the idea that value is something that is particularly (not simply) embedded in products or services or only created in suppliers' processes, but instead is rather created by the client when consuming such products and services or co-created when interacting with suppliers or service providers (Grönroos, 2006; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Normann & Ramirez, 1993). Consumers, according to Grönroos (2006), are therefore supported by suppliers in valuegenerating processes by making resources such as goods, services or information available to them. Considering ordinary consumer goods (e.g. a pair of socks, bottle of milk, etc.), no further support, apart from the product itself and a price, are for the most part necessary; this, however, is different when considering services and especially tourism services, as they typically require more interaction between suppliers and the consumer (Grönroos, 2006). This notion suggests a fundamental difference between the concept of marketing of standardised consumer goods and non-standardised services, which is in consensus with Kotler and Levy (1969, p.10), who state that marketing is more of a "pervasive societal activity" that reaches much further than the ordinary selling of consumer goods.

However, what the current definition of marketing (American Marketing Association, 2013) fails to address are individual consumers or their benefits and instead it provides a business-to business-focus (Zinkhan & Williams, 2007). Zinkhan and Williams (2007) claim that the strong product orientation of the definition shows a shortcoming in terms of the missing embedding of consumer behaviour (cf. Urban, 2005) into the new

wording and argue that an all-embracing definition should be broad enough to incorporate the expansive and dynamic nature of this science.

Kotler (1972) stated that the discipline of marketing and its focus, techniques and goals has shifted over the years and is still changing. Kotler (1972) points out that this discipline that originated as a commodity focus (e.g. food, manufactured goods, services, etc.) over time experienced an institutional focus (e.g. producers, wholesalers, retailers, etc.), a functional focus (e.g. buying, selling, pricing, promoting, etc.), a managerial focus (e.g. analysing, planning, control, etc.), as well as a social focus (e.g. market efficiency, product quality, social impact, etc.). Thus, what this means today is that the marketing field is continuously changing without the consumer necessarily being able to observe it because traditional means of marketing (e.g. advertising panels, radio commercials, or print materials) still reach out to the consumer and tell the consumer what to do and what to get. The difference today is, however, that the consumer is no longer forced to rely on these marketing channels (cf. Urban, 2005). Since the introduction of the Internet and search engines as well as online social media, the consumer has been empowered in the sense that one can go online, search for a product or service and – if appealing – the consumer is able to buy it or form a virtual community of 'likers' (e.g. Facebook). That also means that the consumer is now able to better compare products or services and their prices regardless of distance between them and will look out to obtain the best value, which often comes along in the form of trust, especially when looking at the marketing of tourism services and products.

## 2.2.1 The role of marketing in tourism

Marketing is becoming more and more important for management in global and increasingly competitive markets of twenty-first century travel and tourism (Buhalis, 2000;

Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Pike, 2009). Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010) further point out that along with the aging of the global population and a continuous simplification of travel (i.e. traveling becoming cheaper and quicker), tourism will not only remain to constitute one of the most important revenue generating sectors of the global economy, but it will also experience a stronger influence from sustainability and lifestyle issues in the way tourism will be marketed in the future. From an academic perspective, Table 2.1 represents the key research areas in the tourism marketing literature as identified by Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010).

Table 2.1. Current research areas and topics in tourism marketing research

Research area	Topics
Consumer behaviour	Motives, perceptions, satisfaction
Market segmentation, targeting, positioning	Psychographic and behavioural segmentation factors
Brand management	Destination branding, destination image, destination personality, destination image measures
Service performance	Service quality, service delivery, service failure
E-marketing	Transaction, promotion, Web 2.0, user-generated content, social media, mobile services
Demand models/pricing	Demand prediction models and pricing strategies
Strategic marketing/marketing concept	Market orientation, relationship marketing, experiential marketing

Source: Adopted from Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010)

Ballantyne, Packer and Axelsen (2009) conducted a study in which twelve major tourism journals, between 1994 and 2004, were content analysed and categorised into 21

topic areas. The study by Ballantyne et al. (2009) revealed that two topic areas experienced an above average growth during those years, namely tourist/visitor studies (i.e. articles with a focus on perspectives of visitors/tourists, their behaviour and preferences) and marketing (i.e. marketing, promotion, or segmentation). On the other hand, two topic areas were found to be slightly underrepresented in these years, which were destination studies (i.e. destination image, management, and development) as well as tourism planning (i.e. tourism development, strategies, predicting and forecasting) and, thus, showed a below average growth in that period (Ballantyne et al., 2009). Something that can be taken away from this is, however, that regardless how well the individual topic areas are represented in the literature, all the above-mentioned topic areas are inextricably linked to marketing or they entail certain components of marketing. A similar picture has existed in the tourism industry for a number of years, where marketing no longer happens within the four walls of a somewhat confined marketing department. Instead, from a business perspective, Middleton and Clarke (2001) state that marketing impacts the entire business as a corporate response embracing both boardroom and front line staff. Furthermore, Middleton and Clarke (2001) point out that, regardless of their size and sectors of travel and tourism (i.e. private or public), marketing is part of the management philosophy or corporate culture of most businesses in this industry, and is understood as a systematic thinking process along with incorporated sets of techniques that have an understanding of customer wishes and expectations in mind. However, this picture symbolises still a very static form of marketing. Li and Petrick (2008) argue that there is currently a paradigm shift under way in tourism research, which is rooted in the general marketing literature (cf. Vargo & Lusch, 2004a; Vargo & Lusch, 2004b; Lusch & Vargo, 2006). Li and Petrick (2008) point out that the previous understanding of marketing and competition was entrenched in a view that regarded marketing to originate from a provider-based perspective and reflected a goods-centred and transaction based marketing model, while describing the relationship between visitors (i.e. tourists) and the tourism industry as a buyer-seller relationship. In line with this conception, Buhalis (2000) argued that the role of marketing was seen as the purpose to increase visitor numbers and consumption patterns.

Contrary to this old conceptualisation of marketing, the new understanding of marketing, according to Li and Petrick (2008), is that tourists and tourism providers are regarded as to be co-creators of value and experience products. This means that on the one hand there are tourists that are driven by certain motivations to look for information and that process potentially desired experiences based on their personal evaluation of their needs and wants; on the other hand there is the tourism industry and different providers that are rather offering solutions than pre-customised products to fulfil these needs and wants (Li & Petrick, 2008). Li and Petrick (2008) therefore suggest that the tourist, who is eventually involved in a relational exchange with tourism providers, is primarily generating the value of a product or tourism service through the actual usage of that product or service. Thus, it can be argued that with this changing role of marketing, the responsibility of marketers changes, in so far as they can be regarded as a form of 'personal shoppers' or an agent of tourists as they need to be able to match the supply side with the buyers or customers, instead of simply marketing tourism products on behalf of a tourism provider (Li & Petrick, 2008). It is self-evident that outstanding marketing in this scenario is required to have a solid understanding for the tourists' interests, their competence and their previous knowledge. Li and Petrick (2008) propose a future conceptualisation that illustrates the differences between the new and old approach to marketing through a change from a two-dimensional (i.e. time and space) viewpoint to a three-dimensional one (Figure 2.1).

According to Li and Petrick (2008), Figure 2.1 illustrates that tourism marketers

previously looked in a one-directional way at the market, which means from a supplier's point of view that their intention was to market products and services in ways that would get tourists to tourism providers.

Old Way of Thinking Future Time Customer Customer -Marketer/Supplier's **Current Position New Way of Thinking** Past Time Static-Dynamic Piecemeal-holistic Demand: Lifetime value Supply: Sustainability Marketer/Supplier's **Current Position** Place Local-Regional-Global Marketer/Supplier to Customer Marketer from/to Customer and Supplier Information Knowledge Customer as co-producer Marketer as learning facilitator Product as value proposition

Figure 2.1. Old and new ways of thinking in tourism marketing

Source: Adapted from Li and Petrick (2008)

The new way of thinking, as depicted by Li and Petrick (2008), however, will require marketing to think in more dynamic and holistic ways, also by broadening their view from a local and regional scale towards more global thinking. In an environment where tourists eventually are considered to be co-creators of value, Li and Petrick (2008)

argue that competing businesses may well be potential partners. However, regardless of whether a paradigm shift is or has taken place, it will certainly not change the general features of the market, meaning the industry conditions in international travel and tourism that are characterised by excess capacity of production and volatile market demand (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Lastly, marketing perishable products in such conditions eventually leads to a highly aggressive competition for market share and growth, and it is rather obvious that that competition will continue to intensify instead of decrease in the years to come (Middleton & Clarke, 2001).

## 2.3 The role of branding in marketing

Brand management or branding has been practiced for many years but it still is a comparatively young science (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). From a marketing point of view, Balmer (2001) states that the traditional approach to branding and image research has been, along with marketing in general, very product focused. However, according to Balmer (2001) this approach has changed towards a higher focus on the corporate level, which is reflected in a variety of new research streams (e.g., relationship marketing, services marketing, corporate and services branding). Balmer (2001) argues that the three functions of corporate brands are to communicate, to differentiate, as well as to enhance, and points out that a number of differences exist between the attributes of corporate brands and product brands (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. A comparison between product brands and corporate brands

	Product brands	Corporate brands
Management	Middle manager	CEO
Responsibility	Middle manager	All personnel
Cognate discipline(s)	Marketing	Strategy/multi disciplinary
Communications mix	Marketing communicator	Total corporate communications
Focus	Mainly customer	Multiple. Internal/external stakeholder groups and networks
Values	Mainly contrived	Those of founder(s) + mix of corporate + other sub-cultures

Source: Adapted from Balmer (2001)

What Figure 2.2 shows is that similarly to the earlier mentioned general paradigm shift in marketing today, branding over the years has experienced a similar shift; away from just being product focused to a more dynamic and holistic approach that not only takes culture and relationships into consideration but moves them into the focus of marketers. In its application to tourism marketing, which will be discussed in subsequent sections, this means that tourism marketing, or branding initiatives for that matter, are for instance not merely focusing on individual attractions but instead are trying to involve an entire destination or multiple destinations to strategically market and brand that entire destination, taking multiple stakeholders into consideration.

Communication, image, reputation, and branding are regarded as key concepts in the field of marketing (Balmer & Greyser, 2006). While marketing is an on-going multiplicity of acts of managing and directing the flow of goods or services from the producer to the user, branding is creating an identity, image or look that endures and grows

with time. A good brand package makes the acts of marketing easier and more effective.

Ries & Ries (2002) argue that marketing and branding are inseparably linked to each other since the ultimate goal of marketing is to establish a brand in the mind of the consumer and advertising, packaging techniques, promotional activities, design development as well as public relations are all means or resources to reach this objective. Branding, thus, can be regarded as one of the most meaningful and important objectives of marketing (Cai, 2002) and symbolises a binding agent that keeps the spectrum of marketing together (Ries & Ries, 2002).

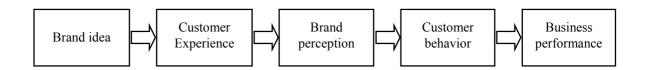
## 2.3.1 The concept of branding

Brand management or "branding" has been viewed from a variety of perspectives and is one of the most thoroughly researched topics in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour (Hirschman, 2010). A vast amount of research has been conducted in social sciences and even the humanities, which comes along with a variety of research approaches or conceptual attempts trying to describe brands, its origins and functions (Hirschman, 2010). The best approach to address the concept of branding is to look into the question of why brands exist. Landor Associates (2010) state that brands support consumers in their selection process, meaning simply to make up their mind and to make a choice. What branding then does, is to guarantee that a product or service is relevant to the consumer or present in the consumer's mind and will ideally then be the preferred choice out of a potentially infinite number of options (Landor Associates, 2010). Whether a product ultimately is that preferred choice depends on a number of factors, the most critical one being the perception a consumer has of that product or service, meaning the relevance of a product/service to the consumer and the differentiation of a product in comparison to similar product categories (Landor Associates, 2010). The question is, of

course, what the factors are that determine the degree of relevance a product or service has to a consumer and what influences the necessary degree of differentiation so that a product or service will finally be chosen. This is where the nature, the complexity and 'multilayeredness' of the characteristics of brands play a decisive role. Brands portray the self of individuals (Belk, 1988; Dolich, 1969; Kressmann et al., 2006; Schembri, Merrilees, & Kristiansen, 2010) and are attributed to have personalities (Aaker, 1997); brands can dwindle into religion (Belk & Tumbat, 2005) and even have a symbolic dimension which means they can tell tales about the consumer (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Levy, 1959). Brands can serve as a gateway for communities and thereby create value as a social entity (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muñiz Jr., & Arnould, 2009); by contrast they can also be a foundation for individualisation (Erdem & Swait, 2004). In many instances, brands can carry nostalgic feelings (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003) and may even be a partner in an emotional relationship with consumers (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Fournier, 1998). Furthermore, brands can achieve iconic status (Holt, 2003) and can be associated with reference groups leading to self-brand connections, formed by individual consumers (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009). Lastly, besides seeing brands as a form of story telling, reversely, marketers, as well as consumers, tell stories about brands (Escalas, 2004; Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008; Zaltman, 2003).

Landor Associates (2010) point out that the perception a consumer holds of a brand depends on the interactions they have with it. It is brand perception that influences the consumer's behaviour and ultimately the performance of a business; in return, however, brand perception is influenced by experiences consumers have with a product or service, which according to Landor Associates (2010) starts with a simple brand idea (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Brands affect business performance



Source: Adapted from Landor Associates (2010)

This brand idea is the first building block of a cause and effect chain, that informs the consumer about what a product or service stands for (i.e. brand promise) and which potentially influences all subsequent building blocks of this chain in either a positive or a negative way (Landor Associates, 2010).

Much of the research done in the area of branding is grounded in commodity goods, even though the service sector has been growing continuously in importance over the last few years (Berry, 2000; de Chernatony, 1999; Shostack, 1977; Turley & Moore, 1995). In both areas, many new approaches and constructs in the branding literature revolve around the question of how consumers experience brands today (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009), which is reflected in research streams looking at brand community (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau et al., 2009), brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, & De Wulf, 2009; Plummer, 1985), brand attachment (Swaminathan, Stilley, & Ahluwalia, 2009), brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) or brand trust (Sung & Kim, 2010).

The variety of the above-mentioned research approaches makes it difficult to fully grasp the concept of what a brand is and why brands exist at all. The following section, thus, assesses these questions and furthermore looks into the differences between brands and branding as a concept.

#### 2.3.2 Definition of the brand concept

A review of literature shows that there is not just one definition that would provide a quick and comprehensive answer to the question of what a brand constitutes. Since brands can be defined from several different perspectives, i.e. from a buyer perspective and/or seller perspective, but also through their purpose and/or by their characteristics (Wood, 2000), it is self-explanatory that a diversity of approaches exists.

An early traditional and commodity oriented definition that emphasised the visual characteristics of a brand as a way for differentiation was suggested by the American Marketing Association in the 1960s, which suggested a brand to be:

"A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (De Chernatony, 2009, p. 102; De Chernatony & Riley, 1997; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 5).

However, what this definition fails to cover is the buyer or consumer perspective of brands. This consumer perspective is typically regarded as aspects that come into someone's mind when thinking about a brand (Landor Associates, 2010). Thus, the definition above has been challenged in contemporary marketing literature as to be too product focused or following only the corporate perspective, by highlighting mostly the visual aspects (de Chernatony & Riley, 1997) of a brand as influencing factors for differentiation. Nevertheless, the reason why this early definition has been continuously applied in the literature (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006; Keller, 1993; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Krishnan & Hartline, 2001) lies in the contribution of the definition, stressing the importance of differentiation as an elementary purpose of a brand.

With the development of research into areas that associate brands with people, design, emotions, personality, value systems, organisations, an ideology or even with

luxury (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009), intangible attributes such as image become the point of differentiation. This is reflected in a modified and current definition by the American Marketing Association, which defines brand as:

"A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (Brodie, 2009, p. 108).

Franzen & Moriarty (2009) argue that although being elementary to defining the concept of a brand, this definition focuses merely on the identification function but sees a brand today rather as:

"A complex system of interrelated management decisions and consumer reactions that creates awareness, visibility, and meaning, as well as distinguishing a product from its competitors. Branding, then, is the strategic process that manages the presentation and influences the perception of a brand" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 18).

Therefore, today a brand can be seen as "a cluster of meanings" (Batey, 2008, p. 6). Batey (2008), thus, claims that it is more appropriate to define a brand:

"As the consumer perception and interpretation of a cluster of associated attributes, benefits and values" (Batey, 2008, p. 6).

In this context, branding industry experts (i.e. David Ogilvy<sup>4</sup>, Walter Landor<sup>5</sup>) acknowledge both the corporate/product focused approach as well as the consumer perspective to defining a brand. While David Ogilvy argued that brands are "the intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised" (Landor Associates, 2010, p. 58), Walter Landor

Will Gloup), is often considered to be the lattice of advertising (http://www.ogitvy.com/rtout.aspx).

Walter Landor (1913-1995), brand design legend and founder of Landor Associates, today owned by the WPP Group, is considered to be a guiding force in the field of corporate and brand identities, logos and packaging. Landor Associates is still the world's leading design firms (http://landor.com/index.cfm?do=aboutus.walterlandor).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> David Mackenzie Ogilvy (1911-1999), advertising executive and founder of Ogilvy and Mather (owned by WPP Group), is often considered to be the father of advertising (http://www.ogilvv.com/About.aspx).

took a different stance, arguing that "products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind" (Landor Associates, 2010, p.58). The phrase "brands are created in the mind" is clarified by Neumeier (2006) who points out that:

"A brand is a person's gut feeling about a product, service, or company. It's a gut feeling because we are all emotional, intuitive beings, despite our efforts to be rational. It's a person's gut feeling, because in the end the brand is defined by individuals, not by companies, markets, or the so-called general public. Each person creates his or her own version of it" (Neumeier, 2006, p. 2).

Derived from both these approaches, it can be said that even though a brand may be designed or created in marketing, it is more likely the environment and contact points between consumers and the products or service itself that determines how a brand is perceived. In this respect, Landor Associates (2010) argue that branding, as a marketing strategy, is not able to control the consumer perception of a brand and is, thus, limited to only try and influence it by pointing towards signals that create associations and that the consumer may use to determine what a product or service stands for. Ultimately, these signals then assist the consumer in that they are able to make an educated decision on why a particular product, service, an idea or organisation should be selected over another (Landor Associates, 2010).

Levy (1959) once said, "people buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean" (p. 118). Batey (2008) argues that it is brand meaning that forms a liaison or an interface (Kornberger, 2010) between products or services and the individual consumer's motivation. By forming this relationship, consumer behaviour is influenced. According to Batey (2008) consumers assess brand meaning on two levels; consciously, how the brand is experienced by the public, and subliminally, that is how a brand harmonises with the consumer itself.

Batey (2008) further argues that nowadays the concept of a brand is viewed more

from a consumer's point of view than from the seller's as has been defined previously, which gives credit to the circumstance that it is typically the consumer that gives a brand a certain amount of relevance and, thus, indirectly decides about success or failure of a brand. Also, consumers tend not to react to reality as such but rather to their own perception of reality (Batey, 2008).

Even though there is a shift towards the consumer's point of view with regard to understanding the brand concept, it is necessary to consider both perspectives taken together in order to fully grasp the domain of the brand. A brand consists of certain identity signals, such as a name, a logo, specific graphics, colour, music or certain characters that the consumer gradually becomes familiar with and eventually perceives as identity (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Consequently, brands are by far more than just an identity marker. Consumers need them because it is in their nature to label or categorise them. Therefore, they do not just undertake important functions for companies but also play a central role for the consumer.

#### 2.3.3 Functions of a brand

Brands have a functional intention or purpose; based on the early definition of brands, they allow the consumer to differentiate products manufactured by different sellers (Kotler & Keller, 2005) and are supposed to convey a convincing company image (Hill, 2003). This sentiment is widely agreed upon within the marketing literature (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009), where a brand is considered to be an influential tool for differentiation and, conversely, where differentiation is not only regarded as an important marketing strategy in today's competitive markets (Kapferer, 1997; Keller, 2003; Kotler, 1988; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007) but also as a powerful tool for creating and sustaining competitive advantage (Aggarwal, 2004).

Brands fulfil a number of important functions. One of their most vital functions from a corporate perspective is to serve as a label or marker for a product or service offer (e.g. Keller & Lehmann, 2006). For instance, Apple today is not just a computer or consumer electronics company and hence listed among a number of high profile IT companies, but additionally and more importantly it is labelled or characterised as a lifestyle company, which is of enormous economic importance in that it allows companies such as Apple to charge significant price premiums. This eventually means that brands do not just fulfil an important marketing function for corporations and organisations but directly support the sales of products and services. The development of Apple, as the quintessential brand success story (Landor Associates, 2010) shows, is that the importance of classically used brand elements (i.e. logo, name, advertising) is being replaced by an environment focusing on service, tone of voice, consumer experience, on whose creation the consumer actively participates. It also reflects that besides being a tool for differentiation and creating a competitive advantage, these are just the benefits from a corporate perspective and it does not consider the important consumer perspective. From a consumer perspective, however, brands assist in simplifying choices; they directly or indirectly assure a certain value through a signalling function (Erdem & Swait, 1998) but also minimise perceived risk by providing familiarity and inspiring confidence between buyer and seller (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Moreover, brands simplify the life of the consumer (Raymond, 2003) and facilitate consumer decisions (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). In a mass consumption society, brands do not just assist in grouping certain products, categories and pieces of service into a meaningful order but they keep the consumer informed and serve as a road sign and scout to guide the consumer's voyage through an oversupply of products and services as well as information overload (Raymond, 2003).

Initially, brands appeared to just influence the identification and differentiation process of products from the perspective of the consumer (Gertner & Kotler, 2004; Keller, 1993; Motion, Leitch, & Brodie, 2003). Today, the purpose of a brand has advanced and branding is applied to organisations, services, sports, art, ideas, and even people and places (Motion et al., 2003).

What is important to emphasise, however, is that generally speaking it is no longer sufficient for brands to merely serve as a means for identification. Instead, branding requires businesses to create a sentimentally charged presence in order to elevate the profoundness and dimensionality of a product or service offer (Hill, 2003). Brands, today, are still necessary to form and secure the market position of companies, but the responsibility or purpose of brands has grown with regards to complexity and relevance (Hill, 2003) and has advanced to more than just fulfil a merchandising function for products. Brands symbolise the total experience or relationship between the consumer and producer (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Besides looking at the different functions that brands can have, it is also important to look into the relevance and value that companies attach to their brands.

## 2.3.4 Potential brand benefits for a firm

From a strategic marketing point of view, many companies are seeking the potential that branding of their products and services offers to their businesses in terms of added value and benefits, which is especially true for the consumer market.

For companies, brands are of tremendous economic significance since powerful brands enable producers to claim sizable surcharges; they impact the loyalty of the consumer and therefore potentially affect future business (Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). Such economic advantages are achieved through the capacity of brands to build up

a competitive ability towards other competing products, which is caused by the capability of brands to generate or amplify the relevance of products in the mindset of the consumer and to convert a product into something unique within its own product category (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). This particular feature of the brand is in direct relation with brand equity, the effect it has on a consumer's buying decision (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009), thereby creating added value (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), which eventually corresponds to an improved rating of the respective company (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). It is therefore essential for companies today to attach their entire operation to an established brand since an increased degree of brand orientation will potentially lead to even more conclusive and powerful brands and, thus, to greater brand equity (Gromark & Melin, 2011; Hankinson, 2001; Reid, Luxton, & Mavondo, 2005; Urde, 1994, 1999; Wong & Merrilees, 2005) as well as influence a firm's stock market performance (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009).

Furthermore, strong brands facilitate the development of group dynamics, which can lead to a group of consumers, or a 'consumer franchise' (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009), who share a certain level of favouritism towards a brand through which product search efforts on the side of the consumer, as well as switching behaviour from a familiar product to a rival product, can be reduced.

Since groups of consumers or individuals enter relationships with brands generally in a very similar way in which they build up relationships in their private social life (Aggarwal, 2004), it is in a brand relationship context of utmost importance for companies to establish an emotional and continuous interaction between the producer and consumer. In this function, a brand adopts a neutral position and spans the gap between consumer and producer of a product or service (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). This position is somewhat neutral, because the producer is not only able to provide a limited input to a brand in the

form of products, services or marketing, but allows the brand to run its own life by granting the consumer some authority over the brand meaning that the consumer associates with a brand (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Besides this focus on the importance of brands for companies, it is necessary to similarly consider the influencing factors that brands have for the consumer.

## 2.3.5 Brands in the mind of the consumer

The desired strength of brands and the associated brand acceptance can differ significantly. Hofstede (2001) argues in his research that people from different countries or cultures also possess a different system of values. Since brands support consumers in conveying their self and defining or distinguishing themselves from other people, it certainly implies that the role of brands may respectively play a minor role or a more central part in decision making processes depending on the cultural identity of the consumer (Fischer et al., 2010), the social group or community they belong to (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Hirschmann (2010) points out that human beings over time have developed the capability to think in figurative and metaphorical concepts, which also gives them the capability to attribute certain individual and socio-cultural identities to themselves and others. This ability is reflected in the behavioural patterns of human beings having the affinity to form groups, to form social bonds or to be part of a social system. Specifically in this context, the 'belongingness hypothesis' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) describes the profound need of human beings to enter and preserve a minimum number of deep, beneficial and important relationships on a personal level. At the same time human beings strive for coherence within the groups or communities and through a process of self-categorisation, label these groups subconsciously or even openly using symbolic markers

and thereby distinguish themselves from other groups or social communities (Hogg & Turner, 1985). Brands symbolise such markers as stated previously (Landor Associates, 2010). It lies therefore in the human nature of consumers to elect and to make use of brands that they connect to the social entity they either belong to or wish to be part of (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Furthermore, consumers purchase products not only for the designated use itself but also for what the product stands for (Levy, 1959). This indicates that brands serve as symbols that are utilised by the consumer to construct and interpret their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005). Belk (1988) argues that possessions are consciously or unconsciously, purposely or not purposely part of us and therefore contribute to and reflect our identity since we tend to give these possessions not only a meaning or a value (Richins, 1994a), but we also draw conclusions about others based on their possessions (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982; Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Richins, 1994a, 1994b). Thus, it is rooted in the nature of human beings to partially consume in order to create their self-concept and to build up a personal identity (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994a). As soon as brand connections are utilised to form this individual self-concept or to convey this self-concept to others, a form of relationship, a so-called self-brand connection, is being established between the consumer and a brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Interestingly, consumers make use of brands that have an image or meaning that is in harmony with certain reference groups, or sociologically speaking with in-groups, to which they belong (or wish to belong) in order to construct a spiritual or emotional connection to these groups (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Naturally, the attachment to brands with images that fall into the category of an in-group is higher and thus, more congruent, compared to brands where the perceived image of the brand is more consistent with that of an out-group (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) and which therefore may be subconsciously

rejected. However, another aspect that influences the impact of reference groups on product and brand purchase behaviour is that some brands appear to have a greater influence on reference groups than others. Products have to be individually perceived as exclusive and visible, which means that for reference group influence to affect a brand or purchase decision, a product or brand should not be owned by everyone and the place where a product is consumed or a purchase takes place should be noticeable or be able to be identified by other consumers (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). This means that publicly (vs. privately) purchased products and services as well as luxury items (vs. everyday objects) are more likely to communicate symbolic meanings about the consumer (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). This principle is reflected in the circumstance that particular brands of products or services are being regarded as a special distinguishing mark or factor for defined consumer groups of our class society today (Han et al., 2010). Han et al. (2010) consider this to be related to a certain 'brand prominence', the magnitude to which a product has distinctive marks that help consumers to recognise a brand. They further argue that the brand prominence construct indicates how the perceptibility of brand signals (e.g. logo) by consumers is mirrored in signalling intents of companies as the owner of a brand (Han et al., 2010).

So far the discussed aspects to branding focus more on visible and tangible features of brands, such as physical or more concrete attributes or benefits. Today, however, a multifaceted area of research on branding aims at more abstract and intangible facets of brand image (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). They are more strategically used from a marketing point of view to make brands even more distinguishable (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986) and to point beyond the pure physical product (Kotler & Keller, 2005). This certainly results from the present belief about brands to be less associated with value, quality or functionality and rather establish a connection with political, socio-cultural and

personal meaning (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Hirschman, 2010). Hill (2003) argues that today's experiential branding demands firms to coat a company with an emotional or sensory sleeve, which is a contrast to previous times where the focus of marketers was to form a coherent image of the company.

The goal of many companies today is to construct an all-embracing and significant brand story or fictitious landscape in order to add to the complexity and profoundness of a brand (Hill, 2003; Woodside et al., 2008). Consumers eventually want to live in a 'Mac World' or 'Harley-Davison-like landscape' that does not just try to sell a product but more importantly, a lifestyle (Hill, 2003). As soon as brand stories are combined with people and the right personality (e.g. Apple), sympathy and obligation towards the brand increases, and a profound brand loyalty between the brand and the consumer can be formed (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Hill, 2003), which eventually serves as supporting factor in case the brand faces difficult situations.

This emotional branding overrides the distance between corporations and the consumer by installing confidence, trust and a two-way communication (Gobé, 2001). Thus, the strategic aim of emotional branding must be to create a strong and meaningful attachment or relationship between the consumer and the brand and to communicate with the consumer on a level that establishes an inspiring and personalised relationship so that the brand becomes part of the consumers' life (Fournier, 1998; Gobé, 2001; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006; Zaltman, 2003).

There is evidence suggesting that consumers sometimes treat brands very similarly to personal social interactions, which often leads to situations in which they do not differentiate between brands and manufacturers and instead regard brands as living organisms (Aggarwal, 2004). In such instances a company is being identified for the brand and the brand is being identified for the company, which interestingly, occurs more often

for service brands (e.g., hotels, and airlines) as well as for brands that combine products and services (e.g., online stores) (Aggarwal, 2004). Thus, it is important to look into the service sector to see how brands influence this industry.

#### 2.4 Brands and the service sector

The role of brands in the service sector are most likely of greater importance than in any other sector due to the intangibility of the nature of this business (McDonald & de Chernatony, 2001). These special characteristics (i.e. intangibility or perishability) of the service sector leads to the perception that the purchase of services is riskier than the purchase of goods (Laroche, McDougall, Bergeron, & Yang, 2004). To understand the differences and challenges in corporate service branding, service can be defined:

"A service is an activity which has some element of intangibility associated with it. It involves some interaction with customers or property in their possession, and does not result in a transfer of ownership. A change of condition may occur and provision of the service may not be closely associated with a physical product" (McDonald & de Chernatony, 2001, p. 340).

In industries with tangible products, the product often presents itself as to be the main brand, whereas in the service sector with entertainment, accommodation, or transportation, it is usually the company that is regarded to be the main brand (Berry, 2000). Powerful brands have the capability to increase consumer trust in the invisible purchase, they help the consumer to realise and visualise intangible products, and most importantly, they minimise the risk of investing money into a service that is often difficult to evaluate (Berry, 2000). Brand development in the service industry is therefore seen to be a key success factor as a strong brand symbolises reduction of risk and stands for a safe partnership, which typically is appealing for the consumer (Berry, 2000).

The understanding of this correlation has led to strong service brands that continuously try to be different and deliberately try to work out and develop a distinct brand in order to be successful and please the consumer (Berry, 2000). However, a unique characteristic of a service brand (contrary to product-based brands) is a higher percentage of interfaces, which often results in consumers having to deal with a variety of employees across the entire organisation (McDonald & de Chernatony, 2001). Thus, strong service brands try continuously to communicate their services, make use of branding to justify their existence, and intensively try to connect with the consumer on an emotional basis (Berry, 2000).

Unique to service industries, according to Anholt (2005), is the phenomenon that countries can utilise cultural differences in order to provide their service brands with a competitive edge. According to Anholt (2005) this is particularly evident in the hospitality and transportation sectors of the tourism industry. Branding of services is an important sector with very unique characteristics that highly influence branding in tourism as a service driven industry. However, branding in tourism has a variety of additional facets and possible applications that will be in the focus of this study.

### 2.4.1 Branding in tourism

Even though the tourism industry, and particularly the service sector in general are growing in importance, most branding research has been conducted with physical goods (de Chernatony, 1999; Shostack, 1977; Turley & Moore, 1995). This shortcoming in the tourism literature stands in contrast to the assessment that sees the future of marketing in a battle between brands, whereby tourism destinations are regarded by some as the industry's biggest brands (Pike, 2005). Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010) point out that future research on branding in a tourism context is likely to be conducted in a number of different

fields but with focus areas on concepts such as customer/financial-based brand equity, strategic brand management processes, the application of brand extensions and cobranding in a tourism context, as well as image/personality concepts in global contexts and how they individually affect visitors, non-visitors, residents and the different tourism destination stakeholders.

Generally, however, companies across all sectors of the tourism industry try to distinguish themselves from the competition through product and service differentiation strategies (e.g. branding) and by trying to identify, target and understand very specific customer segments and their needs and wants. Properly handled, branding strategies help companies to gain a competitive advantage (Kim & Kim, 2004; O'Neill & Mattila, 2004), are applied to differentiate products and companies and thereby create an economic value for businesses and tourists alike (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010). For some of these businesses the brand name and what this brand name advocates (i.e. the meaning of the brand to the consumer) are key assets to their operation, as its strength helps consumers to identify and recognise intangible products or services besides the more obvious recognisable or tangible factors (Kim & Kim, 2004). According to Kim & Kim (2004), another reason why branding is highly important in service related industry sectors is that it enables the consumer to minimise certain risks (e.g. financial, social, or safety risks) involved when purchasing products or services and whose assessment may be problematic before they are being obtained (Zeithaml, 1988). For instance, it is quite simple to check the quality of food items before the actual purchase takes place. However, when looking into the general service sector (e.g. transportation, banking, etc.) it proves to be more difficult to make an assessment about quality and a certain amount of trust towards the service provider is necessary to conclude a purchase. Thus, a central function of a brand is to serve as a guarantee and security for the consumer (Hill, 2003). In this respect it is the brand name

that may serve as a code word for quality and, thus, provides consumers with essential and desired information of a product, a service or sight that the consumer may not have been able to previously experience (O'Neill & Mattila, 2004).

Tourism services are mostly intangible and, thus, lack a physical dimension (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011; Reisinger, 2001; Shostack, 1977; Zeithaml, 1981). This characteristic, however, most likely applies to most businesses, products, or services across the entire tourism industry, an industry with tourism, hospitality and leisure services that are different in this respect from physical goods. Reisinger (2001) describes this as 'palpable intangibility', meaning that tourism services cannot be sensed in the same way as other consumer goods or any physical objects in general. However, even though there is mostly no physical or sensory experience prior to a purchase, services across the tourism sector can be empathised in the mind of the consumer, a characteristic that is being described as 'mental intangibility' (Reisinger, 2001). With few exceptions, most tourism services typically consist of a mix of tangible (i.e. food, design, architecture, etc.) and intangible features (i.e. catering, transportation, atmosphere, etc.). With regard to marketing these, among other characteristics (i.e. inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity of tourism services, consistency/inconsistency of service performance, perishability of tourism services, etc.) (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985), requires a different marketing approach (Reisinger, 2001). Compared to manufactured goods, services are evaluated differently by the consumer, as they often involve purchasing risks; they also follow different distribution processes, different pricing strategies and have different promotional focal points, as they are dealing much more with aspects of customer satisfaction (O'Neill & Mattila, 2004; Reisinger, 2001). Berry (2000) argues that branding of services, despite its intangibility, is similarly important as the branding of goods; it is just more complex (de Chernatony, 1999).

Companies that build strong brands with high brand value experience a number of advantages. Branding not just increases the perceived tangibility of tourism services; branding, according to Kim & Kim (2004), increases consumer loyalty and the attitude strength of the consumer towards a product or service related to the brand (Kim & Kim, 2005); it also increases inviolability to strategies of competitors, it potentially increases profits and might positively influence the consumers' attitude to price changes and risk taking (Berry, 2000), but it also provides possibilities for brand-extension, something that can be observed in quick-service restaurant chains and branded hotel enterprises alike.

Accommodation services (e.g. hotels) or transportation services (e.g. airlines) often make use of distinct cultural profiles of people in the countries where their registered headquarters are located and incorporate these cultural characteristics into their brand promise (Anholt, 2005). In other words, this means that brand promises of companies or certain brands are quite often based on cultural characteristics or even stereotypes. This is a process through which brands such as Shangri-La hotels, Mandarin Oriental hotels, Taj Group hotels, among many hotel brands, but also Singapore Airlines or more recently Etihad Airways, as examples from the transportation sector, have successfully attracted business and tapped new markets by conveying the conception of offering an exotic, gracious, authentic and empathetic form of hospitality (Anholt, 2005). Therefore, airlines even more than hotels, are ambassadors for national identity and certain values (i.e. hospitality, style, technical capability, etc.) and thereby are able to communicate strong impressions upon the consumer, known as the country of origin effect. By implication, this also means that countries or even cities and entire regions (i.e. tourism destinations) naturally can act in many respects similar to brands. Anholt (2005) argues that countries – similar to brands, positively or negatively – are being perceived by tourists or the general public in one way or another and are subsequently linked to specific qualities and characteristics. These perceptions, according to Anholt (2005) can be significant in that consumers might also perceive the countries' products differently as well as behave differently towards these countries as the image of these countries is conveyed upon the products. In a tourism context, the likelihood of visiting a specific country or to invest in it may be impacted, which illustrates those countries, as tourism destinations can be a point of differentiation. Anholt (2005) argues that it is often just a small cue of familiarity that differentiates one product or country from another, which in tourism often symbolises the difference between selection and elimination.

## 2.4.2 Development of destination brands

Interestingly, there still seems to be a scarcity of research in the area of destination branding as a comparatively new concept (Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Pike, 2005), even though place branding research has received increased attention in the past ten years (Anholt, 2009; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2010; Wagner & Peters, 2009). This is surprising not just because the future of marketing is by many being seen in a competition of brands (Pike, 2005), but also in view of the fact that branding itself is being regarded as one of the most efficient marketing tools in a destination marketing context (Morgan et al., 2010) at hand for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). According to Wagner and Peters (2009), however, emphasis in the tourism literature has mostly been placed on defining brands and in creation of images (cf. Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Places or destinations are increasingly complicated to distinguish from one another and are, thus, substitutable (Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2005). The entire industry is confronted with intense competition in an increasingly complex market with 196 nations globally and countless destinations canvassing the consumer (Balakrishnan, 2009); a

market, affected by globalisation, inconsistent governmental policies, environmental concerns, fluctuations in foreign exchange earnings and increasing marketing expenditures (Balakrishnan, 2009; Xie & Boggs, 2006). This, according to Morgan et al. (2010) leads to interchangeable destinations in the sense that the 'hard factors' of differentiation (e.g. economy, infrastructure, accessibility) are common to most destinations and loses importance as a point of differentiation for the consumer. Therefore, something that becomes more important for tourism, tourists and investors in this context are a destination's 'soft factors' (e.g. heritage, culture, architecture, people, and 'feel') as a point of differentiation and as a means to call a brand or destination brand into being (Morgan et al., 2010).

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008, p. 158) state that "place brands may be fundamentally different from product brands, but this does not mean that they cannot be treated as corporate brands". Pike (2005) argues that destination branding or destination brands are comparable to products and services (cf. Kavaratzis, 2005) in the sense that they possess tangible and intangible attributes but are far more complex and multidimensional. One of the most difficult challenges for marketers in this respect is the typically heterogeneous group of stakeholders of destinations that mostly have diverse market interests (Buhalis, 2000; Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2005). Buhalis (2000) states that from a tourism perspective a destination experience consists of regions, resources and a variety of tourism facilities and services, which typically are not being owned by individuals. The majority of these destinations, according to Buhalis (2000), entail key components of tourism products and services (Table 2.3) and, thus, can be looked at as "a combination (or brand) of all products, services and experiences provided locally" (p. 98).

Table 2.3. Six A's framework for the analysis of tourism destinations

<b>Tourism Components</b>	Description
Attractions	Natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events, etc.
Accessibility	Entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles, etc.
Amenities	Accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services, etc.
Available Packages	Pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals, etc.
Activities	All activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visit, etc.
Ancillary Services	Services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, hospitals, etc.

Source: Buhalis (2000, p. 98)

Furthermore, destinations also need to be regarded as a collection of not only professional but also personal interests of all people living and working in that specific area (Buhalis, 2000). To manage and market destinations in consideration of these different stakeholders, whose interests are often conflicting is, thus, very difficult (Buhalis, 2000; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Despite this heterogeneity of interests and of stakeholders in destinations, the vast numbers of consumers typically identify destinations as one brand consisting of tourism providers and tourism services (Buhalis, 2000).

Pike (2005) further argues that destination brands depend upon services and can be positioned as a means to establish a connection with the consumer and to illustrate or outline a range of brand associations such as destinations features (i.e. entertainment, attractions, natural environment, culture, etc.). Furthermore, resembling the corporate branding world, destination brands function as umbrella brands for a variety of products and services (Balakrishnan, 2009; Trueman, Klemm, & Giroud, 2004) and, thus, can be branded much in the same way as consumer goods and products (Cai, 2002; Caldwell &

Freire, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Morgan et al. (2010) partially seem to challenge this assertion by arguing that places cannot be brands in the traditional sense. However, places can utilise branding methods to differentiate one destination from another and it therefore may be more precise to speak of place reputation management instead of place or destination branding (Morgan et al., 2010). This so-called place reputation management in connection with destination branding is especially true when considering a positioning framework introduced by Gilbert (1990), who argued that, similar to products, destinations could be classified according to either being a status symbol or merely a commodity product (Figure 2.3). According to Gilbert (1990), countries should be developed from commodity areas to status areas in order to benefit from an improved image, loyalty on the side of consumers as well as economic benefits. Gilbert (1990) further points out that countries need to differentiate their tourism products in that they are able to obtain a unique tourism product benefit or attributes in order to be able to attract tourists who are willing to pay more for a fashionable destination and show increased loyalty.

Incidental Demand

Task

Intentional Demand

Status

Area

Other Product Attributes

Product Attributes

Intentional Demand

Status

Area

Other Product Attributes

Product Attributes

Product Attributes

Figure 2.3. Country-positioning framework

Source: Gilbert (1990, p.25)

However, what the framework fails to illustrate is the fact that most destinations are not clearly located on one end of the commodity-status-continuum and instead are located somewhere in between (Buhalis, 2000). The framework also fails to explain that the positioning of countries along this continuum may change in either direction due to beneficial or inappropriate development, of which destination branding is an important aspect. Buhalis (1999) points out that destinations (i.e. countries) need to have a critical mass of tourist magnets (i.e. attractions) in order to achieve economies of scale and, thus, be able to charge premium prices; conversely, uncontrollable or unilateral growth may lead to deterioration effects, lower customer satisfaction and eventually the reduction of pricing schemes, something destination branding strategists need to be aware of.

However, it is also questionable whether the branding of destination always follows the same rules, given that destinations can take the shape of cities, regions, countries, or even regions consisting of several countries (e.g. continents). An interesting aspect in this context was pointed out in research conducted by Caldwell and Freire (2004) who assessed the question of whether countries can be branded much in the same way as regions and cities. The authors (Caldwell & Freire, 2004) found that consumers or tourists perceive countries, cities and regions differently and, similar to products and service brands, in two dimensions (i.e. representationality and functionality). While countries are perceived according to the representational (i.e. value expressive) aspects of their brand identity, cities and regions are rather perceived from a more functional perspective (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). This, according to Caldwell and Freire (2004) implies that countries are typically chosen by tourists in order to demonstrate their own self-concept, while regions and cities are visited because of the performance of a place (i.e. beaches, wheather, shops, mountains, etc.).

To go further into this aspect it is even more important in this context to define a

destination more precisely, which appears to be a question of interpretation. Pike (2008) does not perceive a destination to be defined by politically controlled boundaries but rather a geographically defined area, which consists of a cluster of tourism resources (Table 2.4). In this context, a cluster is being defined as:

"An accumulation of tourist resources and attractions, infrastructures, equipment, service providers, other support sectors and administrative organisms whose integrated and coordinated activities provide customers with the experiences they expected from the destination they chose to visit" (Rubies, 2001, p. 39).

According to Pike (2008), such clusters may be identical with political boundaries (e.g. countries); other clusters may constitute a certain part of a political boundary (e.g. federal states or particular regions of countries); again other clusters may be comprised of cross-border or transnational areas or regions.

**Table 2.4. Destination Cluster Types** 

Section of a political boundary	A political boundary	Across political boundaries
<ul> <li>The French Quarter, New Orleans, USA</li> <li>Darling Harbour, Sydney, Australia</li> <li>Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, USA</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>The Gold Coast, Australia</li> <li>Rotorua, New Zealand</li> <li>Las Vegas, USA</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>The Algarve, Portugal</li> <li>Outback Queensland, Australia</li> <li>European Alps</li> </ul>

Source: Pike (2008, p. 24)

What can be derived from Table 2.4 is that destinations, in other words, clusters, can take on very different forms, sizes, boundaries or levels, as the most basic competitive units (cf. Rubies, 2001) in that the term 'destination' covers a wide spectrum, ranging from

very well defined particular parts of a city (e.g. French Quarter, New Orleans) to more unspecified national (e.g. Outback, Australia) or even cross-natioal regions such as the European Alps on a highest level, spanning, after all, over seven countries (i.e. Slovenia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Lichtenstein). Gallarza, Saura, and Garcia (2002) argue that the researcher typically defines the type or categorisation of a destination, while the perception of the tourists may not always be clear. In contrast, however, a long-established opinion has been that destinations are viewed as well-defined spatial areas such as countries, islands, regions, or cities (cf. Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Gallarza et al., 2002) but there is also dissent in the sense that destinations can be regarded as a perceptual concept, sentimentally constructed by the traveller or consumer relative to their travel route, the cultural sphere they are coming from, their travel assignment and purpose of the trip, their own educational level as well as prior travel and personal experiences (Buhalis, 2000). Buhalis (2000) argues that for some European business travellers, a major metropolis in Europe may be viewed as a destination, whereas for non-EU tourists or overseas travellers, Europe would be considered as a destination, since there is a likelihood that they cover several major cities in their travel itinerary. Likewise, some may regard a hotel resort as a destination, whereas for others it could be an island, a cruise ship or the ports visited during a cruise (Buhalis, 2000). Similar to Pike (2008) and Rubies (2001), Buhalis (2000) argues that destinations are often inexpertly split up by spatial or political boundaries, not taking consumerist behaviour or operating principles of the tourism industry into consideration and instances the Alpine region between France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, which consumers – in particular skiers – perceive as one tourism product. Thus, Buhalis (2000) defines destinations as:

"A defined geographical region, which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 98).

Morgan et al. (2010) point out that with regards to marketing a destination, regardless of their boundaries, it is important to understand branding as a two-way process, meaning that it needs to be done together *with* the consumer instead of *to* the consumer. This in itself already implies that the consumer or tourist today decides how a destination is to be defined in terms of geographical boundary and not necessarily tourism marketers. At the same time, the boundaries that consumers or tourists establish for their own purpose, may change over time or according to the specific interest of the consumers. Thus, Morgan et al. (2010) argue that destination branding is mainly about being able to develop a rich and relevant personality for destinations, where constant development and adaptation to any changes in consumer behaviour is necessary so that a brand personality may permanently advance while a destination brand's core value may remain constant. This view is in line with Rubies (2001), who argued that tourism competitiveness could only be reached at destination levels through a recurring ability to innovate and improve a destination in sustainable ways.

#### 2.5 Concept of co-branding

In the last 15 years, branding has become the field of attention in consumer marketing research (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005) and an upcoming challenge in corporate brand management is how to design, maintain and realise corporate brand partnerships (Motion et al., 2003). Especially in consumer marketing (e.g. food / automobile manufacturers) but also increasingly in the tourism sector, there seems to be an expanding interest in brand partnerships, or co-branding, as a special form of brand extension (Chang, 2009), a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective aim to not only establish a brand more effectively in comparison to what a partner brand would be able to do on its own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005) but essentially

to reach their individual objectives (Guillet & Tasci, 2010).

Blackett and Russel (1999), as one of the important contributors in this research area (cf. Motion et al., 2003) define co-branding as:

"A form of co-operation between two or more brands with significant customer recognition, in which all the participants' brand names are retained" (Blackett & Russel, 1999, p.7).

Motion et al. (2003) therefore argue that the concept of co-branding cannot just be seen as a basic co-operation between organisations or corporations, but instead needs to take the public integration of corporate brands, that is being held or monitored by different organisations, into consideration (Motion et al., 2003).

Bengtsson and Servais (2005) point out that co-branding links marketable items through so-called representations of brands (i.e. product or corporate brand names, product designs, logotypes, etc.) (Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2004). That means that co-branding offers businesses a portal to provide the consumer with indices of quality and image as successful brands (Chang, 2009). This, according to Aaker et al. (2004) has furthermore the aim to increase sales revenue, enter and explore new markets, it shares risks, largely influences the image a consumer has of a product, it impacts credibility and increases consumer confidence.

According to Lee et al. (2006), co-branding includes or is similar to concepts or strategies such as brand alliances (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Park et al., 1996; Rao & Ruekert, 1994), brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990), marketing partnerships, joint sales promotion, or co-operative advertising (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005), as well as strategic alliances (Preble, Reichel, & Hoffman, 2000) to name but a few. However, it is important, for the purpose of this study, to distinguish co-branding from other forms of co-operative arrangements between companies or organisations, in order to define what co-

branding is and what is not considered to be a co-branding strategy, as well as to see what the individual benefits are, based on what each party brings to the table. Common to all forms of co-operative arrangements, according to Blakett and Russel (1999), is the principle that companies that engage in co-operation are looking for synergetic effects, which lead to a higher value compared to what participants would be able to achieve individually. Blackett and Russel (1999) argue that the point of differentiation is twofold; first, the expected duration of a co-operative arrangement and, second, the nature and amount of potential value generated through the arrangement. Blackett and Russel (1999) provide a useful matrix in which this differentiation is illustrated (Figure 2.4).

high Star alliance ♦ oneworld Joint Venture **Co-branding** Esso/Tesco Symbian ♦ IBM/Inte Diet Cok NutraSwe Shared Value ♦ Cordon Bleu/ Creation .Joint Alliance Tefal Integral **Promotion** Optima Delta/ Sky Miles MacDonalds/ Disney low long short Duration

Figure 2.4. Co-branding distinguished from other forms of co-operative venture

Source: Blackett and Russel (1999, p.7)

What can be taken from Blackett and Russel's (1999) illustration is that a cobranding arrangement between two or more brands typically is designed to be of medium to long continuance. Blackett and Russel (1999) also point out that in co-branding arrangements, the net value creation potential is usually insufficient to design a new brand or engage in joint venture strategy.

The literature on co-branding provides a great number of differing definitions and not just one universally accepted definition (Leuthesser, Kohli, & Suri, 2003). As a general and very broad definition, Cornelis (2010, p. 776) portrays co-branding as:

"All circumstances in which two or more brand names are presented jointly to the consumer, for short albeit long term (Rao & Ruekert, 1994) or any pairing of two brands in a marketing context such as advertisements, products, product placements and distribution outlets" (Grossman, 1997).

Similarly to Blackett and Russel's (1999) definition, Cornelis (2010) utilises a definition that already considers the time component and implicates marketing strategies that find application. More specifically and narrowly defined, Washburn et al. (2000) base their definition on Park et al. (1996) who describe co-branding as:

"Pairing two or more branded products (constituent brands) to form a separate and unique product (composite brand)" (Washburn et al., 2000, p. 591).

However, it is important to note that even though collaboration takes place in areas such as development, marketing, or production, each of the brands keep their independence as separate business entities (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2007; Lee et al., 2006).

There is an extensive amount of literature on the impact of co-branding strategies on the consumer (e.g. Aggarwal, 2004; Park et al., 1996; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Washburn et al., 2004). From a strategic point of view, however, brands are getting involved in brand alliances primarily in order to enhance their brand equity

(Cornelis, 2010; Grossman, 1997; Motion et al., 2003; Washburn et al., 2000). This, according to Cornelis (2010), is due to the fact that companies or existing brands are looking into new possibilities to offer more value to the consumer and to continuously grow in their market, something that becomes increasingly difficult. Guillet & Tasci (2010) rate the importance of co-branding in the capacity to allow two or more brands that have formed a co-operation to establish themselves in new markets and to explore and exploit new opportunities that offer equally beneficial advantages for all brands involved (e.g. initial awareness, increased familiarity with the brand, increased customer loyalty, etc.). One of these opportunities or desired outcomes is, for instance, by combining two complementary brands to induce a transfer of meaning from a host brand (high equity brand) to the co-brand (low equity brand) in order to obtain a considerably more beneficial meaning for both brands (Prince & Davies, 2002), to score an improved attribute profile (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005) and, thus, to increase the alleged quality of a product or service from the viewpoint of the consumer (Rao, Qu, & Ruekert, 1999). Conversely a transfer of meaning also takes place, which is typically regarded as a spill over effect (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Washburn et al., 2004). Interestingly, Rao et al. (1999) state that consumer's sensing of quality characteristics may increase with the introduction of a second brand name for products that otherwise have hidden characteristics, referring to a product or service that the consumer has previously not come in contact with. This is important as it directly relates to the core of this study. Interestingly, Bengtsson & Servais (2005) state that it does not necessarily matter whether co-branding actually increases the quality of a product, or service, for that matter. What is important, however, is the perception of the consumer, which may, at times, convey little about reality.

In an industrial setting and different from the consumer market, but nevertheless

similar to the tourism sector and subject to this study, is another important advantage of branding; its capability to reduce risk and uncertainty. According to Mudambi, Doyle and Wong (1997) brands amplify customer value as a result of providing signals about an offer. This means that brands, along with their perceived image, suggest a certain general view in the mind-set of consumers. These signals and pictures are often laid out in a way that makes the consumer less risk-averse and increases the overall satisfaction with a product or service (Mudambi et al., 1997), an important aspect considering all stakeholders involved and a starting situation for building up trust and forming relationships.

Cornelis (2010) consolidates the effects of co-branding based on preceding effect studies (Table 2.5):

**Table 2.5. Effects of Co-branding** 

Author	Effect of Co-branding
Park et al. (1996) Simonin & Ruth (1998)	Co-branded products can acquire the salient attributes of both parent brands, making co-branding a particularly attractive alternative to brand extension where the parent brands complement each other strongly.
Simonin & Ruth (1998)	Perceptions of a co-branded product can have spill over effects on the parent brands; lesser-known parent brands are likely to be affected the most.
Simonin & Ruth (1998)	Strong parent brands influence the perceptions of co-brands more than weaker parent brands, and strong parent brands are less influenced by attitudes towards the co-brand.
Park et al. (1996)	Pairing a "high-status" parent brand with a "low-status" parent brand is not necessarily detrimental to the high-status brand.
Washburn, Till, & Priluck (2000)	Low equity brands gain more in a co-branding situation than high-equity brands, but do not damage the high-equity brands they partner with.
Washburn, Till, & Priluck (2000)	The act of pairing with another brand may lend credibility to the constituent brand, even when one or both of those constituent brands are perceived as having low brand equity.
Washburn, Till, & Priluck (2000)	High equity brands appear to not be diminished by their pairing with low equity brands thereby offering protection from poor co-branding decisions. This positive impact affects both the co-branded product and the brand equity of each co-brand partner.
Washburn, Till, & Priluck (2000)	The only brands not enhanced by co-branding are those with well-entrenched, long-standing positive images. Nevertheless, these brands are not negatively affected by co-branding.

Source: Adapted from Cornelis (2010)

In line with Figure 2.3 and consumer products literature, Guillet and Tasci (2010) argue that successful co-branding largely depends on a 'fit', 'match' or 'compatibility' of participating brands. It is the consumer's perception about a potential match that eventually determines whether favourable connotations about the separate brands will be carried over to the co-branded product (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Guillet & Tasci, 2010) or

whether there are resulting spill over effects upon the original brand attitude (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Moreover, it is the perceived match between brands that involves variables such as familiarity, image, value, quality, likelihood to purchase and loyalty that represent the equity of a brand (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Keller, 1990; Guillet & Tasci, 2010; Keller, 1993, 2003). Thus, Chang (2009) argues that in a co-branding situation, the allying businesses should ideally have a business relationship to commercially be able to utilise the full potential for achieving a desired synergy and to be able to profit from the unique strengths that each individual brand contributes to the co-branded construct. One potential danger, however, is that high-equity brands can be negatively affected if they consociate with low-equity brands (Helmig, Huber, & Leeflang, 2007), which eventually could lead to unfavourable spill over effects, an unwanted asset erosion or dilutive effects among participating brands (Cornelis, 2010). Helmig et al. (2007) state that co-branding typically exists when a long-term brand alliance is formed, whereby one product is branded and recognised at the same time by two brands. Helmig et al. (2007) argue that four main characteristics need to be fulfilled to label a marketing strategy as co-branding approach. First, participating brands have to be independent over the entire time of the co-operative arrangement; second, the co-branding partnership between participating companies should be intentional; third, a potential consumer must be able to identify the co-operation between the involved brands; and lastly, a product needs to be combined with the two other brands simultaneously (Helmig et al., 2007).

It is argued that a brand name typically serves as a point of reference or allusion for the consumer and that consumer usually forms a multitude of associations that are shaped on the basis of previous experiences with that brand and alternatively (or additionally) through pieces of information the consumer has gained about the brand (Swait, Erdem, Louviere, & Dubelaar, 1993; Washburn et al., 2000). As a result, these associations are

then brought and paired in a co-branding condition. Since the consumer is confronted with a new co-branded product, automatically judgements are made using the known brand about the co-branded product due to a lack of further information (Washburn et al., 2000). The potential danger that lies within this principle is that not only positive experiences are being transferred from one brand to another but co-branding can, thus, also erode a brand as soon as consumers make the wrong brand responsible for negative experiences (Washburn et al., 2000).

Thus, co-branding potentially offers a 'win-win' situation for the brands involved (Washburn et al., 2000) but it can both improve a consumer's perception about a brand and also damage it (James, 2005; Park et al., 1996; Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Washburn et al., 2000), which means that marketers and decision makers must use special care when engaging in co-branding (Rao et al., 1999). Yet, the general consideration in the literature is that high brand awareness, paired with favourable brand associations, usually results in a similar favourable assessment of co-branded products, provided there is a match between the parent brand and co-brand or extension (Park et al., 1996; Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

If co-branding is thought of as a source of equity for corporate brands it is, thus, of importance to review how the co-branding concept is applied and utilised in the tourism sector.

## 2.5.1 Co-branding in tourism

Co-branding in various sectors of the tourism industry is not an entirely new phenomenon; it is a concept or research stream that has existed in this industry since the 1930s (Cornelis, 2010; Guillet & Tasci, 2010). However, more recently co-branding strategies have been applied in service industries, particularly in restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, discount retailers, and theme parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006;

Young et al., 2001), to name just a few. One of the many examples are a partnering between McDonald's and Disney in the form of their 'Happy Meals' concept, but also Holiday Inn Hotels and Red Lobster / T.G.I. Friday's restaurant concepts (Young et al., 2001) or more recently a licensing agreement that brings Starbucks coffee to Marriott International properties where business space, customers as well as marketing and promotional activities is shared (Boone, 1997) to increase sales revenue of each of the companies involved. Most of these are examples from the hospitality sector and as stated by Leuthesser et al. (2003) there is not one specific co-branding definition in the hospitality context other that co-branding can be regarded as a liaison of a hotel and restaurant brand in one space.

Today, most major airlines are utilising customer loyalty programmes (e.g. Lufthansa Miles and More, British Airways Executive Club, Air France Frequence Plus, etc.) that for the most part are fuelled by co-branding strategies, specifically by partnering concepts with hotels, restaurants, car rental companies and which, on top of that, are also linked to credit card companies as one of the most obvious forms of co-branding. The co-branding of aircraft among Star/OneWorld Alliance members, for instance, helps to raise the awareness of the alliance and its benefits among customers. The benefits for the consumer typically lies in rewards, which may come in the form of discounted or free tickets, upgrade possibilities, special lounge access, etc. (Lee et al., 2006). The benefit for the companies are associated with the general benefits and advantages of co-branding described earlier and in addition that regard co-branding as a marketing tool to establish and increase both behavioural and attitudinal customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2006).

Another main area, besides the food and beverage, accommodation and transportation sector of the tourism industry, where co-branding often finds strategic application, is the recreation and entertainment sector, in the form of the theme park

industry (Cornelis, 2010; Ralph, 2009; Uggla, 2004). Disney and Universal Studios or EuropaPark and Mercedes are well known examples for an industry sector that is aware of the benefits of this strategy, namely to create ultimate cross-marketing possibilities (Cornelis, 2010). Ralph (2009) states that the aim for theme parks is to develop parks and attractions in co-operation with their partners in order to create real life experiences that allow the consumer to immerse deeper into their brands.

However, Lee et al. (2006), as well as Guillet and Tasci (2010), argue that even though there seems to be an increased interest in co-branding within the tourism industry, hardly any empirical research has been carried out by academia in the hospitality arena. Instead, according to Lee et al. (2006) most literature revolves around the concept itself or focuses on advantages or disadvantages of this particular branding strategy and only limited literature has looked into the perspective of consumers on hotel and restaurant co-branding (Guillet & Tasci, 2010; Lee et al., 2006).

#### 2.5.2 Co-branding of Destinations

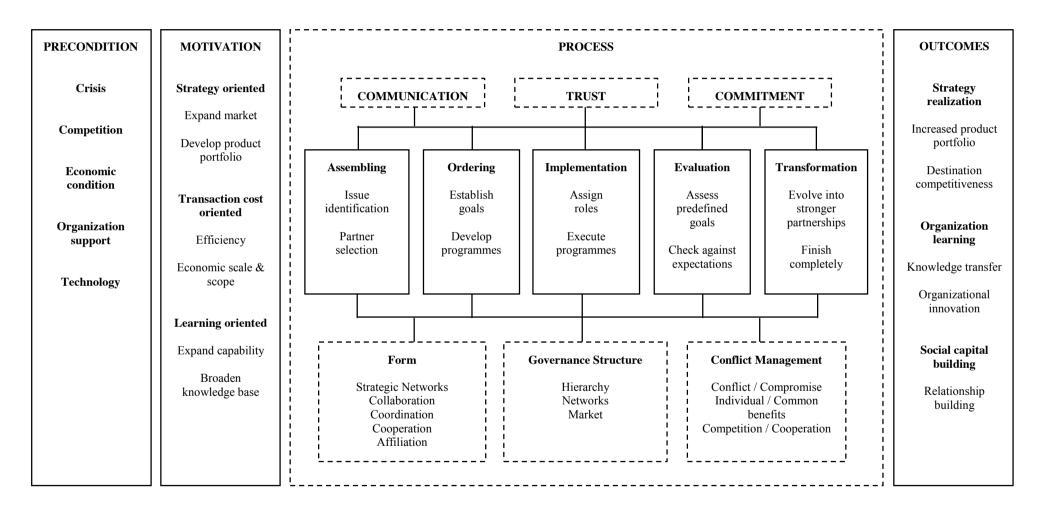
Today's tourism industry is highly fragmented and in consequence demands a considerable amount of co-ordination as well as co-operation among the different stakeholders and agents in destination marketing that may have diverse individual business goals (Roberts & Simpson, 1999; Wang, 2008a; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007; Wang & Xiang, 2007). When marketing destinations, typically a variety of tourism organisations at different levels are involved. Consequently the task to coordinate, network and foster co-operation among the diverse stakeholders and tourism entities are managed by convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) or destination management organisations (DMOs) whose principle task is to position a destination in the market and ideally to develop an inherently consistent image of the entire destination as one entity in the perception of the tourists or

visitors (Wang, 2008b; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007). Palmer and Bejou (1995) argue that concerted efforts in establishing higher levels of awareness or visibility of destinations in a highly competitive market are likely to lead to a competitive edge (Wang & Xiang, 2007). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that autonomous destination marketing and promotional efforts through individual stakeholders within a destination are not beneficial in generating an integral or holistic image of destinations and therefore do not allow a destination to prosper on a long-term basis (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Wang & Xiang, 2007).

Although it may be difficult and a complex task to establish inter-organisational and inter-community co-operation and collaboration among stakeholders (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Naipaul, Wang, & Okumus, 2009; Wang, 2008b; Wang & Krakover, 2008), it naturally initiates results that, according to Wang & Xiang (2007), are multifaceted, widespread within the destination and typically reflect the type of cooperation. Wang & Xiang (2007, p.79) further contribute to this particular aspect by identifying three areas of results where a joint marketing approach may prove to be beneficial; "strategy realisation (i.e. increased product portfolio, higher destination competitiveness), organisational learning (i.e. knowledge transfer, organisational innovation), and social capital building (i.e. relationship building, etc.)". In fact, the aspect of organisational learning is of great significance for corporations or organisations and, thus, in all likelihood similarly important for destinations. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) point out that organisations need marketing capabilities (e.g. branding) in order to achieve the desired increased performance and a sustainable competitive advantage. Organisational learning, as part of market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), is a process enabling marketing capabilities. In their conceptual framework (Figure 2.5) the authors (Wang & Xiang, 2007) project joint or collaborative destination marketing as a product of external influences that organisations within a destination are facing today. More precisely, this

framework of collaborative marketing incorporates the preconditions, motivations, processes, and outcomes of destination marketing alliances and networks based on theories of inter-organisational relations (Wang & Xiang, 2007). As illustrated in Figure 2.5, Wang and Xiang (2007) argue that, pertaining to the preconditions for collaborative marketing, tourism organisations are impacted by certain environmental factors (i.e. economic, technological, organisational factors, etc.) in that they set preconditions for organisations to engage into collaborative arrangements. However, these organisations also have specific motivations (i.e. strategy oriented, transaction cost oriented, organisational learning oriented) for getting engaged in a co-operation arrangement, which, in conjunction with Blackett and Russel's (1999) matrix (Figure 2.4) already seems to point towards certain forms of co-operation. In the third and large box of the alliance formation framework, Wang and Xiang (2007) describe the collaboration process itself as a dynamic and cyclical process consisting of five stages (i.e. assembly, ordering, implementation, evaluation, and possibly transformation), whereby the five separate stages typically are overlapping and are not necessarily executed in the illustrated order.

Figure 2.5. Framework for Destination Marketing Alliance Formation



Source: Wang and Xiang (2007, p.79)

However, what is important to point out is that individual tourism stakeholders inevitably follow through an evaluation process that ultimately decides over continuation or termination of the collaboration. Another aspect Wang and Xiang (2007) point out with regards to the process of marketing alliances, is the relationship factor or type/form of relationship, indicating that there are five levels of relationships (i.e. strategic networks, collaboration, co-ordination, co-operation, affiliation) based on their legal formality, integration and complexity as shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Types of collaborative marketing relationships

Type of Relationship	Description
Strategic Network	All tourism organizations involved in the network have a shared vision and use a system orientation to achieve group objectives through consistent strategy and concerted efforts.
Collaboration	Involved parties work collectively through common strategies; each will relinquish some degree of autonomy toward the realization of a jointly determined purpose.
Coordination	Otherwise autonomous tourism organizations align activities, sponsor particular event, or deliver targeted services in pursuit of compatible goals.
Cooperation	Fully autonomous tourism organizations share information to support each other's organizational activities.
Affiliation	Two or more tourism organisations loosely connect with each other, usually informally, because of their similar interest or interests.

Source: Adapted from Wang and Xiang (2007)

These types of collaborative marketing relationships describe the terms and conditions in which tourism alliances typically function. However, what the framework fails to consider is co-branding as a form of marketing relationship, even though the type of relationships as illustrated by Wang and Xiang (2007) points towards certain commonalities (e.g. level of autonomy, etc.). Another aspect that Wang and Xiang (2007) specifically point out, and is worth mentioning, is conflict management for the duration of

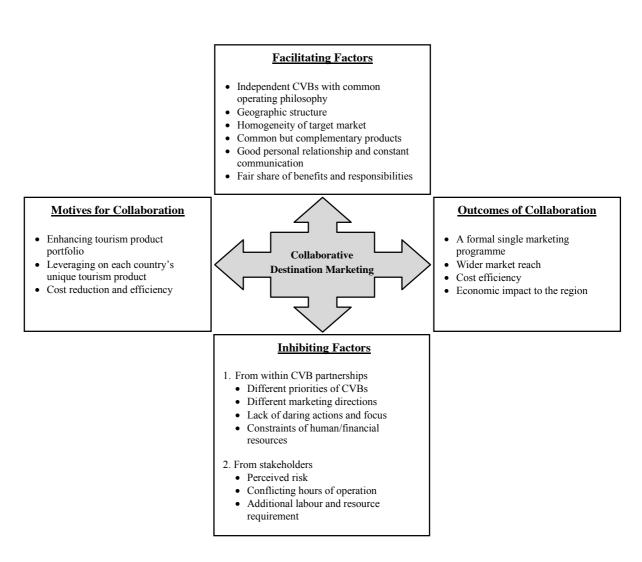
the co-operative arrangement. These conflicts, according to Wang and Xiang (2007) naturally emerge through the weighting or trade-off between the stakeholders' individual organisational interests and the common interests of the destination, as well as their respective strategies of co-operation versus competition and, thus find application in this theoretical framework. Lastly, Wang and Xiang (2007) point out that a multitude of outcomes can be expected from co-operative marketing arrangements that can be broadly categorised into three main categories (i.e. strategy realisation, social capital building and organisational learning), of which strategy realisation as well as social capital building are strongly linked to brand building benefits.

By implication, no destination today can be effective and prosperous without linked-up relationships between the various stakeholder and entities within a destination. Thus, Wang and Xiang (2007) apply their destination marketing alliance framework to destinations internally, to provide a structure for a joint endeavour that expects different organisations and companies within a destination to constructively work together towards a common goal in response to an increasingly difficult market environment. The question that needs to be asked is whether collaboration within a destination, as illustrated by Wang and Xiang (2007), is equally beneficial and could similarly be applied to collaboration strategies between two or more destinations in a cross-national context.

Naipaul et al. (2009) take this stance a step further and explore how smaller, adjacent destinations with a finite amount of tourism products and capabilities are nevertheless able to collaborate in aspects of marketing their destinations within a region. The authors argue that it is often the DMOs that regard neighbouring destinations as rivals (Naipaul et al., 2009); an attitude that may not necessarily turn out to be beneficial, as it is argued that an overly chiselled rivalry among destinations inside a region may adversely impact the cumulative capacity and efficiency of regional tourism improvement (Naipaul

et al., 2009; Prideaux & Cooper, 2003). The motives and outcomes of collaboration are multifaceted, as are facilitating and inhibiting factors, which can be seen in Figure 2.6, depicting the key areas in collaborative regional marketing (Naipaul et al., 2009).

Figure 2.6. Key Areas in Collaborative Regional Destination Marketing



Source: Naipaul et al. (2009, p.469)

In synthesis, both Wang and Xiang's (2007) theoretical framework for co-operative marketing activities (Figure 2.5) and the Naipaul et al. (2009) model of key areas in collaborative destination marketing (Figure 2.6) are complementary in that the motives and outcomes of collaboration are similar. While Wang and Xiang (2007) also include

environmental preconditions, Naipaul et al. (2009) also illustrate important facilitating and inhibiting factors, which fit into the dynamic collaboration process, illustrated by Wang and Xiang (2007). What is important to point out is that Wang and Xiang (2007) focus on collaborative marketing efforts of tourism organisations at a destination level and, thus, contribute to the literature with a framework for tourism-specific partnerships and networks in tourism destinations. Naipaul et al. (2009) on the other hand, take their model to a different level, and consider collaborative marketing arrangements of small neighbouring destinations with limited tourism products and resources on a regional level. Even though Wang and Xiang (2007) as well as Naipaul et al. (2009) point out that there are challenges in terms of varying priorities, differing marketing directions and resources involved that require time and effort from all stakeholders involved, both research approaches value the benefit of forming partnerships in terms of improving the product portfolio as well as cost reduction leading to an overall increased competitiveness, beneficial relationships and higher efficiency.

As consumers become more and more sophisticated and demanding in a fast changing social, economic and highly technical environment (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007), it is simultaneously difficult for particular destinations to come to decisions without incorporating the individual objectives and the tourist potential of surrounding destinations into their decision making process in order to be able to obtain access to markets and technologies, to establish knowledge transfer between the destinations and to decrease marketing costs by spreading them over an entire region (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Naipaul et al., 2009). The tourist offering of destinations consists of a variety of components. Small destinations with a limited tourist offering are able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies as it often offers the potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire region or geographical area when individual destinations target similar market segments or

alternatively offer complementary products or services and widen or diversify the regions product mix (Palmer & Bejou, 1995), which potentially changes consumption patterns, increases consumer demand and expenditures (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Naipaul et al., 2009).

Tourists, according to Hwang and Fesenmaier (2003), are generally looking to maximise time, expenditure and other travel benefits by trying to experience as many different destinations and compatible tourism products and services within a region rather than limiting themselves to just one destination or specific part of a region. Thus, Bahar and Kozak (2007) argue that it is reasonable for destination marketing strategists to look upon the components of tourism products and services through the eyes of the consumer (i.e. the tourist) and consider grouping these tourism products and services as a total consumption or travel experience. It is also in the interest of the individual destinations to acknowledge their interdependency to work collaboratively with other destinations towards an overall tourism structure that enhances the total travel experience and simultaneously advances the individual destinations' position on the tourism market (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2003; Naipaul et al., 2009; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007).

Destination marketing has to be seen as a joint endeavour, which may ask a variety of very different corporations and/or organisations to constructively do business together in order to accomplish a mutually beneficial goal (Grängsjö, 2003; Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005; Wang, 2008a). Although confronted with a number of challenges (e.g. recognition, acceptance, and adoption of joint practices) due to the fragmented character of destination products (Aas et al., 2005; Wang, 2008b), the fact that destinations are able to involve public organisations as well as private entities in the design, creation and promotion of tourism products is seen to be a benefit of marketing tourism destinations (Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Prideaux & Cooper, 2003; Wang, 2008a). Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van Es (2001) acknowledge these difficulties but view a community and

partnership approach and, thus, the development of intercommunity co-operation, as to be very effective in the further development as well as marketing and promotion of tourism destinations.

A major obstacle to branding destinations that Cai (2002) proposes comes from the complexity of the decision-making process of tourists (e.g. perception of high uncertainty, being expensive, intangibility of products and services, etc.). This means those potential tourists are not able to simply try tourism products out before deciding on a purchase (Cai, 2002; Gartner, 1994). In addition they also face a greater risk and are involved in a more complex information search, in which they need to balance their mental construct and potential offerings of a destination in relation to their needs (Cai, 2002). Thus, the tourist's perspective of this decision-making process is needed.

The challenge, according to Um and Crompton (1990) in this respect is that destination image seems to be the most critical aspect within the selection process of the consumer, regardless of whether the image the consumer has of the destination is true compared to what the destination is like. Thus, it is not surprising that destination marketers are interested in creating or enhancing strong and favourable images for their respective destinations (Cai, 2002). Cai (2002) furthermore claims that it may make a difference whether image-building takes place individually within a community or across destinations. It is argued that image building through co-operative branding, which involves all stakeholders, could potentially build a stronger destination image and in addition result in stronger attributes-based brand associations, which may cause an increased favourability toward a brand (Cai, 2002).

In this context Naipaul et al. (2009) state that only a limited amount of research has been done on co-operative marketing of small neighbouring destinations with a narrow scope of tourism products and resources. Thus, only limited knowledge exists on how

tourism destinations are able to collaborate in promoting their destinations altogether (Naipaul et al., 2009).

#### 2.6 Summary

Marketing is becoming more and more important for management in global and increasingly competitive markets of twenty-first century travel and tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Pike, 2009). Tourists and tourism providers are regarded as being co-creators of value and experience products (Li & Petrick, 2008). Outstanding marketing is required to have a solid understanding of tourists' interests, their competence and their previous knowledge. Among different marketing approaches, branding has been widely studied and demonstrated to be very influential. However, much of the research done in the area of branding is grounded in commodity goods, even though the service sector has been growing continuously in importance over the last few years. The literature evidenced the role of brands in the service sector to be of critical value due to the intangibility of the nature of this business (McDonald & de Chernatony, 2001). These special characteristics (i.e. intangibility or perishability) of the service sector leads to the perception that the purchase of services is riskier than the purchase of goods (Laroche et al., 2004). Brand development in the service industry is therefore seen to be a key success factor as a strong brand symbolises a reduction of risk and stands for a safe partnership, which typically is appealing for the consumer (Berry, 2000). Branding further increases consumer loyalty and the attitude strength of the consumer towards a product or service related to the brand (Kim & Kim, 2005); it also increases inviolability to competitor strategies, it potentially increases profits and might positively influence the consumers' attitude to price changes and risk taking (Berry, 2000).

Recently, place branding research has received increased attention (Anholt, 2009;

Morgan et al., 2010; Wagner & Peters, 2009). Branding is perceived as one of the most efficient marketing tools in a destination marketing context (Morgan et al., 2010). With regards to marketing a destination, regardless of their boundaries, it is important to understand branding as a two-way process, meaning that it needs to be done together with the consumer instead of to the consumer (Morgan et al., 2010). Destination branding is mainly about being able to develop a rich and relevant personality for destinations, where constant development and adaptation to any changes in consumer behaviour is necessary so that a brand personality may permanently advance, while a destination brand's core value may remain constant (Morgan et al., 2010).

Increasingly, the literature shows an expanding interest in brand partnerships or cobranding as a special form of brand extension in the tourism sector (Chang, 2009), a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective aim to establish a brand more effectively in comparison to what a partner brand would be able to do on its own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). Since attributes of co-branded products rub off on each other, co-branding represents an attractive alternative for marketers (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). More recently, co-branding strategies have been applied in service industries, particularly in restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, discount retailers, and theme parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Young et al., 2001). Only a limited amount of research has been done on co-operative marketing of small neighbouring destinations with a narrow scope of tourism products and resources (Naipaul et al., 2009). Thus, only limited knowledge exists on how tourism destinations are able to collaborate in promoting their destinations altogether (Naipaul et al., 2009).

# CHAPTER III: THE ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE AND PERSONALITY IN DESTINATION BRANDING

#### 3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter contemporary as well as seminal literature on the concepts of image and personality in marketing will be reviewed, in particular the concepts of destination image and destination personality, two concepts particular to the marketing of tourism destinations. This chapter commences with an overview of both concepts and their role in consumer goods marketing. Subsequently, it reflects on the underlying terminology as well as functions and concepts of a brand and branding in the general marketing literature on which modern destination branding concepts are based.

#### 3.2 Brand image and brand personality

Consistently, businesses are looking for strategies to establish stable and – ideally – permanent emotional ties between their brands and the consumers (Fournier, 1998). It is commonly agreed within branding and consumer behaviour research that strong and differentiated brands and such ties or relationships with the consumer essentially result in increased consumer loyalty, which in return, increases a brand's market performance and thus, may positively influence the overall financial performance of a company (Geuens et al., 2009; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Park et al., 1986; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010).

According to Aggarwal (2004) and Nandan (2005), branding and brand-based differentiation are significant instruments to position products and services on the market and to establish and maintain competitive advantage in increasingly complex marketplaces

as they offer the consumer the possibility to more easily evaluate products and services. From the consumer's point of view and within this evaluative process, brands provide a visible representation of difference between competing products (Nandan, 2005).

Two key concepts and components of brand loyalty and brand positioning, which are crucial to brand choice, are brand image and within brand image, brand personality (Geuens et al., 2009; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006, 2007; Keller, 1993; Plummer, 1985). Both concepts are generally seen to have a strong influence on consumer behaviour (Geuens et al., 2009; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007a) and, thus, on purchase intention.

Hosany et al. (2006; 2007) state that a vast number of models exist in the general marketing literature and claim that a much discussed ambiguity is prevalent that surrounds these concepts with regard to contradicting or inconsistent definitions, the imprecise or interchangeable use of the terms brand image and brand personality. The authors Hosany et al. (2006; 2007) ascribe this generally to a poor conceptualization and lack of methodologically sound empirical research. Thus, it seems essential to properly define the concepts used for the purpose of this study. A review of the general branding literature shows that past research pertaining to corporate branding is very much aligned to tourism destination branding research, which infers that managing corporate brands likewise is very much related to managing destination brands (Hankinson, 2007, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2004). Hence, this is also reflected in the definitions of brand image and brand personality, the two concepts discussed in the following sections.

# 3.3 Definition of the brand image construct

Brand image has long been acknowledged as an important idea in marketing (c.f. Gardner & Levy, 1955; Keller, 1993, Keller 2007). However, even though brand image is an intensely researched term in the marketing literature, adequate definitions pertaining to

this concept are less explicit (cf. Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Jenkins (1999) attributes this mainly to an indistinct use of the term 'image', its changing meanings in a variety of disciplines from merely being a visual representation to a more holistic understanding, including associations such as impressions, the awareness of something, sentiments, values and perceptions. However, general definitions of the term 'image' in the marketing literature relate this concept more towards consumer behaviour (cf. Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Park et al., 1986). One of the most cited and widely accepted definitions of this concept is one by Keller (1993) who determines brand image in the following way:

"[...] brand image is defined [...] as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller, 1993, p.3).

Keller (1993) clearly stresses that the brand image concept has to be looked at from the perspective of the consumer. This approach is in line with a 2011 general definition of 'image', provided by the American Marketing Association (AMA):

"[Image is] the consumer perception of a product, institution, brand, business, or person that may or may not correspond with 'reality' or 'actuality'. For marketing purposes the 'image of what is' may be more important than 'what actually is'" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

Two aspects are worth mentioning. Firstly, the above definition also places emphasis on the consumer perspective when looking at the image concept. Secondly, it makes the distinction that the image a person holds of a product or brand may not necessarily be the image that a company wants the product or brand to have. This supports critics among marketing research scholars, who claim that a projected and received image could theoretically be different and the accuracy between these two images would most likely determine the success or failure of a particular marketing strategy (cf. Tasci et al., 2007a; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). These considerations are also reflected in a more specific

definition of 'brand image' provided by the American Marketing Association:

"[Brand image is] the perception of a brand in the minds of persons. The brand image is a mirror reflection<sup>6</sup> (though perhaps inaccurate) of the brand personality or product being. It is what people believe about a brand – their thoughts, feelings, expectations" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

Similar to the American Marketing Association's definition of brand personality<sup>7</sup>, it needs to be reiterated at this point that image is regarded to be a subjective concept (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Gallarza et al., 2002; Leisen, 2001), meaning that it has a basis in reality but may be coloured by the individual and usually reflects the perspective through which the individual views reality. Like personality, image can be viewed from a seller's perspective or consumer's perspective and the reality between the two perspectives may differ significantly (Gartner, 1994).

In its application to a tourism context, Crompton (1979) provides a definition for image as an attitudinal concept in the context of tourist destinations:

"An image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979, p. 18).

Crompton's (1979) characterisation of image is considered to be the most commonly cited definition in a tourism context (Hosany et al., 2006, 2007) and he clearly emphasises a single person's perception about destination as opposed to the perception of a group of people. However, some researchers in the general marketing literature perceive

<sup>7</sup> "[Brand personality] is the psychological nature of a particular brand as intended by its sellers, though persons in the marketplace may see the brand otherwise (called brand image). These two perspectives compare to the personalities of individual humans: what we intend or desire, and what others see or believe" (American Marketing Association, 2013,

http://www.marketingpower.com/ layouts/Dictionary.aspx).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The term "mirror reflection" is rarely used and is typically synonymous with the term "mirror image". However, the term "mirror reflection" is quoted as part of the brand image definition from the American Marketing Association (American Marketing Association, 2013, http://www.marketingpower.com/ layouts/Dictionary.aspx).

this as to be insufficient and address this shortcoming by arguing that images or aspects of an overall image can very well be a collective impression, shared by a group of people (Jenkins, 1999). Their valuation incorporates marketing segmentation as a key concept in marketing and economics with very specific implications on tourism destination branding as it lays a foundation for an eventual formulation of marketing strategies. In other words, if image would only be defined as the "sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions" of a single person's perception, which implies that there would not be any commonalities between the perceptions of individuals, it would be impossible for marketers to conduct a segmentation of markets, a key tool in the marketing of tourism products and services. This issue is reflected and considered in a definition presented by Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977):

"[Destination image is] the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place" (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977, p.17).

To address the above-mentioned shortcomings, a combination of the stated definitions is applied and refined for this thesis, so that it encompasses and reflects all; first, the consumer's perspective; second, a potential inaccuracy of the consumer's perspective due to the alignment of received images with emotions and the individual's personal belief system; and third, the possibility of dealing with image as a collective impression. Thus, the definition of destination brand image developed for this thesis is as follows:

Destination image is the subjective perception of individuals or group of people as consumers, that is reflected by the sum of brand associations (e.g. objective knowledge, thoughts, feelings, prejudice, expectations, imaginations, beliefs, ideas and impressions) held in their memory.

Brand image has received substantial attention in the generic marketing literature. However, Hosany et al. (2006; 2007) state that their application to branding in tourism and particularly to branding of destinations is a more recent area of research. With these general definitions in mind it is important to look more detailed into the impact of brand image on tourism and more specifically, destination branding.

### 3.3.1 Destination image and tourism

Branding of destinations is one of the most influential tools that marketers have in an industry that has come face to face with assimilation of products, increased competition and products that are interchangeable (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002; Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2008). Morgan et al. (2002) argue that on the surface, most destinations have exceptional tourism products across the industry sectors (i.e. accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment and recreational services, etc.), meaning that high-class hotels, prize-winning restaurants, breath-taking shows and a stunning environment with entertaining leisure facilities are to be found nearly everywhere, leading to converging destinations. Further, most countries or regions claim to have a unique culture or heritage, the most likeable people and the best customer-oriented tourism industry (Morgan et al., 2002). This conformity of tourism products and services, however, creates a dilemma for competing destinations in an image driven industry (Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2010). It leads to a predicament where facilities and services are essentially no longer differentiators. In consequence, the need to develop a unique image and personality, a niche that differentiates one destination from another, becomes more important than ever (Morgan et al., 2002). In this respect it should be mentioned that tourism destinations primarily compete with each other with the help of a consumer's perceived image in comparison to the image consumers have of their main rivals in the marketplace (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001). Understanding the images tourists have of destinations is of high importance in order to assess a destination's performance (Chen & Uysal, 2002) and to be able to promote it effectively from the marketer's perspective (Leisen, 2001). Furthermore, destination image is also an influencing factor on pre-, during-, and post-visitation behaviour (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005), which in return impacts the choice of future destinations that tourists make, based on their evaluations, and intentions to revisit or recommend (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

The role destination image plays in consumer/tourist behaviour is multifaceted. Image, according to Dichter (1985), is similar to the 'placebo effect' of pharmaceuticals. The effectiveness of medicine can be influenced by the presence that surrounds it (Dichter, 1985). In comparison to product or destination marketing for that matter, the packaging of products, advertisements, the credibility of a product or service and eventually image and personality are capable of influencing the consumer in the destination selection process, the intention to visit, revisit, or recommend a destination. This correlation, in other words, could also mean no image – no effect.

#### 3.3.2 Role of destination image in tourism destination choice

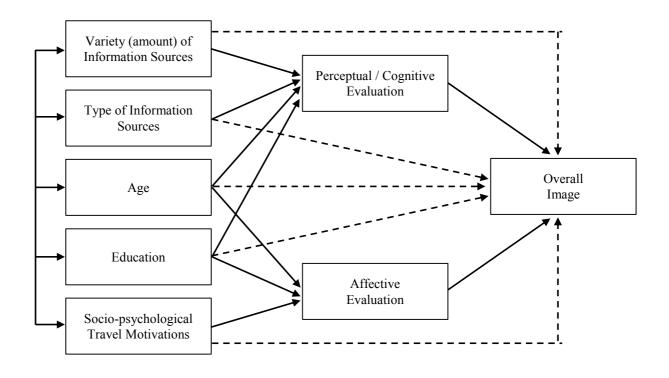
"Sometimes the notions people have about a brand do not even seem very sensible or relevant to those who know what the product is 'really' like. But they all contribute to the customer's deciding whether or not the brand is the one for me" (Gardner & Levy, 1955, p. 35).

Tourism destination image has been a substantially researched area for a little more than 30 years (Elliot et al., 2010; Pike, 2002). Image as a predictor for travel behaviour (cf. Hunt, 1975), as an influencing factor of traveller choice (cf. Pearce, 1982), studies on the measurement of image (cf. Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; 2003) and its formation process (cf.

Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994) as well as on the effects of positive place image (cf. Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000) have all contributed to the understanding image plays in destination marketing. However, it is argued that the conceptualisation of tourism destination image has not found a commonly agreed theoretical base (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Elliot et al., 2010; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007b).

Image, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999) is an important construct to appreciate the consumer's selective processes of choosing a destination. Kavaratzis (2005, p. 333) states that "destinations are visited because of their prior images, and they are consumed based on a first-hand comparison of those images with the reality faced in the destination itself". Buhalis (2000) argues that even before tourists visit a destination, they already create a certain image, perceptions and expectations about that destination, based on what they believe, what they have heard and what their previous experience is. This study refers to Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) model (Figure 3.1) to illustrate the foundation for destination image foundation. However, it is important to challenge how tourists are able to form an image and, additionally, how they are able to do so, provided that they were not exposed to previous experience with a destination. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found out that destination image is formed by personal factors as well as stimulus factors that contain both perceptual/cognitive elements (i.e. evaluation of beliefs, impressions and knowledge about destination attributes) as well as affective elements (i.e. an individual's feelings toward a destination).

Figure 3.1. Model of the Determinants of Tourism Destination Image Prior to Actual Visitation



Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999, p. 871)

The stimulus factors that Baloglu and McCleary (1999) mention, correlate with physical objects or prior experiences (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008), which originate from various information sources (e.g. articles, travel magazines, personal experience, etc.) available to tourists. San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque (2008) argue that these stimulus factors have a significant effect on the tourist's perceived image of a destination (cf. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Vogt & Andereck, 2003) as have personal factors or consumer characteristics (e.g. age, sex, education, etc.) on destination image (cf. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997).

As a multi-dimensional phenomenon (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008),

destination image is therefore formed by the tourist's reasoned and emotional interpretations (Beerli & Martin, 2004). The richness and character of information sources that a tourist uses together with a tourist's socio-demographic factors impact the perceptions and cognitions of destination attributes, which eventually form feelings such as pleasure or excitement (Walmsley & Young, 1998) towards a destination and thus, create an overall image of that destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Only recently both components (cognitive and affective) have jointly been looked at, since they support the view that a perceived destination image cannot be solely determined by a place's physical attributes (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). There is a general consensus in the literature that cognitive components are regarded as antecedents of affective components and that consumer evaluations originate from their knowledge of objects (Beerli & Martin, 2004) or destinations for that matter.

Other researchers (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gallarza et al., 2002; Gartner, 1994; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Prayag, 2009; Tasci et al., 2007a) are in general agreement with the earlier concept from Baloglu and McCleary (1999) but add a third component to the destination image construct, the conative component. The conative component is linked to how a consumer or individual behaves or acts based on his/her knowledge and understanding of the cognitive and affective component (Gartner, 1994; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Tasci et al., 2007a) and is characterised as the tendency to visit a destination in a certain time window (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Finally, the overall image of a destination is developed through the interplay between affective and cognitive evaluation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994; Tasci et al., 2007a). At this point it is, however, important to note that the literature suggests that the image a consumer or tourist obtains through an actual visit of a destination is closer to reality than the image the consumer or tourist held prior to visiting a destination (Gartner, 1989) as the image then

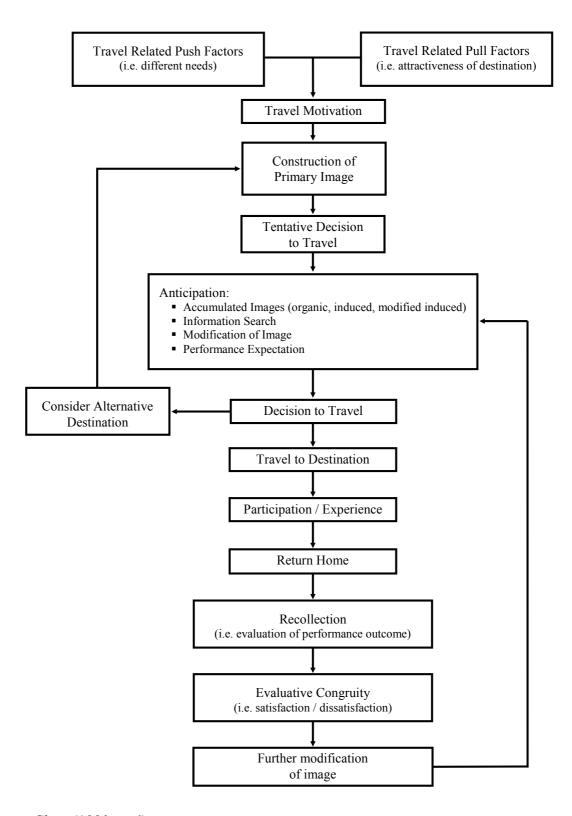
consists of more qualified perceptions and typically reduces potentially stereotyped and false images (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

## 3.3.3 Destination image formation and structure

Pike (2002) conducted an extensive literature review of 142 destination image papers spanning a timeframe of destination image research from 1972 to 2000. Pike (2002) addresses two previous literature reviews with different objectives, which significantly contributed to the understanding of destination image. First, Chon's (1990) review of 23 destination image studies, and secondly, a review conducted by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) covering 15 previous studies. While Chon (1990) focused on the role of destination image and its influence on consumer satisfaction as part of consumer behaviour (Figure 3.2), Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) focused more on the concept of destination image and its operationalisation.

In Chon's (1990) model of the interrelationship between destination image and travel behaviour, prior studies regarding the role of destination image on customer satisfaction and decision making, the change of destination image over time, image formation and modification, image assessment and measurement as well as the role of image in tourism development are mostly considered. The model is an important contribution to the understanding of how consumers are influenced by destination images and, thus, are impacted in their decision making and purchasing process. It is, thus, generally acknowledged (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Pike, 2002; Tasci et al., 2007a) that destination images have a significant influence on consumer/tourist behaviour and consequently destinations with positive and strong images are to a greater likelihood reflected upon and chosen in the traveller's buying behaviour, thereby also influencing customer satisfaction (Chon, 1990).

Figure 3.2. Relationship of destination image and traveller buying behaviour



Source: Chon (1990, p. 6)

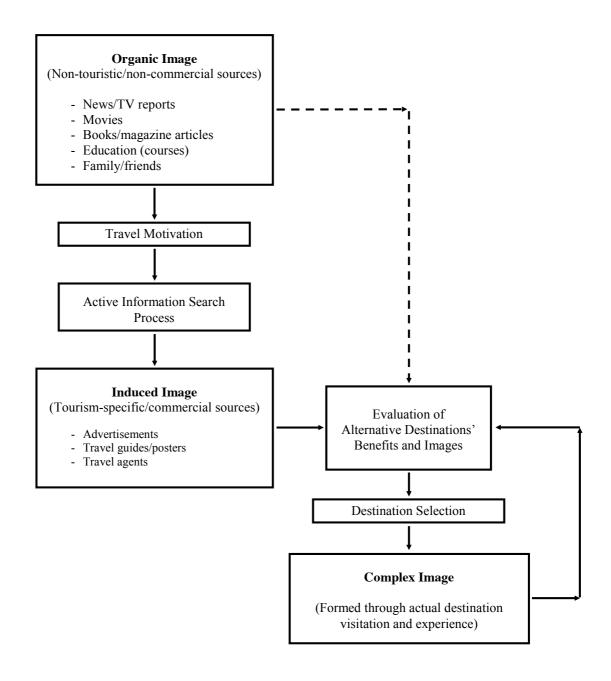
In his more comprehensive review, Pike (2002) identifies a broad range of studies that are concerned with visitation effects, image differences among groups, the relationship between affect and image, induced images, the influence of distance to a destination on image perception, time as influencing factor to image change, the impact of familiarity on image perception, and image formation, to name a few. Besides reflecting on the sheer volume of work previously done, Pike (2002) found that surprisingly few research papers (23 out 142) tried to measure the concept of destination image for a specific travel context. Besides this finding, Pike (2002) shows further imbalances regarding previous research, in that over half of the research papers focused on the perception of only one destination as opposed to comparing it to other destinations as a frame of reference. Pike (2002) also reports the varying use of visitors contrary to non-visitors to capture image perceptions and surprisingly few research papers that applied qualitative and unstructured methods at any point in their research, both issues that will be looked at in detail in the methodological section of this study. Most importantly however, Pike (2002) reiterates a criticism that was initially brought up by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), namely, that although an immense amount of research in various areas linked to destination image has been conducted, researchers had not been successful in the operationalisation of destination image. In fact, even today after being a comparatively well-studied topic, destination image is often described as "elusive and confusing construct" (c.f. Tasci et al., 2007a, p.194). Even though Tasci et al. (2007a) credit Echtner and Ritchie (1991) with providing groundbreaking advancements in clarifying the destination image construct, they (Tasci & Gartner, 2007) also conclude that a systematised structure in the conceptualisation or operationalisation of destination image has not been achieved, which essentially contributes to fuzziness in most of the literature. Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) as well as later on Pike (2002) and Tasci et al. (2007a) partially contribute this deficiency in their

reviews to the fact that definitions of the concept are diverging, often not stated, are sometimes sketchy or simply inaccurate so that it often is not evident what image component is measured in the respective studies. One reason that Tasci et al. (2007a) provide in their review for the existence of the large number of differing definitions is that each definition defines a certain aspect of the multi-dimensional and, thus, complex construct of destination image. However, the fact that a multitude of different definitions exists shows that a common and agreed theoretical understanding does not yet exist (Tasci et al., 2007a). It can be argued that Echtner and Ritchie's (1991, 1993) contribution to destination image studies marks at least somewhat of a turning point from previously more or less one-dimensional studies incorporating structured approaches to destination image assessment, to more multi-dimensional studies that assess the multi-faceted destination image construct including additional components and different, more flexible approaches to their assessment.

The credit that needs to be given to Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) with respect to their contribution in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of destination image is that they differentiate destination image from any ordinary product (i.e. consumer goods) image by attributing the tourism product or services to be more diverse, complex and specific, which is reflected in their description of the image formation process, their proposed framework and assessment methodologies applied. The question of how destination image is formed is answered by placing the consumer (i.e. traveller) into the thick of the action, being exposed to a flood of information originating from very different sources. This information on destination image can stem from organic images, that is non-touristic and non-commercial sources such as exposure to news/TV reports, movies, books or magazine articles, education or opinion of others, such as friends or family that a consumer comes in contact with (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991);

that is deliberately advertised or communicated through tourism specific channels, such as advertisements, travel guides/posters, or travel agents as commercial sources; lastly and by viewing it as a developmental process (Figure 3.3), a complex image is formed through a consumer's actual visitation and experience, from which destination image related information is derived (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

Figure 3.3. A model of tourist's image formation process



Source: Fakeye and Crompton (1991, p. 11)

According to Echtner & Ritchie (1991), the distinctiveness and complexity of destination image becomes apparent through its characteristics to not only be composed of commercial information sources, but also to a greater extent of non-commercial information sources (i.e. historical, economic, social factors). However, this further

In the image of potential, actual and repeat visitors is most likely not the same. This may especially be the case, provided that the information sources of potential visitors of a destination are comprised of organic and induced images as opposed to actual visitors with personal exposure to a destination, being able to compare and contrast the former two image sources with their own personal experience. In their review, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) draw attention to the methodological implications this has and to some extent criticise prior research for not paying sufficient attention to this aspect.

In fact, Fakeye and Crompton's (1991) study revealed that the image perceptions of first-time visitors are significantly more complex and differentiated as compared to individuals who have not had the same exposure, provided they were able to spend sufficient time at the destination, being exposed to the destination's different dimensions. Reportedly, the time spent at a destination seems to also have had influence on an individual's image perception about a destination as the study indicated that visitors (i.e. first-time visitors and repeat visitors) who stayed longer in a destination rated that destination's tourism offerings (e.g. attractions, social interactions, etc.) higher than shorttime visitors (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). In line with these findings, Tasci et al. (2007a) argue that different populations internalise and process image components very differently, an aspect that is certainly reflected in the deep segmentation of the tourism market into smaller sub-segments. Hughes and Allen (2008) further criticise the lack of clarity in some studies regarding this aspect by arguing for a clear differentiation and comparison between images held by individuals who have and those who have not been to a certain destination. This differentiation and comparison, according to Hughes and Allen (2008), allows drawing conclusions on negative image perceptions and decisions to not visit a given destination. In this context Fakeye and Crompton (1991), Baloglu and McCleary (1999) as well as Leisen (2001) argue that the images of visitors with a direct and personal

destination experience are likely to have a more favourable perception of the destination than those of non-visitors; the same, however, must be true for individuals with a high intention to visit a destination versus those who have no intention to visit a destination.

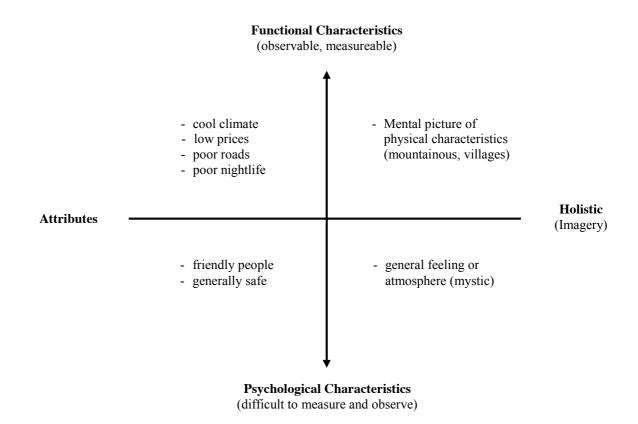
When looking into both constructs, it is important to differentiate between the tourist, in other words the consumer, on the receiver's side and destination marketers or destination marketing/management organisations (DMO's) on the sender's side. On the consumer's side, Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993, p.141) state, "images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and essentialize huge amounts of data about a place". Destination marketers need to have a solid understanding of how image and personality of destinations are formed on a consumer side and how that potentially impacts marketing decisions on the sender side or how it can be utilised to strategically and more effectively market destinations or regions through promotional channels. With reference to the understanding of the process of image and personality formation and the relationship between the two concepts, public institutions such as destination marketing organisations are able to communicate more effectively (Beerli & Martin, 2004).

#### 3.3.4 Destination image information processing

Naturally, destinations themselves are not good or bad, positive or negative in the strict sense of the words. The formation and measurement of image in tourism is, according to Echtner and Ritchie (1991), embedded in psychology, specifically the study of mental imagery as part of consumer behaviour theory and research. MacInnis and Price (1987, p. 473) define imagery in their seminal article as "(1) a process (not a structure) by which (2) sensory information is represented in working memory". It is, thus, a mental

picture an individual obtains or develops through various processes from a product or destination that eventually determines how that individual evaluates that product or destination. The procedures through which imagery or information is processed are numerous and, according to MacInnis and Price (1987), range from retrieval of cognitive information to tasks such as creative thinking, problem solving, or even daydreaming. The authors (MacInnis & Price, 1987) group information processing basically into two processing modes, discursive processing and imagery processing; the former being more cognitive/attribute based, symbolic, language-like and, thus, more abstract; the latter, a multi or single-sensory dimension, where information is being filtered out from sensory (e.g. smell, taste, sight) representations, memories or feelings is regarded to be more affective and of holistic construction. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) emphasise the important role of imagery during the actual consumption process, in that some products and certainly some destinations are purchased or chosen specifically for the fantasy imagery they reflect. In combination however, both processes influence consumer behaviour, in that it affects purchase intentions, choice processes and product evaluations, where individuals may make use of discursive processing to eliminate unwanted alternatives from all options provided and subsequently use imagery to assess a few remaining alternatives (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) argue, however, that this process could also take place in a reverse order. MacInnis and Price's (1987) understanding of information processing is adopted by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) as two important components in their conceptualisation of destination image (Figure 3.4). In order to evaluate destination image and to fully assess a destination, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) integrate two additional components into their conceptualisation; functional (i.e. observable and measureable characteristics) and psychological (i.e. difficult to measure and observe) characteristics.

Figure 3.4. Components of destination image (e.g. Nepal)



Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1991, p. 6)

The functional and psychological aspects, as the two additional components incorporated into Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) framework (Figure 3.4), are based on an early article by Martineau (1958) that looked at such aspects and their contribution to image and success in a retail store environment. In this article, Martineau (1958, p. 47) addresses the question of what grounds shoppers are attracted to a specific store as opposed to another and concludes that it must be image (or personality) of a store and "the way [it] is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes". Martineau (1958) identifies functional characteristics (e.g. pricing, store layout, etc.) to be measureable and immediately observable, whereas psychological characteristics such as friendliness or atmosphere are impossible to be

immediately measured. Essentially, consumers subconsciously compare the status of a store (e.g. high class/low class, high quality/low quality, positive atmosphere/negative atmosphere, interesting/not interesting, etc.) with their own desires and expectations and ultimately make a decision based on a unconscious evaluation of congruence between the perceived image (or personality) of the store (defined as a store's architecture, layout, symbols, colours, sales personnel) and the image they have of themselves (Martineau, 1958).

Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) application of Martineau's (1958) functional and psychological image attributes of retail stores to destinations is reasonable since the evaluation of consumer goods and destinations follows similar principles. Significant is the fact that Martineau (1958) does not make a clear distinction between image and personality as separate, but as related concepts when considering his definition as stated above. However, his early image/personality related research shows the importance of the personality concept in consumer behaviour research and how entangled a product's / store's / destination's personality is with the overall image that a consumer or tourist has of it. As with any perceptual/positioning map, Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) conceptual framework offers a number of dimensions that can not be very clearly distinguished from each other or should not be seen as strictly independent dimensions. According to Echtner and Ritchie (1991), the dividing lines between the individual dimensions are blurred or indistinct in the sense that certain combinations or interactions of attributes affect the holistic impressions much in the same way that feelings or holistic impressions can influence the perception of more cognitive attributes; the same certainly applies to functional and psychological characteristics.

### 3.3.5 Destination image structure

As previously stated, most of the research on destination image prior to Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) was vague in their definitions of the image concept, not transparent with regards to the dimensions/attributes measured and primarily focused on the cognitive component of image (i.e. list of attributes), and in doing so neglected the affective/holistic component of it. However, it is argued that in order to capture the image of a destination, destination image research should include both cognitive (i.e. physical properties) and affective (i.e. emotional aspects) components (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). This sentiment is in line with earlier research conducted by Russell and Lanius (1984) who argue that an individual's affective appraisal of a place not only plays a decisive role in the individual's choice of a destination but also influences and directs the individual's behaviour at the destination:

"When we think about or perceive an environment, we judge more than its physical or objective properties. We judge how gloomy, how exciting, or how peaceful it is. No matter how familiar or unusual the place might be, we judge its affective properties. We shall call this type of judgment an affective appraisal and assume that affective appraisal is a judgment about the ability of the place to alter emotional feelings" (Russell & Lanius, 1984, p. 119).

This argument is picked up again in more recent research by Qu, Kim, and Im (2011), who argue in line with Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) that all image components are closely interconnected and in sum constitute the overall image of a destination, which again influences the future behaviour of the consumer. In addition to the previously discussed four components, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) add another aspect (Figure 3.5) to their final conceptualisation of destination image, which not only makes their research unique in comparison to earlier research; it also makes their destination image construct

stand out from regular consumer products and emphasises the concept as a turning point for following destination image research.

**Functional Characteristics** Common (observable, measureable) - nature of infrastructure - accommodation - climate - price level - etc. Holistic **Attributes** (Imagery) Unique special events **Psychological Characteristics** iconic landmarks (difficult to measure and observe) special auras

etc.

Figure 3.5. Components of destination image

Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1991, p. 6)

Echtner & Ritchie (1991) make the case for an additional destination image dimension; a dimension that, although not considered in earlier research, many tourists encounter while travelling. The authors (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991) argue that destination image can also be assessed or rated with the aid of a random combination of common functional characteristics such as nature of infrastructure, accommodation, climate or price levels; on the other hand image can be comprised of unique functional features such as special events or iconic landmarks and even special auras (psychological). Examples for

unique features can be, for instance, Paris and the Eiffel Tower, the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro and are often described as symbols of a destination or destination markers (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). On the contrary, there are unique auras or atmospheres, exemplified by destinations with a special combination of values such as romantic Paris, the sacred Vatican or a vibrant Vegas (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

In its entirety, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) provide an encompassing and a more rigorous framework for the measurement and conceptualisation of destination image than prior research. In their framework, they clearly place emphasis on the unique and holistic components of image. It is argued (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Qu et al., 2011) that both components play a decisive role in the evaluation, categorisation and differentiation processes of consumers (i.e. tourists). In this context Qu et al. (2011) argue that tourists are typically confronted with the agony of choice between destinations that offer a portfolio of very similar properties (i.e. accommodation, transportation, scenic views, friendly atmosphere or people, etc.) and, if so, it is not sufficient for a destination to be among a given number of 'finalists', but eventually to be so unique and different to be chosen and preferred over the competition. Thus, in situations where tourists have trouble rating or differentiating very similar destinations or destinations unknown to them, holistic and unique images often provide useful reference points to circumscribe and define destinations in the minds of the targeted consumer (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). It is assumed that this must be especially true for destinations or countries such as the Baltic States (i.e. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), a region that has gone through a tremendous political and economic transformation (Clottey & Lennon, 2003) in the past 20 years (i.e. break up from the former USSR in the early 1990s and integration into the European Union in 2004). Prior to their break up from the former USSR, these countries may not have been present as international tourism destinations in the minds of the consumer and even today these

countries are to a large extent still in a developmental stage with regards to tourism (Clottey & Lennon, 2003). Their struggle to build their own national image with the objective of differentiating themselves from other states in the same region have not been highly successful in the past and instead has sent mixed and confusing messages, leading to an unclear image in the minds of the consumer (Park, 2009). In such situations, potential tourists might rely more on affective components of image as well as holistic and unique images in assessing and evaluating a destination and its image as well as personality for the simple reason that first hand cognitive experience, which allows for an assessment of more functional destination image attributes, may just not have been available. In this context Jenkins (1999) argues that images of destinations are typically understood as holistic representations of places such as atmosphere or aura of a place, which cannot be further broken down into single attributes. In such instances, according to Jenkins (1999), Echtner & Ritchie's (1991) model captures these components in their model, which enables the evaluation of destinations and, thus, reflects the significance of this conceptualisation to destination image research. In their research, Qu et al. (2011) also stress the importance of uniqueness and its influence on overall image. The authors (Qu et al., 2011) claim that unique image is valuable for positioning purposes as a means of differentiation between destinations; the effect of unique image on overall image in their study was even larger than affective image on overall image. Further, the Qu et al. (2011) study revealed that cognitive image has more influence on overall image than the affective component of image has. This evaluation and finding is in contradiction to findings from Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) study who state the opposite and a stronger influence of affective versus cognitive evaluation on overall image. The reasoning provided for these different outcomes are, besides a different methodological approach and construct (i.e. Qu et al. (2011) did not include unique image), the investigation of image formation at different stages, i.e. evaluating image prior to actual visitation and the evaluation of image after actual visitation. Qu et al. (2011) suggest that affective image components might more significantly influence the overall image a consumer has of a destination prior to visiting it; correspondingly, cognitive image may then be more influential when a visit has taken place. What this different conception shows, however, is the need to take stages of the image formation process (i.e. pre-/post-visitation or actual/potential tourists) into consideration when conducting destination image research studies, an understanding that Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) illustrated.

Tasci et al. (2007a, p. 217) give further credit to Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) in that their "introduction of a holistic view fits perfectly into the theoretical base because it extended image measurement beyond the cognitive component [i.e. what we know about an object] into the affective [i.e. how we feel about what we know] and conative spheres [i.e. how we act on this information]". Furthermore, another aspect Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) are credited with is the authors' (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 1993) realisation of a correlation between the concept of image and its operationalisation or measurement (Tasci et al., 2007a). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) argue that if destination image is a multidimensional concept consisting of several components (i.e. functional and psychological characteristics, common and unique aspects, attributes and holistic aspects), then the measurement of the construct itself should not be one-dimensional. Thus, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) propose a mixed approach, applying a quantitative measurement to detect common characteristics and certain attributes of destinations, paired with a qualitative measurement of psychological and the more holistic impressions that consumers associate with destinations. This finding, according to Tasci et al. (2007a), has largely influenced most of the later research, where qualitative research or combined approaches proliferated in various areas. Even though Tasci et al. (2007a) acknowledge the advances made by

Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), they criticise significant differences between attribute lists used to measure cognitive components of destination image in research subsequent to Echtner and Ritchie (1991) with regard to their completeness as well as relevance, resulting in a lack of standardisation and absence of systematic or methodical structure of the image theory in this specific tourism context.

## 3.4 Definition of the brand personality construct

The symbolic concept of brand personality is a related concept to brand image (Keller, 2007; Parker, 2009). It suggests that products and brands have person-like qualities or characteristics (Aaker, 1997; Parker, 2009), personality traits that were grouped into dimensions by Aaker (1997), which are formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with a brand (Aaker, 1997; Parker, 2009; Plummer, 1985).

The American Marketing Association's (2013) definition of personality as a general concept is:

"An individual's consistency in coping with one's environment" [or] "the consistent pattern of responses to the stimuli from both internal and external sources" [and] "a consistent pattern of responses in coping with perceived reality" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

This general definition of personality entails several properties that are interesting when looking more closely at the personality construct. It emphasises 'internal and external sources', which – in a branding context - can be linked back to the direct and indirect contacts that a consumer has with a brand as argued by Aaker (1997), Parker (2009), and Plummer (2000) as mentioned above. Furthermore, and similar to image, it also emphasises a perception as opposed to an absolute reality. In past research it has been

demonstrated that consumers tend to personify brands as to possess personalities, which is caused through the consumers' interactions with products and by being exposed to advertisements (Aaker, 1997; Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001). In line with that, the American Marketing Association (2013) defines brand personality as follows:

"[Brand personality] is the psychological nature of a particular brand as intended by its sellers, though persons in the marketplace may see the brand otherwise (called brand image). These two perspectives compare to the personalities of individual humans: what we intend or desire, and what others see or believe" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

Important to note is that this definition puts the formation of brand personality into the hands of the seller, as opposed to the consumer, and lacks the statement that it can be looked at both ways, since brand personality perception, similar to an individual's personality, is understood as a mental process and is therefore subjective (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Additionally and although the definition acknowledges that the consumer may see the brand (or brand personality for that matter) differently as intended by the seller, it concurrently implies that this deviating perception of the consumer is to be equated with the brand image construct. However, a lack of unity can be observed in the literature regarding these two assertions, which makes further clarification necessary.

Firstly, Geuens et al. (2009) address the problematic nature of the viewpoint from which brand personality needs to be defined. In their study, they (Geuens et al., 2009) argue that the confusion is rooted in the existence of several brand identity frameworks (as an overarching concept) and acknowledge that even though most literature focuses on brand image from a receiver and brand personality from a seller perspective, it is highly important to merely differentiate the two not only theoretically but also for practical and methodological reasons (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). Geuens et al. (2009) acknowledge that a gap between desired (sender perspective) and perceived (receiver/consumer

perspective) personality may exist and state that it is essential to indicate from which perspective brand personality is looked at. Similarly, Plummer (2000) also makes this differentiation between the so-called brand personality statement (as a strategic method on the sender's side) and brand personality profiles (as perceptual reality on the consumer's side).

Secondly, to clarify the meaning of brand personality from a consumer's perspective, it seems inappropriate to name the consumer's perceptual reality as to be 'brand image', as implied in the American Marketing Association (2013) definition. Brand personality is one component of brand image as an encompassing construct (Diamantopoulos, Smith, & Grime, 2005), which consists of more features than just brand personality. According to (Plummer, 1985), image consists of several functional characteristics, physical attributes, and characterisation or brand personality, which are transformed and classified into categories such as 'suitable', 'not suitable', or 'maybe suitable' in the minds of the consumers.

The work of Aaker (1997) influenced the majority of consumer behaviour literature on brand personality to date. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality in the following way:

"[Brand personality is defined] as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997).

However, in recent years this definition has been criticised as too broad or loosely defined, as it entails other characteristics (e.g. age, gender, etc.) besides personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Bosnjak, Bochmann, & Hufschmidt, 2007), which according to Geuens et al. (2009) may create validity issues for not being explicit enough about what is being measured. The definition that Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) thus propose, to address this vagueness is:

"Brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003).

This definition is based on Aaker's (1997) definition, but explicitly specifies personality traits instead of more universal human characteristics (Bosnjak et al., 2007) and also allows for the differentiation between a seller and receiver perspective as previously discussed. Another criticism in literature regarding Aaker's (1997) United States based study pertains to the non-replicability of the five factors cross-culturally, which has caused several authors (cf. Bosnjak et al., 2007; Sung & Tinkham, 2005) to develop and apply country-specific brand personality scales (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Geuens et al., 2009; Gupta, Winkel, & Peracchio, 2009). However, similar to the generic marketing and consumer behaviour literature, the tourism research literature commonly accepts the application and validity of Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale (BPS) as a fundamental construct. Thus, the definition of Aaker (1997) in combination with Azoulay and Kapferer's (2003) definition find application in this study.

Based on the review of literature relevant to brand personality, the following section will review and define the related destination personality construct.

# 3.4.1 Tourism and destination personality

The consumer research literature reveals that a strong and positive brand personality positively influences the brand itself (Freling & Forbes, 2005a) in a number of ways. Among these, Sirgy (1982) found that brand personality increases consumer preference and usage, which is in line with Fournier (1998), who states that it also positively influences trust and loyalty levels. Biel (1992) claims that brand personality increases the lifespan of brands and asks the consumer to accept an active role in the

interpretation of a brand. Most importantly, according to Aaker (1996) and Aaker (1997), brand personality is seen as a means to differentiate products, a commonly accepted feature of the construct. In relation to the previously discussed construct of brand image, it is important to determine how brand personality relates to the brand image construct and what constitutes brand personality.

It is commonly agreed in the tourism literature that destination personality has the same underlying idea as brand personality (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Destination personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics [or personality traits] associated with a destination as perceived from a tourist rather than a local resident viewpoint" (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006, p.128), which accepts Aaker's (1997) brand personality terminology. Destination personality connects the consumer to a brand on an emotional level (Landon, 1974) and provides the consumer at the same time with a more concrete point of reference, which is more descriptive, more vibrant, and above all, provides a more comprehensive picture than the one communicated through an abstract product offering (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006).

A brand's, or in a tourism context, a destination brand's personality, are ideas, clues or notions about a product that are difficult to grasp since we cannot necessarily apply our senses (e.g. hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling) to obtain information about that product (Freling & Forbes, 2005a), which may or may not influence our perception about it. However, these ideas, clues or notions are a nonphysical aspect of information that, in addition to the physical aspects, completes a consumer's product information significantly and configures the perceptions about that product (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). Any given product or destinations, for that matter, hold so-called extrinsic attributes (i.e. product related cues, but not part of the physical product) and intrinsic attributes (unalterable cue, involving physical constitution of a product) that influence a consumer's perceptual

processing (Freling & Forbes, 2005b). Freling and Forbes (2005b) explain this by reference to soft drinks, where flavour, texture and sweetness are considered as intrinsic cues, whereas a soft drink's brand name would be viewed as an extrinsic cue. Applied to tourism, the brand name 'Las Vegas' would similarly be the extrinsic cue, whereby Las Vegas' shows, casinos, hotel designs, to name a few, would be regarded as intrinsic cues. Zeithaml (1988) argues that in cases where a consumer has insufficient experience, lacks the time, the interest or possibly does not have the ability to evaluate intrinsic product attributes, the consumer is likely to depend on brand personality information as a substitute for intrinsic product attributes. This means that consumers not only depend on brand personality information as a substitute for intrinsic product attributes, but brand personality is also likely to influence product perceptions in situations where the evaluation of intrinsic product attributes is difficult or not possible (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). It also means that in situations where intrinsic attributes of products are very similar, brand personality serves as the differentiator between brands that are similar but are otherwise in competition with each other (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). Applied to tourism, these considerations are meaningful. Both groups of tourists, actual tourists (i.e. visitors with previous experience about a destination) and potential tourists (i.e. tourists that have not been to a specific destination), rely heavily on intrinsic and extrinsic information. Ideally, they need both types of information to be able to form their own perception about a destination, which eventually influences their future purchasing behaviour. In the absence of previous travel experience to a specific destination (e.g. first time visitors), brand or destination personality might be able to compensate for the lack of intrinsic information in that it supports both groups in gaining a perceptive image about a destination and, thus differentiates one destination from another. Additionally, Freling and Forbes (2005a) found that a positive brand personality as one type of brand association in the mind set of the consumer also positively influences overall brand evaluations and product associations, which again may create the desired difference in comparison to other indistinct brands or products. Caprara et al. (2001) argue that personality and the personification of brands (i.e. brand personality, brand character) (cf. Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990) could serve as a suitable metaphor to grasp consumers' perceptions of the concept of brand image.

In her seminal work, Aaker (1997) researched brand personality dimensions typified by a number of traits (Figure 3.6) that are based on the 'Five-Factor Model' or 'Big Five' personality traits (cf. Goldberg, 1990; 1992; Norman, 1963), a recognised list from personality theory research (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Geuens et al., 2009).

Brand **Personality Sincerity** Excitement Competence Sophistication Ruggedness Reliable Down-to-earth Daring Upper class Outdoorsy Honest Spirited Intelligent Charming Tough Wholesome Imaginative Successful Cheerful Up-to-date

Figure 3.6. Brand personality framework

Source: Aaker (1997, p. 352)

In her study, Aaker (1997) outlines two types of brand personality scales that generally find application in research to measure the extent to which a relationship between brand and human personality potentially drives consumer preference; ad hoc scales and theoretical scales based on human personality constructs (e.g. Big Five). According to her (Aaker, 1997) both approaches have advantages and disadvantages; ad hoc scales, being flexible for particular research projects, but often a theoretical, incomplete, unreliable and not valid; the second approach being more theoretical in nature, but relying on scales that are validated with regard to human personality constructs but not with brands, which implies that the validity can be debatable since often only a limited number of "dimensions (or factors) of human personality may be mirrored in brands, others might not" (Aaker, 1997, p.348). Thus, Aaker (1997) also refers in her study to Kassarjian (1971, p.415), who argues that "if unequivocal results are to emerge, consumer behaviour researchers must develop their own definitions and design their own instruments to measure the personality variables that go into the purchase decision", rather than applying tools that were designed for something else, which reflects some doubt in the practice to mirror human personality on product personality.

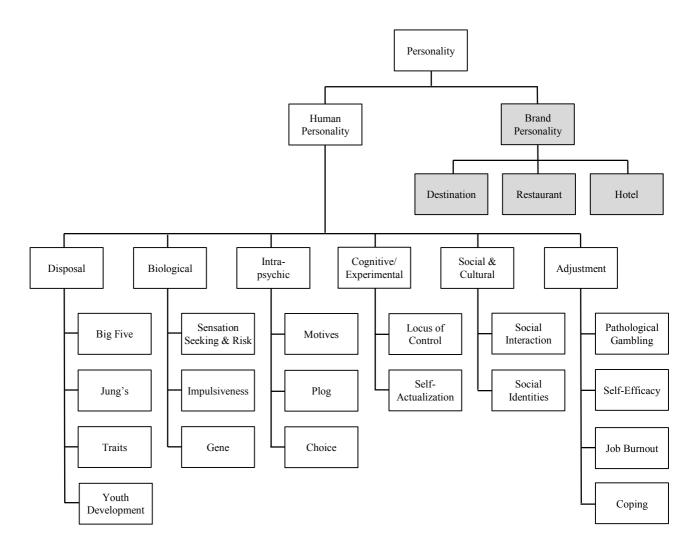
In line with Aaker's (1997) approach and considering Kassarjian's (1971) dissent, Ekinci and Hosany (2006) were the first to adopt Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale in their application to tourism destinations. They (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006, p.130; Hosany et al., 2006; 2007) argue that Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale "remains the most stable, reliable, and comprehensive measure to gauge brand / product personality". However it was found that even though Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale is generally applicable (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006) but not specifically defined for tourism destinations (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), the five-dimensional scale structure needs adaptation, in that only evidence for three factors instead of five was found (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006) and that personality

adjectives or traits (e.g. intelligent, successful, reliable, etc.) tend to shift in between certain dimensions (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011).

## 3.5 Destination personality measurement

The hospitality and tourism industry are seeking to develop brand personality in a variety of applications with regard to their products and services in order to meet the demand in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Murase & Bojanic, 2004). Personality affects individuals or consumers in many ways, such as an individual's shopping behaviour, their decision-making level, the ability for self-control, communication and interaction among individuals, as well as even their state of mind and stress level (Carver & Scheier, 2012). In an application to tourism, the way individuals react to a destination as a travel product can influence (i.e. enhance or limit) sales or marketing performance (Leung & Law, 2010). To fully understand the wide spectrum of this personality research, Leung and Law (2010) contribute to this research stream with a review of 160 journal articles on personality research in a tourism and hospitality context. In their research, Leung and Law (2010) categorised personality studies into two broad domains: human personality and brand personality (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. Categorisation of personality domains and subdomains in tourism and hospitality

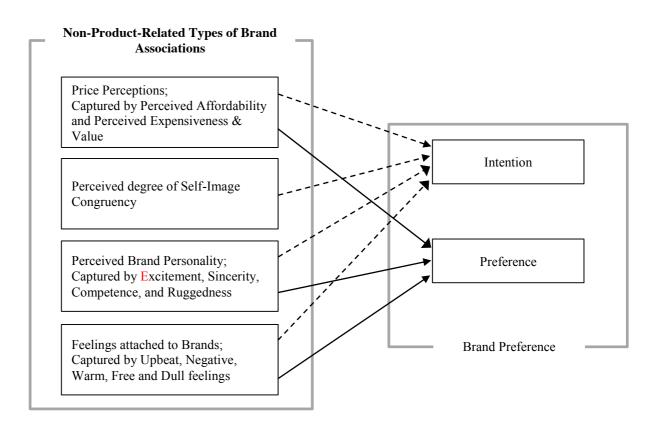


Source: Leung and Law (2010, p. 443)

Despite existing interfaces between the individual domains or subdomains, the interest of this thesis lies in the domain of brand personality with applications mainly in destinations, restaurants and hotels. Among the three subdomains, specific attention is directed to destination brand personality or simply destination personality. However, among the reviewed brand personality research in a hospitality and tourism context, Leung and Law's (2010) main outcome of their review acknowledges a number of research

contributors in this domain. Specifically, O'Cass and Lim (2001) argue that the use of brand personality impacts brand preference, which in consequence influences purchase intentions. O'Cass & Lim's (2001) research aim was to test the effects of non-product brand associations, such as price, user/usage imagery, brand personality and feelings/experiences (cf. Keller, 2007) on brand preference and purchase intentions adopting Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework. Using Aaker's (1997) original brand personality scale, the main finding from O'Cass and Lim's (2001) study is a model (Figure 3.8) that illustrates the relationships between these brand associations and brand preference.

Figure 3.8. Simplified model of relationships between non-product related types of brand associations and brand image



Source: O'Cass and Lim (2001, p. 63)

Furthermore, in an application of brand personality, Sill (1980) demonstrated that customers personalise a restaurant, forming an image of it based not only on the food type and food quality but on intangibles as well. For example, employees' attitudes communicate or are the foundations for a restaurant's personality. Further, Siguaw, Mattila and Austin (1999) applied Aaker's brand personality scale to evaluate the personality of restaurants. Restaurants may develop distinctive personalities. For example, in the Siguaw et al. (1999) study in the U.S. market, McDonalds is perceived as being more competent and exciting than either Burger King or Wendy's, while Burger King is considered the most rugged of the three. A well-established brand personality has been shown to result in increased preference patronage, higher emotional ties to the brand, trust and loyalty. Murase and Bojanic (2004) offered an extension to these findings, by examining crosscultural differences between quick-service restaurants (i.e. McDonald's, Wendy's, and KFC<sup>8</sup>) in Japan and the United States. Murase and Bojanic (2004) also applied Aaker's (1997) scale as a reliable and valid scale for products and restaurants (Siguaw et al., 1999) to determine the strength of brand personalities in the previously stated countries. The authors (Murase & Bojanic, 2004) found that consumer perception of restaurant personality differs across countries. For example, all three restaurants are perceived to be more sophisticated and rugged by Japanese consumers in comparison to individuals from the United States. In a different application of personality research to hospitality and tourism, Magnini and Parker (2009) focused more on the influence of hotel background music as an influencing factor on consumers' perception (i.e. guest's perception) of a hotel's brand personality, while the authors found evidence in an earlier study (i.e. experiment with undergraduate students) that the presence of classical music, in comparison to no music, influences guests to rate a restaurant as to be more intelligent

In Murase and Bojanic's (2004) study, initially the same quick-service restaurants were chosen as in the earlier study conducted by Siguaw et al. (1999). After Burger King withdrew from the Japanese market in 2001, KFC was selected as similarly popular replacement (Murase & Bojanic, 2004).

(Magnini & Thelen, 2008). In yet another application of personality in a hospitality and tourism context, Johns and Gyimóthy (2008) researched the brand positioning of a specific hotel category in Denmark (i.e. 'kros', meaning traditional wayside inns) based on a perceived hotel personality. In doing so, Johns and Gyimóthy (2008) characterised a consumer brand perception of Danish wayside inns by taking an inventory of brand characteristics, specifying the brand as a personality and describing the brand in form of a snapshot, as well as by revealing consumer's emotional feelings about this specific hotel category. In the application of brand personality to destinations, Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott (2003) argue for the use of brand management in the managing of destinations and individual stakeholders. The authors (Morgan, et al., 2003) suggest that for the development of a long-lasting destination brand, identifying brand values is critical. It is those brand values that then need to be transformed into an appropriate and appealing personality and need to be effectively communicated (Morgan, et al., 2003).

Ekinci and Hosany (2006) were the first that investigated whether tourists ascribe personality traits (cf. Aaker, 1997) to tourism destinations. They found that brand equity can be enhanced by establishing unique and positive associations in the minds of consumers through distinctive brand personality. Murphy, Moscardo, and Benckendorff (2007) stress in this context that the identification of specific destination personalities supports destination management not only in the identification of competing destinations, but distinctive destination personalities also potentially motivate tourist arrivals. In particular, the authors (Murphy et al., 2007) explore the visitors' perceptions of brand identity of two popular coastal and reef tourism destinations adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef in Northern Australia<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the question addressed in their (Murphy et al., 2007)

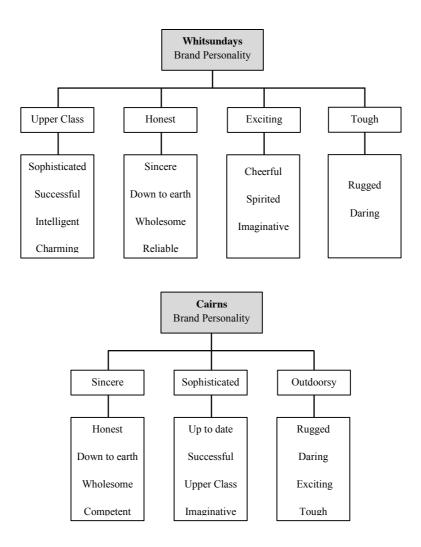
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The study involved a survey of visitors conducted in the North Queensland Tourism Region, located between the Cairns (Tropical North Queensland) region and Whitsundays region as the two destinations under research, an area that acts as transport corridor for visitors moving along the Queensland coast (Murphy et al., 2007).

paper is, whether visitors to the destinations of interest are able to differentiate personalities pertaining to these destinations, even when these destinations are marketed as one region. The authors (Murphy et al., 2007) applied Aaker's (1997) original brand personality scale to assess destination personality, which results in a 4-factor solution for the Whitsunday destination (i.e. upper class, honest, exciting, and tough) and in a 3-factor solution for Cairns (i.e. sincere, sophisticated, outdoorsy) (Figure 3.9). Besides looking at personality, the authors' paper (Murphy et al., 2007) also assessed destination image, using a qualitative research design. Participants were asked "to describe their image of each [individual destination] using 3 words or phrases (cognitive image), their impressions of how a holiday at the destination would make them feel (affective image), and a typical visitor to that destination (linking typical user to brand personality)" (Murphy et al., 2007, p.8).

The study shows that visitors to the destinations of interest are able to differentiate personalities pertaining to these destinations (i.e. Cairns and Whitsunday Islands) even when these destinations are marketed among one umbrella and as one region (i.e. Queensland) (Murphy et al., 2007; Murphy, Benckendorff, & Moscardo 2007a).

Figure 3.9. Brand personality dimensions for the Whitsundays region in comparison to the Cairns region

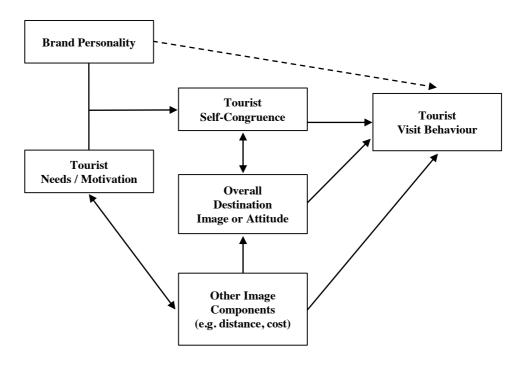


Source: Murphy et al. (2007, pp. 11/12)

Similarly, Murphy, Benckendorff and Moscardo (2007b) offer an extension to these findings and show that tourists can make an association between a destination and destination personality. The authors (Murphy et al., 2007b) found out that when these associations are consistent with their desired holiday experience, a high level of congruity between tourist self image and destination perception exists. In turn, this self-congruity leads to satisfaction with the visit to the destination (Murphy et al., 2007b). Thus, this study shows the importance of congruency between destination personality and how

tourists see and would like to see themselves for their actual and intended visit of the destination (Murphy et al., 2007a; 2007b) as conceptualised in Figure 3.10.

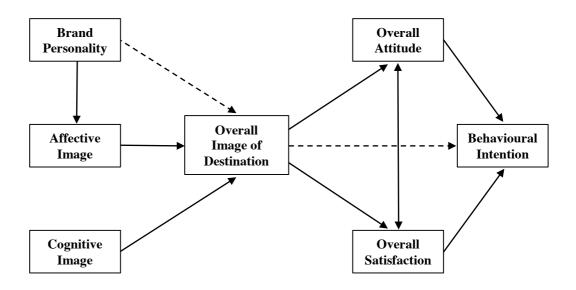
Figure 3.10. Conceptual framework for destination brand personality and tourist visit behaviour



Source: Murphy et al. (2007a)

Destination personality and destination image are often used interchangeably in the literature. However, Hosany et al. (2006; 2007) demonstrated that these are two different but related concepts. Brand image is an encompassing term, with brand personality as one of its components. Brand personality is related more to the affective (softer) side of brand image, which is reflected in a framework for destination branding (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11. Framework for destination branding



Source: Hosany and Ekinci (2003); (cf. Murphy et al., 2007a)

Collectively, the literature review of research on brand personality in a hospitality and tourism context shows that a majority of scholars relied on the original short (15 items) or extended version (42 items) of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale, adapted to a tourism and hospitality context to measure destination personality (e.g., Siguaw et al., 1999; O'Cass & Lim, 2001; Murase & Bojanic, 2004; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2006, 2007; Murphy et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2007a). Several reasons speak for the use of the original Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) in a hospitality and tourism context. First, Aaker's (1997) BPS is the most comprehensive instrument for measuring brand personality (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). Second, previous studies in a hospitality context used this scale to capture brand personality (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). For example, Siguaw et al. (1999) used this scale to measure restaurant brand personality. Third, with this approach the stability of the brand personality scale can be evaluated in

different cultures and situation, which allows for a comparison with previous research (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006).

However, this approach has simultaneously been widely criticised, even though used by many scholars. First, the original BPS can be applied to tourism destinations only with adaptation, resulting in different numbers and types of factors as well as items pertaining to each factor than the original BPS. For example, Ekinci and Hosany's (2006) data resulted in a final version of three factors (sincerity, excitement, conviviality). The original BPS items (Aaker, 1997) result in a different scale solution (i.e factor loadings) for each destination in question/assessment. Secondly, inconsistent scale solutions suggest that the use of such a scale is limited to a specific destination under review (e.g. Australia) and cannot necessarily be generalised to other destinations in the very same format (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2006, 2007; Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk & Baloglu, 2007). Third, the use of Aaker's (1997) BPS scale items as the starting point may not fully reflect the spectrum of personality traits pertaining to destinations, because the BPS has been originally designed to measure the brand personality of consumer goods (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007).

To overcome the limitations listed above, only a few authors have attempted to develop a scale measuring destination personality. D'Astous and Boujbel (2007) developed a new scale to measure a country's personality following Churchill's (1979) procedure for scale development. This scale measures destination (country) personality in particular and thus overcomes the limitation of the BPS scale, pertaining to the lack of the ability to tap all personality characteristics pertaining to destinations. However, the difficulty with this scale is that it would have to be replicated to assure validity; the scale has namely been developed using only Canadians from Montreal, thus a different final scale could have emerged from a sample from a different country. Therefore, this scale,

even though specifically designed to measure a country's personality, does not overcome the limitation that the investigation of a different country would result in a different final version of a destination personality scale. Similarly, Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri, & Kurtulus (2010) follow a traditional approach (Churchill, 1979) for a cities' brand personality scale development, where factors such as excitement, malignancy, peacefulness, conservatism, ruggedness were identified. The limitation of this scale is the fact that data used for scale development was based on personality perceptions of a relatively small number of cities (3 cities) and is thus, not generalisable. Further, a larger problem pertaining to this scale development is the use of student samples and not actual visitors to the destinations (cities) being evaluated. Therefore, this paper is another example of the lack of consistency in destination personality assessment and the need for qualitative assessment.

Both authors, D'Astous and Boujbel (2007) and Kaplan et al. (2010), acknowledge the limitation of a quantitative approach to measure destination personality. Several authors thus suggest that to be able to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the destination personality construct, qualitative research designs (e.g. projective techniques) should be applied to elicit destination specific personality characteristics (Ekincy & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007). For instance, participants could be shown videos of holiday destinations or other projective techniques as a stimulus and then be asked to generate a list of personality traits that can be attributed to that destination (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Hosany et al., 2007).

In their article on evaluation of communication of brand personality by African countries through their official websites, Pitt, Opoku, Hultman, Abratt, and Spyropoulou (2007), developed a new, simple, and inexpensive qualitative approach to study destination personality. All textual information from the main portal on each country's website was copied into a text document. Further, all links on each main portal were clicked and all

available information from these links was copied into the same document. This approach led to a considerable amount of textual information from each country's website (i.e. Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe) (Pitt et al., 2007, p.838-839). The researchers found that, of all researched countries, the most words related to the personality construct (5344 words) were found on Kenya's tourism website (Pitt et al., 2007). Further, ruggedness was the brand personality dimension that African websites communicate most (38% of total number of words related to destination personality). This article is, thus, an important methodological contribution with regards to a new research design and inexpensive methods to determine destination personality, using a qualitative approach.

Similarly, Johns and Gyimóthy (2008) in their earlier mentioned study on Danish inns' (kros) brand image assessment through their brand personality, brand snapshot, and brand identity profile utilised a qualitative approach to hotel personality measurement. They conducted 30 interviews with frequent travellers, but non-kro-users, approached through personal profile and interviewed at home or at a convenient café. Brand personality of kros was assessed through questions like "If a kro were a person, what kind of person would it be?" and "What were his/her taste in food, clothing, lifestyle, etc." (Johns & Gyimóthy, 2008, p. 272). Such an approach to measure brand personality is the strength of Johns and Gyimóthy's (2008) article as results revealed that a typical kro is seen to have the brand personality of an older man or woman, hard working, warm and friendly, but at the same time unsophisticated and difficult to identify with. Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale would not be able to yield the appropriate results due to its limitation to capture the characteristics that are not measured by the final BPS scale. In particular, Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale would likely be able to tap the sophistication aspect of kros' personality, as sophistication characteristics are part of

Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. However, characteristics such as older, hard-working, warm and friendly personality would most likely not be revealed. This article is, thus, a demonstration of the limitations of quantitative approaches to measure destination personality.

Finally, Usakli and Baloglu (2011) assessed the destination personality of Las Vegas and examined the relationships among destination personality, self-congruity, and tourist's behavioural intentions. This study utilised a free elicitation task (i.e. qualitative approach) to identify the unique traits that describe Las Vegas. The subjects "were asked to think of Las Vegas as if it were a person and to write down the personality traits that first came to mind" and if a trait was mentioned "by at least 25% of the subjects, it was included in the pool of personality traits" describing Las Vegas (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011, p. 119). Nine unique traits met this criterion (i.e., exciting, sexy, energetic, vibrant, independent, unique, alive, showy, and naughty). Further, four open-ended questions in the survey allowed respondents to think freely about the destination and to express their original and unique views (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011, p. 120):

- 1. Describe the general image of Las Vegas, using 3 words or phrases;
- 2. List 3 personality traits associated with Las Vegas;
- 3. Visualise and describe a typical visitor to Las Vegas; and
- 4. Write down a tourism slogan or a tag line for Las Vegas in your own words.

First, the advantage of this study is the utilisation of a free elicitation task (i.e. qualitative approach) to identify the unique traits that describe Las Vegas in order to address the limitation of the BPS scale application to tourism destinations. Second, Aaker (1997) proposed that brand personality could be formed in two ways, directly (i.e. through self-view of the brand or a typical brand user) or indirectly (through destination slogans or

tag lines). This paper is the first that addresses both aspects of destination personality formulation. Further, this is the first paper that shows the importance of the argument that the personality traits designed for consumer goods tend to shift when applied to tourism destinations. It is, thus, of utmost importance to capture destination personality characteristics with a qualitative approach to be able to get a full and comprehensive understanding of a destination's personality.

### 3.6 Summary

Brand image is the subjective perception of individuals, or groups of people, as consumers, that is reflected by the sum of brand associations (e.g., objective knowledge, thoughts, feelings, prejudice, expectations, imaginations, beliefs, ideas and impressions) held in their memory (Geuens et al., 2009; Hosany et al., 2006, 2007; Keller, 1993). Its notion can be applied to entire companies, individual products and services offered by companies or to the composite products such as tourism destinations. The image of the destination plays a crucial role in consumers' selective processes of choosing a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

While holistic and unique image components consist of overall functional and psychological representations of places that cannot be further broken down (mental picture, imagery, atmosphere or mood of a place), unique features can be described as special markers, symbols, must-see sights or auras (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 1993). An important concept within the larger idea of image is the symbolic concept of brand personality (Keller, 2007; Parker, 2009). It suggests that products and brands have person-like qualities or characteristics (Aaker, 1997; Parker, 2009). Brand personality increases consumer preference and usage, as well as positively influences trust and loyalty levels (Sirgy, 1982; Fournier, 1998).

Literature demonstrates that tourists ascribe personality traits to tourism destinations (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). A distinctive brand personality could help to create a set of unique and favorable associations in the consumer's memory, and thus build and enhance brand equity. Identification of specific destination personalities supports destination management not only in the identification of competing destinations, but distinctive destination personalities also potentially motivate tourist arrivals (Murphy et al., 2007). A brand's, or in a tourism context, a destination brand's personality, integrates ideas, clues or notions about a product that may be otherwise difficult to grasp given the limited sensory information (e.g., hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling) (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). Furthermore, these ideas, clues or notions are a nonphysical aspect of information that, in addition to the physical aspects, completes a consumer's product or service information holistically and configures the perceptions about that product or service.

Ideally, tourists need information about image as well as personality to be able to form their own perception about a destination, which eventually influences their future purchasing behaviour. In the absence of previous travel experience to a specific destination (e.g., first time visitors), brand or destination personality might be able to compensate for the lack of intrinsic information in that it supports both groups in gaining a perceptive image about a destination and, thus, differentiates one destination from another.

# CHAPTER IV: DESTINATION IMAGE AND PERSONALITY AS FACTORS OF A CO-BRANDING APPROACH TO MARKETING OF THE BALTIC STATES

### 4.1 Introduction

Within this chapter literature on the current and expected future development of tourism in the Baltic region will first be reviewed. Subsequently, it reflects on the importance of a co-branding concept for tourism destinations and the role of destination image and personality for such a marketing approach. It commences with the gap in the literature and justification for the study.

#### 4.2 Overview of current tourism in the Baltic States

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, for all three countries, the tourism industry has an important impact on GDP (5.3% in Lithuania, 8.6% in Latvia, and 13.6% in Estonia; Bank DnB Nord Group, 2011). While tourism numbers are promising, several observations need to be addressed pertaining to the tourism structure. There are several socio-economic and environmental constraints related to tourism development in the Baltic States tourism sector, which hamper the sector's sustainability and growth. Tourism in the Baltic States highlights a trend of economic concentration in the capital cities (Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius) with little economic development elsewhere (Smith et al., 2002; 2013). However, the expansion of tourist offerings in the three destinations would extend an opportunity for economic growth throughout the Baltic States region. For example, in the Soviet period, the shores of the Gulf of Riga or spa resorts of Jurmala were very popular tourism destinations (Smith et al., 2002; 2013). After the countries' independence the new wave of tourists from the West changed the tourism structure. For example, visits

of foreign tourists are short-term partially due to a limited diversity of services and a lack of appropriate information to motivate foreign tourists to prolong their stay (Roose, 2007). The Baltic States became a popular weekend getaway for Scandinavian tourists, in particular tourists from Finland that are escaping the high prices of alcohol in their home countries. German tourists, particularly the descendants of Baltic Germans, often visit the Baltic States, particularly Latvia, for cultural and heritage reasons (Smith et al., 2013). Other tourists to the Baltic States are typically visiting these destinations because they represent a cheaper alternative in comparison to Western Europe. For example, backpackers discovered Riga as a bargain and "off-the-beaten path" alternative to Prague (Smith et al., 2013). The pricing is linked to the quality of tourism services that needs to be improved (Roose, 2007). A permanent shortage of qualified personnel in rural districts, poor product development and service quality, restricted volume of catering and a limited number of ATMs are some examples of major local constraints in tourism (Roose, 2007). However, lately more Western hotel brands (e.g., Best Western, SAS Radisson) have entered the market that cover for the lack of high-quality hotel rooms as well as growth of services that accommodate Western tourists. The number of hotel beds and number of enterprises in tourism-related sectors or services have a significant positive influence on the number of tourists, and can predictably be considered as an important resource for regional tourism. This relationship is bidirectional – businesses adapt to a real economic situation and develop in regions with higher tourists' attention (Pavlyuk, 2010).

Such a turn in tourism development is interesting to observe considering the growth of the tourism industry in the Baltic States. While the capitals are, without any doubt, beautiful, are architectural and cultural gems with a range of friendly, privately run restaurants, clubs and pubs, outdoor patios and beer gardens, the Baltic States have, beyond their capital cities, a multitude of treasures in all parts of the region to offer to

tourists from around the world (Smith et al., 2002, 2013). Outside the capitals, beaches are, by European standards, often deserted but beautiful. The countryside offers fresh water fishing and game hunting in the forests. There are numerous medieval castles, renaissance palaces and quaint towns that offer tourists more to see than just capitals. However, nature and landscape based tourism is restricted by overexploitation, conservation rules, and strict property rights with limited public access areas for recreation purposes (Roose, 2007). In pursuing nature-based tourism opportunities, tourism development should avoid locations where the land's fragile or pristine condition cannot sustain any developmental impacts, such as in areas of special rural character or landscape, native vegetation, biodiversity and water resources as this reduces the tourism potential and environmental value of areas (Roose, 2007). While first initiatives of nature based and heritage tourism are observable and also lately gastronomy being used in an attempt to establish a distinct market position, capital cities are still attracting the majority of tourists. Still unexploited resources include making use of the full season, especially the spring time, a better event marketing, and the improvement of a rather poor infrastructure for active tourism such as walking and biking (Roose, 2007). Marketing problems originate from a more nationalistic and county specific focus and are exacerbated by a weak product development, inconsistent image and poor collaboration with travel companies. For tourism to develop and blossom in its full potential, the destination as a whole has to be marketed consistently in a crowded and highly competitive market of tourist destinations (Smith et al., 2013). A co-ordinated marketing plan with attractive airfares, dynamically packaged vacation plans and appealing campaigns needs to be developed. Local authorities have begun to pay attention to visual identity and marketing, training, information and publishing, and local, regional, and national tourism organizations have started regularly participating in trade exhibitions (Roose, 2007).

Last but not least, the competition between destinations for tourists is present in all Baltic States. An analysis of the competition and cooperation between regions in the Baltic States suggests that tourists, accommodated or based in a particular region within the Baltic States, cannot be considered as a resource for other parts of the Baltic States, but on the contrary – have almost no influence on the inrush of tourists in other parts of the region (Pavlyuk, 2010). The majority of tourists seem to prefer being accommodated in a particular location and only visit neighbouring regions (if any) as a one-day trip (Pavlyuk, 2010). The second reason for competition between regions is the limited number of wellorganized tourist routes in the Baltic States. Most routes are still designed to keep tourists in a particular and geographically small region (partially due to poor infrastructure) and only promote or suggest one-day excursions to attractions of neighbouring regions (Pavlyuk, 2010). There is still limited public transport that restricts travel by individual tourists (Roose, 2007). The development of routes that includes overnights stays in different regions would improve the level of region's cooperation. Tourism in the Baltic countries is still significantly individualistic (i.e., independent travel), and the development of a transportation network and international and cross-border tourism routes would be highly desirable.

This overview of the current tourism industry in the Baltic States suggests that the economic impact of tourism will largely depend upon the existence and success of other industry sectors in these regions, the profile of traditional exports and import-competing industries, exchange rate regimes and current government macroeconomic policy positions (Roose, 2007). The majority of the cited factors support tourism's economic potential and revenue in the area. The mix of activities and diverse life-styles existing within these destinations are important tourism attractors and need to be explored. These can include recreation and sports facilities – summer facilities (e.g., beaches, tennis), winter facilities

(e.g., skiing), water sports (e.g., swimming, boating, fishing); facilities for special interest groups such as adventure tourism, ecotourism, heritage tourism and biking trails (Roose, 2007). The more diversified a destination's portfolio of tourism products, services and experiences, the greater will be its ability to attract different tourist market segments.

#### 4.3 Future of tourism in the Baltic States

In all three countries, it is the strong leisure segment that is driving the tourism industry, whereby the share in business travel is low, at approximately 20-23% of direct travel and tourism GDP in 2011. Thus, it is assumed that while all three countries mainly focus on leisure travel, business travel may offer development potential with regard to the effects of Estonia and Latvia being full EU member states (i.e. both have been members of the euro zone since 2011 and 2014 respectively) and Lithuania being an EU member state and candidate for the euro zone. Estonia and Latvia both significantly benefit from foreign visitor spending in comparison to Lithuania, where foreign visitor exports do not exceed 52.7% of direct travel and tourism GDP. This implies that in the near future the Latvian and Estonian domestic tourism market will offer room for development, whereas for Lithuania, the focus might be to streamline potential marketing activities more towards the international markets. However, Therkelsen and Gram (2010) state that the Nordic countries, and as such the Baltic States, emerged on the international tourism market as a region in a 'far off the beaten track' corner of Europe, often depicted on one side as a region with harsh weather conditions, culturally as well as historically rich and as rugged countries in their natural state, which is in contrast to being marketed as warm, sunny, urban and cosmopolitan places, on the other hand. By having such an inconsistent image and being a region that acts as a newcomer on the international tourism market, it seems necessary for these countries to integrate into a cohesive future European brand, with great

diligence, and just as much caution was required to develop a coherent Nordic profile as such (Therkelsen & Gram, 2010).

As indicated in the introduction, Europe is a highly important tourism region and has lost market share over the last couple of years, partially resulting from the growth of dynamic regions in Asia and South Asia (European Commission, 2008), partially because of an economic or financial crisis and additionally because Europe is by its core nature a difficult and diverse place to market (Therkelsen & Gram, 2010). Therkelsen and Gram (2010) infer that the competitive environment in international tourism has extensively changed, with new or developing economies surfacing on the tourism market and discounted flights changing travel experiences and patterns, so that nationally confined marketing or branding strategies among Europe's destinations may potentially not be the proper response to successfully repel this international competition in the long run. The authors (Therkelsen & Gram, 2010) argue that especially for smaller countries (e.g. Nordic countries) it may be a new, but certainly viable, approach to reconsider their destination's geographical frame or range, in order not only to counter the competition, but essentially to position their destination differently and more comprehensively in the mind-set and perception of the consumer, who may not consider national borders as boundaries anyway. The Baltic States' contribution to Europe's tourism sector is, as previously shown, comparatively small and the countries' tourism industries have in the past predominantly relied on domestic or neighbouring tourism markets such as Finland, Sweden, Russia or Germany. Applied to the Nordic countries, Therkelsen and Grand (2010) suggest that a common European or possibly a common regional or supra-national branding strategy might be beneficial to increase the attention in more distant source markets, to consolidate marketing and other resources and to utilise synergies by enhancing an image transfer from attractive locations to less attractive locations and thereby increasing the image capital of the participating parties. This, according to Therkelsen and Grand (2010) would also positively impact the dispersion of tourism product resources to other places, an important aspect considering that the Nordic countries are rarely the first destination choice of international travellers as the tourism-related image of these countries is considered to be too vague.

The European Travel Commission (ETC), a coalition of National Tourism Organisations (NTO's) has brought such a promotional initiative (www.visiteurope.com) into being, in order to market Europe as one destination to international/global tourism markets. Their website states that:

"NTOs are governmental organisations set up to market and promote tourism to their own individual countries. However, for some markets and market segments, the European brand carries more weight than individual national brands. It is in such markets that ETC is active, bringing together its member NTOs in partnership to promote Europe and to seek to generate tourism flows which the NTOs would find it much harder to achieve individually" (European Travel Commission, 2009).

While the website is intended to be a branding initiative, which tries to make the point for a diverse Europe and destinations that are marketed together at no unilateral advantage for a specific destination or stakeholder, the website fails to create a unique and shared identity (Halkier, 2010; Therkelsen & Gram, 2010). Jaakson (2000) points out that small countries such as the Baltic States have always experienced outside control to a certain extent and can almost be seen as an historical rule. Something that has changed for these countries since their independence from the Soviet Union, according to Jaakson (2000), is the direction from where control is being executed, meaning that is has simply changed from East to West, or from the Soviet to the European Union.

In the history of Western Europe, a number of supra-national planning initiatives for social, environmental and economic co-operation can be found, which is why Jaakson

(2000) points out that these three states were historically already connected in trading federations, the promotion of educational programmes, as well as tourism development programmes. A good example cited by Jaakson (2000) are two European Union documents, "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010: Towards a Framework for Spatial Development in the Baltic Sea Region" (Ministers of Spatial Planning and Development, 1994) and "From Vision to Action" (Ministers of Spatial Planning and Development, 1996), which identified a high tourism potential in the cultural landscapes, coastal zones, and the Baltic Sea islands, which are assigned the role of serving the touristic and recreation needs of urban residents of Western Europe. These documents suggest development of economic structures, which can co-exist and complement touristic activities in these three states.

Based on the review above, it thus seems feasible to investigate the potential of cobranding strategies of the three Baltic States; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

## 4.4 The importance of co-branding for tourism destinations

As an umbrella term, marketing comprises (but is certainly not limited to) activities such as product development, price determination, communication, and distribution, but also activities that give permanent attention to the constantly changing needs and wants of the consumer; activities that not only focus on product development but also on the alteration of products and design of services in order to meet consumer needs (Kotler & Levy, 1969). Regardless of whether marketing is viewed as a means to push or promote products or whether it is understood as a means to steer customer satisfaction, it is most commonly perceived and reviewed as a business operation (Kotler & Levy, 1969).

Li and Petrick's (2008) contention is that tourists and tourism providers are considered as to be co-creators of value and experience products. This means that on one side there are tourists who are driven by certain motivations to look and search for information and who process potentially desired experiences based on what their personal evaluation of their needs and wants is; on the other side, there is the tourism industry and different tourism providers that are rather offering solutions than pre-customised products to fulfil these needs and wants (Li & Petrick, 2008). Li and Petrick (2008) therefore suggest that the tourist, who is ultimately involved in a relational exchange with tourism providers, is primarily generating the value of a product or tourism service through the actual utilisation of that product or service. Thus, it can be argued that in light of this changing role of marketing, the responsibility of marketers changes, in so far as they can be viewed as a form of 'personal shopper' or the tourists' agent since they need to be able to match the supply side with the buyers or customers, instead of simply and unilaterally marketing tourism products on behalf of a tourism provider (Li & Petrick, 2008). Evidently, outstanding marketing in this scenario is required to have a solid understanding

of the tourists' interests, their competence and their previous knowledge.

Nonetheless, the new way of thinking, as depicted by Li and Petrick (2008), will make it necessary for marketers to think in more dynamic and holistic ways, and in this context also by broadening their view from a local and regional scale towards more global thinking. In an environment where tourists eventually are considered to be co-creators of value, Li and Petrick (2008) argue that competing businesses might as well be potential partners. On a related note, branding initiatives are, for example, not solely focusing on individual attractions, but instead are trying to involve an entire destination, or even multiple destinations, to strategically market and brand a larger unit, taking multiple stakeholders into consideration (Balmer, 2001).

Ries & Ries (2002) argue that marketing and branding are inseparably linked to each other since the ultimate goal of marketing is to establish a brand in the mind of the consumer and, thus, advertising, packaging techniques, promotional activities, design development as well as public relations, are means or resources to reach this objective. Branding can therefore be considered as to be one of the most meaningful and important aims and objectives of marketing (Cai, 2002) and it symbolises a binding agent that keeps the spectrum of marketing together (Ries & Ries, 2002). The best approach to answer what constitutes the concept of branding is to look into the question as to why brands exist. Landor Associates (2010) state that brands support consumers in their selection process, to make up their mind and to make a choice, per se. The role that branding then fulfils, is to guarantee that a product or service is relevant to the consumer or present in the consumer's mind. This, according to Landor Associates (2010), will ideally then be the preferred choice for the consumer, out of a potentially infinite number of options. Branding strategies, if properly handled, help companies to obtain competitive advantage (Kim & Kim, 2004; O'Neill & Mattila, 2004), are applied to differentiate products and companies

from each other, and thereby create an economic value for both businesses and tourists (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010).

Increasingly, in the tourism sector, there seems to be an expanding interest in brand partnerships or co-branding as a special form of brand extension (Chang, 2009), a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective objective to establish a brand more effectively in comparison to what a partner brand would be able to do on its own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). From a strategic point of view, companies are getting involved in brand partnerships or alliances primarily in order to enhance their brand equity (Cornelis, 2010; Grossman, 1997; Motion et al., 2003; Washburn et al., 2000). This, according to Cornelis (2010), is due to the fact that companies or existing brands are looking into new opportunities to provide more or better value to the consumer and to continuously grow in their respective markets, something that becomes, in highly competitive markets such as tourism, increasingly difficult. When co-branding strategies are applied, co-branded products can adopt the salient attributes of the other brand (Park et al. 1996, Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Due to this spillover effect, lesser-known brands might benefit most (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The general consensus in the literature is that high brand awareness paired with favourable brand associations usually results in a similarly favourable assessment of co-branded products, provided there is a match between the parent brand and co-brand or extension (Park et al., 1996; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). It is, thus, not surprising that more recently, co-branding strategies have been applied in service industries, particularly in or between restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, discount retailers, and theme parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Young et al., 2001).

It can be argued, therefore, that small destinations with a limited tourist offering would be able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding, as it frequently offers great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire region or

geographical area when individual destinations target similar market segments or alternatively offer complementing products or services and widen or diversify the regions product mix (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). This, according to Fyall and Garrod (2005) and Naipaul et al., (2009), is potentially able to cause a change in consumers' consumption patterns, increase consumer demand and increase consumer expenditure.

## **4.5** Destination image of the Baltic States

Since the end of the cold war and the fall of the iron curtain, increasing attention has been given to cultural research focusing on Central and Eastern Europe (Huettinger, 2008). Nevertheless, the three Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, have for the most part been long neglected in cultural research and are still being perceived in the consumers' minds as a 'forecourt of Russia' (Huettinger, 2008). According to Huettinger (2008), this is an unfortunate situation, particularly because the Baltic States are relentlessly trying to create awareness among consumers that they are oriented towards western Europe and prefer to be seen as formerly occupied rather than being considered as a former Soviet republic.

The three Baltic States share a cultural and political heritage, geographical closeness, and identification with Central and Western Europe, in terms of level of education, language skills, entrepreneurship and strong ethics. However, a major challenge for the tourism industry and an aspect that especially affects inbound business, is the fact that the three countries are relatively small, still surprisingly unknown to the majority of travellers and, in a small market, still not fully developed in terms of tourism offerings (Archdeacon, 2008). Even though the Baltic States have each initiated image campaigns to promote their destinations and investment in their markets, the lack of information about the countries beyond geographic location and affiliation to the European Union is still

problematic.

However, Siraliova and Angelis (2006) point out that all three countries constitute interesting emerging markets, not just due to their strategically very centralised location within Europe and also between Europe and its main trading partners, a formerly very fragile position among imperialist forces (Martinsons, 1995), but also due to their historic affiliations, within, as well as outside of Europe. Huettinger (2008) argues that all three Baltic States are also very similar on all of Hofstede's dimensions: individuality, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. This leads Huettinger (2008) to the conclusion that the three countries are similar in terms of their business values. Compared to some of the neighbouring countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Russia) they score differently on these same dimensions, whereas the German business culture appears to be closely related to that of the Baltic States (Huettinger, 2008). Huettinger (2008), thus, argues that it is worth considering viewing the three Baltic States as one market. Based on such similarities and common characteristics among the three states one can reasonably expect Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to be able to benefit from joint marketing efforts.

# 4.6 The role of destination image and personality for co-branding of the Baltic States as a destination

Brands in general are, like people or individuals, portrayed with adjectives (Plummer, 1985; 2000) so that consumer perceptions reflect certain brand characteristics (Caprara et al., 2001). This follows from the psychological approach in personality psychology, which claims that important personality characteristics become encrypted in language (Caprara et al., 2001; Goldberg, 1990; Peabody & De Raad, 2002). For example, the brand personality ascribed to Las Vegas, a city known for the 'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas' marketing campaign, is a personality represented through adjectives such

as "exiting, sexy and safely dangerous" (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009). Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) state that a personification of brands occurs in mainly two forms; first, identifying or comparing a product with a human being; and second, connecting a consumer's personality or self concept with the perceived image of a product. Gartner (1994) found, for instance, that the perceived affective image a tourist has of a destination largely depends on the tourist's motivations. Additionally, other authors (Kressmann et al., 2006; Sirgy & Su, 2000) recount that the connection between destination image and destination preference was influenced by a tourists' self-image. In consumer behaviour research, it is argued that the likelihood of purchasing a product is strongly influenced by how a consumer's self concept interacts with the perceived product personality (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). This interaction or perceived match is called 'congruity'.

Visiting places, destinations, and travelling in general includes numerous motivations for tourists, such as being able to participate in new experiences, visiting exotic places, meeting new people and learning about their culture; it is a chance to be physically active, to gain new skills and to get away from the stress and daily routine of normal life, and eventually for some tourists it is also an opportunity to talk about something as soon as they get back home (Murphy et al., 2007). However, from a social psychology standpoint, the motivation to travel is regarded as an internal, affect-related factor that stimulates and navigates a tourist's behaviour and, thus, exists to satisfy a specific need (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009). Goossens (2000) states that there is a relationship between the emotional needs or the affective state of tourists and their travel motivation, as well as choice behaviour. Morgan et al. (2002) emphasise Goossens (2000) statement by arguing that the consumers are increasingly making lifestyle statements with their selection of destinations, in that destinations not only have to be emotionally attractive to them, but need to reflect certain aspects of the individual's persona. A brand,

together with its image and personality, regardless of whether it is a product, service or destination, needs to meet self-expression needs (e.g. fulfilment, rejuvenation, experiences) of the consumer and not be based on simply functional benefits, 'places and things' (Caldwell & Freire, 2004; King, 2002; Murphy et al., 2007). Ultimately, people then also travel for purposes such as ego enhancement and self esteem (Jang et al., 2009), since destinations, much like any other product or service, resemble or communicate symbolic meanings about the consumer (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Belk et al., 1982; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). It can therefore be argued that consumers – and so are travellers and tourists – consume products, services and destinations in order to design their self or personal identity (Belk, 1988) and by doing so, establish a connection or even relationship with a product, service or destination.

It is argued that an individual's self-image or self-concept evolves with time and is comprised of two perspectives; one, how that individual sees or thinks of him/herself and two, how other individuals perceive him/her and respond to them (Graeff, 1996; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Parker, 2009). A self-concept is therefore "a set of knowledge and beliefs about one's self that is stored in memory [and as such] can be activated and recalled to influence purchase decisions" (Graeff, 1996, p. 5). As a multi-dimensional construct, self-image consists of four main constituents (Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007; Sirgy, 1982; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011) as can be seen in Table 4.1.

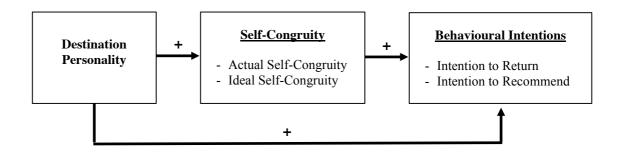
**Table 4.1. Self-concept framework** 

Components of Self-Concept	Definition / Explanation
Real Self -Concept / Actual Self-Concept	Refers to how a person actually perceives himself or herself
Ideal Self-Concept	Refers to how a person would like to perceive himself or herself
Social Self-Concept	Refer to how an individual thinks others perceive him or her
Ideal Social Self-Concept	Represents the way an individual desires to be perceived by others

Source: Usakli and Baloglu (2011)

Usakli and Baloglu (2011) state that self-congruity is to be seen as an expansion of the self-concept in that it establishes the theory (i.e. self-congruity theory) that consumers are likely to favour brands, products or services that reflect their own self-concept. Self-congruity is seen to be an important factor in the purchasing behaviour of tourists during the selection process of destinations (Beerli et al., 2007), as they (i.e. tourists or consumers in general) have a known disposition to choose products or destinations that reflect their own self-concept (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), something that Sirgy and Su (2000) refer to as match between a tourist's self-concept and a destination's image. The model that Usakli and Baloglu (2011) hypothesised (and tested) in their study provides an understanding of the positive effects that a distinctive brand or destination personality have on brand attitudes and is shown below (Figure 4.1).

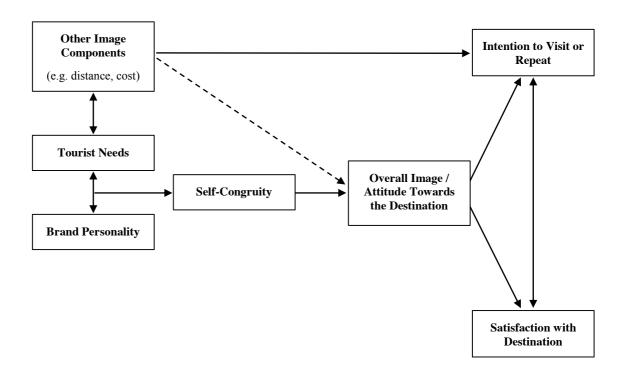
Figure 4.1. Mediating role of self-congruity on brand personality/brand attitude construct



Source: Usakli and Baloglu (2011)

Thus, there is consent in the literature that the higher the level of congruence between a self (i.e. any of the four components in Table 3.1) and destination perception in terms of destination image and destination personality, the more likely it becomes that a product or destination will be chosen (Beerli et al., 2007; Kressman et al., 2006; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). In a wider context, Murphy et al. (2007) developed a conceptual model (Figure 4.2) that connects destination image/destination attitude to evaluative results and behavioural intentions, based on the understanding that destination image can be seen as a type of attitude (Pike, 2002). In line with Hosany et al. (2006), this supports the view that destination image is regarded as a main constituent of destination loyalty.

Figure 4.2. Conceptual framework of destination branding and choice process



Source: Murphy et al. (2007)

It is argued in this research that although the four components of the self-construct or self-image might overlap to some extent, they are not one and the same. If one assumes that to be well founded, then destinations with specific commonalities (e.g. geographic closeness, etc.) but differing destination personalities and subsequently destination images could use co-branding as a way to target greater audiences. This is a reasonable assumption, as different consumers (i.e. tourists) have differing emotional needs and wants and, thus, may seek to fulfil a different self-component in their selection of a destination. For example, when looking at Las Vegas, the personality the destination has and tries to convey to the consumer is to be 'exiting, sexy and safely dangerous' (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009), as previously stated. Vegas' personality may be congruent with the actual or ideal self of a certain group of tourists who are adventurous tourists or thrill seekers, perceive to

have this personality or want others to believe in having these characteristics. On the other hand, other groups of tourists may find a higher congruity with destinations that are conceptualised as to be more down-to-earth or rugged and, thus, may exclude a destination such as Las Vegas from their search parameter. In today's competitive industry, in which destinations are trying to develop promotional campaigns that emphasise very specific destination personalities (Hosany et al., 2006), co-branding would most likely offer a way of keeping the individual destination's personalities. However, at the same time, since two or more destinations with different destination personalities would target tourists together, it would broaden their product and service portfolio to address more diverse customer segments (i.e. more diverse tourists seeking to fulfil different self-concepts) by visiting a destination.

Secondly, co-branding and its implications on destination personality might help fulfil different self-concepts of one person at the same time. For instance, the social ideal self-concept of one tourist (i.e. the way an individual wants to be seen) may be 'exciting'; thus, that traveller may select destinations that offer a perceived match in this dimension (cf. Aaker, 1997), to be able to maintain or foster that image of self-presentation in public. At the same time, the individual intrinsically may actually have the desire to be rugged (i.e. addressing the ideal self-concept). A co-branding of destinations with different destination personalities may, thus, be able to fulfil both self-concepts at the same time.

Lastly, travelling as a social activity means that people travel together. However, the personalities of individuals travelling together may differ significantly. For example, one individual of a tourist party may seek to find a destination that he/she perceives to be exciting whereas others may look for something entirely different (e.g. destination labelled as to be sophisticated). Co-branding of destinations that are in closer geographic proximity, but have different and distinct personalities and images and in addition are branded among

one umbrella, might offer the consumer the ability to experience a match between their individually different and desired holiday experience. Thus, the desired high level of congruity would be established between the tourists' self-images and their perceptions about the destinations, leading to a satisfaction of the individual self-concepts involved and higher likelihood of actually visiting a place.

## 4.7 The gap in the literature and justification for the study

Two central topics connected to the branding of tourism destinations and discussed in this literature review are destination personality and destination image. It is hoped that this study will make contributions to the marketing field, specifically tourism marketing and tourism branding, in that it extends the understanding and current literature on destination personality as well as on destination image. Second, it will extend the understanding and current literature on destination branding, which happens to be a popular means of differentiating destinations that are otherwise in competition with each other. Even though an extensive amount of research has been conducted on branding of destinations in the general tourism literature, no one, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has yet looked into the co-branding of destinations, a concept that is generally widely used in the marketing arena and particularly in consumer behaviour. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no one has approached the application of the co-branding concept in tourism destinations as a means to create yet another distinction criteria in an industry where brands or destinations are in great competition with each other. The central question that this study addresses is what role destination personality and destination image play in tourists' perceptions of co-branding destinations and their impact on tourist satisfaction as well as behavioural intentions (i.e. intention to visit, intention to return, and intention to recommend).

### 4.8 Summary

The Baltic States' tourism industry has an important impact on each country's GDP. However, it is perceived as a region in a 'far of the beaten track' corner of Europe, often depicted on one side as a region with harsh weather conditions, culturally as well as historically rich and as rugged countries in their natural state (Therkelsen & Gram, 2010). The Baltic States are a newcomer on the international tourism market, thus literature agrees that it is necessary for these countries to integrate into a cohesive future European brand with great diligence (Therkelsen & Gram, 2010). Literature suggests that small destinations with a limited tourist offering would benefit from collaborative marketing strategies as it frequently offers a great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire region and change tourists consumption patterns (Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Naipaul et al., 2009).

The three Baltic States share a cultural and political heritage, geographical closeness, and identification with Central and Western Europe, in terms of level of education, language skills, entrepreneurship and strong ethics. Based on such similarities and common characteristics, one can reasonably expect Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to be able to benefit from joint marketing efforts and position their destination differently and more comprehensively in the mind-set and perception of the consumer, who often does not consider national borders as boundaries anyway. However, as the review on destination image and personality suggests, development and emphasis of specific destination personalities is of utmost importance in the consumer's mind-set (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006). A collaboration approach such as co-branding would most likely offer a way of keeping the individual destination's personality that would broaden their product and service portfolio to address more diverse customer segments.

#### **CHAPTER V: METHODOLOGY**

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter clarifies the methodological approach and explains the principles used for this study by focusing on the research design, determining the research population and sample, as well as the sampling procedure. Furthermore, it explains the applied data collection method and describes the data analysis tools used for the study.

## 5.2 Research design

The purpose of this study was threefold; first, to analyse destination image and personality characteristics of Baltic countries; second, to evaluate the tourists' perception of co-branding of Baltic countries; and third, to examine the role of destination image and destination personality as a foundation for destination co-branding, in order to establish a conceptual model for Baltic countries' destination co-branding.

### 5.2.1 The study's exploratory research approach and underlying philosophy

The study's underlying questions indicate that the nature of the study is of exploratory purpose, in parts displaying explanatory elements. According to Robson (2002), Silverman (2006), as well as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007, 2012), it is the designation of exploratory research as a study, to seek new insights into a precise and concrete topic or phenomenon; they regard it ultimately as an opportunity to ask questions and as an instance to assess that phenomenon in a new light, or from a different angle. As indicated above, in the study at hand, the objective was to capture new insights regarding

the actual and potential target market's perceptions of co-branding of Baltic countries and to gain an insight into the role of destination personality and destination image, together with the implications in that respect.

Zikmund (2003) reasons that in situations where no, or only limited, knowledge about a research issue is available, it is the purpose of exploratory research to acquire a clearer understanding of the scope and dimension of the respective problem. This is based on the assumption that additional research might be necessary to provide more specific, representative, and distinctive evidence. The author (Zikmund, 2003) further argues that exploratory research emerges as a single, or series of studies, whose purpose it is to provide background information that demands and points researchers towards specific and particular aspects of its findings in further and conclusive studies. This principle has been adopted in this study, as the aim of the study was to see what destination images as well as destination personalities exist about the Baltic countries in the minds of potential and actual tourists and how that impacts the market perceptions for co-branding possibilities. This approach allows for the subsequent studies to elucidate this underlying idea with quantifiable approaches. In the present case, research was carried out on the nature of destination personality and destination image of the Baltic States and how these concepts can inform a co-branding approach to marketing. The aim was, thus, to conclude with a model of Baltic destination co-branding with a particular focus on exploring destination personality and image as its antecedents. The study was therefore designed to address a research problem with regards to an optimisation of destination branding / marketing effort.

The study was conducted using the subjectivism of ontology philosophy. Literature suggests that an ontological approach, as the underlying research philosophy applied to this study, is involved with the nature of reality and the nature of human beings in the

world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Saunders et al., 2007, 2012). The ontological approach embraces the idea of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013) and aims to capture how individuals participating in the study view their experiences differently (Moustakas, 1994). It is concerned with identifying, in the most general terms, the kinds of things that actually exist. Epistemology, on the other hand, is more conceived as a philosophical viewpoint that studies the scope or nature of knowledge itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Saunders et al., 2007, 2012). Epistomology is concerned with questions of what constitutes valid knowledge and how can we obtain it. It questions what knowledge is and how it can be acquired, and the extent to which knowledge pertinent to any given subject or entity can be acquired (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Since ontology is about what is true and epistemology is about methods of figuring out those truths, the ontological approach to this research deemed appropriate. Ontology adopts two major camps about studying the truth; the objectivism and the subjectivism. Objectivistic camp perceives truth as a single reality that exists independently of the observer and can be experienced through human senses and measured either directly or indirectly. This approach believes that a researcher can engage the world in a value-neutral manner and that knowledge is consequently built cumulatively following scientific canons (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Subjectivistic camp believes that the truth is composed of multiple realities that are symbolically constructed and based on observation (Brannigan, 1981). Theory is thus situationally and historically specific to a given social context (Brannigan, 1981). Therefore, the applicability of subjectivism, as an ontological stance, is adopted in this study, since the aim was to understand the subjective reality (i.e. destination image and destination personality perceptions) of customers (i.e. tourists) as a projection of human imagination, to be able to provide meaning from the researcher's point of view and to realise different perspectives, motives, actions and intentions of these social actors in their system (Creswell, 2013). Further, the perception of situations (i.e. destination images / destination personalities) constantly varies among individual social actors or customers (i.e. tourists), which is caused by the individual's own view of the world, an aspect that may be further impacted by the way individuals view themselves (i.e. self-concept); (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012; Creswell, 2013). These different perceptions lead to different interpretations and, thus, affect the individual's actions and way they interact with others, much in the same way as others may be affected by their actions.

### 5.2.2 Research process

The study was conducted in several stages. First, a thorough literature review was conducted to address the first aim of the study, followed by a consecutive data collection stage geared towards aims 2 and 3 of this study. Subsequent to the primary data collection was an in-depth analysis of the primary data, followed by a fourth stage addressing aim four, in which the findings of phase two and three were used to develop a conceptual model pertaining to the market perceptions of co-branding among the Baltic countries, incorporating destination image and destination personality (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Diagram of research design

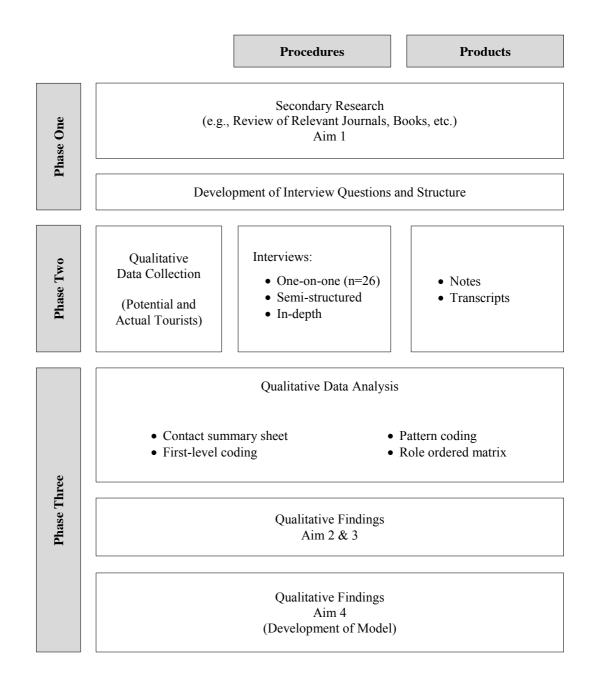


Figure 5.1 above illustrates the procedures and sequence of data collection techniques applied in this study, which will be explained further in the following sections.

In phase one, prior to the primary data collection, literature was critically reviewed and evaluated to obtain a good understanding and insight into previous research and

current developments in the relevant areas of tourism and marketing. This process enabled an understanding of the current state of knowledge within the research field (Fink, 2010; 2014) and allowed for generation and clarification of initial research ideas. Comparing and contrasting previous research findings, and synthesizing these in to a coherent understanding of the process of secondary research, further allowed a generation of research aims and provided definitions of concepts and theories central to the study. Lastly, it informed the process of the interview questions and structure formation. Primarily, academic journals and books in the respective domains were reviewed. The literature search utilised Web of Science as the primary electronic database, which provided links to associated publishers' electronic databases. This approach has been supplemented with Google Scholar to ensure that all relevant publications were reviewed. Main keywords used in the search process were: destination personality, destination image, tourism marketing, tourism branding, and tourism co-branding among others. The literature review in this thesis is presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Phase two explored the current perception of actual and potential tourists pertaining to distinct destination personality and destination image of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as individual destinations, as well as the suitability of these individual perceptions for a cobranding strategy between these destinations. The researcher aspired to gather an understanding of a subjective reality of the social actors involved; that are potential and actual tourists to the above mentioned tourism destinations. From the data gained, more detailed insights into the potentially differing perceptions on destination image and destination personality between potential and actual tourists were explored together with an insight into how both cases of tourists view the destination under research. Further, potentially differing opinions about destination co-branding influenced by destination image and destination personality were gained, so that conclusions were drawn regarding

the target market's perceptions of co-branding strategies for the respective tourism destinations. Phase three pertains to the data analysis and development of the model of co-branding for the Baltic States region and will be described in detail in subsequent sections.

This research followed an inductive approach to provide qualitative primary data. Zikmund (2003) defines this inductive reasoning as "the logical process of establishing a general proposition on the basis of observation of particular facts" (p. 47). At the expense of a generalisability of the findings, the strength of an inductive approach is in its potential to gain a close understanding for the research context and the way individuals construe their social world, which were features desired in this exploratory research (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012; Creswell, 2013). It was important to understand the reality of different actors engaged in this research. The inductive approach in both stages was chosen as it allowed a deeper and current insight into the complex perception of destination image and destination personality that tourists have on the destinations under research. Inductive reasoning namely moves from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories in which the researcher begins with specific observations and measures, begins to then detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses to explore, and finally ends up developing some general conclusions or theories (Babbie, 2001). Since this is the first study to date that explores perceptions of destinations co-branding inductive reasoning as a more open-ended and exploratory approach, especially during the early stages was adopted. Deductive reasoning was not deemed appropriate for this study as a researcher typically begins with a theory about his or her topic of interest (Babbie, 2001). From there, a researcher narrows that down into more specific hypotheses that can be tested with specific data, leading to a confirmation (or not) of the original theory and arriving at a conclusion (Babbie, 2001). This approach is adopted in later stages of research when initial theories about the phenomena exist. It would have been possible to adopt this approach to

address Aim 2 of this thesis as previous knowledge on destination image and personality exists in the literature. However, as the understanding of destinations image and personality is also part of addressing Aim 3 and specifically Aim 4, that are best addressed with an indictive approach for reasons stated, it deemed more appropriate to approach this study with an inductive approach in its entirety.

The qualitative data collected in the second phase helped in the explanation and formation of the third phase, where the target markets' perception of co-branding techniques of destinations was explored based on current destination image and personality existing in the minds of consumers (i.e. tourists). The primary data collection consisted of semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Its design and process will be explained in the following sections.

## 5.2.3 Research approach and interview design

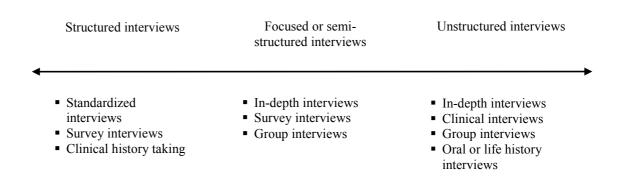
In the majority of research approaches, the measurement of image has predominantly used structured and quantitative approaches in the form of questionnaires (Pike, 2002; Hughes & Allen, 2008). Jenkins (1999) argues that alternative qualitative and unstructured research approaches have, for the most part, been regarded as a preceding step in questionnaire development. However, in line with Dann (1995, 1996), Hughes and Allen (2008), Jenkins (1999), and Ryan and Cave (2005) it is argued that due to the complexity and holistic nature of image and personality, an unstructured and qualitative approach is seen to be appropriate for this study. Qualitative data can best address the complexity and novelty of this research. One of the strengths of qualitative data lies in the way data is collected in close proximity to specific situations, which positively influences the richness or holism of the collected data that is nested in a real context (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Since qualitative data is geared

towards individuals' experiences, meanings people give to processes, their perceptions, assumptions, feelings, prejudgements and presuppositions as well as how they connect these meanings to the social world around them, it is seen to be one of the most beneficial strategies for discovering or exploring a new area (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014). The literature is very elaborate on difficulties and drawbacks of quantitative approaches to understand meanings, perceptions, values, and similar, that individuals assign to their experiences and their interactions with the social world they are living in (Creswell, 2003; Jankowicz, 2005; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2005, Zikmund, 2003). In this context, Punch (2005, p.237) states that a "quantitative approach conceptualizes reality in terms of variables, and relationships between them. [...] It does not see context as central, typically stripping data from their context. [...] Its methods in general are more unidimensional and less variable than qualitative methods." However, this contributes to the desired replicability of quantitative research approaches, an aspect that is not seen as a requirement for this study and its exploratory nature. Qualitative approaches, by contrast, are more sensitive to context and experiences of individuals and typically aim to obtain an in-depth and more holistic understanding through their multidimensional perspective (Punch, 2005).

All stages of the methodological design, thus, consisted of a qualitative investigation of tourists' perceptions of destination image and destination personality of the individual Baltic States, the tourists' perceptions of a co-branding approach between the Baltic States, as well as tourists' perceptions on how destination personality and image may influence such a marketing strategy. This was achieved by collecting data through semi-structured interviews with actual as well as potential tourists, including open-ended questions based on the review of secondary literature (Creswell, 2013) and aims of this study.

Interviews can generally take a variety of approaches such as individual, face-to-face interviews or face-to-face group interviews (e.g. focus groups); they can be structured, semi structured or unstructured (Figure 5.2) (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Figure 5.2. The continuum model for interviews



Source: Adopted from Punch (2005, p. 169)

The degree of standardisation or structure determines the depth of data that can be obtained (Punch, 2005). On the left side of the continuum, interviews are typically highly structured and standardised, interview questions are usually pre-coded and the interview itself does not go into too much detail (Punch, 2005). In comparison, on the right side of the continuum, interviews are typically not standardised, are unstructured and open-ended, which means (for the interview process) that specific questions will more naturally surface with a much more uncontrolled progression of the interview (Punch, 2005). This characteristic was considered to be essential for this study as it allowed interviewees to open up and to more freely express their opinion on the interview questions, which helped in understanding their feelings, their emotions and their interpretation of issues pertaining to this research. Generally, interviews can be applied for several purposes, such as for measurement, the understanding of individual's perception or that of a group, and their duration can range from a non-recurring brief exchange of information to interviews that

consist of multiple and rather lengthy sessions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviews are a method to obtain rich, in-depth contextual data, with the assumption that these results are a veritable and precise picture of the participant's selves and lives (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Peräkylä (2005) argues that the researcher, in interview settings, is in greater direct touch with the object that they are studying. Thus, it is a useful approach to obtain access to participant's perceptions, definitions of situations, meanings and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005).

The use of structured interviews for this research was discarded. The typical benefit of structured interview techniques lies in the possibility to exclude error sources, directly pertaining to the negligible influence the interviewer has on response quality, due to the structured, rigid and standardised nature of this interview style, offering limited variation possibilities (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Punch, 2005). However, it is argued that due to the neutral and impersonal stance an interviewer takes in this form of interviews (Punch, 2005), and similar to quantitative surveys, respondents are likely to please an interviewer with answers that are socially desirable or they may be inclined to hold back certain, often personal information (Bradburn, 1983; Mick, 1996). A major objective of the research at hand is to gain an insight into the perceptions (i.e., based on attitudes, values, subjective feelings, expectations, motivations, affective experiences, etc.) that tourists have on a particular destination as well as on a co-branding approach among the three selected countries. Structured interviews are, thus, counterproductive as certain flexibility needs to be given to the researcher to meet the differences of individual participants, to deal with unanticipated developments and to be able to show a "combination of observation, empathetic sensitivity and intellectual judgement" (Gorden, 1992, p.7) in order to understand the participant's world and aspects that could stimulate responses (Kahn & Cannel, 1957). In this context, Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 703) argue that a structured interview "often elicits rational responses, but it overlooks or inadequately assesses the emotional dimension".

Similarly, a group interview or focus group approach was not adopted. Group interviews can take both structured and unstructured approaches and can generally be beneficial in the context of exploratory research. First, by comparison to individual interviews, they are less expensive in their execution and typically are helpful in generating rich, cumulative and elaborative data (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Second, they are by nature flexible in their format and can stimulate participants in the sense that they can promote the retrieval of information. However, this form of interview comes with a number of specific problems that directly relate to the study at hand, which underscores the rejection of this data gathering technique. Fontana and Frey (2005) state that it can be difficult for the researcher to control the environment pertaining to a balanced participation of all interviewees in order to guarantee a full coverage of the topic. At the same time, the authors (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 705) argue that potentially "groupthink" can be a possible outcome if the naturally emerging group culture or group dynamics interferes with individual expression, meaning that a group can at times be dominated by one or a few participants. King (2002) makes the case that there is a trend observable in the marketing of destinations, away from focusing on a relatively undefined mass market (i.e., onedirectional mass communication), and rather moving towards making unique offerings to each customer (i.e., brand and sub-brand development) so that a destination's strong brand image resonates with the consumers' individual motivations, needs and aspirations. Following this argument, group interviews were not seen to be appropriate, since this study aims to obtain the perceptions of individual tourists on an organic destination image (i.e., not induced image) (cf. Gartner, 1989; Gallarza et al., 2002), destination personality and how both can inform the co-branding of destinations.

Within tourism research, two of the most widely used conventional qualitative methods are semi-structured interviews and focus groups. An alternative qualitative approach in a form of projective techniques, while having many advantages, has been considered for this study. It has been demonstrated that projective techniques can enable tourism researchers to penetrate the surface of the topic and explore individual experiences (Westwood, 2007). By avoiding the barriers and constraints of direct questioning, projective techniques enable participants to express themselves more openly and intuitively, thus giving insights to personal and idiosyncratic attitudes, motives and behaviours (Westwood, 2007). Literature in psychology acknowledges that people can find it difficult to express their real feelings, attitudes and ideas, and can at the same time have a tendency to say what they think they know or feel, or what they think or feel is socially acceptable rather than what they really know or feel (Westwood, 2007). Projective techniques that originate from psychoanalysis thus, allow participants to extend their imaginations and make up a story around a person or people in a picture, on the assumption that they will project their attitudes and feelings on to the people in their story (Haire, 1950; Westwood, 2007). Examples of projective techniques as used in tourism and consumer behaviour research include but are not limited to five categories of methods – association (connecting the research object with words, images or thoughts), completion (finishing sentences, stories, arguments), construction (answering questions about the feelings, beliefs or behaviors of other people, completing speech bubbles in a cartoon), choice ordering (ranking product benefits), and expressive (role-playing, story-telling, drawing, personification) (Hofstede et al. 2007). For example, personalisation pertains to ascribing human personality traits to other objects or products (e.g., brands), and is based on the understanding that just like people, object and products are perceived as having personalities (e.g., Aaker, 1997). Participants are encouraged to imagine an object or

product as a person and to describe them e.g.: If X was a person what gender would they be? What would they look like? Where would they live? Personalisation exercises are very effective in provoking wider and deeper feelings and thoughts, eliciting associations and attituddes, and in the avoidance of diplomatic or politically correct responses (Westwood, 2007). This approach has been adopted for parts of the data collection for this study (e.g., personality of destinations), however it has been discarded as the primary approach to data collection. While these techniques have many advantages they also suffer from some disadvantages that unstructured direct techniques have in common, including the need for highly trained interviewers, skilled interpreters to analyse the responses, risk of interpretation bias, and high costs. For example, the responses have little meaning without careful evaluation by researchers who are both trained and skilled interpreters of information (Donoghue, 2000). Further, there is a considerable degree of subjectivity involved in the interpretation of responses and the experts frequently disagree among themselves (Donoghue, 2000). Lastly, it may be difficult to get the subjects to project themselves into the roles the researchers wish them to assume (Donoghue, 2000).

With regard to this study, value is thus seen in a more unstructured interview approach (i.e. semi-structured interviews). The difference between structured and unstructured approaches to interviewing, according to Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 706), is that the structured approach typically focuses on "capturing precise data of a codeable nature so as to explain behaviour within pre-established categories". Due to the nature of this study it is argued that an unstructured approach is of greater value, because contrary to a structured approach, it is usually the aim of unstructured interviewing approaches "to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 706). Since this study aims to understand and gather a complete picture of the Baltic States and their

destination image and destination personality as potentially relevant factors for a cobranding strategy of tourist destinations, this approach was seen to be appropriate. Peräkylä (2005) further argues that some of the main advantages of interviews are that researchers obtain access to areas of reality that might otherwise remain beyond reach (i.e. subjective experiences and attitudes). Simultaneously, interviews offer the possibility to bridge time or space distances in the sense that even past events or experiences from years ago can be researched by interviewing participants that came into contact with them. Fontana and Frey (2005) accentuate in this context an "interviewer-respondent interaction [as] the very essence of unstructured interviewing" and relate to the formation of a shortterm interpersonal relationship with the interview participant and the objective to understand a circumstance or situation rather than to explain it (cf. Spradley, 1979). To pursue the aim to understand the participant's view regarding the research questions addressed in the aims of this thesis, the analysis followed no pre-established categorisation and allowed for codes and themes to emerge inductively. Such a semi-structured approach was adopted since the researcher was interested in bonding with the participants in order to get a feeling for how they saw a situation and understandood their view of the world pertaining to destination image and destination personality, instead of having a researcher's point of view and potential preconceptions interfere with it (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Thus, semi-structured interviews were chosen to guide the conversation, to receive an in-depth, realistic and accurate insight into the interviewee's perceptions and experiences with the topic (cf. Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). This approach also granted the participants the opportunity for some latitude and freedom in their answers, which was seen as essential for the quality of the data. The benefit of using personal face-to-face interviews was to collect valid, comprehensive and reliable data with reference to the

research objectives of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Additionally, a greater depth and an increased value of information were expected through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, as they allow follow-up questions for further clarification (McMillan, 2000). Jankowicz (2005) describes the advantage of semi-structured, open-ended techniques as supplying the researcher with considerable amounts of rich, productive, but often disordered data. The advantage of conducting interviews in an exploratory study is to get a feeling for the key issues before using a questionnaire to collect descriptive or explanatory data (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012). As stated above the topic of this research is of exploratory nature with certain parts lacking information in the literature to date. Therefore interviews allowed the researcher to investigate the topic in detail to gather initial understanding of the phenomena under research. Access to potentially sensitive and confidential information was another benefit that interviews offered the researcher (Creswell, 2013) as well as the opportunity to use probe questions (Zikmund, 2003) so as to encourage answers and to clarify contextual information.

## 5.2.4 Target population, sample, sampling technique

To address the second, third and fourth aim of this study, primary data was collected. Given the definitions of destination image and personality (Crompton, 1979; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006), one does not necessarily have to have travelled to a destination to form a perception of destination image and/or destination personality. In this context, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) argue that it is a primary objective of tourism destination marketing to project images of a destination to potential tourists to make the destination appear more desirable. However, a perception of destination image (and/or personality) can differ significantly between actual and potential tourists (Hughes & Allen, 2008). Further, Selby and Morgan (1996) have already argued that the richest data is typically

uncovered by studies that incorporate both the perceptions of actual tourists and the perceptions of potential tourists. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the target population was defined as potential and actual tourists to Baltic countries. As previous research suggests subjective world of different groups of people can vary. Since both groups of tourists (i.e., actual and potential) are of interest for destinations from a marketing augmentation, targeting and postioning strategy, it was important to understand a holistic image and personality of the three Baltic States as well as a holistic perception about the co-branding among them. In that regard, potential tourists were defined as travellers or individuals that have formed a perception about a destination (i.e. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, when viewed individually) prior to their visit and, thus, prior to being directly exposed to the destination's tourism services (i.e. accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, recreation and entertainment) and its culture. Conversely, actual tourists are those individuals or travellers that have been exposed to the aforementioned direct destination experience. The sample consisted of potential and actual tourists from Germany, as this country is an important tourists source market for Baltic States' tourism (European Travel Commission, 2010) and had in 2010 (i.e., at the time of data collection) seen a slow growth of tourists to all three destinations (European Travel Commission, 2010). The studied countries' tourism bureaus' statistics between 2008 and 2010 indicated that Germany had been among the top four countries in terms of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in all three of the Baltic countries. To evaluate the actual and potential target market's perceptions of a co-branding approach in Baltic countries, it was, thus, critical to understand the perspective of potential and actual tourists alike from a country holding a great impact on tourism in all three Baltic States. German tourists, thus, represent an essential component of the tourist population to be able to recognise and understand tourists' reactions to a co-branding marketing approach. Tourists from other countries that represent target markets for the Baltic States were not considered due to the German background of the researcher. Usunier and Lee (2013) suggest that the researcher and participants in the research should be of same origin. This provides researcher with a better knowledge of the country and its people under investigation. The authors further suggest that rapport between the researcher and interviewees is established more easily and the researcher has a better understanding of what is being said language wise as well as context wise. Common environment also allows the researcher physical comfort in the research setting and thus provides him with a better ability to cope through familiarity with any problems that ight occur during the research process (Usunier & Lee, 2013).

Sampling is equally important in qualitative and quantitative research, although there is a significant difference pertaining to the sampling approach (Punch, 2005). Punch (2005) argues that quantitative research attempts to achieve a certain degree of population representativeness for the measurement of variables, often through probability sampling or randomness (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014). From a smaller sample, inferences are then made on a larger population. By comparison, probability sampling in qualitative research is relatively uncommon (Punch, 2005). Instead, deliberate or purposive sampling approaches are typically applied, which infers that sampling is conducted in a well-considered and intentional fashion that concentrates on the purpose of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014; Punch, 2005). This was also seen to be appropriate for the study at hand since the researcher was looking at investigating a phenomenon for which participants with certain knowledge requirements were needed. The researcher needed participants that had knowledge about the countries under investigation; that knowledge either being formed through personal experience of the destinations or through secondary sources. Samples in qualitative research are likely to be not entirely defined or specified; instead, they often evolve in the sense that the initial

selection of participants may lead to similar and different ones, a concept referred to as conceptually driven sequential sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014). Due to the broad range of research approaches, purposes and settings, Miles and Huberman (1994) list 16 qualitative sampling strategies in a typology (Table 5.1). The three sampling strategies that stand out from the overview below are opportunistic, snowball or chain, and intensity sampling strategy, for the reason that they facilitate an inductive and theory building analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 5.1. Typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry

Type of Sampling	Purpose		
Maximum Variation	Documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns		
Homogeneous	Focuses, reduces, simplifies, facilitates group interviewing		
Critical case	Permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases		
Theory based	Finding examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborate and examine it		
Confirming and disconfirming cases	Elaborating initial analysis, seeking exceptions, looking for variation		
Snowball or chain	Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich		
Extreme or deviant case	Learning from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest		
Typical case	Highlights what is normal or average		
Intensity	Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely		
Politically important cases	Attracts desired attention or avoids attracting undesired attention		
Random purposeful	Adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large		
Stratified purposeful	Illustrates subgroups; facilitates comparisons		
Criterion	All cases that meet some criterion; useful for quality assurance		
Opportunistic	Following new leads; taking advantage of the unexpected		
Combination or mixed	Triangulation, flexibility, meets multiple interests and needs		
Convenience	Saves time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility		

Source: Adopted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012), which enabled the choice of subjects from the population that hold characteristics (i.e., knowledge about the destinations under research), which enabled the researcher to address the research aims (Silverman, 2005). Based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, particular individuals or cases were deliberately selected

(Zikmund, 2003; Punch, 2005) with the assumption that they were highly knowledgeable and experienced about the topic leading to in-depth and information-rich interviews (McMillan, 2000). The researcher targeted individuals that represented diverse demographic characteristics (i.e., geographic distribution, gender, age, income, etc.). Thus, participants had to fulfil the following common criteria as specified in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2. Selection criteria of interview participants

Actual Tourists	Potential Tourists		
<ul> <li>Previous exposure and first hand experience to at least one of the researched countries (i.e., Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia)</li> <li>Time frame between destination experience and interview not longer than 3 years</li> <li>Minimum length of stay of 3 consecutive days</li> <li>Purpose of travel: leisure</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Basic knowledge about the Baltic States (i.e. geographic location of the contiguous trio Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia)</li> <li>Average experience in European/International travel</li> <li>A score of at least 5 (on scale between 1 to 10) pertaining to the likelihood to consider all three Baltic States in future destination choice processes (max. 3 years).</li> <li>Purpose of travel: leisure</li> </ul>		

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) emphasise potentially occurring differences between images generated through secondary sources in comparison to images shaped by first-hand experience as discussed in Chapter 3. Further, it is argued that destination image and, thus, destination personality are critical in destination choice processes (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hughes & Allen, 2008), which implies that the image and personality perception of destinations held by potential travellers cannot be ignored in effective and successful marketing as well as management strategies of destinations (Soenmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Hughes & Allen, 2008). Thus, actual and potential tourists were seen as appropriate to be included in this study. It is argued that both participant

groups together could provide a more complete and balanced picture on the required information about destination image, destination personality and consequently their views on destination co-branding.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 27) argue that "qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth, unlike quantitative research, which aims for larger numbers of context stripped cases and seek statistical significance." Following their argument and a non-probability purposive sampling technique (Silverman, 2005) the targeted sample for the tape-recorded face-toface interviews consisted of eight participants (four actual tourists and four potential tourists) per destination in question (Yin, 2009). Thus, the anticipated total sample size was 24 (12 actual tourists to all three countries and 12 potential tourists to all three countries). An assessment was made that such sample size should provide sufficient in depth data to address the aims of the study. However, when the interview process started, the researcher determined that actual tourists travelled to all three countries rather than one. Therefore the sample size was rethought. It is important to note that guidelines for determining nonprobabilistic sample sizes are virtually non-existent. The sample size typically relies on the concept of "saturation," or the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). To ensure that all of the contributory concepts had been fully discussed, the final sample size was determined based on the data collection and data analysis. Once no new information was obtained from a new / additional interview participant, the data collection was stopped. The point of no new information occurred relatively early in the interview process around interview 10 to 12 in each tourist group. The interviewer continued with the data collection until saturation was achieved while at the same time aiming to assure for equal representation of both tourist groups. While there are clear guidelines in quantitative research about the necessity of equal cell sizez or subgroups in the sample, there are no such stric rules pertainint to the qualitative data analysis approach. However, since the saturation point for both groups of tourists resuoted at much the same point, the researcher decided to have equal number of participants and thus assure that both groups of tourists are equally represented. The final sample size thus resulted in 26 interviewees (13 potential tourists, 13 actual tourists).

Key contacts were established with German tour operators and travel agencies as travel service providers that actively promoted individual and group packages to German tourists for all three destinations under research. These travel service providers assisted in identifying actual as well as potential tourists from Germany based on their databases and in strict accordance with data protection directives. Additionally, several well-established travel websites were utilised to identify actual as well as potential tourists. Specifically, travel websites that assist tourists in gathering travel information through user-generated content (i.e. reviews, travel related content, interactive travel forums) were approached. Internet users that post reviews, share travel experiences or blog in travel forums on these websites are forced to pass through a registration process during which their willingness is verified to serve as a reference person for inquiries from other Internet users (i.e. individuals interested in their review or particular aspects of their travel experience). Thus, a declaration of consent is publicly available and existent. Based on publicly available demographic information of travel reviewers, potential interviewees were identified through a matching process with the selection criteria stated in Table 5.2. The contact form of the respective travel website was subsequently used to establish a first contact with potential interviewees. Both sources provided potential interview participants that were directly contacted from the researcher to determine their willingness to participate in this research study. An incentive in the form of participation in a draw for an iPad was offered to encourage partaking in the interview. This is a common approach in quantitative

research and has been adopted for this study with the aim to increase the motivation for participation of actual and potential tourists. It further encouraged the interviewees to engage in an in depth discussion regarding their experiences and perceptions about the relevant concepts as probed by the interview questions.

### 5.2.5 Data collection instrument

The development of the interview questions was based on the literature review, as well as multiple-source secondary data (Silverman, 2011), which was obtained from books as well as journal articles, conference proceedings and other publications, released over the past years. This was done in order to demonstrate credibility in the view of the research participants (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012). A total of 61 questions for actual tourists and 59 for potential tourists, arising out of the literature review, were categorised into six sections as shown in Table 5.3. From this comprehensive list of interview questions, two different sets of interview questions were designed to meet the two different participant groups (i.e. potential and actual tourists) (Appendices C, D, E, and F).

Table 5.3. Categorisation of interview questions (actual and potential tourists)

No.	Categorised section	Total number of questions (incl. probing questions – actual tourists	Total number of questions (incl. probing questions – potential tourists	Question Numbers
1.	Demographic section	10 (consent form)	10 (consent form)	1-10 (consent form)
2.	Opening the interview	6	4	1
3.	Destination image of the Baltic States	22	22	2-5
4.	Destination personality of the Baltic States	4	4	6-7
5.	Target market's (actual and potential tourists) perceptions of marketing / co-branding of Baltic countries	13	13	8-10
6.	Co-Branding informed by destination image and destination personality	14	14	11-16
7.	Closing of interview	2	2	17-18

Prior to the data collection process, the interview questions were assessed and examined several times within a validation process to make sure that the questions addressed and answered the objectives and research aims of this study. To reduce the likelihood of bias during the interview, to ensure a similar understanding of terms between researcher and interviewee and to increase the validity of the responses, a clear phrasing of the questions as well as appropriateness and neutrality of the wording (no jargon) was assessed (Silverman, 2011). The assessment was conducted by academics at two academic institutions the researcher is affiliated with. A critical incident technique was applied by linking the questions to previous participant experiences wherever possible (Chell, 2004). This meant that the interviewee was led to an imaginary activity or situation where the consequences were so clear that the interviewee had a definite idea regarding the effects of that situation upon certain variables. Robson (2002) describes the benefit of using the

critical incident technique "as to get people to notice specific happenings that they consider to be important" (p.259). Due to the international scope of the present research and the execution of the interviews in Germany with German speaking travellers, the source questionnaire and associated instructions were translated into German by the researcher who is a native speaker (Appendices D and F). Subsequently, the target questions were back translated by a certified English native translator into the new source questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012). In both translation processes attention was paid to the lexical, idiomatic, experiential meaning as well as grammar and syntax to ensure that the questions in both versions had the same meaning (Larkin, Dierckx de Casterlé, & Schotmans, 2007). The comparison of the source questionnaires was then integrated into the creation of the final (English) version (Appendices C and E).

Afterwards four (two for actual tourists, two for potential tourists) pilot interviews (Appendix G) were conducted to additionally test the overall clarity of the interview questions and to eliminate any difficulties with the recording process of the data. The selected participants had to fulfil the same demographics specifically applying to the sample, this - being an actual or potential traveller in Germany with previous exposure or interest in visiting the Baltic States. The interviews were conducted in similar environments. Researcher aimed to assure that there no environmental influences or noise that could potentially bias participants' responses. During the pilot interviews, emphasis was put on the following criteria:

- a) To examine the understanding of the interview questions in terms of clarity as well as ambiguity and to verify the suitability of the interview design,
- b) To assess the interview situation and process, and
- c) To test the estimated duration of the interviews.

As the respondents made no additional remarks about the above-mentioned criteria and no topic omissions were found (Saunders et al., 2007, 2012), no further changes to the interview questions were made beyond that point. The participants confirmed the interview transcript.

# 5.2.6 Data collection process

The chosen groups of participants were first approached via email in order to briefly introduce the researcher and the study and to verify the contact details of selected participants. In a second step, introduction letters and invitations were sent to the participants in order to invite them into the study as a respondent in the interview process. The invitation letters included detailed information about the aim and purpose of the study, the process and approximate time frame, and clarified ethical issues regarding the research study (Appendices H and I).

Initially, a total number of 45 respondents agreed to participate. As a result of contacting many potential participants simultaneously, some had to withdraw from the process at the later stage, due to unforeseeable circumstances (e.g., illness, time constraints, etc.). Following the aforementioned 'saturation approach', the final number resulted in a total of 26 interviews. The interviews were conducted at each of the participant's place of residence (as opposed to inside destinations under research) in order to capture the perceptions of both actual and potential tourists in their usual environment. The researcher specifically aimed to not interview actual tourists at the destinations as the specific location within the destination could have biased their responses and obtaining a complete holistic view of destainations' perceptions. Further, interviewing actual tourist at the destination would place them in a different environment than potential toruists. Actual tourists would in such case be at the source of information about the topic of research.

while potential tourists would not have such opportunity. The interviews took place inside appropriate locations to make sure that participants felt comfortable in order to obtain rich data; locations that guaranteed a necessary amount of privacy, no interruptions and consequently no influence on the data collected (Creswell, 2013). The lengths of the interviews on average were approximately between one and two hours. The entire interview period reached the total of approximately nine weeks (Appendices G, J, and K).

Before the interview, the researcher addressed confidentiality issues, giving attention to the role and participation of the interviewee, the electronic recording of the interview, and obtained a consent form (Appendices L and M) as a sign of approval (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2011). This form also included questions pertaining to demographic data (Appendices N and O). The interviews were tape recorded in order to not lose important pieces/parts of the comprehensive qualitative data collected. Consequently, a verbatim transcript was produced after the completion of the interviews (examples in Appendices P and Q). Subsequently, a copy of the transcript was sent to each of the interviewees for final checking of factual accuracy and approval. Upon the interviewees' approval, the transcripts were then used for data analysis.

## **5.3** Data analysis

The qualitative nature of this research study resulted in extensive amounts of collected data. After the transcription process of tape-recorded interviews into extended text as "an unreduced form of display" (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 493), the interviews had to be then translated into English with the help of an English native translator. Due to the large amounts of data, as well as time and cost constraints, the researcher decided to exemplarily have only two interviews translated (i.e. one for potential and actual tourists each) from German into English. Interview transcripts can be done with significant

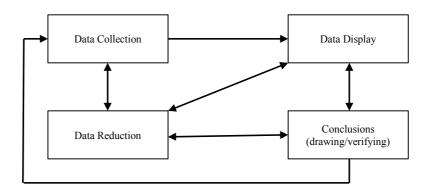
differences in granularity (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014). In order not to lose essential information, verbatim transcripts were produced into a text that was clear to the reader and analyst. Any pauses, word emphases, the tone of voice, or any facial expressions were not directly expressed in the transcripts. However, the researcher made use of a post-interview one-page contact summary sheet (Appendix R) to reflect on the main points of the respective interview after every field contact. Specific emphasis was given to the interview content and interviewee (e.g., behaviour, expressions, gestures, etc.), as well as issues and questions that were brought up during the interview. The objective was to capture salient non-verbal information (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994). The main purpose of utilising these contact summary sheets was to summarise the interview, identify potentially new insights, notice any speculations or feelings about the field situation as brought up by the participants so that the researcher was able to draw sensible conclusions for subsequent interview situations. Miles and Huberman (1994; Miles et al., 2014) additionally recommend the use of contact summary sheets as a means to guide planning, to refine the analysis process when and where necessary and to support the overall data analysis further as an additional source of information. The data of all interviews was directly transferred into the analytical process.

Several analytical procedures were used involving the coding of data and data display (Silverman, 2006). Miles and Huberman (1994) provided the conceptual framework for the data display and the coding of data and involved the following processes (Figure 5.3):

a) Data reduction, by selecting, simplifying and transforming the extended text into a condensed and organised form of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10);

- b) Data display, by assembling the organised data into an accessible and compact illustrative visual format (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11) for which cognitive maps, matrices and causal networks were chosen; and
- c) Conclusion drawing and verification, to identify relationships and key themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11).

Figure 5.3. Components of data analysis



Source: Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 12)

The analytical stage started with a coding process of the obtained data from interviews and contact summary sheets. Contrary to quantitative research where processing numbers can be handled more economically and are by nature less ambiguous, qualitative research is more complex in the sense that words typically have multiple meanings and ought to be seen in their context so that relations between field notes remain intact (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, codes in the form of labels or tags were applied to a wide range of data units comprised of words, sentences, and paragraphs. The purpose of this interim stage was to organise the chunks of data, to categorise or systematise it, to make sense of the data and to be able to retrieve data for subsequent clustering and display of data in order to be able to draw conclusions and to make inferences from it. As with the overall

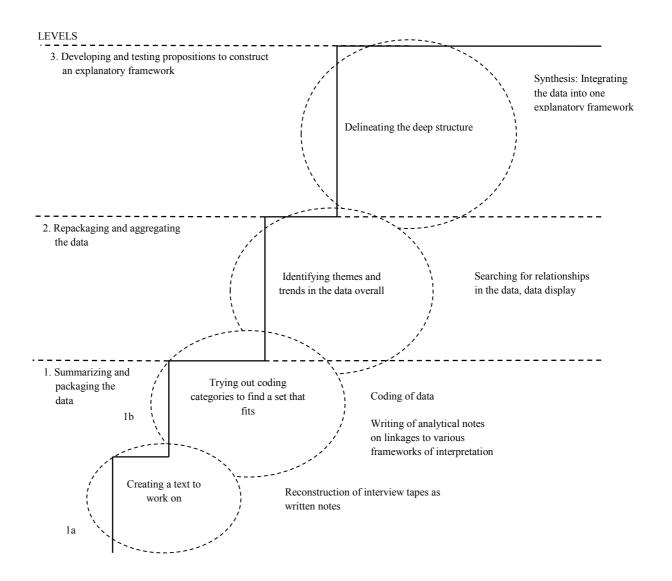
inductive approach to the study, an inductive approach to coding was applied, meaning that no precoding (i.e., provisional start list of codes prior to fieldwork) was conducted. The benefit with this approach is that "data gets well moulded to the codes that represent them, and we get more of a code-in-use flavour than the generic-code-for-many-uses generated by a prefabricated start list" (Miles & Hubermann, 1994, p. 58; cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The aim of the researcher was to be more open-minded and sensitive to the context, while reviewing the data line by line. After attributing a growing list of codes or labels to the data, the labels were reviewed and categorised to make sure that different information related to each other was at the same time sufficiently distinct from other information in a meaningful way that emphasised the aims of the study. This organisation and early analytical process of the rich and text-based unstructured information was supported through qualitative data analysis computer software (NVivo9), and subsequently also used in the entire following analytical process of this research study, as well as for data management purposes.

Once the above described first-level coding had taken place, pattern coding was applied with the objective to group and summarise the previously categorised data into smaller subsets, themes, and constructs. Miles and Huberman (1994) and Miles et al. (2014) suggest pattern coding to not just reduce large quantities of data, but also to generate a more integrated scheme for understanding contextual information as well as to enable within-case analytical processes (e.g., development of a co-branding model as well as comparison of actual and potential tourists' perceptions). Most importantly, however, pattern coding allows for mapping out concepts by finding interrelations among them, a characteristic that was desirable in a study that ultimately aimed to develop a theoretical model or a framework for the co-branding of destinations being informed by destination

image and destination personality. Similar to the first-level coding stage, qualitative data analysis computer software (NVivo9) provided the adequate support during this process.

Depending on the previously outlined approaches to coding as early analytical processes, further analysis continuously followed a natural progression (Miles et al., 2014; Rein & Schon, 1977) or data transformation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014). The concept of natural progression suggests starting with the raw text-based data, followed by coding procedures as a means to condense information.

Figure 5.4. The ladder of analytical abstraction (cf. Carney, 1990)



Source: Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 92)

Subsequently, the identification of themes and trends is conducted, to cluster and sort the data, before testing assumptions and findings to outline a deeper context before the data can be integrated into an explanatory framework. The natural progression upon which the analysis of this study is outlined is based on Carney's (1990) ladder of abstraction and illustrated in Figure 5.4.

As part of a repackaging and aggregation strategy, a within-case (i.e., separate analysis for actual and potential tourists within their respective group) data display approach was applied to provide preliminary conclusions and potential reasons for the phenomenon under research. Displays as an illustrative or depictive representation of textual information can be categorised into two families, matrices and networks (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To achieve aims two and three, a role-ordered matrices approach was deemed as very useful and was thus applied in the further analytical process towards aims 2 and 3 of this study. A role-ordered matrix was chosen (cf., Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014), which not only organised the data obtained from participants (i.e., actual or potential tourists) pertaining to their views, but further supported a comparison between actual and potential tourists in later stages of the analysis. In particular, this approach helped address aims 2 and 3 of this thesis as it allows for a structured comparison between two different types of groups (actual vs. potential tourists).

To achieve aim 4 of this thesis, the conceptually ordered display was applied. Rather than relying on time or role as the organising principle, this approach structures the display by concepts or variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A conceptually clustered display intends to bring together concepts that have emerged empirically during early analysis. Such was the case in the establishment of the descriptive categories in the first stage of the analysis. This approach allows the researcher to draw inferences directly from the displayed data and see patterns and themes – that is seeing a few general variables underlying many specifics. This step allowed the researcher to develop a coherent and detailed model of co-branding considering the role of destination image and personality.

#### **5.4** Research ethics

The researcher adhered to a comprehensive and methodologically sound relationship with all participants involved at all stages in this study. The researcher thereby followed the elementary guidelines of informed consent (Zikmund 2003; Jankowicz, 2005) by advertising and offering all relevant information about the research project through invitation letters sent to participants before the actual data collection took place or through detailed consent forms at the point of data collection. All ethical standards regarding the privacy and confidentiality of potential and actual participants, as well as the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any given time in the process (Creswell, 2013) was highlighted and guaranteed before the data collection process started. Any data collected through the respective interview processes were only available to the researcher and the supervisory team of the research project. This data will be destroyed after the completion of the present research study.

# 5.5 Summary

The study applied subjectivism of ontology as the underlying research philosophy. An inductive approach was chosen, due to the exploratory value of the research in which a qualitative data collection method was applied. The data collection and analysis was split up into several phases. For phase one and two, semi-structured, tape-recorded face-to-face interviews were used to collect primary data. The targeted population of the study involved potential and actual tourists. The outcome of the data reduction and data display techniques led to a development of a theoretical framework pertaining to the target market's perceptions of a co-branding approach, based on destination image and personality factors. The analytical processes involved in this study were supported through qualitative data

analysis computer software (NVivo9). At all times the researcher maintained a transparent, ethical and methodologically correct and sound relationship with all stakeholders involved.

#### CHAPTER VI: RESULTS – DESTINATION PERSONALITY

### 6.1 Introduction

The results of the analysis are presented in detail across three chapters. Each of the consecutive chapters describes one coherent topic in detail: tourists' personality perceptions of the Baltic States (Chapter 6), tourists' image perceptions of the Baltic States (Chapter 7), and tourists' perceptions of co-branding of the three countries (Chapter 8). The three chapters report the findings of the analysis as they relate to the aims of this research, before Chapter 9 discusses the findings in relation to the literature.

Chapter 6 introduces a profile of interviewees to provide a background to the findings illustrating the demographic composition of both groups of interviewees (i.e., actual and potential tourists). Subsequently, the chapter focuses on the perceived destination personality of each country separately, as well as all three destinations taken together, to report the more undifferentiated perceptions of mostly potential tourists. However, the reporting structure in this chapter is organised such that the category relevant for the destination personality construct (e.g., personality characteristics, physical appearance, psychological appearance, etc.) is discussed in turn. This scheme is also reflected in the codes that emerged from the data analysis (see Section 6.3). Among each category, findings are reported for each country separately in two main contrasting categories: actual tourists and potential tourists. Finally, destination personality as it pertains to the Baltic States as a region is discussed.

# **6.2** Overview of Interviewee Demographics

A total number of 26 German tourists were interviewed, whose summarised profiles are shown in Table 6.1 below, with greater details provided in Appendices J and K.

Table 6.1. Interviewee profile of actual and potential tourists

Interview Code	Gender	Age	Occupational Status	Location	ZIP Code	Tourist Type
A1F	Female	46	Self-employed	Nuremberg	90419	Actual Tourist
A2F	Female	55	Self-employed	Munich	80798	Actual Tourist
A3M	Male	64	Retired	Schwaebisch-Gmuend	73525	Actual Tourist
A4M	Male	35	Employed	Darmstadt	64293	Actual Tourist
A5M	Male	71	Retired	Saarbruecken	66119	Actual Tourist
A6M	Male	36	Employed	Wiesbaden	65205	Actual Tourist
A7M	Male	27	Employed	Bochum	44809	Actual Tourist
A8M	Male	39	Employed	Leinfelden-Echterdingen	70771	Actual Tourist
A9M	Male	28	Employed	Berlin	10365	Actual Tourist
A10F	Female	46	Employed	Muelheim / Ruhr	45468	Actual Tourist
A11M	Male	53	Employed	Berlin (Bielefeld)	10365	Actual Tourist
A12M	Male	35	Employed	Ginsheim	65462	Actual Tourist
A13M	Male	53	Employed	Hannover	30449	Actual Tourist
P1M	Male	38	Employed	Bad Rodach	96476	Potential Tourist
P2M	Male	36	Self-Employed	Stuttgart	70174	Potential Tourist
P3M	Male	62	Self-Employed	Stuttgart	70174	Potential Tourist
P4M	Male	42	Employed	Potsdam	14467	Potential Tourist
P5F	Female	37	Employed	Berlin	10785	Potential Tourist
P6M	Male	47	Employed	Bremen	28195	Potential Tourist
P7F	Female	27	Employed	Luebeck/Travemuende	23570	Potential Tourist
P8F	Female	35	Student	Hamburg	22764	Potential Tourist
P9M	Male	34	Employed	Berlin	10711	Potential Tourist
P10M	Male	41	Employed	St. Leon-Rot	68789	Potential Tourist
P11F	Female	34	Employed	Erlangen	91052	Potential Tourist
P12F	Female	30	Employed	Cologne	50935	Potential Tourist
P13F	Female	39	Employed	Frankfurt / Main	60528	Potential Tourist

A total number of 13 interviews were conducted with actual tourists (i.e., tourists with previous travel experience in all three Baltic States) and 13 interviews with potential tourists (i.e., tourists who have not been to the Baltic States). Both genders were interviewed, even though males dominated the group of actual tourists (actual tourists: three females, ten males; potential tourists: six females, seven males). The age of interviewees varied, ranging overall between 27 and 62 years of age. The age pattern between the two groups of interviewees was very similar. In the group of actual tourists, all interviewees but four were employed. Two of those four interviewees were self-employed and two were already retired. In the group of potential tourists, all but three were employed. Out of the three, two were self-employed and one interviewee was a student. The interviews were conducted all over Germany covering the entire federal territory (Appendix S). Additional demographic information is shown in Appendices J and K, providing insights into the interviewees' family status, household size, educational background, income, and dates when interviews were conducted.

The real names of interviewees have been removed to guarantee anonymity. Instead, for the purpose of data analysis, interviewees have been coded according to the group of interviewees they belong to (A = Actual Tourists, P = Potential Tourists), a serial number to differentiate interviewees within each group (1-13), and their gender (F = Female, M = Male). Thus, A1F is a female actual tourist. Similarly, P1M is a male potential tourist. The same coding procedure was applied to interview transcripts (Appendices P and Q) and quotes used in this, as well as subsequent chapters.

Generally, the demographics of interviewees as reported above are provided merely as background information to this research. It should contribute to the findings in that they provide a context about the characteristics of the sample. The intention was not to analyse differences between interviewees according to demographic variables.

## **6.3** Overview of codes – Destination Personality

The main codes relevant to destination personality that inductively emerged from the data analysis are provided below (Figure 6.1). An exhaustive and final list of codes representing the entire analytical process is provided in Appendix T.

Figure 6.1. Destination personality – coding overview

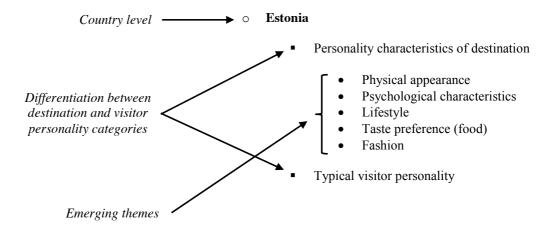


Figure 6.1 serves as an example for Estonia. However, the same differentiated categories and themes emerged in all other countries, as well as for the three Baltic States combined. To allow for a coherent overview, a thematic approach to reporting of findings has been applied. The subsequent sections thus report on each of the themes that emerged from the analysis and provide a comparison among the three countries, as well as the two groups of tourists within each theme.

#### **6.4** General observations and comments

In addition to personality characteristics for each individual country, both actual and potential tourists provided additional information in their individual testimonies when asked for their personality perceptions and associations relevant to all three countries. However, the reasoning was different for both groups. While actual tourists used the opportunity to clearly differentiate the individual countries or point towards commonalities, potential tourists did not have the same clear perceptions of the individual countries and tended to see the three states as one region. In comparison to actual tourists, the group of potential tourists had more difficulties differentiating the three Baltic States and reporting detailed personality associations they had with each country. For example, potential tourists struggled with the description of specific personality characteristics. Thus, they used this opportunity to describe personality characteristics as they pertain to the region. Their associations were often blurred and sometimes prejudiced.

### 6.4.1 Estonia

Generally, Estonia stands out among all three Baltic States (A1F, A5M, A7M, A8M, A9M, A11M, A12M) in that it is reported to be the most homogeneous (A1F) and (economically) integrated (A5M) destination by comparison to the other two states that are perceived to be more similar to each other (A9M).

Well...based on their language, overall development, and standard of living, I think Estonia stands out and seems more Scandinavian [...] Lithuania and Latvia, if compared directly, are in my opinion more similar to each other. [...] Yes, I wouldn't see too many differences between Latvia and Lithuania but Estonia is definitely the most Western oriented country, which can be seen through their standard of living, which is higher, compared to the other two (A9M).

Estonia is mainly seen as the most progressive (A7M, A11M, A12M) nation of the three, while Latvia and especially Lithuania are said to lag behind (A7M, A12M). This progressiveness is tied to Estonia being more ambitious and having a Scandinavian mentality (A12M). Estonia is perceived as a trading nation that has adapted itself to change more quickly and utilised it in much better ways (A11M). The country is regarded as being more European in terms of self-conception and lifestyle (A8M) while the other two destinations are seen to be more Russian or Russo-Slavic (A12M).

Estonians to me would be what the Dutch are in the rest of Europe - a trading nation that has trading and deal making in their DNA and are thus able to deal with larger changes more quickly and with a more positive outcome. Latvians are more phlegmatic and don't use their opportunities that lay ahead of them. Lithuanians are even more phlegmatic due to their rural setup and the influence of the Catholic Church has in my opinion prevented them from being more progressive and proactive so that everything has stayed more on a rural level (A11M).

On the other side, potential tourists mentioned that the country is hard to grasp or difficult to describe (P1M, P5F, P6M, P8F, P9M, P10M) for a number of reasons but mainly because they do not differentiate the countries as one region (P1M, P5F) or concentrate their associations only on the cities (P2M). Initial associations with the destination vary in that some potential tourists see similarities with Russia (P7F), others are spontaneously reminded of one of the worst maritime disasters in modern history, when the MS Estonia<sup>10</sup> sank en route from Tallinn to Stockholm in 1994 (P8F).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The MS Estonia maritime accident occurred on 28 September 1994 in the Baltic Sea. The vessel sank en route from Tallinn to Stockholm, claiming 852 lives.

#### 6.4.2 Latvia

Latvia is perceived as a somewhat unrecognised and misunderstood country (A5M). Along with this sentiment, the country's capital, Riga, is perceived as being multi-faceted, as well as being still in search of its own identity (A8M).

Latvia is still looking for its own identity. [...] In Riga you can see many young people that stroll about the main roads, something we can see in many Central European countries. And you can observe many young Russians that are dressed well and want to show off with their beauty but you also see men in their leisure suit; also a Central European tradition (A8M).

Interestingly and in line with actual tourists, one potential tourist conceived a difference between the personality of the cities and the country in its entirety and noted that Riga is not Latvia and Latvia is not Riga (P7F).

#### 6.4.3 Lithuania

Lithuania is perceived as clearly different from the former two countries, Estonia and Latvia. When asked to provide their associations with the country, interviewees reported that they were drawing a blank since it is quite a difficult country to grasp (A11M); a country that somehow drops out due to their orientation towards Poland (A4M, A7M). Actual tourists mentioned that the country is somewhat out of place in the sense that Vilnius is very different from Lithuania and the other two countries (A5M) and while Estonia and Latvia move forward at varying speeds, Lithuania does not move anywhere (A7M). General and initial comments made by potential tourists pertaining to their perception of Lithuania's destination personality were that Lithuania was the one destination providing the least amount of associations (P8F) and that the sound of the name

'Lithuania' sounds Eastern, thus influencing their perception (P13F). Further, potential tourists had difficulties describing Lithuania with personality characteristics.

# 6.4.4 The Baltic States as a region

It was reported that even though all three countries would argue that they are Europeans, the Estonians would be the ones who have a truly European self-conception and lifestyle (A8M). Interviewees perceived differences between the North (i.e. Estonia) and the South (i.e. Lithuania) in that Estonia stands out, being the farthest ahead in terms of development (A7M, A9M, A11M, A12M) and being influenced by Finland in the sense that they are more Scandinavian and actually more ambitious than the Finns (A12M). While Latvia and Lithuania are closer and similar to each other, being perceived as more Russian or Russo-Slavic (A9M, A12M), it is Lithuania that somehow lags behind (A7M).

Estonia is the most progressive nation, a trading nation that is able to adapt and utilize change. Latvians are more phlegmatic and don't use their opportunities that lay ahead of them. Lithuanians are even more phlegmatic due to their rural setup and the influence of the Catholic Church, which has in my opinion prevented them from being more progressive and proactive so that everything has stayed on this rural level (A11M).

Most potential tourists were only able to see the three countries as one unit or region (P1M, P5F, P9M, P10M) and were not able to differentiate the Baltic States clearly from each other (P5F, P6M, P8F, P10M), they regarded them overall as similar (P9M) or perceived multiple personalities associated with this region. Importantly, interviewees also mentioned that associations they have pertaining to the personality of these destinations concentrate mostly on the cities in all three destinations (P2M) and that they had hardly any associations pertaining to the countryside (P2M).

## **6.5** Personality characteristics of the Baltic States

#### 6.5.1 Estonia

The same progressiveness of the country was reflected when interviewees were asked to describe the destination in terms of a person's overall personality characteristics. The descriptors chosen were that of a young, independent, very dynamic, realistic, future, and western oriented, occasionally uncompromising business person (A2F, A4M, A7M, A9M), and typical yuppie (A3M).

Estonia is a young businessman...dynamic but attached to his native soil. He is culturally very open-minded, interested in the fine arts, but realistic...to some extent uncompromising, westwards oriented and forward-looking (A2F).

The person was believed to be a technology freak (A7M), but at the same time is culturally and artistically very open-minded (A2F).

[...] in Estonia it would be...it would definitely be someone, who is fascinated with technology and who would be very modern. Well, he would be rather trendy, a fashion victim in a technological sense (A4M).

Even though interviewees reported associations of a very modern lifestyle overall, Estonia as a person was believed to be down-to-earth, very attached to their native soil and sociable (A2F, A4M), making it the most sympathetic of all three destinations (A10F). Potential tourists associate Estonia with a friendly, open-minded and weather-beaten person due to the country's geographic location (P8F, P9M); a person with a somewhat Hanseatic mentality or virtue<sup>11</sup> (P9M). At the same time, associations were reported of an

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Hanseatic mentality or virtue are often described as industriousness (more than accumulating wealth), values of frugality, restraint, hard work, courage, diligence, moderation, prudence, civic ethos, citizenship, patriotism, serving the society, proudness, etc. (Aaslestad, 2007).

old Russian woman, looking outside the window, leaning over an old pillow having a slow, peaceful, quiet day (P7F).

Well, in terms of Estonia...and I'm sure I'm pretty prejudiced saying that...well, there is this old Russian mother with a headscarf who sits on the side oft he road watching cars passing by all day long...or perhaps simply leans over the windowsill, chills out, is very relaxed and has a quiet day (P7F).

# 6.5.2 Latvia

The above mentioned search for identity is also reflected in the testimony that Riga stands out as a city in its multifacetedness and complexity (A8M) and appears to be clearly different from the rest of the country (A7M).

While Riga is Latvia, Latvia by contrast is not Riga (A8M).

The overall personality of the countryside on the other hand is equally associated with certain insecurity and in search for identity reflected in associations actual tourists had with an old person who is anxious and concerned about modernity and future orientation (A2F).

### 6.5.3 Lithuania

When asked for perceptions pertaining to the overall personality characteristics, actual tourists described Lithuania as a person who would not have the self-confidence of Latvia (A5M). Instead associations were reported of an old woman, living an almost irrelevant life:

I can see an old woman in her forties or fifties who has a hard time and struggles. You don't hear about them [Lithuanians]. They [Lithuanians] just exist like this old mom. She functions but she does not stand out. She follows habits but is not willing to change anything. What they [Lithuanians] do and have still works so that there is no need or urge to change to anything new. She has strawberries during the summertime and no strawberries during the winter because they simply don't grow at that time of the year (A7M).

### 6.5.4 The Baltic States as a region

When asked for perceived differences between the three destinations related to overall personality, interviewees associated a young, technology focused, easy-going, design oriented, more cosmopolitan and modern person with Estonia (A3M, A6M, A9M). The Latvian personality was described as a league by itself (A6M) in that it is associated with a normal middle-aged person who appears to be busy, metropolitan and cosmopolitan but at the same time is also more traditional, original and Polish (A3M, A6M, A9M). Latvians were also perceived as to be more open and not as pig-headed or stubborn as Estonians (A9M). Actual tourists perceived Lithuania as the oldest person, of about 60 years of age and above, grey haired, very religious but despite all restraint, still in control of everything (A3M, A6M).

Estonia would be happy, easy-going, approachable; Latvia is more serious, more reserved but also pleasant and after keeping an initial distance they would be easy-going. I see Lithuania as being much more reserved, restrained or distant. I miss the sleaziness (A11M).

Well, okay...I'm coming back to the same adjectives I used before...well, as I said, I think Estonia is rather organized and hands-on, ambitious and...and yeah, organized...also disciplined in certain ways...bourgeois. And Latvia simply has a little bit of...a little resigned...has something a little bit melancholic in their rucksack. Well, they are...it simply is that...the country has

something of...as if they have been kicked in their heels, a little surrendered. Like someone who perhaps got beaten up once too often...you know. And Lithuania on the other hand is to me...um...yeah...like I said...I kind of visualize a person...well, who is rather a little plump, self-satisfied, who is a little...a little withdrawn, more...um...self-absorbed somehow and...and...perhaps also more conservative in a certain way (A1F).

The overall personality characteristics that potential tourists associated with all three countries differed. Interviewees believed that there were no differences between the countries (P10M) or associated a multiple personality with strong differences between cities and the countryside (P11F). As opposed to an Italian personality (P2M), the personality was also believed to be tougher, like the climate, but still cordial in its own special and unique way (P1M).

In contrast to more southern cultures they are perhaps approachable and communicative but most likely in a very different way than Mediterranean type of people. [...] They are not as loud and aggressive...but well...but quite thoughtful. But as I said...that does not mean that they are not open-minded and extroverted. And...I find that really difficult (P12F).

The location of the Baltic States may have also contributed to the perception of Russia as well as Scandinavia shimmer through in all three destinations (P8F). One testimony perceived a North-South divide pertaining to personality:

The Estonians are happy and cheerful, the Latvians not so much and the Lithuanians...well, they cry (P13F).

## **6.6** Physical Appearance

#### 6.6.1 Estonia

The previously mentioned associations that actual tourists have of Estonia in terms of progressiveness and modernity are in a sense projected on descriptors used to characterise the physical appearance of the destination. Interviewees described the habitus to be somewhat Finnish or Scandinavian (A1F) and held associations with that of a vibrant, powerful, and very masculine person (A2F, A12M, A13M). Remarkably, and even though the person was seen to be deeply rooted in traditions, most actual tourists perceived Estonia to be a very young person (A2F, A7M, A8M, A9M, A11M, A12M, A13M), in fact the youngest person of all three destinations (A7M, A9M).

I would definitely place the youngest person in Estonia (A9M).

Despite the overall masculine charisma of the destination, the interviewees associated, on one side, young women with the destination that were extremely beautiful, attractive, delicately built, were tall and slender, had long hair, were of model-like complexion (A1F, A2F, A4M, A10F) but at the same time had a cheap-looking, Russian appearance (A10F).

Um...I have never...by our standards, I have never seen so many gorgeous women in one place as in Estonia. Even in the sense of...um...almost model-like, who were also then behaving like that so that I thought to myself...phew...that is just insane (A4M).

They reported a fascinating mix and imbalance between this extreme accumulation of beauty and elegance and simultaneously the opposite with very unattractive, Russian and serious looking men (A2F, A4M, A10F) that were described as cheap, beefy, horrible

and rough and associated with "canister heads" (A10F). These contrasts were further amplified through perceptions interviewees' had with the older generation, which was associated with an older woman or grandma in a kitchen apron (A2F, A10F).

Similar to actual tourists, there are associations with young people (P3M, P8F) and more specifically with a young, beautiful, and attractive woman (P3M) among potential tourists. Men are described as still young but weather-beaten inside and outside, as well as more Nordic and rough looking by comparison to Latvia and Lithuania (P8F, P9M). The older generation is associated with an older mother or an old Russian babushka still wearing a headscarf (P7F, P8F).

#### 6.6.2 Latvia

When asked about their associations with the physical appearance of Latvia, actual tourists held different views in terms of whether the destination had a more masculine (A2F) or feminine (A13M) charisma or presence. Interviewees described Latvia as a young (A3M, A7M, A8M, A9M, A11M) and educated person (A9M) between 25 and 45 years of age (A3M, A7M). In this age range they visualised a young, very feminine and incredibly beautiful woman (A1F, A2F, A7M, A10F) of a more Russian or Russo-Slavic appearance (A12M), who tries to show everyone how to walk cobblestone streets in high heels (A7M, A8M).

The old grandma sells something at the central market and the young woman shows how to walk with high heels over cobblestone pavement. [...] (A8M).

In more extreme testimonies this female was perceived as a bored blonde chick, who is extremely dolled up and constantly tries to put herself on display (A1F, A7M).

And the Latvians...well, it is a young person. A young person who tends to put herself a little on display...and unfortunately, it leans towards this type of blonde bird. [...] Especially Riga is...really young, mid 20s, tediousness, short skirts...well, and high heels that get stuck in cobblestone streets of Riga (A7M).

In contrast, men were associated with an older farmer, rather a masculine and wiry person (A2F, A3M), who looks more Russian (A9M, A12M), and more rough and beefy in terms of appearance (A10F). Potential tourists, who were able to give a testimony on Latvia, perceived the country as a very feminine destination (P3M) and associated it with a young but sexy and rich woman of Russian appearance (P3M, P7F, P8F).

I would think it is a person who runs around with a fur cap during the day and dances on the table at night...they have parties like you wouldn't believe...um...they are not adverse to alcohol. [...] To me, a golden necklace would be a typical accessory...in my mind that somehow is associated with people from Eastern Europe who have money. Also...big watches...regardless, whether they are real or fake ones (P1M).

### 6.6.3 Lithuania

Actual tourists are split over the gender they associate with the destination. While some interviewees perceive Latvia as very masculine (A2F, A3M), others describe the country as being between feminine and masculine (A13M) and even as some sort of different race (A10F). The masculine version is described as an older Catholic man, a granddad type of person, grey haired and above 60 years of age, ample, full-figured or well rounded and a little rough (A1F, A2F, A3M, A7M, A12M); he is a plain and simple man, with harsh facial features, like a weather-beaten fisherman (A2F).

Yes...and Lithuania...is a Catholic man...it's weird, I can only think of men. I see all three countries as masculine, not at all as feminine.

Well...it is a Catholic man with sharp or rugged facial features. Even though they have the shortest coastline, he is a fisherman. As I said, he is Catholic and somehow managed to under cover preserve his religiousness during atheistic years...um...he catches birds and is very plain, simple, and is no particular gourmet. That's what comes to my mind regarding these countries (A2F).

This man does not try to stand out or to be the centre of everything, but he is the only one who knows how things work (A3M). In contrast, the feminine person is associated with the exact opposite, as a young woman of incredible beauty (A10F) or the above-mentioned older woman in her forties or fifties (A7M). Potential tourists had an unclear image of Lithuania's physical appearance. The only associations interviewees had with the physical appearance of Lithuania ranged from a woman / female farmworker (P3M) to an older gentleman sitting on a bench in the mountains like an eremite (P7F).

# 6.6.4 The Baltic States as a region

With regards to the physical appearance of the three countries, actual tourists reported not too many visible differences as noticeable between Estonians and Latvians. However, Lithuania did not seem to fit in perfectly (A4M). The women in all three destinations were described as extremely beautiful and model like (A2F, A6M, A8M, A10F), but who often were too 'glammed' up (A6M, A8M). Men, however, were seen on the opposite side of the spectrum and described as rough, beefy, unattractive (A8M, A10F).

Potential tourists associated a young population with all three destinations (P2M) and described the countries as very masculine (P5F, P9M); as a middle-aged man in his forties (P5F). They further had associations with Russians or Eastern Europeans (P1M, P10M); a man or a woman from Moscow, where the newly-rich guy has the money, golden necklaces, big watches, the big Mercedes Benz and a very feminine, Russian

looking woman or society lady who lives off the money her husband brings home (P1M, P3M, P10M), is dressed in short skirts, is slender and looks a little slutty/trampy (P1M, P10M, P11F):

I see a blonde chick. She is a little dumb, has big boobs and is quite good looking but I wouldn't know if she was a prostitute (P10M).

Women...the shorter the better [dress/skirt]. That somehow comes to my mind...tall, slim, and I don't know...perhaps a little slutty (PIM).

At the same time, a strong contrast was observed. Potential tourists also imagine people on a lower standard of living, who may be dressed in clothes obtained from the used clothing collection, happy to have something to eat (P1M).

#### 6.7 Fashion

### 6.7.1 Estonia

Along with associations interviewees had regarding the physical appearance of Estonia, fashion perceptions point towards similar descriptors. Generally the descriptors associated with fashion are that of a typical yuppie (A3M), a stylish and modern person (A7M, A9M), whose taste reflects Scandinavian influences (A9M) and the usual Western brands (A2F, A9M, A11M).

As I said...in Estonia I would expect the youngest and most hip person...but not...well, not really kooky but...but this ,less is more' type of person in terms of design (A9M).

It is a person described as being the most design oriented of the three destinations with a more purist design taste (A9M), who typically likes to experiment with fashion

(A7M). Similar to testimonies pertaining to the physical appearance of Estonia, interviewees differentiated between the fashion taste of a young woman, versus that of a young man, as well as the older generation.

Interviewees described a young, fashion minded woman who is modern and trendy (A4M, A11M), chic (A10F), has a hip, design focused and fresh clothing style (A11M, A13M). This woman was credited with knowing exactly how to assimilate situations in the sense that she knows what outfit to wear at the right time (A7M), be it in jeans or dressed up (A7M, A8M). However, interviewees also saw a modern fashion victim (A4M) feeling that inner urge to constantly show off their beauty and latest fashion (A8M), which is often carried to an extreme with their high heels, short skirts and golden necklaces (A8M, A10F), so that they sometimes come across as extremely 'dolled up' and cheap looking (A10F). Contrary to this, Estonian men were described as an extreme opposite (A4M), being horribly dressed (A4M), having a very casual clothing style (A11M), often walking next to these beautiful women in their jogging suit resembling a style or scene commonly observed in Eastern Europe (A8M). Older women were described as wearing apron dresses and more traditional clothes (A2F, A10F), which were associated with Russian influences on fashion (A9M) which was seen to be contradictive to the fashion mindedness of the younger generation (A2F, A9M, A10F). A missing, or mediocre fashion taste in the sense of being normal was mentioned (A2F). Potential tourists associate a very trendy and Western European fashion style (P3M, P6M) with the destination and envision a very fashion-conscious, modern and hip person (P3M, P6M, P8F, P13F). Interestingly, the old Russian babushka with her headscarf is equally present in this category representing a more traditional, rustic fashion style in the countryside with typically colourful regional or national costumes, skirts or outfits (P7F).

#### 6.7.2 *Latvia*

Interviewees clearly differentiated in this category between fashion characteristics in the capital city (i.e. Riga) and the countryside. While the countryside was described as having a more rural and traditional fashion style (A8M), a Western European, sometimes a Russian influenced fashion style was reported in the cities (A11M, A12M). This was featured by socialite type women (A4M) showing off their gold, glossy and shiny accessories, their furs, miniskirts and high heels (A1F, A7M, A8M). Actual tourists associated Riga with highly attractive, well-dressed (A5M) women who have a great, sophisticated, chic, trendy, but also classy and almost metropolitan fashion taste (A1F, A4M, A5M, A7M). While women in Riga were perceived to live by the motto 'to see and to be seen' and were eager to dress up and show their beauty (A1F, A8M), men on the other hand were described as normal, more Russian in the sense of simple, often dressed in jogging suits (A8M). Potential tourists perceived the overall fashion style to be similar to that of Estonia but very different from Lithuania (P6M). Interviewees described a mix between a Russian influenced, simple fashion taste (P3M, P6M) and a young and modern, normal fashion style typically seen in Europe (P6M, P7F).

# 6.7.3 Lithuania

The fashion taste in Lithuania was commonly described as very plain and simple, unobtrusive and unpretentious (A2F, A5M). It has more of a small town, rural fashion character, a little old-fashioned and a granddad/grandma style that simply does not stand out (A3M, A7M, A11M). Potential tourists imagined the fashion style in Lithuania to be different in comparison to Latvia and Estonia in that it was believed to be rather simplistic

(P6M). Lithuania is perceived as a person with a rural fashion style where people would mainly wear traditional costumes and outfits (P3M, P7F).

The Lithuanian would be a very rural...a countrywoman (P3M).

## 6.7.4 The Baltic States as a region

Depending on the age and place of residence of the person (i.e. countryside or city) the fashion was described as a rather abstract fashion style (A7M) with women wearing revealing clothes with chic and golden accessories (A2F, A6M, A8M, A10F). Overall a mix between old fashioned, traditional outfits and mainstream Western brands (e.g., Zara, H&M) was reported (A12M). Men on the other hand, were perceived as being dressed rather cheaply (A8M, A10F).

Potential tourists were split over the fashion style in all three countries. While some interviewees believed that the fashion style was fashionable, chic and modern, following general trends (P4M, P9M), another testimony associated a fashion style not deviating much from the one in North-eastern European countries (P12F). One testimony compared and contrasted the fashion style of the three destinations:

The Estonian is more fashion conscious and more focused towards Western lifestyle products and brands whereas the Lithuanian would be more country style. The Latvian would be Russian (P3M).

Russian influences in the fashion style were also imagined in that women were believed to be typically well-dressed to overdressed causing interviewees to relate it to fashion commonly seen in a red light district (P10M). This fashion was described as snobbish Russian, a little slutty, pretentious and bragging or showing off (P11F):

I heard somewhere that the women are incredibly dolled up and parade in high heels across the cobble stoned streets (P13F).

# 6.8 Lifestyle

# 6.8.1 Estonia

When asked to describe the lifestyle of an Estonian person, interviewees reported associations that centred on business, technology, family, and traditions. Interviewees described a young person leading a very modern, trendy and hip, progressive and dynamic, almost yuppie like lifestyle (A4M, A9M, A6M, A7M, A11M, A13M). Additionally, a remarkable consensus existed in the perception of the Estonian lifestyle being very technology oriented. Interviewees associated Estonians as technology freaks or technological fashion victims (A3M, A4M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A12M), and envisioned a person that is permanently online, on their iPhone or iPad during the day (A4M, A6M, A7M, A9M).

Well, that would be...let's start with the most northern country. To me, Estonia would be a typical yuppie...a kind of...iPhone evangelist, iPad...preferably even three of it (A3M).

More negative views revolved around a certain Western European monotony pertaining to the shopping and consumption culture (A5M, A13M, A3M), causing the lifestyle to come across as mercantilist and cold at times (A5M). Generally, there seems to be a greater orientation in Estonia towards Europe, Scandinavia and Finland in particular (A7M, A9M, A11M, A12M) when compared to Latvia and Lithuania (A9M). Similar to

other Scandinavian countries (i.e. Sweden or Norway) there seems to be a self-conception as the gateway to the world (A4M) in the sense of a gateway to success and the West.

Something...well, I think the most normal person was the Estonian, simply because I would describe Estonia really as an approachable and modern person, who is absolutely open-minded towards technology. It is a person, who does not have an issue eating Sushi but who is aware that there are potatoes growing outside in his garden. So the true origins, the traditions remain intact. In that sense modern and just very open. [...] In fact, they are very open-minded. They have the courage for new things, to try something entirely new, and they also accept those new things as long as it improves something. They are also happy to try new things in terms of food and they know how to dress appropriately for any occasion (A7M).

This is, in part, also reflected in their English speaking ability (A7M, A8M), and eagerness to learn and speak other languages as well (A12M). Even though some interviewees described the lifestyle as hip, trendy, consumption focused or mercantilist, it was also reported that unlike Russians with a rather ostentatious lifestyle (A4M), Estonians prefer understatement and unpretentiousness, and generally have a less-is-more mentality (A9M, A10F). Associated with this modesty and humbleness and in great contrast to their modern, easy-going, casual and relaxed lifestyle (A2F, A6M, A7M, A8M, A11M) is another form of lifestyle that is deeply involved, entrenched and rooted in traditions and craftsmanship (A1F, A2F, A7M, A10F). This lifestyle appears to be more backwards in the countryside (A2F). It is perceived to have a folkloristic emphasis and thus, sometimes is perceived as outmoded, stale and antiquated (A10F).

Family, friends and the local community seem to be the power source of Estonians. They are reported to be well integrated in their community (A5M), and centre their dynamic lifestyle on their families, friends and a very active community life (A2F, A4M, A7M, A10F, A13M). At the same time interviewees reported that it is not a closed off community and family life. Instead they are perceived to live a very open, social,

hospitable, inviting lifestyle (A2F, A4M, A10F, A11M, A13M), which stands out in the Baltic States in their hospitality towards foreigners (A11M). Estonians like to sing as a means to express their national identity and independence (A4M), tend to regularly have a sauna with family and friends (A4M), and come together for an amicable drink or two (A10F). In short, Estonia's lifestyle can be described as a positive (A1F), down-to-earth (A2F), simply bourgeois or middle-class (A1F), and in touch with traditions and nature (A4M).

During the summer months, people are out on the streets and are happy. However, during the winter months, when it is dark, people retreat a little into their shell (A12M).

Potential tourists envision a lifestyle similar to that in other Nordic, Scandinavian or Western countries (P3M, P9M). They associate an Internet savvy person living a pro-Western (P3M, P8F, P13F), young, trendy and dynamic lifestyle (P3M, P6M). However, the lifestyle they perceive is described as being very connected to traditions (P3M, P9M), not being fond of traveling other than for special occasions (P3M). Nevertheless, potential tourists would expect a hospitable and not hostile lifestyle, rather a quiet lifestyle that is not boisterous or frantic but still very open, friendly and welcoming (P7F). This mix of lifestyle descriptors associated with the destination representing modernity as well as traditions, caused interviewees to expect a very positive atmosphere and authentic lifestyle (P4M).

#### 6.8.2 *Latvia*

Lifestyle descriptions of actual tourists in Latvia seem to be more heterogeneous in comparison to Estonia. Actual tourists describe it as very diverse and rather as being in search of a true lifestyle that represents the entire country (A8M), trying to find a way

towards a Western standard (A13M). Thus, they clearly differentiate between a city lifestyle in Riga and the countryside. Lifestyle in the capital city is described as trendy and cosmopolitan (A4M, A6M, A8M), vivid, alive, vibrant, and rich in variety (A1F, A5M, A7M), where people have their beer in a café and listen to street music (A8M).

I would say Latvia...in love with life, fun loving, and perhaps even quite extroverted (A5M).

Interviewees reported a lifestyle that at a first glance appears to be on some higher level (A6M) showing off their prosperity in terms of shopping behaviour, money, the Porsche Cayenne and other expensive cars by publicly putting it on display (A1F, A5M, A8M). However, actual tourists also had the impression that Latvians rather pretend to be cosmopolitan (A7M), are trying to appear better or more than they are (A4M), causing interviewees to judge that they are a little full of themselves (A7M).

The lifestyle in the countryside, on the other hand, contrasts strongly with the city life in and around Riga. While some interviewees described it as a pretty ordinary or normal lifestyle (A3M) that is just more conservative and awakens memories of Poland (A9M, A11M), others observed a much more rustic, rural and quiet lifestyle (A2F, A8M, A9M), centred on farming (A8M). Overall, Latvians are perceived as being more phlegmatic in the sense that they do not utilise their chances and opportunities (A11M).

Latvia is an old farmer who tries to endeavour modernity and tries to be forward-looking...um...but where perhaps only the next generation will be able to really get the farm in shape (A2F).

Moreover, some interviewees described a primitive lifestyle of a poor old woman (A8M, A10F, A13M), who is very concerned about the future, barely survives because she cannot afford anything (A2F, A8M) but somehow tries to keep her front yard in shape (A10F). It is a picture of a very visible poverty (A8M, A13M) and a somewhat primitive

life, like 'in the year dot' (A10F), where horses and carts are still common (A10F). Potential tourists differentiated between a lifestyle assumed in Riga and one in the countryside. While the lifestyle in the countryside was described as traditional, farming, in touch and connected with nature, family and traditions as well as possibly a little Russian (P3M, P4M, P5F), interviewees associated a much more dynamic, lively and buoyant lifestyle with the capital city, which was perceived to be a little more hip, wild, crazy but also hectic (P6M, P7F, P8F).

#### 6.8.3 Lithuania

The lifestyle in Lithuania was perceived as very Russian like, conservative, reserved, plain and simple, where people obviously have a hard time and struggle (A2F, A5M, A7M, A9M, A11M, A12M). It is perceived as a very modest, down-to-earth, slow-paced, small-town and rural lifestyle that is centred on family and friends and bound to traditions. The most salient associations interviewees had with the lifestyle in Lithuania, however, was a lifestyle that rather follows habits and is very phlegmatic in that they do not utilise chances and opportunities (A7M, A11M). Due to a daily life highly influenced by religion (A1F, A2F, A4M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A11M), even almost dictated to by the Catholic Church (A6M, A7M, A11M), they have maintained that rural standard (A7M, A11M):

It is a life pervaded by the Catholic Church. The person I see would be very religious, pass a church at least twice a day, making the signs of a cross while passing (A7M).

In line with fashion perceptions, potential tourists described Lithuania's lifestyle as more rural, simple, conservative, and sleepy (P3M, P7F, P8F). Some interviewees imagined a more dreamy and romantic lifestyle in that they related it to a country where

one can enjoy quiet, idyllic nature, where time stands still (P7F, P8F). At the same time, negative perceptions also existed, in that Lithuania was believed to be tense and uptight, not oriented towards the West, leading to negative lifestyle perceptions (P6M, P13F):

Lithuania sounds more Eastern European than the others. To me it seems more Polish in the sense that it leaves a greyish impression with me so that Lithuania is more grey as opposed to Estonia for example, which seems more bright (P13F).

# 6.8.4 The Baltic States as a region

The three Baltic States, being still relatively new in their independence, were described as still trying to find their own identity (A12M). Women tend to enjoy their newly gained emancipation (A2F), which is also reflected in their appearance and fashion style and were, thus, described as overly emancipated and often more outgoing than men (A2F, A4M). Generally all three destinations reflect a mixed lifestyle between modernity and traditions (A2F, A9M, A12M) with varying degrees of clarity in one or the other direction (A9M). They are reported to have an outgoing lifestyle, to seek international experiences, are lively and try to celebrate whenever they have the opportunity to do so (A2F, A4M). At the same time, the lifestyle is also perceived as calm, composed (A2F), being in touch with nature and having great respect for it (A9M):

Even though they all have a somewhat vibrant city life, for us it seems much more quiet, cosy, relaxed and slow-paced (A9M).

However, it is important to recognise that the above-mentioned testimonies are drawn from different countries. For example, actual tourists perceived Estonia to be the most emancipated country with the clearest vision for its future. Lithuania, on the other

hand, was perceived as left in the shadow with no visible desire to move forward or away from their traditional and rural life. Latvia was perceived as hybrid, as if it is being paralysed between modernity and traditions, in search of an identity.

Lifestyle associations varied greatly between inner cities and the countryside. Potential tourists described it as a very contradictory lifestyle, in addition to having a great divide and imbalance between inner city life and the rather socialist suburbs and rural regions outside any city area (P2M, P3M, P4M, P10M). Inner cities were associated with normal people on a lower standard of living, but at the same time also with very rich people as common in Eastern Europe or Russia (P1M, P11F); people of a certain social class that lead a pretentious, wasteful and extravagant lifestyle (P11F), where they show off their money with luxury goods, beautiful women, good food, expensive wines, parties, and vodka (P1M, P11F, P13F). In addition, potential tourists described a lifestyle of rather normal people who follow a professional daily routine with a satisfying, maybe a bit alternative personal life (P4M, P12F):

I think it is a lifestyle similar to that in Berlin: well-educated, good income, owning a flat in an old building, the bike with child transporter is in the basement and they go shopping at the wholefood market (P4M).

Among the younger generation, however, interviewees envisioned a joy of living and zest for life causing this demographic group to adopt, but also to adapt to a Western shopping and party culture (P2M, P4M). In contrast, lifestyle in the countryside is informed by a very traditional lifestyle (P1M, P4M), much more traditional by comparison to villages as, for example, in Germany's countryside (P11F). It is described as a lifestyle similar to one in rather poor Eastern bloc countries (P10M), where citizens are attached to their customs and traditions (P4M) and follow a very rural, simple and farming way of life (P3M, P4M) that is centred on community, family and friends (P4M). Additionally,

interviewees also speculated to see a disillusioned old grandma who is forced to live in a non-heated room on a farm and is living a life close to the breadline (P1M, P11F).

Overall, interviewees expected a certain progressiveness and openness towards modern things and fresh ideas in that they are on their way to modernity, but have not arrived there quite yet (P4M, P5F, P9M, P11F):

I would not be surprised to see a person that wears a fur cap during the day and dances on the table in the evening, enjoying party life in an extreme form (P1M).

# 6.9 Psychological characteristics

#### 6.9.1 Estonia

The psychological characteristics of Estonians self-evidently are a reflection of their lifestyle and vice versa. The overall country's personality is described as homogeneous, economically integrated and progressive. When asked for perceptions related to psychological characteristics of Estonia as a person, interviewees associated it with a person that is dynamic, hardworking, efficient, and ambitious (A1F, A2F, A4M, A5M, A7M, A12M), is full of ideas and forward thinking (A1F, A2F, A4M, A11M, A12M, A13M). Estonia is a person that is not just a visionary but is, at the same time, in control of everything, is a mover and shaker instead of just a talker (A1F, A7M, A11M). The person is reported to have an entrepreneurial mind set (A5M) in that he/she is communicative, young in the mind and flexible, shows a spirit of discovery, and is open to change and fresh ideas (A7M, A4M, A13M). Further perceptions were that of a person being critical and reflective (A7M, A8M), occasionally uncompromising and stubborn

(A1F, A2F), but typically a powerful, strong, self-aware, organised, and disciplined person (A1F, A4M, A13M) with a work hard, play hard and hands-on mentality (A4M, A12M.)

Interviewees also described an extremely modern, design oriented, hip, trendy and high tech savvy person (A2F, A3M, A4M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A9M) with a Finnish or Western mentality (A1F, A7M, A11M), which, taken together, some equated with a typical yuppie or a jet set/café society (A3M, A4M) while others regarded this as a positive mind set of a model student of the European Union (A1F), who has an urge to distinguish himself somehow (A4M). In line with their lifestyle, the person was described as very liberal, communicative, open-minded, and very cosmopolitan (A2F, A7M, A9M, A11M). It is a proud and grounded person who is sociable, cordial, and regains his strength through a tradition, nature and family centred life (A1F, A2F, A4M, A5M, A6M, A7M, A8M). It is a person that is tight-lipped and keeps a conversational distance in the beginning (A7M), but is generally welcoming and hospitable, approachable, giving, and pleasant to be around once this initial coolness is overcome (A8M, A9M, A10F, A11M, A13M).

For potential tourists, Estonia has the previously mentioned Hanseatic mentality (P9M), and is independent, dynamic and successful (P6M, P13F). Estonia is perceived as a person that is easy-going, smiling, relaxed, is light-hearted, fun loving, cheerful, openminded, approachable, and shows a pro Western/European attitude (P4M, P6M, P7F, P9M). At the same time and in contrast to the above, interviewees imagined a proud, conservative, quiet and tranquil person that has both feet on the ground, is authentic (P4M, P7F, P9M), but at times is very slow (P7F).

It is a person that lives by the motto: Never do today what you can put off till tomorrow (P7F).

#### 6.9.2 Latvia

Interviewees described the psychological characteristics of Latvia as being a healthy mix between traditional and rustic on one side, as well as modern on the other (A9M). In this category they equally linked their descriptions to a person exposed to city life and a person living in the countryside. The person in the city was described as fun and pleasure loving, loud, extraverted and open-minded (A5M, A7M), taking life and themselves not too seriously (A7M). They pictured a person who is focused on his/her outward appearance, is quickly bored and a little phlegmatic, self-absorbed and has a tendency to show off her possessions and to brag about it (A5M, A8M, A11M). However, the individual is a generally proud person, especially proud to be able to speak their language again and, considering German history, for Germans a bit too nationalistic (A7M). The Latvian person is concerned about modernity and the future (A2F), is still in search for a real identity (A8M) and sometimes needs two jobs to fund his/her lifestyle (A7M).

Overall, the person was reported to be pleasant, a little Polish, helpful, hospitable and warm-hearted in the sense that they were speaking with and from their heart (A4M, A8M, A9M, A13M). However, interviewees associated (with the person living in the countryside) someone who is more quiet and serious, reserved, resigned and melancholic (A2F, A11M), as if that person has given up on something (A1F, A11M):

I don't know what it is. Well, they are...it simply is that...the country has something of...they appear as if they have been kicked into their heels, a little surrendered. Like someone who perhaps got beaten up a couple of times too often...you know. It is as if they have capitulated (A1F).

Potential tourists perceived Riga to stand out in that they envisioned a person that is determined, active and focused (P7F) but also open-minded and open towards new

dynamics, especially coming from tourism (P8F). On the other hand, they associated a person with the destination that is jovial, placid, connected to family and traditions (P5F), in love with life but a little less successful and dynamic compared to a person from Estonia (P6M).

## 6.9.3 Lithuania

Corresponding with lifestyle perceptions actual tourists had of Lithuania, psychological associations were linked to a person described as very religious, traditional and conservative (A1F, A2F, A4M, A5M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A9M, A11M, A12M), who had Polish features or seemed to be Soviet shaped (A2F, A7M, A12M). Even though some interviewees saw the person as proud, self-satisfied, shrewd or streetwise, self-absorbed, distant and reserved (A1F, A2F, A3M, A5M, A7M, A11M, A12M), the person was also characterised as uneasy, restrained, shy and cautious (A5M, A11M), as passive and colourless (A7M), as having a lack of confidence and not setting very high standards for him/herself (A5M, A7M). The person was also described as a little rough (A2F), but generally as a plain character that is somehow more complete, inwardly at rest (A1F, A2F) and content with life and the world around (A6M). In addition, this person was described as humble, quiet, friendly and hospitable (A5M, A6M, A9M), at times uneasy but still pleasant to be around (A6M, A11M).

The psychological characteristics reported by potential tourists were divergent, in that associations were made with a person that seemed more simple-minded, tense, uptight, more serious, grumpy and sad, Russian or Eastern European, conservative and under pressure (P3M, P6M, P8F, P13F). At the same time, Lithuania was described as a person imagined to be rather quiet and proud, but very relaxed and hospitable (P7F):

Vilnius is smaller and maybe that's the reason why it seems more cordial to me. It may also be the reason why people at least appear to be more welcoming (P7F).

## 6.9.4 The Baltic States as a region

Overall, people are not perceived to be extroverted and outgoing like Southern Europeans (A2F). At the same time, the person was not perceived to be superficial or shallow, stereotypes attributed to people from the Unitd States or Russia (A3M, A12M). Interviewees reported that people initially are very restrained, reserved and distant (A2F, A3M, A12M) and that it takes time to get accepted (A12M). However, once a person is past that point and once they have had time to unwind, they are extremely friendly, hospitable, make an effort to communicate, to get in touch with foreigners, and potentially become good friends for life (A2F, A3M, A6M, A10F, A12M). However, these aspects were perceived as to be different in the individual countries:

Lithuania is the reserved, restrained and shy destination; Latvia is a progressive state and Estonia appears to be much more integrated (A5M).

Additionally, similar to Scandinavians, they were reported to be linguistically very gifted (A4M, A12M), well educated and regard a good education generally as highly important (A12M).

When asked about psychological characteristics of all three countries, interviewees pictured a person who seems a bit snobbish (P1M), tough and not at all soft (P5M), proud (P10M), and initially cold and distant (P2M, P9M). They expected to find either a normal person (P1M), someone who eventually becomes your best buddy (P10M). Interviewees linked these destinations to people who are friendly and possibly more attentive,

considerate, and hospitable than a typical European (P1M, P2M, P12F). They were described as welcoming towards foreigners, cordial and sincere, not hypocritical or offensive (P1M, P4M, P9M, P12F). They are rather quiet, not very spontaneous but cogitating (P2M).

While I imagine Tallinn to be quite friendly, hospitable, smiling and proud, Latvia (Riga) seems more hectic. Lithuania is a bit more cordial and proud (P7F).

Potential tourists also described two main types of people, the person that is smart and educated (P2M, P5F), emancipated, proactive, creative, forward looking, embracing work and change (P2M, P3M, P11F); an enthusiastic person who looks for opportunities and is ambitious to improve life (P4M, P5F, P10M, P11F) but is also appreciative of what they have and where they come from (P5F).

On the other hand, they describe a person that is deeply rooted in the individual country's traditions and protective of this identity (P3M, P4M, P11F). It is a rather quiet person, a little withdrawn and reserved, more introverted (P5F); someone who has a great sense for friends, family and community (P4M), and is a relaxed authentic and original person (P4M).

# **6.10** Taste preferences (food)

## 6.10.1 Estonia

The taste preferences interviewees associated with Estonia resemble previously mentioned patterns pertaining to progressiveness, traditions, and modern Western lifestyle and being a social person. Descriptors used range from the typical Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) customer (A3M) to a person who likes to experiment (A7M) and shows an

impressive preference for Vodka (A10F). While interviewees perceived a dominant preference for the more traditional and rustic food (A7M, A9M), they also sensed a trend towards a modern Scandinavian cuisine (A9M).

While they like to experiment and are open-minded towards Sushi, they are aware that they have potatoes in their garden (A7M).

Potential tourists see Estonia as a person that prefers more hearty food, similar to the food in Germany (P6M), food that is more traditional or rustic (P7F), which is accompanied by incredible amounts of Vodka (P8F).

### 6.10.2 Latvia

Interestingly, the notion that Latvia is still in search of its identity is also somewhat reflected in perceptions actual tourists had related to taste preferences:

The young and beautiful woman often goes to McDonalds but is anorexic and would rather bring up the food to simply avoid a 3g-weight increase because that could potentially harm her ravishing beauty (A7M).

While interviewees report a preference for hip and more cosmopolitan food in the cities (A5M), it was reported that they have a more traditional cuisine as opposed to a modern one and that in everyday life they prefer their meat platter (A9M). Potential tourists reported that they would not see too many differences between Latvia and Lithuania (P6M). While perceptions leaned towards a more simple taste preference (P3M), an open-mindedness towards new dynamics and impulses with regards to culinary style was associated with the destination (P8F).

## 6.10.3 Lithuania

In line with lifestyle and psychological characteristics mentioned above, taste preferences reported were also more traditional (A2F, A7M, A9M). The person that interviewees visualised was someone who would not be a gourmet or connoisseur but rather prefer a simple, less modern, traditional and rustic cuisine (A2F, A7M, A9M). The person associated in this category would not eat caviar but rather fish, poultry, self-grown, and seasonal products (A2F, A7M). Potential tourists reported no particular taste preferences other than simple and as having a similar cuisine as in Estonia and Latvia (P3M, P6M).

# 6.10.4 The Baltic States as a region

Potential tourists had very different perceptions pertaining to cuisine. While some described the cuisine as traditional and solid, urban, being more on the hearty side and not sophisticated (P1M, P2M, P10M, P12F), others saw a more creative, healthy, almost organic cuisine (P4M, P9M). Interviewees also described the person having a preference for alcohol, in particular Vodka (P1M, P8F).

# **6.11** Typical visitor personality

# 6.11.1 Estonia

Actual tourists perceive the typical visitor to Estonia to mainly come from Finland, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany (A1F, A2F, A9M, A12M) as well as other European countries and from the United States (A4M). The age groups that interviewees

associate with the typical visitor are on one side very young people (A2F, A5M, A8M, A9M, A11M, A12M) mainly from England (A2F, A9M) as well as older tourists or retirees above 60 years of age (A8M, A9M, A12M, A13M). Naturally their lifestyle and motivation to visit the Baltic States is different as are the associations interviewees had with the forms of tourism that visitors engage in. The young person was described as a fun and party seeker (A2F, A5M, A8M, A9M, A11M, A12M). Common associations were those of an alcohol tourist from England or a Finnish binge drinker (A2F, A9M, A11M, A12M). Those tourists rely on cheap transportation (Ryanair or ferries) to come to Tallinn for a long weekend in order to have a bachelor party, experience the city's party scene and casual sex (A2F, A12M), which leads to visible problems with prostitution (A2F). In contrast, the older visitor was associated with a person interested in the nativeness of the destination, its cultural identity and architecture (A1F, A4M, A8M, A12M, A13M). Even though wellness travel was associated with Estonia (A1F, A12M), the majority of visitors are seen as a culturally and historically interested person who enjoys the quietness and harmony of the destination (A1F, A8M, A13M). The typical visitor in this category is the cruise ship tourist, who uses the comfort of a bus for special attractions and excursions in the destination (A3M, A8M, A12M). Interviewees perceived this as a tick off or stop over tourism where the typical tourist has only a few hours for a superficial form of sightseeing during the cruise ship's stay in the harbour (A4M, A8M, A12M). Apart from young backpackers and domestic tourism, any particular form of family tourism, camping or rural tourism was not highly visible (A3M, A12M).

Most potential tourists have a rather vague and unclear perception of the typical visitor of Estonia. Those who had specific associations described three potential age groups; mainly visitors between 30-50 years of age, the small group of so-called best agers above 50 or 60 years of age, and the group below 30 years of age, who only have limited

interest in the destination (P13F, P7F). The motivation to travel to Estonia includes mainly a cultural interest or interest in the country (P6M, P7F, P13F). Estonia is generally associated with city tourism and shopping tourism as part of Baltic Sea cruises (P6M); it is associated with a destination for romantic getaways but only few potential tourists perceive the country as a destination for rural or outdoor tourism (P7F, P13F). In fact, some potential tourists see it as a destination that is not fun to go to (P13F).

# 6.11.2 Latvia

In line with the multi-faceted character of Latvia it was reported that there is no typical visitor in the country, or Riga in particular, but that there is a little bit of everything in that context instead (A8M). However, similar to Estonian tourists, the most salient associations were those of British binge drinkers, rumbling and loud Scandinavians, retired Germans with their big belly and digital camera as well as cruise adoring Americans who are having a brief stopover on their grand tour through Europe (A4M, A8M, A12M, A13M). Visitors were commonly described as very young (A8M, A10F, A11M, A12M, A13M). However, the main group of visitors was perceived as being over 60 to 65 years of age (A10F, A12M) from an educated or intellectual middle-class (A8M). Depending on age and visitor group, the motivation to travel to Latvia differed in that some were looking for a pristine and unspoilt state of nature (A4M, A12M) while others were interested in general heritage, their own heritage and cultural tourism (A4M, A8M). Apart from a few long distance bike tourists and backpackers that individually travel the country using Eurolines<sup>12</sup> (A10F, A12M), interviewees associated the bulk of tourists with Baltic Sea

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Eurolines: The brand 'Eurolines' groups 29 independent coach companies, together operating Europe's largest regular coach network. The network connects over 600 destinations across 36 European countries (www.eurolines.com).

cruises, as well as fun, party, and alcohol tourism, some domestic and regional tourism, but hardly in the form of wellness or family travel (A4M, A11M, A12M, A13M).

Potential tourists reported surprisingly few associations related to Latvia's typical visitor personality. They described a typical cruise tourist, a comfort seeker on a Baltic Sea cruise ship, who stays overnight in a harbour and potentially spends two hours in a city, finding everything he or she sees amazing (P6M). In contrast they associated a young fun seeker and party tourist from Great Britain with the destination; a person interested in nightlife, shopping and entertainment who uses cheap travel options such as low cost carriers to get in and out of the destination (P7F, P8F).

#### 6.11.3 Lithuania

Actual tourists perceived the typical visitor to Lithuania relatively similar to the one traveling in Latvia with regards to visitors' fashion and appearance. However, some differences were observed. Interviewees indicated that fun and party tourism was visible (A8M, A10F). However, a smaller number of young tourists were noticed (A12M). Actual tourists also reported an omnipresence of bus tourists who mainly come to see Lithuania for cultural, heritage, and historical reasons (A8M, A10F, A12M). The person traveling to Lithuania was described as someone interested in family roots (A10F); someone who is also well informed prior to traveling and likes to read more than just a Marco Polo travel guide:

I think the typical tourist coming to Lithuania is someone who has background information, looks at the history of the country, and is interested in the Baltic Sea region. It is someone who possibly has roots in the country, comes to grips with history, religion and the country's attractions and who likes to see these attractions that mainly are churches (A8M).

Potential tourists were only able to provide a description of visitor personality that at best can be described as vague. Uncertainty was reported pertaining to the attractiveness of the destination apart from hiking, mountain biking or driving by car through the mountains (P7F). Interviewees imagined both younger and older tourists who are interested in cultural tourism, as well as in Lithuania's nature (P6M, P7F). Overall, no clear image about a typical tourist exists. Further, some potential tourists are even unsure as to why anyone would visit the country.

Not sure if the destination would be in any way attractive apart from hiking, mountain biking, driving through the mountains. The tourist is nature focused. Why else would you go there (P7F).

# 6.11.4 The Baltic States as a region

Overall, actual tourists associate a special clientele of visitors to have a distinct interest in the destinations and to be better educated (A1F, A7M).

People who select the Baltic States as holiday destination have more knowledge, something they would not need for Bulgaria and its sun and beach tourism. A Baltic States tourist needs to have a motivation other than beach, sun, all-inclusive because holidays in the Baltic States are not the typical holiday with down time. It is sophisticated and demanding and is more of an educational form of tourism (A7M).

Generally, interviewees experienced different broad categories of visitors; Europeans looking for pristine nature and interested in the cultural identity of the three destinations as well as Americans on tour through Europe, who participate in a Baltic Sea Cruise, a form of 'tick-off tourism' where the visitor has not really seen anything at the

end of the day (A4M). However, interviewees broke this main group further down in their testimonies.

The largest group of visitors was associated with the retired or nearly retired secondary school teacher, professor or public servant, being 65 years of age and above, traveling with their partner or significant other (A2F, A6M, A7M, A10F, A12M). They are culture snobs participating in a guided tour by Studiosus<sup>13</sup> and visit all three countries in 10 to 12 days (A1F, A2F, A7M, A10F). They have no time to relax and let experiences sink in because they rush from one attraction to the next always trying to keep pace with schedule of their comfortable air-conditioned bus (A1F, A2F, A7M). They are ticking off the highlights they see to the left and right of the road adding a notch to their passport, ultimately to be able to say: 'We were there' (A1F, A2F, A4M).

One variation of this group was believed to be the typical Baltic Sea cruise tourist who gets thrown off the boat in Riga or Tallinn during a stop over and who only selectively travels the region but mainly spends a few hours in the port cities for some basic sightseeing (A1F, A12M). Another variation was a female secondary school teacher, single and around 50 years of age, who has booked guided bike holidays with Viking<sup>14</sup> through all three countries, hoping to meet other participating single men, enjoying the finer things in life during overnight stays in old upscale estates (A2F).

Another main group identified by interviewees were young party tourists, being 25 years of age and above, who come mainly from Finland or the United Kingdom with low cost carrier Ryanair for bachelor parties, cheap alcohol, fun and entertainment (A2F, A3M, A5M, A6M, A9M, A12M). Their travel focus is the main and capital cities of the Baltic States and by saving the money they would need for a similar trip in England or Ireland,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Studiosus Travel: European market leader in the cultural tours segment offering outbound, guided tours worldwide (www.studiosus.com).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Viking Travel: A global, full service personal and business travel agency (www.vikingtravel.com).

they are able to afford 3 days in the Baltic States including alcohol and prostitutes (A2F, A9M).

Apart from these main visitor groups and their variations, interviewees mentioned a group of visitors that are typically older, who participate in some form of heritage tourism motivated by their personal background (e.g., descendants of displaced people or displaced people themselves). The visitors were described as not being a typical package tourist, but culturally very interested and in contrast to the younger group of party tourists more respectful in their behaviour (A9M). Further, backpacking tourism among the younger generation takes place, which is typically being done by younger people with solid educational background, who are in touch with nature and interested in culture and modern city life (A6M, A9M). Family tourism, as well as rural and farm tourism, however, still seem underdeveloped due to a problematic infrastructure in this region (A9M, A13M).

When potential tourists were asked about their general thoughts pertaining to the typical visitor personality, several main general groups of visitors were associated with these destinations. The first and largest group was described as visitors between 55 or 60 years of age and above (P2M, P4M, P8F, P11F). It is a group of visitors typically engaged in organised group travel and round trip tours with no final destination in an air-conditioned tour coach (P2M, P4M, P6M, P7F). This group was described as a high-end form of group travel, a well-travelled Studiosus client who is very culture and history focused, is looking for an educational component in the travel itinerary and has a better than average education as well as financial standing (P2M, P4M, P5F, P6M, P8F, P11F, P12F).

The second group of visitors to the region is seen as younger, educated, lifestyle/fun/experience seekers between 25 to 40 years of age (P2M, P4M, P6M, P12F). They potentially travel with friends, go through bars in the evenings and take the liberty to

get away from home and family once in a while (P2M, P4M, P6M). The were described as a visitor who may also 'whoop it up' a bit in the form of bachelor parties, potentially leading to a negative form of party tourism or even having a sexual motive for traveling there (P1M, P2M, P5F, P8F). They were seen to have a better social background, and are financially secure (P2M, P4M, P12F).

The third main group was described as visitors between 17 and 25 years of age, the InterRail traveller<sup>15</sup> or backpacker (P1M, P2M, P4M). They were seen as the smallest of the main groups (P2M). They go easy on spending and have a minimal impact environmentally but also financially on the destination (P2M). Nevertheless, they are seen as trendsetters in most destinations since it is usually the backpackers who go to a place first before mass tourism comes in (P2M). They were described as discoverers, being interested in nature and outdoor sports, they try to avoid mass tourism and plan their independent trips by themselves (P2M, P11F, P12F).

The destinations were associated with shorter weekend trips in the form of city tourism (P12F), possibly couples where the children stay with their grandparents for the duration of their parents' holidays (P5F). Even though the region was associated with a destination made for the typical adventure seeker or visitor who still wants to discover, it was not regarded as a destination or region for families with children (P5F, P11F), possibly due to a perceived poor infrastructure and poor medical facilities (P5F).

I don't see families from Germany that would say: we are spending our holidays in the Baltic States or in Estonia. No one would put kids into the car and drive up there. This is rather for tourists who have seen the world and now want to get a quick glimpse of the Baltic States or just want to fill a gap (P8F).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> InterRail: A company or webshop of 32 railway companies selling flexible train passes online to travellers from all over Europe (www.interrail.eu).

Some testimonies described the three countries as a destination for alternative forms of tourism and did not perceive it as a high profile destination or region (P1M, P12F). The assumption was made that the potential visitor needs to have already made extensive prior travel experiences or be a globetrotter to consider these destinations in the first place (P12F):

You would not want to go there. It is either someone who has relatives there and visits them or a business traveller. Otherwise no one would go there! Well, an exception would be someone from the Catholic Church but that is business travel to me (P3M).

# **6.12** Destination personality visual overview

To allow for a comprehensive overview of each country's personality individually, as well as the intersection of personality characteristics among the three of them, a graphical representation has been developed. Graphical depictions in the subsequent sections further allow a presentation of a single and unified personality of actual and potential tourists for each country, as well as the personality commonalities among them. A synthesis of these two groups of tourists is important to receive a complete view of destination personalities. While views between actual and potential tourists might differ and would need to be targeted through separate marketing campaigns, it is important to target both groups at the same time and understand perceptions of the target market as a whole. Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 presented in the subsequent sections further represent the basis and parts of the final co-branding model (Appendix U) discussed in Chapter 9. The 'black font' in Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5, illustrates the personality perceptions from either actual or potential tourists. The 'red font' emphasises where actual and potential tourists have similar personality perceptions.

Figure 6.2. Estonia's destination personality

# Personality of Estonia

# MODERN, STYLISH, YOUNG, ROUGH

## Personality – Attitude, Character

- Happy and lighthearted
- Family oriented
- Tolerant, critical, reflective
- Fun-loving
- Hip people
- Pro-Western attitude
- Flexible
- Balanced
- Down-to-earth
- Caring, trusting
- Generous, humble
- Powerful, energetic, strong

## Personality - Work Ethics

- Overachievers
- A young, Western and future oriented business man
- Hardworking, ambitious
- Efficient, disciplined, organised
- Direct
- Confident, clever
- Optimistic
- Realistic
- Dvnamic
- Independent
- Visionary

#### Personality – Appearance, Fashion

- Young city person
- Upscale oriented
- Western brand trends
- Modern, trendy women (often excessive, cheap)
- Horribly dressed men with golden necklace

### **Personality – Identity**

- Very traditional
- Bourgeois
- Nationalistic
- Independent
- Conservative
- Enjoying identity and sovereignty
- Proud
- European Union-minded

# Personality - Taste

- Simple
- Nordic
- Comfort / traditional food
- Vodka
- Kentucky Fried Chicken

# $\underline{Personality-Lifestyle}$

- Large friends network
- Like to socialize
- Enjoys arts
- Settled
- Does not show off
- Prefers understatement, unpretentious
- Connected to traditions, craftsmanship
- Tech savvy

Figure 6.3. Latvia's destination personality

# **Personality of Latvia**

# **QUIET, REFLECTIVE, RURAL, LOVELY**

# Personality - Identity

- Identity problems among social classes
- Identity search
- Conservative

### Personality - Taste

- McDonalds
- Meat platter
- Traditional cuisine
- Simple taste

# Personality - Appearance, Fashion

- Chic, classy
- Metropolitan
- Golden Jewelry
- Russian influenced taste

## **Personality – Lifestyle**

- Café society
- They are full of themselves
- Rich in contrast (poverty vs. wealth)

### **Personality – Attitude, Character**

- Melancholic
- Fun-loving
- Less happy
- Alive
- Forward pressing
- Metropolitan
- Very open
- Friendly
- A little loud
- Extraverted, determined
- Cautious
- Restrained, resigned
- Bored, phlegmatic
- A little Russian

### Riga = Latvia

- Fashion Conscious
- Sophisticated
- Great taste
- Lively
- Trendy
- Posh
- Cosmopolitan
- Pretentious
- Dolled up

Figure 6.4. Lithuania's destination personality

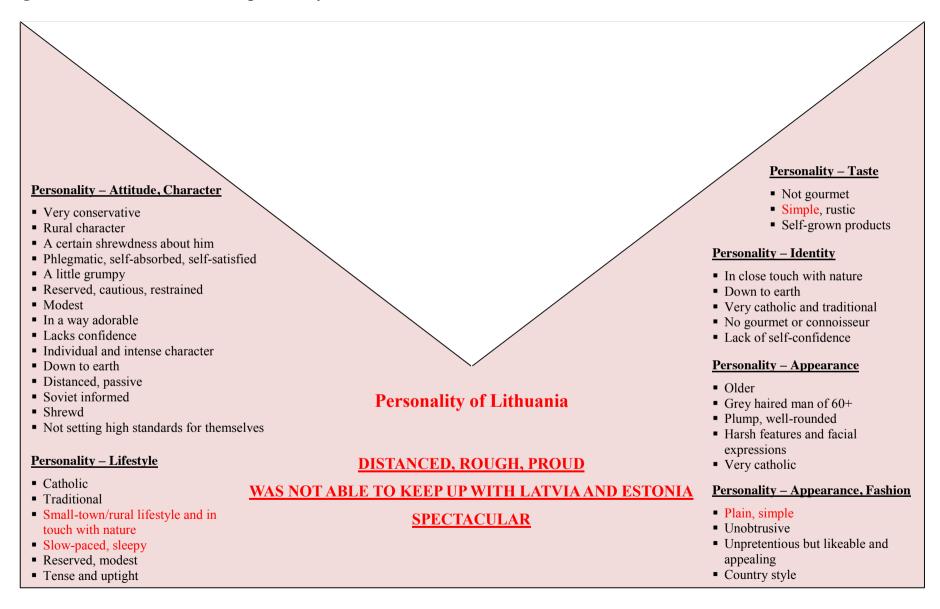


Figure 6.5. Intersection of common Baltic States' destination personality characteristics

#### **Appearance**

#### Women:

- Young
- Good looking
- Scandinavian
- Fashion conscious. hip, stylish
- Revealing and overdressed
- High heels

## Men:

- Introverted
- Serious
- Uncommunicative
- Calm
- Rough
- Tough
- Male that drinks a lot

# **Personality of All Three Baltic States**

# TRADITIONAL AND MODERN **POOR AND RICH** MALE AND FEMALE

# Lifestyle

- Family oriented, urban lifestyle, slightly alternative, prefers healthy organic food, financially secured but not materialistic, culturally oriented
- Young yuppie, newly rich, Western lifestyle McDonalds, enjoys life, shows off money, enjoys freedom, shopping, party culture

## Attitude, Character

- Friendly
- Hospitable, cordial, welcoming
- Interested in tourists
- Approachable
- Open-minded
- Genuine, sincere
- Warm
- Happy, cheerfulCommunicative
- Not loud
- Authentic
- Hospitable

# 6.13 Summary

There are apparent differences between actual tourists and potential tourists in the clarity of their perceptions as they pertain to the individual states. Actual tourists can clearly identify commonalities but also see clear differences among the three countries. Estonia is described as modern, stylish and young; Lithuania seems backwards, distanced, rough and proud, Russian-Polish influenced, religious and held back. Latvia, the reflective, quiet and rural but also metropolitan country, seems blurred and still needs to find its own identity.

Potential tourists have difficulties recognising differences among three countries. While their overall perception of the states as a region reveals similar personality characteristics associated with the three countries, they are unable to clearly separate them from one another. They fail to distinguish between what each country brings to the table, how they differ, yet complement each other.

Potential tourists have only a vague idea of the region's personality characteristics, describe the region as an overall colder person than actual tourists do, which leads them to be distant and lack enthusiasm to visit the individual countries. On the contrary, actual tourists describe the countries as a warmer person and show greater appreciation for the region's diversity, authenticity and uniqueness. Actual tourists possess much more concrete and specific perceptions about the personality of each Baltic State through their personal travel experience than potential tourists can have, whose personality perception at times seems rather abstract, blurred, vague, and often prejudiced. The latter group is naturally dependent on external and secondary information they have been exposed to through destination marketing channels or others and personal interest. Actual tourists found it easy to provide a detailed personality description of the three Baltic States and are

able to differentiate them from each other, which resulted in a coherent and more detailed destination personality assessment between the individual testimonies. Contrary to this, most potential tourists were not able to do so as they generally perceive the three Baltic States as one common region or destination rather than being sovereign, independent countries. In many cases, potential tourists base their responses on perceptions they hold of the individual capital cities rather than a comprehensive image that would include other parts of the country. With few exceptions, the personality potential tourists perceive of the three destinations is a very hybrid one.

#### CHAPTER VII: RESULTS – DESTINATION IMAGE

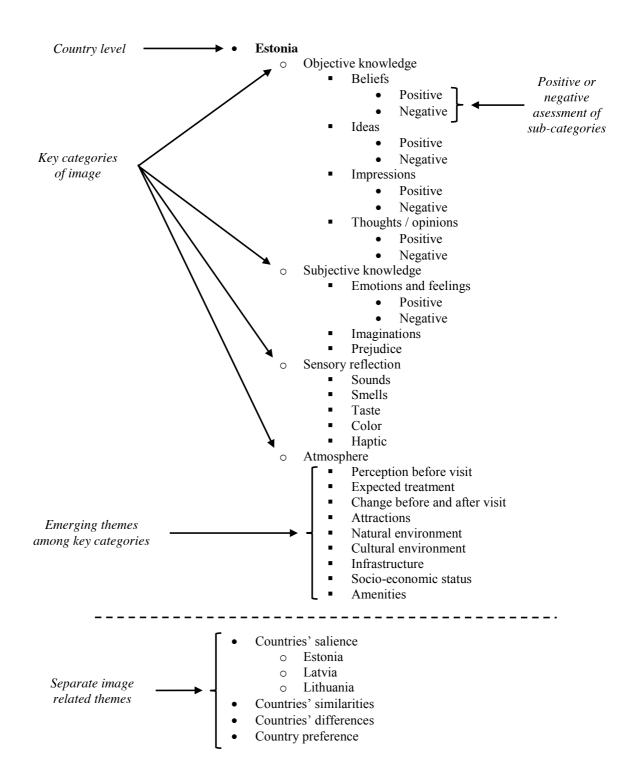
## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings about tourists' image of each Baltic State separately and all three countries together as a region. Similarities and differences between the three countries as well as both groups of tourists, actual and potential, are illustrated. Based on the design of the instrument, results are reported by initially comparing and contrasting image associations of actual and potential tourists for each of the three destinations separately, before comparing and contrasting similarities and differences of image associations of both groups of tourists.

# 7.2. Overview of codes – destination image

The main codes relevant to destination image that inductively emerged from the data analysis are provided below (Figure 7.1). An exhaustive and final list of codes representing the entire analytical process is provided in Appendix T. Figure 7.1 serves as an example for Estonia. However, similar categories and themes emerged for Latvia and Lithuania as well as for the three Baltic States combined. This chapter adopted a different approach to reporting than the previous chapter. It discusses the themes that emerged from the analysis for each of the Baltic States. It reports on each country's image separately (for both actual and potential tourists together) as the analysis revealed that many themes and categories overlap. Adopting the reporting structure from Chapter 6 would thus result in increased reporting repetition. However, at the end of this chapter, a section on countries' image similarities and differences is included to allow for a clear comparison between countries' image.

Figure 7.1. Destination image – coding overview



#### **7.3.** Destination image of Estonia

# 7.3.1 Perceptions of actual tourists

Actual tourists describe Estonia as a very appealing, beautiful and diverse country in terms of its architecture, landscape and scenery (A3M, A4M. A9M); it is described as the most maritime country of the three (A7M). Tourism highlights that actual tourists mentioned as being outstanding were the Endla Nature Reserve (A1F), a marshland with everglades and smaller brooks, the off-coast islands (e.g. Saaremaa) and the Gauja National Park (A10F). Estonia captivates through its nature, its quietness and diverseness but also through a unique mix between nature, culture and adventure (A2F):

Estonia is fascinating and so very rich in contrast. It has a harsh coastline, beautiful islands, but also a gorgeous inland that I perceive to be more rich in variety and fascinating than the other two (A2F).

The capital cities in all three countries receive the greatest tourist attention, Estonia being no exception. Tallinn, with its medieval charisma or aura (A2F) of the medieval historic district and city walls surrounding it (A6M), speaks for itself (A3M) and is regarded as a key attraction in Estonia (A2F, A3M, A6M, A8M, A9M, A10F).

Whenever the Baltic States are mentioned I immediately think of Estonia and the medieval historic district of Tallinn. It is somehow burned into my memory (A10F).

At the same time, Estonia is seen as a very Scandinavian country (A2F, A8M, A9M) due to similarities in many aspects such as lifestyle (A8M, A11M), their good educational system (A7M), the funny language (A2F, A9M) and general development and proximity to Finland and Helsinki in particular (A7M, A9M, A13M). One interviewee

noted that this closeness is also reflected in very similar national anthems (A7M). Actual tourists reported that the closeness and similarities to Finland leads to a noticeable orientation towards the West (A2F) and a European or Scandinavian atmosphere (A11M), which in one case was perceived as a mini Sweden (A2F). Estonia was associated with an interesting mix between improvised and engineered (A2F), a contrast between heritage and the most high-tech focused (e.g. Skype) and modern country of the three Baltic States (A2F, A3M).

Estonia and Tallinn are a country but also a city of contrasts. You can see half-timbered houses from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and right next to it you have a parking meter that you can pay for using your cell phone (A3M).

Actual tourists described a history rich country that is very modern and progressive (A4M), design and technology minded (A9M), progressive and international in the capital city (A4M).

It is a very unique mix between an old Hanseatic city with medieval character and a modern metropolis that is leading in computer technology, and other high-tech and communication technology in Europe by now (A11M).

At the same time, the lifestyle and development in the countryside was contradistinctive to the modern and progressive city life in that it was also perceived as rather slow, rural, agricultural, backwards, in parts even poor (A4M). However, overall, tourists described Estonia as a booming country (A3M) with an enormous economic discipline (A2F, A5M), utilising opportunities and chances with a sensible spirit of optimism (A1F).

It seemed to be the most offensively-minded as well as open-minded country of the three Baltic States and it was interesting to see how well-developed they are and how well they have reconstructed themselves after the Russian occupation. I think it is a true Baltic

tiger that has tradition in its DNA, has quickly mastered their transition from occupation to independence but has not stopped there and continues to push forward (A11M).

Actual tourists also view the country as somehow being economically more integrated (A5M) in the European Union, already being one of the largest peat producers of the member states (A7M). Primarily Estonia (and only to a certain extent also Latvia) were described as the strongest states due to their geographic location and affinity towards the West, while Lithuania geopolitically was seen to have more similarities with Poland (A4M).

I think Estonia stands out in terms of progress, in terms of modernity, while I would consider Latvia and Lithuania to stand out with their nature (A13M).

From a tourism viewpoint, Estonia is perceived as a great summer and winter destination (A9M). According to most actual tourists, the country offers the best infrastructure, as well as superstructure of the three states, in terms of quality, road links and often free attractions and public transportation (A3M, A5M, A7M, A13M), which is helped by the EU membership of the country and having introduced the Euro as currency (A7M). However, actual tourists also reported that the progressiveness in many areas comes at a cost. Mass tourism and negative forms of tourists (e.g. alcohol tourism from Finland and the UK) affect the image actual tourists have of the destination negatively (A7M), besides being perceived as the most expensive destination of the three Baltic States (A8M).

Besides radiating individuality and modernity, an eagerness to maintain a low profile (A7M), as well as a very European or Scandinavian atmosphere (A2F, A7M, A11M), Estonia was generally perceived very positively. Overall, actual tourists were

greatly attracted by the country's openness, friendliness, honesty (A9M, A10F), helpfulness and general preparedness towards tourists (A2F, A11M).

This extreme friendliness of the people and this smartness was most sensible and impressive in Estonia. I have this pleasant feeling of warmth that stands out in Estonia (A10F).

Some actual tourists described the country as small and understandable (A7M), possessing a self-identification through singing and traditions (A4M), which was perceived as very relaxing and restful (A2F).

# 7.3.2 Perceptions of potential tourists

The associations potential tourists have with Estonia are based on secondary sources, therefore vague and often difficult, if not impossible to describe.

Estonia is a country to me that is not in the spotlight or in the focus at all. I would not say that it does not exist but you just don't think about it (P1M).

Potential tourists that possessed vague associations with the country either linked their perceptions to Baltic Sea cruise destinations (P7F), to a destination that hosted the Eurovision Song Contest<sup>16</sup> (P8F), or associated the country with the maritime accident of the MS Estonia in 1994 (P9M). Due to the lack of personal travel experiences, potential tourists also focused on the capital city Tallinn in the description of their associations rather than the country as a whole:

To me it is not Estonia but rather Tallinn as a city that stands out (P11F).

May 2002 at the Saku Suurhall Arena in Tallinn, Estonia (www.eurovision.tv).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Annual song competition held among member countries of European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The 47th edition took place on 25

However, overall associations interviewees' held with Estonia were described as scenically beautiful, interesting and diverse (P3M). Interviewees' imagined the country to be sparsely populated and agriculturally informed (P3M); a country that has fascinating beaches, faunal richness (P3M), is original, untouched and in parts deserted, a pristine and very authentic destination (P4M, P9M). Estonia was perceived to be green, quiet, a little deserted, yet harmonious and relaxed but not an international tourism destination (P7F). Potential tourists imagined a country with a Finnish character and assumed a very independent country (P3M) with a general orientation towards Western countries (P3M, P4M), specifically Finland due to its geographic proximity (P5F, P6M), affecting the country's language, culture and ethnology (P3M).

Even though it is the most Northern country of the three, it is the country that is most German influenced to me as well as the most distinct cultural, political and ethnological destination of the three countries (P3M).

Similar to actual tourists, interviewees in the group of potential tourists associated very young, progressive (P8F), open and Internet or technology minded people (P4M, P8F) with a country that was confronted with high unemployment rates, yet was perceived to be a stable country due to having the Euro as a currency (P3M, P8F).

Without knowing for certain, I think Estonia and Latvia are more developed, are more open, and have a progressive spirit (P11F).

Potential tourists were confident in that they would be exposed to design and arts in Estonia (P11F) and noted the medieval flair of the capital city, Tallinn (P5F). Without being able to specify, interviewees in this group noted stark differences between the capital cities of the three countries and the countries themselves.

I think Tallinn and Riga set themselves apart from Vilnius and I would assume that the same is true for the countries. I also see

Estonia as to be best developed and Lithuania as being least developed. Latvia to me is somewhere in the middle (P5F).

A coherent image of Estonia does not exist in this group of interviewees that would allow them to clearly differentiate the country from Latvia or Lithuania.

I know that Estonia is a country that is part of the Baltic States, which are all independent countries. But somehow that picture doesn't add up to me. I see them as one (P8F).

# 7.4. Destination image of Latvia

## 7.4.1 Perceptions of actual tourists

Actual tourists described Latvia as very different from the other two countries, as a country and city of contrasts, as peaceful and quiet, but at the same time being a hectic and vibrant destination, all in a mix (A7M). Thus, it is not surprising that actual tourists argued that Latvia needs to be seen in its entirety (A2F) in order to have a complete image of the country.

The way in which actual tourists were treated in Latvia and how they perceived local residents was described as helpful and honest (A9M, A11M), as well as being overall friendly, a friendliness that was not perceived as 'fake friendly' (A9M). However, at the same time they noted some differences in comparison to Estonia:

They had a very conservative approach in treating tourists, and were not as open and friendly as Estonians (A11M).

The natural environment in Latvia was described as extremely beautiful (A2F, A3M, A5M, A9M) with an incredible scenery and intact landscape and nature that were

seen to be more rustic and backwards in the countryside (A2F, A7M, A9M). The Baltic Sea coast, with its wide and long beaches was perceived to be the number one attraction for actual tourists (A2F, A3M, A5M):

Oh my god, Latvia is very, very rural and agriculturally shaped where you just feel taken back in time to the year dot. It is such a pleasing and sweet landscape and scenery. I always remember those beautiful beaches on the coast and then again these haystacks on the fields in the countryside with this incredibly large number of storks in between (A2F).

Nature and scenery stood out in the perception among actual tourists with its intactness, diversity but most importantly its quietness, peacefulness and traditional flair or aura (A2F, A7M, A9M).

In their testimonies, however, actual tourists regarded Riga, the country's capital, as the focal point for tourists visiting the country (A4M, A5M, A6M, A7M); the capital is perceived as a city with a very Western orientation (A4M), an attraction in itself, one needs to have seen (A3M) due to its Art Nouveau district and Jugendstil architecture that is described as breath-taking in its entirety, quality and cohesiveness (A4M, A5M, A6M).

Latvia and Riga may not stand out politically but they know how to present themselves to the tourist. The lifestyle and nightlife in Riga as the most cosmopolitan and most Western oriented city with its medieval and mainly Jugendstil architecture is absolutely fantastic (A7M).

Riga was perceived as chic, trendy, cosmopolitan and hospitable (A4M), a city that pushes to the fore (A5M). Associations actual tourists held of the city were described as young, lively, vibrant and very sympathetic (A8M, A10F). Even though theft and 'tourist rip off' was reported (A9M), the country's capital stands out among all Baltic States as the best developed city with incredible and comparable cultural offerings as in any other Western European metropolis (A5M, A8M):

Riga as a metropolis offers very diverse experiences and impressions. It has this Hanseatic and German background, as well as a Russian past. I perceived it as a very vibrant city with cinemas, universities, parks and so on (A8M).

However, the positive associations actual tourists have with Latvia and Riga cannot hide the fact that interviewees also reported problematic areas and more negative tourist experiences. In the minds of actual tourists, the country does not just stand out among all three Baltic States with its natural beauty and vibrant city life, but also with visible and many unsolved problems between Latvians and Russians in form of a problematic treatment of the Russian minority (A1F, A2F, A5M, A7M, A11M). Tourists heavily sense these political problems with the Russian population and perceive the country as a hot spot in that respect (A11M):

Latvia has plenty of socio-economic problems that become visible through prostitution, a city-backcountry divide, and ... and this exclusion of Russians (A1F).

Besides political and social problems, actual tourists also reported economic problems and an uneven distribution of wealth.

There is a visible and big divide between rich and poor. [...] You have these women in Riga in massive high heels, wearing their furs, driving a Porsche Cayenne. [...] And then you are suddenly outside the city in a backwards countryside and see people sorting through the garbage as a contrast. [...] I felt extremely sorry for that country, because you have the feeling that...they are in search of something...you know...and they...but where, how...where. And then you think to yourself...Good Lord, you have such...you have such a beautiful...such a beautiful starting situation, but in such a large, nasty EU, where everything is concerned with cars and...and quotas and what not, and what do you have to offer. You have such a beautiful countryside...um...please don't even try to produce more milk or any of that rubbish, but instead look out for your own path and focus on tourism and such things...preserve your beautiful country and don't do any bullshit. (A1F).

While actual tourists report a large number of manors, estates, and mansions (A2F, A8M) that are in no way inferior to Versailles (A8M), the majority has fallen into disrepair, do not provide a touristic benefit and are a visible testimony that Latvia was hit harder than the other countries by the 2008 economic crisis (A9M, A11M):

Latvian poverty really does extremely stand out among all three Baltic States (A13M).

The economically very difficult situation of the past three to four years (A11M) has left negative marks among the population as well. Actual tourists perceived the country as a more phlegmatic nation, a country that has not used its chances and opportunities that were offered though their independence (A11M):

[...] in Latvia, everything had a depressing sensation of ...very much of resignation. It's as if they feel cheap towards Estonia being so much more successful (A1F).

Actual tourists even had very vivid associations with the poverty in Latvia:

My associations with smell or scent in Latvia are that of former German Democratic Republic times and the extreme scent of oil or brown coal in the air when they heated their houses or this typical plastic smell in trains. To me this very much reflects the poverty in Latvia. You don't have these scents in Estonia. These scents are tourist perceptions that strike you immediately where you can really say with closed eyes, 'look, this is poverty' (A13M).

These negative images that actual tourists, in parts, have of Latvia as a tourism destination are intensified by negative forms of tourism that interviewees strongly associate with the country:

In Latvia and mainly Riga you have this drinking and party tourism coming from Scandinavia and Great Britain. It is a very visible and ugly side of tourism where prostitution also blends in (A13M).

However, on the positive note, actual tourists perceived Latvia to be a country that is very connected to traditions, a destination where traditions are still very much alive (A1F) in the form of music (e.g. song contests<sup>17</sup>), arts, and handicrafts (e.g. wood carvings, etc.) (A1F, A7M). Next to the city of Kaunas, it is Riga that has diverse cultural attractions to offer (A10F, A11M), with its Hanseatic history and heritage (A8M, A11M) but also with the city's castle and city walls, a marketplace inside zeppelin hangars, museums and other attractions (A8M). The country is perceived as the centre of a Baltic-German history (A8M), which is still noticeable through the German lettering on many signposts and old buildings (A3M, A8M). Overall, actual tourists described a country of stark contrasts, a country that has a lot to offer for tourism but also a country with many unsolved problems.

# 7.4.2 Perceptions of potential tourists

The very limited testimonies that potential tourists provided in the interviews were very blurred and displayed a great uncertainty in terms of geographic or touristic knowledge due to a lack of personal travel experience.

Latvia does not really stand out to me. I would say it is similar to Estonia in that it is not in the spotlight. Besides, I often mix up Latvia and Lithuania but one of them is in the media once in a while. Not sure which one and for what reason. I just know it's a Baltic Sea country (P1M).

Potential tourists perceived Latvia as a country that stands out as a great sports nation (i.e., basketball or ice hockey) (P1M, P4M), while others merely associated it with its Russian past (P3M):

 $<sup>^{17}</sup>$  The  $48^{th}$  edition of the Eurovision Song Contest was held on 24 May 2003 at the Skonto Hall in Riga, Latvia (www.eurovision.tv).

I believe Latvia and Lithuania are rather Russian influenced and I admit that I still associate them with Russia. Nothing has changed there (P3M).

Generally, Latvia was perceived as having a pristine landscape and scenery, which is sparsely populated (P9M) and even though images of the countryside were admitted as being blurred (P7F), actual tourists associated a rather rurally informed inland with the destination (P7F, P9M). Correspondingly, Latvians were regarded as relaxed, peaceful, very family-minded people (P5F) that are connected to their traditions and their country (P5F) and deeply in touch with nature (P9M).

Similarly to actual tourists, potential tourists also regarded Riga as standing out from the rest of the country (P2M, P4M, P5F, P8F, P11F) even more than actual tourists, without having personal travel experience. Potential tourists did not show an increased interest in visiting Latvia's countryside (P2M), did not regard Latvia as a country to provide attraction (P8F) but instead perceived the capital Riga to stand out as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (P8F), as a city with a unique Jugendstil / Art Nouveau architecture (P5F), as a vibrant, lively and noisy city (P7F) with an interesting cosmopolitan lifestyle and a well-developed arts and design scene (P11F) and lastly as a most visited city that stands out from all Baltic cities (P5F, P11F):

I believe Riga has a lighthouse function for the Baltic States in that it is a main attractor and hub for tourists to get to the region (P4M).

Economically, Latvia – similarly to Estonia – was perceived to be better developed, more open, having a more progressive spirit by comparison to Lithuania (P22F). However, potential tourists also reported negative images with the type of tourists visiting the destination (P8F) in that it was associated with a destination for bachelor parties and prostitution, ultimately leading to problems with HIV/AIDS in terms of new infection rates (P8F).

#### 7.5. Destination image of Lithuania

### 7.5.1 Perceptions of actual tourists

While some interviewees see similarities with Latvia (A12M), most actual tourists described Lithuania as very different from Latvia and Estonia (A1F, A5M, A6M, A11M), even as a country that somehow just does not fit in (A6M):

Lithuania is different from the other two countries in that it is a bit colourless and seems closer oriented towards Poland (A11M).

The country is reported to be more reserved (A5M), to have a much more individual and self-confident character (A1F). While Estonia excels with its modernity and progressiveness, Latvia and especially Lithuania stand out with their nature (A9M, A13M). Next to jungled forests towards the Russian border in the South of the country (A10F), it was the landscape and scenery of the Curonian Spit/Lagoon<sup>18</sup> with its beautiful beaches and dune landscape that was perceived to be a unique highlight for any tourist traveling in this region (A2F, A6M, A10F):

The Curonian Spit with the house of Thomas Mann<sup>19</sup> was one of the most beautiful recreational regions I have ever seen with this amazingly relaxing and extreme quietness (A3M).

Generally, the environment was described as very rustic or rural (A2F, A9M, A10F, A11M), as an agriculturally informed country (A11M), with a green and hilly (A7M), pristine, untapped and original, enchanted, sometimes sweet but often archaic, harsh, rough and almost unreal landscape and scenery (A2F, A10F). This enchanted and

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Mann (6 June 1875 – 12 August 1955) was a German novelist, short story writer, social critic, philanthropist, essayist, and 1929 Nobel laureate (www.nobelprize.org).

The Curonian Spit is a landscape of sand dunes in form of a peninsula that separates the Baltic Sea from the Curonian Lagoon. The Spit is a 98 km long and 0.4-4 km wide arc ranging from the Kaliningrad Peninsula to the town of Klaipeda (Lithuania). Human habitation dates back to prehistoric times (whc.unesco.org).

unreal scenery led to associations with a very peaceful and quiet place (A2F, A9M), but also a poor country (A2F).

Most actual tourists experienced Lithuania as down-to earth and slightly German (A4M, A9M) but also as an extremely catholic, devout, and religious country (A2F, A4M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A11M) with churches at every corner (A2F) and a noticeable and extreme piety of its residents (A4M, A7M):

Lithuania and Vilnius were awkward due to this omnipresence of the Catholic Church and religion. It was melancholic and felt somewhat strange (A7M).

One of the most interesting tourist attractions in Lithuania was reported to be the Hill of Crosses<sup>20</sup> (A2F), a symbol or synonym for a country being dominated by the Catholic Church, religion or religious faith (A6M, A7M):

There is this incredibly high influence of the Catholic Church and due to that the country appears to be very conservative. Lithuanians have not used their chances due to their rural character and this strong influence of the Catholic Church that has prevented them from getting out of this rural, agricultural state or level (A11M).

Even though Lithuania was said to have the best highway system of the three Baltic states (A8M), tourists' associations with Lithuania are that of a little behind or backwards country (A3M) by comparison to the other two states; a very poor country with an underdeveloped infrastructure (A2F, A4M) that serves as a transit country and was never able to utilise their opportunities (A11M).

In my perception, Latvia and Estonia have always been the strongest states due to their geographic location and affinity towards the West, while Lithuania geopolitically is somehow Poland to me (A4M).

-

The Hill of Crosses is a pilgrimage site and historical architectural monument outside the city of Siauliai in northern Lithuania. Over the centuries an estimated number of over 100.000 crosses were brought by Catholic pilgrims (www.hillofcrosses.com).

More than the other two countries, Lithuania was regarded as very Polish (A4M, A8M) and Russian.

There is this visible Soviet past in Kaunas with boulevards similar to those of a Soviet capital and czarist / Russian architecture in the South (A2F).

Even though the Russian minority is noticeably smaller than in Estonia and Latvia (A6M), actual tourists reported a sensible dislike of Lithuanians towards the Russian population (A7M):

They make their own life miserable with their hatred against Russia (A7M).

In Lithuania, the touristic focus is on the capital city Vilnius, and Kaunas, as the country's cultural hotspots (A8M, A10M), whereas Kleipeda does not seem to have as much mass tourism as the other bigger cities (A6M). Vilnius stands out in that it is reported to be different, quiet, tranquil, and multifaceted (A5M) with its fascinating art scene in the "Republic of Užupis" (A2F, A8M) as well as the museum landscape (A8M).

Actual tourists generally perceive local residents as friendly, very helpful and open towards tourists, even though some tourist traps were mentioned (A9M). Actual tourists felt comfortable in Lithuania (A5M) but argued that the destination would resonate more with older tourists (A9M).

#### 7.5.2 Perceptions of potential tourists

Among potential tourists, disagreement was noticeable pertaining to the perceived presence of Lithuania in the Western European media (P1M, P2M). Generally however,

<sup>21</sup> Užupis is one of the oldest districts in Vilnius, the old town being a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The district has been very popular

with artists and designers and is often compared to Montmartre in Paris or Christiana in Copenhagen, due to its atmosphere (www.vilnius-tourism.lt).

Lithuania on their radar (P5F), have the fewest associations with the country (P8F), or believe that Lithuania is weaker when compared to the other two Baltic States (P6M). Here too, the touristic focus was on Vilnius as the capital city, with an expected art or design scene and interesting lifestyle (P11F) rather than the rest of the country.

It is not Lithuania that would attract me; it's just Vilnius as a city (P2M).

There is still scepticism among potential tourists towards Lithuania, due to its closeness to Russia and perceived problems the country still has with the Russian influence (P6M), for example with an orientation towards a planned economy (P3M).

Lithuania is rather Russian influenced and I also still associate them with Russia (P3M).

Potential tourists associate a country with Lithuania that is very original, rural, sparsely populated, is untouched and pristine (P4M, P9M). They expect to find a destination that does not stand out with mass or packaged tourism, but rather shines through with very authentic scenery, especially at the Curonian Spit/lagoon with its dune landscape at the Baltic Sea (P4M). They associate a very quiet, relaxed, openly lived and harmonious lifestyle of people that are very much in touch with nature (P4M, P7F, P9M).

## 7.6. Perception of similarities between the Baltic States

Actual tourists perceived the Baltic States as being similarly small countries pertaining to their landmass (A1F, A4M, A8M) that do not act as a global player (A1F) and have an interesting common Soviet past that has influenced them strongly (A8M). All three Baltic States are not perceived to be extremely Eastern European, but rather very

internationally minded (A9M). Interviewees reported a noticeable and strong orientation towards Western Europe, as well as Western lifestyle, trying to leave their Soviet past behind (A9M). Actual tourists were able to sense a strong nationalism and pride as young republics within the three countries, and perceived people being proud of their independence and proud to be able to live it (A4M) after having gone through the years of the Soviet occupation.

Interviewees reported many commonalities between the countries pertaining to the history of the Baltic States (A1F, A2F, A3M, A6M, A7M, A9M, A12M) with visible German imprints in many places (A2F, A3M, A9M, A12M) and a common Russian occupation (A7M, A9M). While Germans are very positively received (A12M); the Russian occupation, however, does not seem emotionally processed yet. Even though actual tourists are able to see commonalities between the Baltic States due to their personal travel experiences they find the three countries difficult to understand:

You cannot describe or comprehend the three countries in three words, not even individually. Even if I had to describe each of them in three words, I would describe it using four words. The fourth word would be "commonalities"; a commonality that sets them apart from each other again because all three focus on themselves, their own history, their own culture. But somehow their history is the same or closely linked to each other and the Russian occupation cannot be argued away. For Germans this is very interesting (A7M).

Generally, actual tourists perceive the three countries as culturally very similar to Germanic peoples, while they notice the differences with Russians as Slavic peoples (A9M). This common history and the common perception of the individual countries as the Baltic States are reflected in tourist associations of the Baltic States as somehow belonging together (A1F):

After achieving their independence, all three had their individual phases and now the EU leads to a new form of togetherness (A2F).

The common past and turbulent history the three countries went through prior to their independence seems burned into tourists' perceptions. Actual tourists perceive the three Baltic States as one entity (A5M, A7M, A8M):

All three Baltic States have in Germany the image of being far away; somewhere in the Northeast but far away from Europe. However, once you are there you have the feeling to be in the centre of Europe, which connects them somehow and is unifying (A8M).

Actual tourists report that prior to traveling the three countries are generally perceived as the Baltic States and not as individual countries (A5M, A8M). However, this changes through the personal travel experience, when tourists are able to clearly differentiate them (A5M, A7M):

Tourists see the three countries as the Baltic States, not as individual countries and these countries express that too. Once you are in the countries, however, they emphasise their independent status and are proud of their identity (A7M).

Even though actual tourists were able to clearly differentiate the three countries from one another due to their personal travel experience in these countries, they perceived it as an advantage to view these independent states as one region:

They complement each other so nicely that if taken together, they would be the perfect holiday destination (A3M).

Being newly independent, actual tourists perceived all three Baltic States as countries that are still in the process of finding themselves or searching for their true identity (A2F, A12M). The reported reason for this could be seen in that the Baltic States are seen as high-contrast countries (A2F, A3M, A4M, A7M, A9M). Actual tourists reported visible contrasts between old and modern (A3M), social tensions with the Russian population and a divide between cities, suburban areas and the countryside (A4M, A9M),

as well as a divide between the young generation and older generation, often leading to old-age poverty (A2F, A4M). The forced collectivisation under the Russian occupation that eliminated a small farm environment is perceived as a cause for poverty today (A1F, A2F):

For a long time they were occupied and badly treated by the Russians and today they do the same to the Russian minority. [...] And due to the Russian occupation, the Russians transformed them everywhere into their LPGs...that's how you would label it in Germany...well, these large agricultural co-operatives. A result of it was that they all lost their small farms to a certain extent, which contributed to poverty, which is very visible in the countryside. (AIF).

Actual tourists described a population in all three countries that falls apart (i.e. into locals and Russians) and reported problems with Russians in terms of finding it difficult to integrate (A1F). It was mentioned that there is an anti-Russian attitude among the population and an obvious dislike, suppression, and social exclusion of Russians even though the Russian minority tries to establish itself in the third generation (A2F, A4M, A7M, A9M, A13M). This is evident in a population that perceives Russians and the Russian language as a red flag (A11M), a population that tries to eliminate any former Russian imprints (A3M, A9M), a younger generation that does not want to have anything to do with the Russian minority (A13M) nor speak their language any longer after having been forced to speak it during the years of the occupation (A7M). Next to a ghettoisation of the Russian minority mainly in suburban areas (A9M, A13M), actual tourists also reported a different treatment of Russians at the borders in that they are controlled between the countries, while other tourists are able to move around freely (A9M):

In suburbs, a ghettoisation and open discrimination of Russians takes place and it happens naturally more in cities, but it is something that is also very obvious in the media. Actually, it is not just a ghettoisation but also almost a social exclusion. I would not dare to speak Russian there. Everything that had to do with the

Soviet Union was removed and eliminated. You don't see any signs in Cyrillic script, nor war memorials any longer (A9M).

Actual tourists argued that this dislike for Russia has a quality that the local population even makes their own life miserable through this hatred for Russia (A7M). A large percentage of the Russian population has different earning capacities and property relationships (A9M), which ultimately affects the countries' economic development.

The three Baltic States are believed to have a very bright future within the European Union (A6M). At the same time, actual tourists reported that they currently are their own worst enemy when it comes to economic co-operation (A7M), even though they all embrace tourism for economic development (A1F, A10F), have similar problems with poverty and economic issues (A6M), but are also perceived to have similar chances and opportunities (A6M). All three countries are perceived to be ideal for 'off the beaten track' tourism development (A2F), something actual tourists perceive as insufficiently marketed. Actual tourists criticise the focus of tourism on the capital cities in all three Baltic States (A5M, A12M), while inland does not seem to matter for tourism development (A12M):

I believe all three countries focus way too much on city tourism and just miss out on their incredibly beautiful backcountry and nature (A5M).

The cities are described as contrast-rich, more than other comparable cities in Western Europe, while the countryside is said to captivate with its vastness and quietness (A9M). All three capital cities are perceived to have many things in common, but are very different in terms of their architectural style (A11M), being old and modern at the same time (A9M).

Quite a few things seem similar, such as the construction boom and the capital cities being the focus point in the three countries (A12M).

Interviewees reported that the city centres of all three capital cities are surrounded by satellite towns consisting of industrialised apartment blocks (A8M). The inner cities are positively perceived with a shopping culture, luxury and Western lifestyle with positive atmosphere comparable to that of any other Western European city (A9M, A11M). Overall, actual tourists perceive the Baltic States or Baltic Sea region as possessing a unique and fascinating mix between nature and cities, old and modern at the same time (A9M). All three countries offer a good, hearty, more rural cuisine in the countryside and a great and diverse gastronomy in the cities (A8M, A9M, A10F).

Nature and culture are seen as main attractions in the Baltic States (A10F). The natural environment in all three countries is perceived as beautiful, contrast-rich, and very diverse for the size of the countries (A1F, A4M, A7M, A10F) offering great versatility in terms of different experiences (A10F):

There is this extreme diversity and variety in a localised manner. For example they have such a unique mix between enchanted villages, large and vibrant cities, an amazing cultural life and nightlife, but also this very quiet nature (A7M).

Even though the nature is described as diverse, actual tourists perceived the three countries as similar at the same time (A1F). Similarity is seen between the countries in terms of their landscape and nature (A6M) with its vastness, the hilly, sweet and green appearance (A10F). At the same time all three countries are reported to have their individual special highlights (A10F), a landscape with impressive forests that is interesting for tourism (A11M).

They have a very fascinating nature with beautiful sceneries and landscapes and it's almost like going on a journey back into childhood, where you still had those lakes, fields, grassland, and vastness that you can hardly find anywhere nowadays (A2F).

Interviewees perceived the nature of the Baltic States as to stand out with its diverse beauty, its secluded nature with lakes, rivers and forests (A2F, A4M, A9M), but also as countries with an untouched, pristine and quiet nature (A4M, A9M), where the Baltic Sea is a natural and obvious connecting element (A3M):

They have this very intact and diverse nature with hundreds of storks everywhere. The storks to me are a connecting element. Another connecting element was the incredibly beautiful landscape even though it is so very diverse (A2F).

The local people in all three Baltic States were described as very friendly, as a little reserved in the beginning, like a block of ice that needs some time to melt (A2F, A4M, A7M) but generally very open, hospitable, cordial, helpful, approachable and willing to communicate once this initial distance has been overcome (A4M, A12M).

Another connecting element was the friendliness of the people as well as the initial distance they maintain in the beginning. They are not as extroverted as Southern Europeans and rather reserved in the beginning but still incredibly friendly and helpful (A2F).

Actual tourists noted a very special friendliness and openness towards foreigners or tourists (A13M), a friendliness that was perceived as very honest and not fake (A9M). Interviewees felt actively approached by local residents and noted incredibly good English speaking skills, an easiness to communicate in several languages and a solid education (A4M, A9M). Interviewees were fascinated not just by beautiful young women (A2F) but also with the local residents' way of life in that they were perceived to celebrate whenever they have the chance to do so (A4M, A11M) and to be able to lead an almost carefree and positive lifestyle despite many other visible problems:

They have such a positive spirit so that you can really leave your worries behind and are able to dive into a yesterday (A10F).

Local inhabitants were perceived as being very much in touch with their traditions, even among the younger generation (A9M), something they emphasise, treasure (A7M), and live or celebrate more openly (A3M). Actual tourists linked this to a noticeable love for singing and traditional song festivals (A1F, A2F, A4M, A11M), which was perceived as a form of communication (A4M) and as another connecting element and remnant of their common history and the 'Singing Revolution' (A1F, A4M):

I see this singing and their song contests as a very connecting element. It just shows this generation spanning caring for traditions. There is no other place in the world where three countries actually changed the world by simply singing (A2F).

Interviewees also reported a very approachable and lively history, arts, visual arts, as well as traditions (A2F) in the three Baltic States. Traditions, a special peacefulness in the countries, as well as an incredible quietness, were seen as a commonality of all three Baltic States (A3M, A7M), which caused even actual tourists to perceive the three countries as one:

They somehow belong together (A7M).

Similarly to the reflection of each of the countries individually, potential tourists naturally found it hard to provide detailed information about similarities or commonalities between the three Baltic States. They viewed the countries as hardly accessible with limited airline services to the three states, as not transparent enough in their promotional approach and thus, being relatively unknown (P3M):

They are all in the EU, are named and perceived as the Baltic States even though they are independent. That does not add up to me. It

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The Singing Revolution is a term for the events between 1987 and 1991 that resulted in the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Included were various peaceful protects and acts of defiance such as the famous Baltic Chain, a peaceful political

does not result in a clear image, which means I cannot differentiate it so that they are very similar to me (P8F).

Potential tourists perceive them as similar and don't see major differences between the countries (P2M, P4M, P6M, P7F, P10M, P11F, P12F, P13F), often caused by their small size, their similarly perceived natural environment, their common history, and location being far away and close to the Baltic Sea (P5F, P9M, P12F):

They are all being lumped together and get pigeonholed (P8F).

Instead, they are perceived as an entity in the sense of being one country (P1M, P2M, P4M, P6M, P8F, P12F, P13F), to which the term 'Baltic States' largely contributes, since the image of the term 'Baltic States' is already associated with some form of commonality (P3M):

I would not say they are three separate destinations. They are one and for most people they are the Baltic States. At least in Germany no one differentiates them because they are so similar (P2M).

Even though potential tourists are aware of the fact that the three Baltic States are independent and sovereign countries, they perceive the three states rather as a conglomerate of countries (P6M, P8F, P12F, P13F). However, they identify a need for the three countries to position themselves more independently in the mind of the consumer or tourist:

The countries have a different development, speak different languages and should be able to establish themselves with a differentiated image. But they were not able to achieve that so far in my opinion, at least not in Germany. The image in Germany is a unified one (P3M).

Thus, homogeneous features and characteristics of the three Baltic States dominate the perceptions of potential tourists (P4M). This, according to interviewees, causes a mix up of capital cities (P5F, P13F).

I perceive them as mishmash even though I know that there are different forms of architecture (P5F).

It is also considered an influencing factor to destination selection and travel behaviour:

I cannot imagine that the landscape and people of the Baltic States are so different. I guess it would be enough to visit just one country in order to get to know the Baltic States and its people (P10M).

Potential tourists also find it difficult to describe a clear and distinct cultural identity of the three Baltic States and, similar to actual tourists, perceive the Baltic States to be similar (P7F, P12F) and at the same time in search of themselves and their own identity (P3M):

Perhaps the Estonian is as little different from the Latvian and Lithuanian person as the Bavarian is from an Austrian or Swiss person. I just don't see a distinct cultural identity of those different ethnicities from here. And maybe this is the reason why I would not necessarily lump them together because that would have negative connotations. Nevertheless, I see them as a group, meaning that I would communicate their similarities (P2M).

Even though being regarded as similar to other Eastern European countries (P5F), the countries are generally perceived as having a pro-Western attitude with an open-minded mentality, relaxed, not grim or stubborn mentality (P1M, P4M, P3M), similar to a German mentality (P5F). All three states are regarded as young, dynamic, ambitious, technology-minded, as well as being in the process of development (P6M). Interviewees also perceived the countries to be more critical and withdrawn towards Russia and Poland

for historic reasons (P3M, P10M) and, since becoming independent, now have a strong desire to open up towards Central Europe to achieve that standard of living (P3M, P10M). However, even though emphasising this distance towards the former occupant, potential tourists still perceived a strong orientation towards Russia, especially in an economic context (P3M).

They seem similar so that I could imagine that they become close partners and support each other in order to become more and more independent together from Russia in the East (P6M).

The natural environment is also perceived as very similar in terms of scenery, landscape, and geography (P1M, P4M, P5F, P7F). Associations that potential tourists have with all three destinations are those of countries being very green, having large forests, lakes, grassland, beautiful beaches, a flora similar to that in the tundra or taiga, as well as a lot of agriculture (P1M, P3M, P5F). To potential tourists, the natural environment stands out with a vastness, a simple and original, quiet and sleepy, pristine and untouched nature that still offers a certain wilderness for the tourist and which is only sparsely populated (P1M, P4M, P8F, P9M). For some potential tourists, the image associations they have with the countries seem very blurred:

I'm sure they have natural attractions but you would not notice a change in landscape driving from one country to the other (P10M).

The countryside is generally perceived as backwards with local people living in close touch with nature (P9M). Only a few larger cities (i.e. mainly capital cities) were known to potential tourists. Outside these metropolitan centres, interviewees did not perceive anything to be going on (P8F).

Due to their size they focus on capital cities in terms of infrastructure, culture and tourism attractors. The rest is mediocre and not developed (P5F).

However, with larger cities, potential tourists associate party destinations (P2M) that offer interesting cultural and historic structures with beautiful and colourful houses (P2M, P4M, P12F). The metropolitan centres are associated with a happy, positive, and relaxed lifestyle (P4M). All three Baltic States were perceived as destinations for individual forms of tourism as opposed to mass or packaged tourism (P4M).

The interviews with potential tourists showed that there was a lot of uncertainty with regards to perceptions about languages spoken or the local cuisine among other things (P1M, P8F). Seeing the three Baltic States more as an entity, potential tourists generally related better to commonalities between the countries than differences. However, even though similarities in many areas were reported, potential tourists also noted that the countries are also in contrast to each other:

These countries are definitely similar but most likely not the same (P9M).

#### 7.7. Perceptions of differences between the Baltic States

Actual tourists see a lot of contrast between the three countries and perceive them to be clearly different, for example in terms of their languages being part of different language families, their nature, their cities, or traditions, even though they have a very similar or common history (A1F, A2F, A3M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A10F, A13M). However, actual tourists also believe that the perception potential tourists might have in terms of similarities among the three Baltic States may not necessarily reflect the view of the countries:

While we speak of the Baltic States, they don't have that same self-conception as a Baltic State. They try to emphasise their unique features and differences rather than commonalities (A4M).

Actual tourists regard the three Baltic States as very different, an aspect, however, that only becomes apparent once a tourist has travelled to all of them (A1F, A5M, A7M):

Tourists regard the Baltic States as a unit and not as individual countries and the countries also present themselves as one. However, at the destinations they emphasise their independence, their individuality and distance themselves from one another and are proud of their identity (A7M).

Interviewees argued that the three countries have never shown a strategic-tactical solidarity or collaboration towards one another and every country just focuses on itself (A4M).

You always wonder how they get their trans-regional song contests organised with their emphasis on being different, even though they had this uniting singing revolution. For us it is the Baltic States, but they emphasise their independence, their individuality and they try to communicate that wherever possible (A2F).

Actual tourists believe that even though the individual countries are different, the term 'Baltic States' may perhaps cover or suppress these differences (A1F), which causes potential tourists to perceive them as one entity and not independent and sovereign states (A5M). The three states are seen to have as much in common as the case of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, being neighbouring states but all having very different cultures and facets (A2F, A7M):

What you have are very different corners in this region, different impressions, small-enchanted villages and large cities with amazing cultural life and nightlife such as Riga or Tallinn as a quieter city. This is diversity on a small space (A7M).

For some actual tourists, Estonia stands out among with its modernity, its orientation towards Finland, as well as with its medieval historic district, a diverse architecture and very friendly people (A7M, A9M). It is the country of the three states that is perceived to be culturally more sophisticated than Latvia and Lithuania (A2F). For others, Estonia is perceived to be the most homogeneous and thus, least interesting country of the Baltic States (A1F). Latvia, on the other hand, is perceived to be much more heterogeneous in that the country is split between the countryside and the metropolitan area around Riga, the nation's capital city.

And Estonia in this sense is perhaps even the least...attracting, because it has in fact the least amount of highlights...basically. *Um...and perhaps that's why it appears to be the most homogeneous* country, because in that sense it doesn't have anything that truly stands out. Because even though Tallinn is a beautiful city, I would not necessarily...by comparison to Riga, Tallinn is no highlight, because while Tallinn has a beautiful coherent historic district and is otherwise also quite cuddly, it doesn't have the ... um ... the same range...nah...it is not as much the star and...and even all other cities that I presently can think of are not...if you look at it that way, Estonia is...um...well, perhaps rather through homogeneity...well maybe...in that sense perhaps...on the face of it the least interesting for the tourist, because it actually has fewer highlights to offer. (A1F).

However, the countryside in Latvia is seen as being more rustic and backwards, having a poor infrastructure (A9M), while the city life was described as vibrant, hectic and cosmopolitan (A7M). The country stands out with its Jugendstil/Art Nouveau architecture in Riga (A9M) and as a country that suffered enormously under the most recent financial crisis (A9M).

Lithuania does not seem to fit in (A6M) and is perceived as 'something else' (A9M), lagging behind (A1F), being more similar to and more oriented towards Poland as opposed to Western-European countries (A4M).

Lithuania is the country that falls out somehow because Latvia and Estonia somehow develop. Estonia is by far the most developed country of the three, but Lithuania stagnates and makes a very catholic and religious impression (A7M).

Interviewees among actual tourists reported several areas in which the countries are distinctly different, including their progressiveness and economic development, a divide between rich and poor as well as the treatment of the Russian population, the nature, and cities.

Having the Euro as currency, a good educational system, and the proximity to Finland, causes actual tourists to perceive Estonia as the most modern, most wealthy, and most progressive country (A1F, A7M, A13M).

Estonians are flexible, progressive, a trading nation (Dutch), Latvians are more phlegmatic, dealing with themselves, and Lithuanians remain rural and backwards due to influence of the Catholic Church (A11M).

There is a noticeable boom and a perception of an increased economic activity that actual tourists describe in Estonia (A2F, A3M), which makes the country stand out in that respect.

Estonians are more ambitious and Latvians and Lithuanians just seem more held back, phlegmatic or melancholic, whatever you want to call it (A12M).

At the same time, interviewees reported a decline in progressiveness and economic standing between Estonia in the North and Lithuania in the South (A1F, A2F, A7M, A13M):

Estonia made the impression that they are the most progressive, that there is this spirit of optimism, an atmosphere of departure and that they are really taking their people along with them (A1F).

Estonians are further described as young, focused, and possessing an inspiring economic discipline (A2F). The country is perceived to have managed the 2008 financial crisis rather well, while Latvia still has problems and struggles with an outflow of young people (A11M). Lithuania, on the other hand, is perceived as being far behind, as being the poorest country, catholic and still very much Soviet informed (A2F, A11M, A13M).

Well, Estonia...has not just begun its journey; they have already arrived to a certain extent. [...] Latvia to me is a little melancholic...um...but not as bad as...as...well, the atmosphere is worse than it actually needs to be. [...] And Lithuania is...um...it was the most distant of the three countries for me, meaning the most distant with regards to its people...perhaps almost a little too proud and apart from that...um...very Catholic (A1F).

Actual tourists also reported differences pertaining to social problems and the way the Russian population is being treated in each of the countries. Latvia is the country that stands out with a very noticeable divide between rich and poor (A1F). At the same time, the country is perceived as a hotspot in terms of a dysfunctional Russian integration, something not as badly perceived in Estonia, while Lithuania does not seem to have that problem (A8M, A11M):

Lithuania is very homogeneous per se in the sense that it is Lithuanian-Polish informed. There are 90% Lithuanians and a few Polish people living there and it is close to Europe. Latvia already has 50% Russians in Riga. Even when they dislike the facts, but they have a certain Russian element. You find Russian churches, Russian greengrocers, just more Russians. In Estonia, Tallinn is a very Estonian city but as soon as you leave the city you can see a certain majority of Russians in the countryside (A8M).

Estonia is regarded as having more Finnish influences, while Latvia and Lithuania is perceived to have more Slavic influences, meaning influences from Russia and Poland (A12M). At the same time, actual tourists reported that in Latvia and Estonia they had the

feeling that the population divides into Russians and non-Russians, something they did not feel in Lithuania to the same extent (A1F).

In terms of the natural environment, actual tourists reported that even though there is a similarity between the Baltic States, every country has its unique highlights that cannot be found anywhere else (A10F). Estonia is perceived to be the most maritime country with the longest coastline and a nature in the North that is very different from the other two countries (A2F, A10F). Lithuania is perceived as the country with the nicest beaches but less maritime, while Latvia was described to have a little bit of everything (A2F, A7M, A10F). It is the rusticity in Latvia, the incredible beaches in Lithuania, and the roughness and solitude in Estonia that stands out among actual tourists (A2F, A10F):

Estonia has a harsh, rugged coastline, beautiful islands and the most diverse and fascinating inland. Estonia is medievally informed and is a mini Sweden, appearing very Scandinavian. Lithuania is more enchanted and sweet with the Curonian Spit and its beaches and dune landscape. The landscape is harsh even though it seems sweet. Latvia is very rural with those beautiful haystacks (A2F).

Here too, Lithuania stands out from the other two Baltic States. While the natural beauty and distinctness of Estonia and Latvia seem more obvious, Lithuania seems to be a country that needs to be more discovered:

Estonia clearly is a bit more rough and diverse. Latvia, on the other hand, is very lovely and rural or agriculturally informed and quiet. Lithuania is rather spectacular, unique but not intrusive in any way. That is revealed to you only at a second glance and you have to be willing to discover it. I could imagine there are tourists that find it boring because they don't do that (A2F).

Stark contrasts were also reported pertaining to the three capital cities, Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius (A2F). The capital cities were perceived as different and unique in architectural style (A1F, A11M), even though certain similarities between Tallinn and Riga were reported (A11M).

Riga is the remnant of a German trading city, the most metropolitan and very dynamic capital city. Vilnius is the city of churches, the metropolis of a sunken Polish-Lithuanian empire with a very catholic impression similar to Poland, a city that has arranged itself with tourists. By contrast, Tallinn is more Scandinavian, more tranquil, placid, and cosy (A8M).

In addition, Tallinn was perceived as having a more Western-European orientation and lifestyle, Riga as very vibrant, and Vilnius as somehow very different (A11M). For example, negative forms such as party and alcohol tourism, as well as prostitution, were associated mainly with Riga and Tallinn, being not as visible to the same extent in Vilnius (A13M).

Actual tourists generally perceived the way each of the countries presents itself as essentially very different but not necessarily as enlightening or revealing for tourists even though they try to emphasise their unique features wherever possible (A11M). While a clear image exists for Estonia as Hanseatic and modern as well as for Lithuania with being different, conservative and having its own character and special identity, Latvia was perceived as the country with the greatest attractive power but also with the greatest discrepancies (A11M).

In as much as Estonia made a very Finnish or Nordic impression on me, Lithuania was rather...well, rather continental, and more Polish. Latvia to me was somehow that country in between. They are the ones who perhaps struggle the most. It's a country that most likely has a problem with finding their own true identity perhaps. That situation there is somehow a bit similar to the situation with middle siblings. That, too, is always a little difficult (A1F).

The drawing power of Latvia as the largest metropolis in the Baltic States was regarded as being too dominant, already negatively influencing Estonia and Latvia by being perceived as countries that are less spectacular (A5M). In addition, actual tourists perceived the Baltic States to suffer from seasonality to some extent. Estonia and Latvia are associated with summer destinations tourists visit, when beer gardens are open and life

takes place outside on the street, while Estonia is not regarded as a winter destination (A11M). Latvia and Lithuania, on the other hand, seem different due to their location further in the south (A12M).

Potential tourists, due to having a regard that all three Baltic States are one entity, naturally found it harder to describe differences as opposed to commonalities between the countries. Consequently, their testimonies, thus, contained superficiality and vagueness. While some perceived the countries as mostly similar (P10M), most potential tourists expected to see great variety in terms of cultural, social and natural differences, language differences and differences pertaining to their individual mentality (P3M, P5F, P7F, P8F, P11F, P12F) without being able to explain their associations in great detail.

I think the individual states are very different and are moving towards individualisation, which is rooted in their national pride that has been long suppressed and that now comes to life again (P3M).

Associations between the three Baltic States were inconsistent. Estonia, even though being the farthest away, was perceived as German influenced, more pro-Western with Finnish influences as well (P3M). Estonia, as the only country with the Euro currency (P8F) was regarded as more progressive ((P8F), more high-tech focused (P3M) and, together with Latvia, perceived as more open-minded and overall better developed than Lithuania (P11F). Latvia, and especially Lithuania, were more associated with Russia (P3M) in that both countries were perceived as more rural and agriculturally informed with Lithuania still having a planned economy (P3M). This causes potential tourists to view Lithuania as the weakest country of the three (P5F, P6M) and as a country that seems less attractive by comparison to Estonia or Latvia (P5F, P6M), with the capital Vilnius perceived as more sleepy when compared to Riga and Tallinn (P8F)

I see an economic ranking among the three countries with Estonia being the number 1, followed by Latvia (#2) and Lithuania (#3). I also think that Lithuania is the least interesting country for tourism and the most pristine therefore (P5F).

However, the lack of personal travel experience among potential tourists leads to unclear images this group of tourists have of the destinations. Some tourists see Lithuania as less developed:

Lithuania is more greyish to me due to associations I have with Poland. Estonia on the other hand somehow seems brighter to me (P13F).

Other potential tourists expect Estonia to be more pristine, untouched and isolated and perceived Lithuania as more populated, more developed and more European oriented (P2M, P9M).

I would see Lithuania as being more developed and more progressive but don't know for sure (P2M).

Potential tourists also have very different associations pertaining to the natural environment of the three destinations. They expect a more flat and harsh landscape with marshland in the north (Estonia) as opposed to a mountainous but more pleasing landscape in the south (Lithuania), which is perceived as the breadbasket of the Baltic States with large, cultivated fields (P1M, P2M, P5F). Generally however, image associations of potential tourists focus more on the capital cities and their surrounding area, without having clear image associations of the countryside:

I'm sure Estonia is green and sparsely populated. Latvia seems more vibrant and loud, when focusing on Riga. The problem is that I don't have an image about the backcountry. I could imagine that Lithuania would again be more relaxed, quiet, and harmonious; a little similar to Estonia maybe (P7F).

With regard to the countries' capital cities, potential tourists seem to have a clearer image, an image that seems more in line with the testimonies from actual tourists. They describe the architectural style in the capital cities as distinct and different from each other (P3M).

They perceive the size of the capital cities as to be very different, with Riga being the largest and attracting most attention, followed by Tallinn and Vilnius as less busy (P5F, P6M):

Riga is modern, vibrant and has modern architecture. Tallinn is more relaxed and Vilnius...well, Vilnius is quieter (P7F).

They reported that the location of the capital cities influences tourism, with Tallinn and Riga being on the coast and Vilnius located inland (P6M). Tallinn was perceived to profit from cruise ship tourism the most (P7F).

#### 7.8. Destination image visual overview

Similar to the previous chapter (section 6.7) a visual representation has been developed to allow for a comprehensive overview of each country's image individually. The figures presented in the subsequent sections (i.e., Figure 7.2, Figure 7.3, and Figure 7.4) further represent the basis and parts of the final co-branding model (Appendix U) discussed in Chapter 9. The 'black font' in Figures 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4, illustrates the image perceptions from either actual or potential tourists. The 'red font' emphasises where actual and potential tourists share similar image perceptions.

Figure 7.2. Estonia's destination image

Image	Spirit of optimisn		n thinking	<u>Cultural Environment</u>
of	<ul> <li>Endla Moor Rese</li> </ul>			Culturally extremely rich
E-4	<ul> <li>Rich in contrast</li> <li>Harsh coastline</li> </ul>		val but modern, international ssive Tallinn versus slow,	<ul><li>Singing contests</li><li>Museums</li></ul>
Estonia	Beautiful islands	rural ir		Medieval Tallinn
01.4	Gorgeous inland		oad infrastructure	<ul> <li>German History</li> </ul>
Objective Knowledge  Western orientation	<ul> <li>Medieval charism</li> </ul>	■ Most n	naritime country	<ul> <li>Arts scene / galleries</li> </ul>
A split country (!)	<ul> <li>High-tech</li> </ul>	■ Design		Beautiful traditional customs
Welcoming atmosphere	<ul> <li>Relaxing, restful</li> </ul>	• Well-d	eveloped	Living their independence / identity
Friendly people, caring	<u> </u>			<ul> <li>Link to Finnish culture, Russian influences</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Good hotel standards</li> </ul>	Sensory - Scents	Sensory - Color	Sensory - Taste	Nurturing traditions
<ul> <li>Tourist info everywhere</li> </ul>	• Open fire smell (v	wood) • Bright	Home-cooked	Hanseatic flair
A model student of EU	• Dill	• Blue	Potatoes	
Pirita Beach	Salty air	White storks	<ul> <li>Fresh veggies</li> </ul>	Socio-Economic Environment
<ul> <li>Ice fishing, cross-country skiing in wir</li> </ul>	Water	■ Black = soil	■ Sugar	Higher economic development
<ul> <li>Singing festivals</li> <li>Dreamy countryside</li> </ul>	Breeze	<ul> <li>All possible colors</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Bakeries</li> </ul>	Model student of the EU     Fower poverty and social problems to
Island of Saaremaa	• Turfs	Sensory - Sound	• Dill	<ul> <li>Fewer poverty and social problems the in Lithuania and Latvia</li> </ul>
Very convenient to travel	Marzipan     Figh	Strange language	■ Fish	More connected
Alcohol tourism improving	Fish Alcohol	Lots of singing	■ Vodka ■ Beer	Better vision for the future
<ul> <li>Design in architecture, fashion, cuisine</li> </ul>	e	<ul> <li>Cozy sounds</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Beer</li> <li>Pancake, Kohuke</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Business ideas</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Renovated old estates</li> </ul>	Sensory - Haptic	<ul> <li>Quietness</li> </ul>	Haute cuisine	<ul> <li>Economic miracle with some exception</li> </ul>
Palmse Manor House	• Wet	<ul> <li>Seagulls</li> </ul>	riadic cuisine	(e.g., older generation, backcountry)
Rural population poor	• Cold	<ul> <li>Water</li> </ul>		Euro currency
<ul> <li>Contrast old/young, rich/poor</li> <li>Interesting language</li> </ul>				Russian versus Estonian Estonia
Advanced technologies	Atmosphere - Gen	eral Atmosphere - Tr	eatment	<ul> <li>Wealth is not visible, but poverty is robtrusive</li> </ul>
Visible economic boom	■ Pleasant	Positive	catment	Focus on tourism and service industr
Progressive	<ul> <li>Intimate</li> </ul>	They are approa	chable	Trendsetter in technology (e.g., Skyp
<ul> <li>Similar to Finland</li> </ul>	■ Familiar	<ul> <li>Very uncomplic</li> </ul>	ated	■ Interesting Shopping
Competence in English language	■ Feel good	<ul> <li>Communicative</li> </ul>		<ul> <li>Ghettoization and discrimination of</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Theft and fraud problems</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Welcoming</li> <li>Charismatic</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Hospitable</li> </ul>		Russians
Prostitution, sex tourism	Charismatic     Oujet	■ Open		<ul> <li>Social tensions</li> </ul>
Most expensive of the tree countries	• Quiet • Peaceful			Small economic tiger
Cities have charisma     Payreagie traditional	■ Relaxing			1
<ul> <li>Bourgeois, traditional</li> <li>Crafts, handiwork</li> </ul>	• Lively	<u>Atmosphere – Cl</u>	nange in Perception	
Tech savvy, Internet everywhere, free			eciate basic supplies that are	
A lot of attractions for free	■ Safe	expensive there		
Pärnu coastal resort	<ul> <li>Medieval</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Respect for what</li> </ul>		
<ul> <li>Good restaurants</li> </ul>	■ Cozy	<ul> <li>Appreciate their</li> <li>Positive change</li> </ul>		
■ Pricy	■ Homey		of the three countries	
Medieval Tallinn is must see versus pu	ubs, Authentic  Certain wildness	- Most European	or the three countries	
bars, modern Estonia	- Certain wildness			
Subjective Knowledge - Positive	Subjective Knowledge –	Subjective Knowledge – Prejud		
Emotions	Negative Emotions	<ul> <li>No one will learn their language</li> </ul>	e	
■ Pleasant	Shocked about modernity	Least amount of attractions		
Intimate     Don't have feeling to be fergion	Alcohol tourism, prostitution     Cold atmosphere (Western	Nothing stands out     Adaptation to modernity / West	ann aniantation has negoti	
<ul> <li>Don't have feeling to be foreign</li> <li>Happiness, curiousness</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Cold atmosphere (Western coldness)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Adaptation to modernity / West influence on tourism experience</li> </ul>		
Funny	Boring	The most modern of the three c		
Fascination	<ul> <li>Uneasy feeling on borders</li> </ul>	More Scandinavian		
■ Young	Depressing suburbs	More interesting		
■ Caring	Russians were at the lowest	<ul> <li>Organized crime in form of beg</li> </ul>		
■ Warm	point	<ul> <li>Outside cities people have diffie</li> </ul>	culty keeping up with the pace	
■ Peace		Russians are the bad guys		
Idyllic world     Destfol relations		Extremely expensive, yet so po		
<ul> <li>Restful, relaxing</li> <li>Felt at home, welcomed</li> </ul>		<ul> <li>Earning capacity must differ be</li> </ul>	tween Estonians and Russians	
- ren at nome, wercomed				

#### ural Environment Natural Environment Infrastructure lturally extremely rich ■ Diverse / rich in variety Internet hotspots everywhere Seaside nging contests High hotel standard Fishing villages Cell phone coverage everywhere iseums edieval Tallinn Tourist info everywhere Forests rman History Swamps (Endla Moor), Old busses but modern ticketing ts scene / galleries moors system · Construction contrasts: old halfautiful traditional customs Laaheema National Park ving their independence / identity Harsh Coastline timbered houses versus skyscrapers Beautiful Islands nk to Finnish culture, Russian Contrast between good/poor road luences Ornithology system Not well-developed train system rturing traditions Island of Saaremaa nseatic flair Pristine Renovated cities Marshland · Paperless environment o-Economic Environment Storks Pines and Conifer woods odel student of the EU Snow and Ice Attractions Tallinn city walls/ architecture wer poverty and social problems than Lithuania and Latvia ore connected · Kuressaare on the Island of tter vision for the future Saaremaa Amenities ■ Endla Moor siness ideas Wellness offerings Singing festival onomic miracle with some exceptions Many free attractions Craftsmanship g., older generation, backcountry) Good signage for tourist Haanja National Park Lahemaa National Park ssian versus Estonian Estonia ■ Bi-lingual signage (English- Karula National Park ealth is not visible, but poverty is not Estonian) trusive Lake Peipus Good shopping malls Narva, Pepsierv, Otepaa cus on tourism and service industry Design restaurants ■ Tartu University endsetter in technology (e.g., Skype)

Horses on Saaremaa

City of Paernu (Spa)

■ Palmse Manor House

Old monastery in Haapsalu
 Gauja National Park

Figure 7.3. Latvia's destination image

Latvian music, pop, art History Architecture, museums Manors Theaters, festivals, opera Traditions Jugendstil / Art Nuveau Russian influenced culture Russi		Natural Environment
History Architecture, museums Manors Theaters, festivals, opera Traditions Russian influenced culture Rural Gentle landscape Beaches, maritime Forest Beaches in Jūrmala Meadows  Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (609 Without Riga, Latvia would be aggrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earming capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Heritage of socialist past</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Dreamy and romantic landscape of</li> </ul>
Architecture, museums  Manors  Thaaters, festivals, opera  Traditions  Jugendstil / Art Nuveau  Russian influenced culture  Russian influenced culture  Attractions  Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit  Cape Kolka  Saulkrasti  Gauja National Park  Jurmala  Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard  Beaches  Riga Radio Tower  Freedom Statue  Wide beaches  Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga  Rundale Palace and its rose garden  Manors sand castles  socialist buildings  Pine trees  Storks  Pine trees  Low mountain ranges with fruit tree  Rural  Gentle landscape  Beaches, maritime  Forest  Beaches in Jūrmala  Meadows  Socio-Economic Environment  Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work)  Enormous differences between poo and rich  Russian proletariat  Social problems with Russians (609  Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country  Many forced to have 2-3 jobs  High rents for low standard flats  Russian minority begging for mone  Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians  Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Latvian music, pop, art</li> </ul>	the 1850s
Manors     Theaters, festivals, opera     Traditions     Jugendstil / Art Nuveau     Russian influenced culture  Attractions     Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit     Cape Kolka     Saulkrasti     Gauja National Park     Jurmala     Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard     Beaches     Ruga Radio Tower     Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga     Rundâle Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles      Satile Automountain ranges with fruit tree     Rural     Geathes, maritime     Forest     Beaches, in Jūrmala     Meadows      Socio-Economic Environment     Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work)     Enormous differences between poo and rich     Russian proletariat     Social problems with Russians (60°     Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country     Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     High rents for low standard flats     Russian minority begging for mone     Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Aussians     Open discrimination of Russians		<ul> <li>Mini Switzerland violated by</li> </ul>
Traditions  Russian influenced culture  Attractions  Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Runal influenced culture  Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poor and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (6000 without Riga, Latvia would be agarrian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Architecture, museums</li> </ul>	socialist buildings
Traditions Jugendstil / Art Nuveau Russian influenced culture  Russian influenced culture  Attractions Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Jurmala Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Pine trees Low mountain ranges with fruit tree Rural Gentle landscape Beaches, maritime Freest Beaches, maritime Forest Beaches in Jūrmala Neadows  Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (609 Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		<ul> <li>Lakes</li> </ul>
Uugendstil / Art Nuveau     Russian influenced culture  Rural     Gentle landscape     Beaches, maritime     Forest     Beaches in Jūrmala     Meadows  Attractions  Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Low mountain ranges with fruit tree. Rural Gentle landscape Beaches, maritime Forest Beaches in Jūrmala Neadows  Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic risis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (609 Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Theaters, festivals, opera</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Storks</li> </ul>
Russian influenced culture  Russian influenced in Jürmala  Meadows  Socio-Economic Environment  Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work)  Enormous differences between poo and rich  Russian proletariat  Social problems with Russians (609  Without Riga, Latvia would be agararian country  Many forced to have 2-3 jobs  High rents for low standard flats  Russian minority begging for mone  Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians  Open discrimination of Russians		
Gentle landscape Beaches, maritime Forest Beaches in Jūrmala Meadows  **Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Gentle landscape Beaches, maritime  **Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich **Russian proletariat* Social problems with Russians (609 Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		<ul> <li>Low mountain ranges with fruit tree</li> </ul>
Beaches, maritime     Forest     Beaches in Jūrmala     Meadows     Saulkrasti     Gauja National Park     Jurmala     Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard     Beaches     Riga Radio Tower     Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles     Beaches, maritime     Forest     Beaches, maritime     Negative consequences of economic crisic (young people leaving for education or work)     Enormous differences between poor and rich     Russian proletariat     Social Problems with Russians (609     Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country     Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     High rents for low standard flats     Russian minority begging for mone     Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians     Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Russian influenced culture</li> </ul>	
**Forest** Beaches in Jūrmala Meadows  **Muldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  **Forest** Beaches in Jūrmala Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (609) Without Riga, Latvia would be agarrain country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		
Attractions  Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit  Cape Kolka  Saulkrasti  Gauja National Park  Jurmala  Beaches  Jurmala  Beaches  Beaches  Beaches  Riga Radio Tower  Freedom Statue  Wide beaches  Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga  Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga  Rundāle Palace and its rose garden  Manors and castles  Beaches in Jūrmala  Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work)  Enormous differences between poo and rich  Russian proletariat  Social problems with Russians (609  Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country  Many forced to have 2-3 jobs  High rents for low standard flats  Russian minority begging for mone  Earming capacity very different between Latvians and Russians  Open discrimination of Russians		
- Meadows  - Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit  - Cape Kolka - Saulkrasti - Gauja National Park - Jurmala - Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard - Beaches - Riga Radio Tower - Freedom Statue - Wide beaches - Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga - Rundale Palace and its rose garden - Manors and castles - Meadows  - Meadows - Meadows - Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) - Enormous differences between poor and rich - Russian proletariat - Social problems with Russians (609 - Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country - Many forced to have 2-3 jobs - High rents for low standard flats - Russian minority begging for mone - Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians - Open discrimination of Russians		
Kuldiga with mountains and espalier fruit Cape Kolka     Saulkrasti     Gauja National Park     Jurmala     Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard     Beaches     Riga Radio Tower     Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Rundâle Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles	Attractions	
espalier fruit  Cape Kolka Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundâle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poor and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (60' Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		<ul> <li>Meadows</li> </ul>
Cauja National Park     Jurmala     Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard     Beaches     Riga Radio Tower     Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles		
Saulkrasti Gauja National Park Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles Socio-Economic Environment Negative consequences of economic crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (60% Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earming capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		
Gauja National Park     Jurmala     Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard     Beaches     Riga Radio Tower     Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles		Socio-Economic Environment
Jurmala Sabile with most Northern openair vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundale Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Jurmala Crisis (young people leaving for education or work) Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (60° Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	Gauia National Park	<ul> <li>Negative consequences of economi</li> </ul>
- Satisferences between poor and rich - Riga Radio Tower - Wide beaches - Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga - Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga - Rundale Palace and its rose garden - Manors and castles - Enormous differences between poor and rich - Russian proletariat - Social problems with Russians (60° - Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country - Many forced to have 2-3 jobs - High rents for low standard flats - Russian minority begging for mone - Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians - Open discrimination of Russians		crisis (young people leaving for
air vineyard Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Enormous differences between poo and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (60° Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Many forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	Sabile with most Northern open-	
Beaches Riga Radio Tower Freedom Statue Wide beaches Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundale Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  and rich Russian proletariat Social problems with Russians (60° Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country Amny forced to have 2-3 jobs High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians		<ul> <li>Enormous differences between poo</li> </ul>
Freedom Statue     Wide beaches     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles     Social problems with Russians (60% without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country     Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     High rents for low standard flats     Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians     Open discrimination of Russians		
Wide beaches  Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga  Rundale Palace and its rose garden  Manors and castles  Without Riga, Latvia would be agrarian country  Many forced to have 2-3 jobs  High rents for low standard flats  Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians  Open discrimination of Russians	Riga Radio Tower	
Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district in Riga     Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles     Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district agrarian country     Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     High rents for low standard flats     Russian minority begging for mone     Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians     Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Freedom Statue</li> </ul>	
Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     Riga     Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga     Rundale Palace and its rose garden     Manors and castles     Many forced to have 2-3 jobs     High rents for low standard flats     Russian minority begging for mone     Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians     Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Wide beaches</li> </ul>	
Concerts, festivals, theater in Riga Rundāle Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  High rents for low standard flats Russian minority begging for mone Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians Open discrimination of Russians	<ul> <li>Art Nouveau / Jugendstil district</li> </ul>	
Riga Rundale Palace and its rose garden Manors and castles  Rundale Palace and its rose garden Open discrimination of Russians	in Riga	
<ul> <li>Rundāle Palace and its rose garden</li> <li>Manors and castles</li> <li>Earning capacity very different between Latvians and Russians</li> <li>Open discrimination of Russians</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Concerts, festivals, theater in</li> </ul>	
garden  Manors and castles  between Latvians and Russians  Open discrimination of Russians		
Manors and castles     Open discrimination of Russians		
- Ividilots and castles		
Basketball     Gwii currency not valued nightly		
	<ul> <li>Basketball</li> </ul>	Own currency not valued nightly

#### Infrastructure

- Socialist industrialized apartments
- A lot of ruined infrastructure zerland violated by
  - Rusts and rots away
  - · Colors coming off buildings, not renovated
  - · Small town farming is dead
  - Soviet leftovers (symbols)
  - Construction in Riga booming
  - Deserted countryside
  - Good public road system
  - Good public transport system
  - Riga well-prepared for tourism
  - Better roads than in Lithuania
  - · Old trams hardly a train system
  - · Regions without waste water systems
  - McDonalds everywhere
  - A lot (!) of hotels of European standard
  - Russian influenced satellite towns
  - Riga as hub for Air Baltic
  - New Riga districts need renovation
  - Stopped working on infrastructure 10 vears ago
  - Some holiday "homes" on a borderline
  - Hotels of good standard and affordable

## **Amenities**

- Cheap Tram
- Free of charge tourism info
- Good signage in Riga
- Well-prepared for tourism in Riga
- Population speaks English for the most
- Cordial and hospitable

### Salience

- Socio-economic problems
- Exclusion of Russians
- Depressing
- Feels cheap
- Impressive music, arts, handicraft
- Traditions
- Hanseatic history
- Rural
- Sweet landscape

### Beautiful beaches

- Storks Most mansions
- Jugendstil / Art Nouveau in Riga
- Riga is trendy, cosmopolitan, culturally rich

Sensory / Taste

Taste of Kwas (malt beverage)

Herb liquor 'Black Balsam' (Riga)

· Sweet pretzels stuffed with apple-

Sweet apple-cinnamon

Too much pork meat

cinnamon filling

Mayonnaise

■ Beetroot

· Pies, cakes

■ Cabbage

■ Black peas

Dark bread

Potatoes

Lentils

Herbs

- · Nightlife and architecture in Riga
- Cinemas
- Parks

#### Sensory / Scents Sensory / Colors · Apple, cinnamon Flowers of all

colors

Sensory / Sound

English German

National Anthem

Noise of traffic

language

and pride

(tram, car)

Russian pop

Melancholic

sounds

Grev

- Pine trees
- Reach sea sand
- Riga Smell of harbor
- Smell of oil port
- Brown coal
- Smell similar to former GDR
- Plastic smell in trains Smell of poverty

## Sensory / Haptic

- Not colder than Gran Canary Cold winter
- Chilly
- Dry sand

## Pudding

- **Atmosphere General** Atmosphere - Treatment ■ Dolled up Riga
- Contrasts
- Atmosphere of sentiment
- · Primitiveness of the country
- · Country takes one back in time
- · Quiet, relaxed Christmas
- Lots of snow
- Riga is Western oriented with pubs, street cafes and beer gardens

### Friendly, hospitable

- Pleasant
- · You have to speak English, not Russian
- More conservative/not as special in their approach to tourism and the tourist

## Atmosphere - Change in Perception

- Sex and alcohol tourism more negative
- Riga is most metropolitan city
- Riga has similarities with other Eastern European cities
- Riga does not look Soviet
- Riga feels like Europe

#### Emotions • Feels like a dream

- Time stands still in Kuldiga
- disarmingly beautiful
- Surprisingly beautiful
- Nostalgia and "homesickness" once you leave
- Feels like coming home

- Riga does not fit in
- Riga is dolled up
- Feels awkward
- · Feels melancholic, more depressing
- The decay makes one cry
- · One feels sorry for them and their search for identity
- Riga is so lively that it almost irritates and scares you
- Sad feelings when you think of the beautiful scenery

# **Image** of Latvia

### Objective Knowledge

- Generation leaving for education and
- Active on social networks
- Want to differentiate themselves
- Social exclusion of Russians
- Integration problems of Russian minority
- Visible sex tourism and prostitution
- A mix of Finland and Poland
- Riga is a German merchant city and the country a mini-Switzerland
- Beautiful beaches
- Rural
- Forest
- Riga as a modern and gigantic metropolis with concerts, theaters. festivals is prepared for tourism
- Lots of flowers
- · People don't rush. They take their time and sit outside in cafes until late in the evening
- Leftovers from Socialism (e.g. Plattenbau)
- Contrast between beautiful scenery and socialist buildings
- Problems finding own identity Divide between young and old, poor and rich
- Too much to do in Riga (overwhelming)
- Riga stressful life
- Suburban areas need renovation
- Road system in bad shape Stopped working on infrastructure
- long ago Baskethall
- Not as original and pristine

#### Subjective Knowledge - Prejudice Backwards

- Unprogressive Underdeveloped but satisfied with it
- Crime ■ Too many Russians - it makes
- negative difference · More beautiful beaches than Adriatic
- More rustic
- Not a winter destination
- Prostitution
- Bachelor parties (alcohol tourism)

#### Subjective Knowledge - Positive Riga irritates

- · Romantic and breathtaking landscape
- Medieval scenery in Kuldiga is
- · You feel alive in Riga
- Relaxed, coziness

- Divide between rich and poor

- because you don't where to place your attention
- with Russian, prostitution and poverty issues

Figure 7.4. Lithuania's destination image

# Atmosphere - General Vilnius is similar to Munich but less hectic Vilnius is different, quiet, placid Melancholic, awkward atmosphere History laden atmosphere Catholic atmosphere and character Deeply relaxing atmosphere Atmosphere - Treatment Hospitable ■ Cordial Atmosphere - Change in Perception Did not know enough before visiting Lowest vs. highest expectation for Lithuania Reserved, not approachable, but then very hospitable ■ Too many warnings about Russian mafia No Hanseatic flair Felt home Very melancholic due to religiousness Subjective Knowledge - Positive Emotions You nearly break down because of the beautiful nature It's poetic, the sunset and Chopin being played Unique, you have to experience it Feels comfortable and good

### Objective Knowledge

- Feel welcomed
- · Feels better than home
- · Loyable familiar warm
- Storybook feeling when walking down the beach
- You're taken back in time

## <u>Subjective Knowledge - Negative Emotions</u>

- · Felt slain and tired of all the churches
- · Skepticism towards country
- Uneasiness when thinking about country

### Subjective Knowledge - Prejudice

- A lot of stealing
- · Very Soviet informed
- Underdeveloped
- Poverty
- White spot for tourists
- It's a grey country

- Feels far away from Europe
- They speak German
- Largest dune in Europe
- The country stands still
- Too influenced by Catholic church
- Very conservative
- Poverty
- Undeveloped infrastructure Impressive coast (Curonian
- Lagoon)
- Archaic and unreal landscape · No architectural attractions but
- landscape is their biggest attraction
- Masses of storks
- Fascinating Hills of Crosses
- Quiet Vilnius with artist district "Republic of Užupis"

- Green, hilly
- Feels safe and clean
- Nature outstands Estonia and
  - Latvia
  - Lots of buildings rotten and not attractive
  - · Kleipeda is a dead city
  - · A lot of stolen cars get transferred to Belarus
  - · All Soviet Union marks are
  - erased Ghettoization of Russian
  - population Amber art
  - Misjudged country (people have too much prejudice towards country)
  - Basketball
  - Not tasteful beer

## · Original, untouched, authentic, fascinating

## Cultural Environment

- Catholic
- Art sculptures (angular, raw)
- Totems
- Soviet-Russian influence
- Baroque and Gothic
- Traditional folk songs
- Many museums and theaters

- Hill of Crosses Curonian Spit / Lagoon
- Thomas Mann house in Nida
- Arts handicraft
- · Kleipeda with 'Annie of Tharau' figure
- Druskininkai with wooden villas and castles, and Grūtas Park called Lenin's World
- Black Madonna in Vilnius
- Kaunas
- Artist district Republic of Užupis (Vilnius)
- Liepaja
- Castle of Trakai

#### Natural Environment

- Amazing beaches and dunes
- Archaic and unreal landscape
- Like a dream
- Not intrusive environment
- Very spacious
- Few forests
- Lots of grassland
- Incredible number of storks
- Curonian Spit!
- Pristine and untouched nature
- Impressive colors of pine trees
- Most beautiful beaches of the

# Socio-Economic Environment Poor

- Polish-Russian like
- Rural
- Everything related to Soviet Union is being removed
- Economically weak
- Suppression of Russian population
- Discrepancy between cities and backcountry

## Sensory / Color

■ Colors of Curonian

Spit/Baltic Sea

Sensory / Sound

· Church bells

■ Eurovision Song

Silence/quietness! Accordion music

Brown colors

Grey

 Dried/smoked fish Incense candles in churches

 Curonian Spit, dunes, Thomas Mann Rural, rough, archaic landscape Fascinating arts scene · Highly catholic

Most beautiful recreational region

Artist district – Republic of Užupis

Nature, landscape, plenty of forests

Religion as opium of people

Rustic food

Sensory / Scent

Tranquil Vilnius

Kaunas, Klaipėda

- Pine forest

Salience Individual ■ Incredible beaches

#### ■ Baltic Sea Flowers

## Sensory / Taste

- Smoked fish
- Not good beer
- Vodka
- Meat
- Rustic food Fresh veggies

# Sensory / Haptics

Contest

## ■ Drv

### Infrastructure

- A lot is rotten and old Regions that are underdeveloped regarding
- tourism infrastructure · Poor / basic road system and
- public transportation system
- A lot of construction
- Developed air traffic system Accommodation ranges from
- hostels to upscale hotels Not much of a train system
- Good minibus system
- · Hotels of good standard
- A lot has been redone

### Amenities

No schedules, maps, or timetables for public transport system

# 7.9. Summary

Similar to destination personality associations, there are obvious differences between actual tourists and potential tourists in the clarity of their image perceptions as they relate to the three Baltic States. While actual tourists are able to clearly describe commonalities, as well as differences between the three countries, potential tourists struggle and provide a more vague, often biased or prejudiced testimony. Actual tourists perceive Estonia to be the best developed country, most modern and progressive, rather Scandinavian influenced with medieval charm. Tallinn stands out as a very interesting city with its impressive medieval architecture and Hanseatic flair. At the same time, Tallinn and Estonia in general seem very quiet and relaxing, homogeneous, yet with contrasts.

Latvia is perceived as being more German influenced. It is interesting that even though actual tourists associate many socio-cultural problems with Latvia, Riga nevertheless stands out. It is perceived as the most vibrant capital city among the three countries that somehow has a lighthouse function in the Baltic States. However, apart from the capital Riga, detailed descriptions of the countryside are practically non existent, which shows the attractive power of Riga and how much tourism is concentrated on the capital city. For actual tourists, the country is a region of contrasts with Latvia being Riga, but Riga not being Latvia. Image associations even among actual tourists seem blurred.

Lithuania is described as very different. Lithuania is more Polish influenced, very traditional, conservative, and religious with churches on every corner. The capital Vilnius is perceived as an interesting but different and a much quieter city by comparison to Tallinn or Riga. At the same time, actual tourists perceive Vilnius as the capital city to be homogeneous with the rest of the country.

Similar to destination personality associations, potential tourists find it easier to describe similarities between the three Baltic States but more problematic to report differences between the countries. With image too, they are not able to distinguish between what each country brings to the table, how they differ, yet complement each other. Potential tourists' testimonies are often charged with vagueness, ambiguity, or prejudice, which affects their willingness and interest to visit the countries individually, much less all three together. This is due to the fact that potential tourists perceive all three countries as one region rather than three different and diverse countries. Contrary to actual tourists, potential tourists, thus, believe that having seen one country is sufficient to get a clear picture of this geographic area.

## CHAPTER VIII: RESULTS – A CO-BRANDING APPROACH

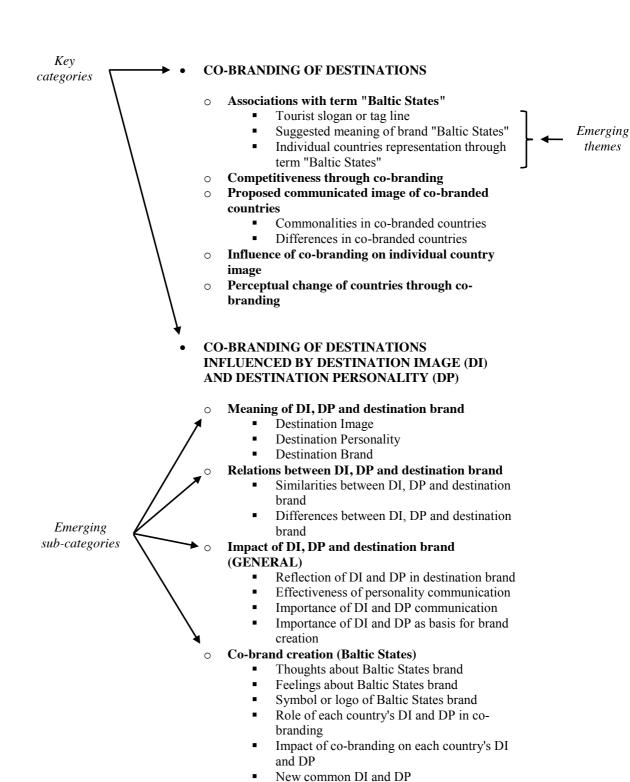
## 8.1 Introduction

To evaluate the potential for co-branding pertaining to the Baltic States, interviewees were first asked how well the three independent and individual states are represented through the connecting term 'Baltic States'. Next, interviewees designed a slogan or tag line for the Baltic States as one entity, to see whether an intended differentiation can take place, followed by evaluation of the competitiveness of a cobranding approach. Since the objective of destination co-branding is not to assimilate destinations, interviewees were then asked how a co-branding approach in Baltic States destination marketing might change their image perceptions of the individual countries, as well as their image perceptions of the Baltic States. Finally, each interviewee was given the opportunity to propose an image or image components they would prefer to see communicated in case a co-branding approach would be adopted and what similarities (but also differences) between the three Baltic States they would communicate. The themes and their subcategories that emerged from the analysis are presented in the subsequent section. The rest of the chapter is organised in sections that capture larger themes, which allows for a comprehensive presentation of tourists' perceptions of a co-branding approach in the Baltic region.

## 8.2 Overview of codes – Co-branding of destinations

Table 8.1 presents the codes relevant to co-branding that inductively emerged from the data analysis. Two main themes are further split into subcategories and discussed in the subsequent parts of this chapter.

Figure 8.1. Co-branding – coding overview



# 8.3 Countries' representation through the term Baltic States

While actual tourists perceived the term 'Baltic States' as a term that encompasses all three countries and creates certain associations with the individual states (A6M, A10F), the term does not resonate with them from a touristic perspective in the sense that it does not provide any cues that might influence the travel decision-making process.

The term 'Baltic States' definitely represents Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; however, it only represents them geopolitically. In terms of touristic associations they are not fulfilling it. They all have the Baltic Sea, the Baltic character, untouched nature, different capital cities and many other things and are very diverse; the term just does not communicate that to me (A12M).

The term typically is regarded purely as a geopolitical term (A2F, A4M, A5M, A6M, A10F, A12M), and is not associated with a tourism term or a term used for marketing purposes (A4M). At the same time 'Baltic States' seems also to be a confusing term for actual tourists, one that provides a vague and blurred image:

This term 'Baltic States' throws these countries into the same pot and it somehow suppresses and hides their originalities. [...] As I said, the term 'Baltic Sea' pertains to so much more than just these three countries and it is not clear which country represents what (AIF).

As shown within the previous two chapters, actual tourists perceive the three countries to be very similar through their history and nature. However, they also stress certain differences between the Baltic States, something they attribute to the fact that each of the three states is eager to emphasise its independence and, thus, tends to communicate their differences and uniqueness (A2F). Actual tourists suggest that the meaning of the term Baltic States may be different for actual tourists when compared to potential tourists in that it may have a more meaningful representation for tourists who have never been to

one or all of these countries (A2F). At the same time, they argue that the term 'Baltic States' makes the three countries somewhat similar for them:

The term Baltic States is for those that have not visited the region a stronger representation than individual states would be. When the term Baltic States is used the representation of individual states vanishes. Their individuality, originality and uniqueness are gone. The 'Baltic States' is an empty term and at best represents a geopolitical region so far (A2F).

However, even though actual tourists argued that an individual representation of the three countries may suffer from the term 'Baltic States', it simultaneously makes the region more interesting for visitation and potentially leads to more positive connotations (A5M) with the individual countries or the region as such:

I think these countries are less interesting for tourists when looked at individually. Many people have very positive associations with the word 'Baltic', whereas with 'Lithuania', a lot of stereotypes are associated (A5M).

Besides having more positive associations through the term 'Baltic States', actual tourists argued that the term is also helpful in assisting tourists to have more associations with the region (A7M). Being geographically small countries, the term 'Baltic States' represents all three countries in making the geographic region more present on the international tourism market (A7M, A9M) and, thus, potentially increases visitation on a regional and individual level (A8M). However, the term also leaves the consumer (i.e., potential and actual tourists) with a lot of vagueness, leading to a comparatively undifferentiated image:

With the term 'Baltic States' they clearly have more power on the international market. But all three of them have something unique to offer. So far, the term Baltic States does not represent that at all (A9M).

Thus, one actual tourist summarised:

This term 'Baltic States' basically does not do the countries any justice because of their huge differences. [...] Aside from that...they are...based on where they are located they do look like a little lost in the region and seem to just have fallen from the sky somehow because they are not...they are not Russian, they are not Polish...they are...they are back there...from where we are they seem to be somewhere...back there but they are not as one might expect them to be...meaning back there somewhere. So it is...it is an exclave in some way (A1F).

For potential tourists, the 'Baltic States' is a term that conveys certain touristic associations but it is generally perceived as a geopolitical term (P5F, P10M, P11F). While the term does not fully communicate or represent the individual states (P7F, P12F), it is a term that potential tourists associate with an overarching umbrella that keeps the states together; states that – in the eyes of those tourists – cannot be separated due to their common history (P5F). Further, they associate the term 'Baltic States' with beautiful beaches, large forests, and interesting cities, without being able to clearly differentiate it (P9M). Lastly, they also perceived the term as a rather cold, rational, and unemotional term; as a construct that makes the individual states appear larger than they actually are (P13F):

The term sounds rational. It does not convey any emotions, whereas the individual countries sound much warmer. Maybe the term 'Land of the Balts or Baltic peoples' would represent them better (P13F).

# 8.4 Perception of the hypothetical brand 'Baltic States'

In order to more comprehensively assess the meaning of the term 'Baltic States' for consumers, both groups of tourists were also asked what a hypothetical 'Baltic States' brand would mean to these tourists, what it should contain, how it could be marketed, and how it would be perceived.

Actual tourists were in favour of a brand that communicated a common image and personality. They claimed that it would draw the attention of tourists to the region and the individual countries (A2F), which could result in reduced stereotype and prejudice about the region (A8M).

These countries are in the middle of Europe and should not be seen as individual countries located in the outskirts of Russia. They have open borders today and belong to the European Union (A8M).

Interviewees mentioned that the Baltic States, more than any other region, stand for diversity in the sense of contrasts but also similarities between the countries and within the individual states, aspects that define the region (A3M, A4M, A5M, A11M) and, thus, needs to be communicated.

There is this contrast between old and new that has to be communicated through a story. I think it makes sense to mention the Baltic Sea, cultural aspects, historical aspects, and high-tech (A3M).

The diversity within the Baltic States region, with the unique character of each country, was regarded to be very attractive across the tourist spectrum (A4M, A11M). The diversity of tourism offerings was mentioned, an interesting mix between tradition, in the form of old Hanseatic cities, paired with modern development, beautiful nature and the Baltic Sea as the connecting element (A11M):

It is interesting for the older as well as the younger generation. The Baltic States stand for cities with a lot of flair, which is important for the younger generation. At the same time they have interesting cultural and historical aspects such as Thomas Mann, which perhaps is more interesting again for the older generations (A4M).

Potential tourists argued, that a brand 'Baltic States' needs to be better differentiated from the term 'Balkan nations' (P1M), which still prompts negative associations in their opinion after the Jugoslavian Civil War. Even though being unrelated terms and differet geographical regions, interviewees suggested that the terms are often mixed up due to them sounding very similar. Generally, interviewees prefer to see the countries' diverse, most beautiful, and attractive characteristics communicated, consisting of the personality of the people and originality of the region (P8F, P13F). Interviewees more specifically mentioned the clean and well-preserved Hanseatic cities with their diverse architecture, a modern service sector, culture, lifestyle, as well as a beautiful nature and the countries' authenticity (P2M, P8F, P9M, P13F).

For potential tourists, the three individual Baltic States are one vacation region so that interviewees in this group of tourists perceived relatedness and connection among them with similar values and a similar cultural background (P4M). For this group of tourists the communication of commonalities of the countries seemed more important.

It is nonsense to place special emphasis on the individual countries because in Europe we perceive them as a region. They should promote themselves as one region and then they can still focus on the capital or individual cities (P5F).

Even though they are not necessarily seen as one destination, potential tourists tend to combine the individual impressions they have to create an overall image that seems more attractive (P3M, P7F, P12F).

The term 'Baltic States' is definitely not a sexy term. It certainly sounds interesting, and perhaps it even arouses curiosity to a certain extent ...but really not in a very apparent way...and it's not sexy, and that's why I haven't been there yet. I guess that's why I also never gotten into the situation that I desperately wanted to purchase a travel guide to look up what's behind the whole thing. [...] Well, they should communicate that they are bigger and stronger together...but then also different amongst themselves and from other countries (P12F).

# 8.5 Proposed slogan or tag line

To find out more about the key elements pertaining to connecting (but also distinguishing) characteristics of the three Baltic States from a consumer perspective, all interviewees were given the opportunity to create a slogan or tag line they would use to promote the entire region, and regard as representing each country.

Actual tourists perceived it as difficult to extract and define what each country stands for, but generally agreed that it is important to find three notions or concepts that are short and crisp, one for each country (A1F, A7M, A10F). In some of the testimonies, the location of the Baltic States was a key to the tagline:

*The natural jewel of the North (A6M).* 

The new northern centre of Europe (A6M).

Other interviewees focused more on the uniqueness of the region. They argued that it is imperative to communicate their differences and commonalities, but more importantly their particularities and components that cannot be found easily in other countries, such as the contrasts of the region in terms of modernity and tradition, or its diversity and freshness (A3M, A8M, A10F, A11M).

Amber coast (A12M).

*The window to the Baltic Sea (A3M).* 

The young Europe at the Baltic Sea (A3M).

*Travel from medieval to modern times (A8M).* 

Actual tourists also focused on the Baltic States as a region that offers the undiscovered, the surprising and unexpected; a region tourists need to experience in order to fully understand (A2F, A7M).

The undiscovered pearl (A2F).

*Back to the roots – Go Baltic (A7M).* 

Lastly, actual tourists also focused on emotional aspects in their testimonies, in which authenticity, familiarity, or originality were important components that would speak to the heart of tourists (A5M, A9M, A13M).

A journey of friendliness (A13M).

Genuinely human (A9M).

*Welcome home (A5M).* 

Finally home (A5M).

Potential tourists focused on the uniqueness of the three Baltic States by emphasising the diversity within the countries, in terms of their architecture and cities, nature and people, as the main tourist attractions (P5F, P7F, P8F). Interviewees mentioned that it would be important to stress the individual characteristics of the countries and contrasts of each of the capital cities in order to underline the diversity in the region.

Walk through the old town of Tallinn, experience the nightlife of Riga, and enjoy the romantic alpine world of Vilnius (P7F).

Come to the Baltic! Experience unique architecture, infinite wideness, and friendly people (P8F).

*The Baltic States. We for all of us (P5F).* 

Potential tourists also found cultural aspects to be important in slogans or tag lines (P1M, P2M, P6M).

Experience pure culture (P1M).

Baltic States – A mix of different cultures (P6M).

Where the lifestyle and culture meet. The new urban (P2M).

Similar to actual tourists, some interviewees among the group of potential tourists mentioned that slogans that make the claim to represent the Baltic States region need to contain emotional components due to the region's uniqueness in terms of perceived authenticity, dynamism, virginity or sense of home (P3M, P4M, P13F).

*Come*, see, and feel (P4M).

*Baltic States - Authentic, unique, dynamic, at home (P3M).* 

*The Baltic States – feel familiar (P13F).* 

In some testimonies, the nature of the Baltic States was connected to emotional components such as finding a true self or equilibrium in life (P9M, P10M, P11F).

Come back to nature! Find yourself (P9M).

Experience pure nature (P10M).

Baltic States - Feel life, enjoyment, and nature (P11F).

Since diversity can have different meanings that can be created with pictures and colours, it was argued that slogans need to evoke curiosity, and show contrast to what tourists might expect there (P12F)

So close, yet so diverse (P12F).

# 8.6 Perception of countries' competitiveness through co-branding

During the interviews, both groups of tourists were asked about the approach they would recommend in terms of marketing and branding the Baltic States so that actual and potential tourists alike are able to make well-educated travel decisions, but are also able to more intensively experience the region prior to their actual journey. Special emphasis was

placed on tourists' perceptions related to a common marketing approach and how that would influence the competitiveness of the three states.

Actual tourists perceive it overall as highly advantageous to market the countries together (A1F, A2F, A3M, A4M, A5M, A6M, A7M, A8M, A9M, A10F, A11M, A12M). They argued that a common marketing approach would attract tourists (A2F). However, some interviewees acknowledged that the three Baltic States might not favour a common marketing approach (A2F). Their emphasis on each of their countries' individuality and independence, rooted in their history, would require a mentality change among the population first (A1F, A2F).

Well...good...from a German perspective...we are much larger...we are...you know...if I was Swiss citizen I might see it a bit different...not sure, but...for us those countries are rather very small. If you look at it that way...and we are just not talking about Switzerland...well, perhaps size-wise but not in terms of productive capacity and definitely not number of people. In that sense I find it utopian anyway that each one of them tries to individually...achieve something. Actually, they would be...they would not just be stupid...I also think it would be downright wrong if each one of them would try to put themselves somehow...um...to the foreground. I only believe they are strongest once they really act in concert and try to...to collaborate (close their ranks)...I mean that might anger one of them more than the other because...as I mentioned...if I was an Estonian citizen I might also argue...do I really have to drag my lame brother along with me...you know...but...teeth-gnashingly, I would...that is very similar to us with the different federal states...you know...Bavarians also think...Good Lord, do we have to really support Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania...you know...but in the end they also have to offer something...vou know. In that sense, I believe they have to ...they have to collectively...I think there is not alternative to it (A1F).

Actual tourists see great benefit in a co-branding or common marketing strategy as it would help increase the attractiveness of the Baltic States as a tourism destination and improve the visibility of all three countries on the international tourism market (A3M, A5M). Interviewees perceive the term 'Baltic States' to represent Estonia, Latvia, and

Lithuania to a certain extent, but argue that the three countries are not fulfilling it from a tourism perspective (A12M). Actual tourists emphasised the great similarities between the three Baltic States, having the common Baltic character, being coastal states, having an untouched nature, and different capital cities. However, they perceive it as too difficult to differentiate them and as too expensive to market each country individually, even though they acknowledge the individual character that each country simultaneously has (A3M, A12M). This is mainly because in their perception it would be too complex to create strong individual country images of states that are too small to be marketed individually; states that appear to be similar and are seen as one geopolitical region as the term 'Baltic States' suggests (A1F, A2F, A5M).

It would be a shame if they market themselves individually. It would help raise awareness and help tourists differentiate among them. No one knows where Latvia is, where Lithuania is, and where is Estonia is. They complement each other well and when all three are marketed together they are a perfect holiday destination. There should be nothing holding them back not to implement it (A3M).

However, even though a co-branding approach to marketing the Baltic States would create synergies among the three countries in the perception of actual tourists, they also noted that simultaneously each country needs to be well represented and should preserve its cultural uniqueness and individuality through a form of co-operation or marketing that does not attempt to mix or assimilate the countries' images (A4M, A5M, A10F). There was agreement among the individual testimonies that while commonalities are stressed, each country should also communicate their differences (A4M, A11M, A10F). This is especially true since existing differences were not perceived to be too significant so as to make a common marketing approach unprofitable for any of these countries, consequently leading to one country dropping out or creating envy among them (A12M).

The term 'Baltic States' is a geopolitical term, not marketing or tourism term. It has potential marketing opportunities but first we need to understand how the individual countries are seen, what do they offer, who are they. Then they can cooperate in marketing and market them under the umbrella 'Baltic States'. Co-branding would create synergies between them, but they need to be equally represented. Each country has to contribute their hot spots for marketing purposes, but they need to be marketed in a balanced way. They can become much stronger under the umbrella 'The Baltic States' (A4M).

Interviewees mentioned that the three states need to be realistic in that they cannot exist individually on the international tourism market (A7M) in a situation where tourists have difficulties differentiating one country from another (A7M, A10F). A common marketing strategy would have an illuminative effect for consumers and help the Baltic States to present all three states in their proper light (A10F). According to interviewees this might increase the region's competitiveness in that the states would no longer be perceived as isolated, small and individual states where travel between the countries is difficult (A7M, A8M, A10F). The countries might rather be seen as a region worthwhile visiting for a longer period of time during which more than one if not all three countries are visited (A6M, A7M, A8M).

They can only be marketed as one. Otherwise, if marketed as individual countries, no one will pay attention. If they market themselves individually the competition among them would be too big. They would compete against each other. They would hurt each other with their individual strategies because all of them market a beautiful nature, etc. That is not attractive for tourists. The tourist is more likely to visit all three at once instead of just one. But they need to know how they differ. If they co-brand, they will market themselves as a region, and by doing so increase the likelihood to visit all three. The name 'Baltic' is good because it exists longer than the names of the individual countries. It's more salient with tourists. They need to offer this kind of diversity (A7M).

Additionally, and based on a more regional marketing approach, interviewees believe that once tourists get to know one country favourably, they will become more

prone to visiting the other countries and by doing so increase the average length of stay (A10F, A11M, A13M). Actual tourists perceive it as obstructive to create such strong barriers among the countries, when in fact they could achieve more for tourism (as well as for the overall political and economic development) if they reappeared as a unit (A10F, A11M).

the three together Marketing countries increases the competitiveness of the individual states. It's a triple win. Most people take two weeks of yearly vacation and it's very unlikely to spend them only in Latvia for example. If they would do cobranding, it would give an impression that people are travelling to one region rather than three countries. It would reach tourists interest quicker. [...] It would be easier as they would have more power on the international market. All three of them have something unique to offer, thus, all three would benefit. So far, the term Baltic States does not represent individual states. Through co-branding this term can communicate the culture and personality in each of the countries (A9M).

Actual tourists do not foresee any negative effects of a co-branding approach and regard the distinct national pride, egotistic marketing strategies, and each country's isolation from one another as hindering. Lithuania, as the weakest link of the three countries, might potentially benefit more than Estonia. However, interviewees argued that even Estonia, as the country perceived to be most economically sound, would benefit from such an approach through synergies and untapped potential that currently is not yet marketed properly and thus, creates a blank spot on the map and intra-regional competition where it is not necessary (A11M).

Similar to actual tourists, potential tourists perceive the three Baltic states much like a community or as one region in which none of the three countries currently has an advantage over the other (P1M, P11F). Potential tourists acknowledged that the Baltic States have problems with tourists perceiving the three states as one construct or region, but also stressed that the emphasis on separation and individualism seemed artificial (P8F).

It seemed more natural for interviewees that the Baltic States could work well together towards a common interest but need to emphasise their similarities in a common marketing approach to not hurt individual states in such an approach (P1M). Interviewees saw great benefit in the three countries marketing themselves as one region to increase the competitiveness of the individual states (P1M, P8F, P11F).

The attractiveness of each individual country has to be communicated. Each country's attractions have to be communicated in a way to build the image of each country that is stronger than one image for all. Once they manage that their competitiveness increases there will be a win-win situation for all of them. The differentiation strategy will not bring them any further. All three [countries] together are much stronger and can position themselves more effectively (P2M).

Similarly, potential tourists argued the countries should jointly promote their individual attractions in each country since they are too small to be experienced otherwise (P9M). In the opinion of potential tourists it would make the three destinations appear more attractive, causing tourists to also stay longer (P9M).

They can be combined if each country offers something unique, for example beautiful beaches in one, forest in the second, cities in the third or so. Then, you can offer differences and you have it all here to tourists. They complement well (P9M).

In the opinion of potential tourists, a co-branding approach of the countries would make the region more interesting for a wider spectrum of tourists. Such a strategy would also help potential tourists to actually make a travel decision and visit them (P7F, P12F), since the countries are perceived to be related, similar, and connected through similar values, culture, and nature. A co-branding approach could possibly and should show the countries' actual differences and diversity of the region (P4M, P7F).

People currently cannot differentiate among the three countries. In terms of marketing it makes more sense to combine the three under the umbrella "The Baltics" rather than market the three countries individually. They will have to accept that they are not so different. A marketing of individual countries will not work. Co-branding however needs to clearly communicate what each of the countries has to offer and how they are different (P4M).

According to potential tourists, co-branding of the three Baltic States, countries that complement each other well, would increase their tourism potential, since the individual countries would be able to offer more to the consumer by appearing more attractive and much more diverse in terms of their tourist attractions, their cities, and nature (P8F, P10M). This, according to interviewees, would not lead to any one country suffering but ultimately could increase their competitiveness overall in the international market, even though they may be perceived as one unit (P8F, P10M).

Some sort of marketing under an overarching umbrella should be their focus, because their resources as individual countries are not sufficient. It would be wrong to market them individually; they should consciously decide to market themselves under a Baltic theme. They would also be better off in terms of pulling their financial resources together (P4M).

For potential tourists, the three Baltic States would not only be able to use synergy effects (e.g., sharing costs) but would also look bigger through a common marketing approach; it would enable them to show more diversity of the individual states to tourists and thus make the three countries stronger by making a small area more interesting from the consumer's point of view (P6M, P13F).

It would be nonsense to place special emphasis on the individual countries because in Europe we perceive them as one region. They should market them as a region and focus on capital cities to increase their competiveness. By doing so they can offer more diversity and help each other out. I think they are at the same level and it makes them sexier when they market each other together. The can push each other to achieve their common and individual goals. For most people they are perceived as a region anyway and not as individual countries (P5F).

# 8.7 Perceptual change of destination image through co-branding

# 8.7.1 Influence of co-branding on individual countries' image

During the interviews, actual tourists were asked about their perceptions of how cobranding might influence the current destination image that tourists have of the individual destinations (i.e. Baltic States).

In the current perception of actual tourists the individual countries are practically not existent politically, economically, or in a tourism context (A5M). It would help strengthen their image and increase awareness about the region so that the individual countries also become at least marginally noticed (A4M, A5M, A9M, A12M). Interviewees argued that it would not change the image that tourists have of the individual states first, because the countries are perceived as very similar and second, because it would serve as an overarching umbrella, which is an eye-catcher for most tourists (A3M, A7M). Interviewees argued that a potentially new overall image of the Baltic States would definitely influence the image of the individual countries but only positively, in that it would be more informative for tourists by showing more diversity in the form of similarities and differences (A11M).

Um...it almost sounds schizophrenic, but I believe that by doing so (co-branding), one would actually sharpen the awareness that it is actually three different states. [...] In fact...pretty much along the lines of 'we are the other three'. Well...you know...'we are generally different than the others but also each one of us is different'. [...] Because you see...if you consolidate something you are afterwards often able to see the differences much better...again...you know...because within this set...one can still sort and shelve it then. [...] We are the three facets of something. That said, I believe it is...um...no problem to clarify...as I said...like three sisters in a sense. It is not a problem to say...okay...indeed, we are...one of us is blond, the other one brunette or whatever...but still...um...we have facets that connect us and each one of us has a healthy self-confidence...we stand together and we rock it

together...well, kind of like all for one and one for all...well I believe they can be strong together without risking personally or as a country having to take a second place. I think that is a...they are like three sisters...three different sisters (A1F).

Actual tourists argued that it might certainly change or distort a country's image if wrong associations are being communicated (A7M). It might also be that the individual countries' images might get placed in the background (A12M). However, if done wisely, all three states would benefit, even to an extent where currently negative associations that are existent in all three Baltic States might be changed into positive ones (A9M, A12M).

They are too small to be perceived or noticed as individual countries. Through co-branding the awareness among tourists would increase. For example, it would definitely help Lithuania for people to develop a positive image (A6M).

Actual tourists would not anticipate negative effects through a co-branding approach in marketing but see one country potentially benefitting more than another due to different states of tourism development (A11M). Interviewees also stressed the importance of demonstrating not just similarities but also existing differences of the countries through co-branding (A2F, A4M, A5M, A10F).

The image of individual countries could blur. It could weaken them. Each country with its attractions is strong; if they are marketed as mishmash and one tries to blur their contrasts and only places their commonalities in foreground they will loose their charm and character. I can imagine co-branding as long as they are not clumped together as one thing. In such case they would be perceived as bigger (A2F).

As long as all three countries are able to promote their tourist attractions evenly and diversely enough, the interest among tourists would increase and all three countries become more believable (e.g. open borders) besides improving the pull factors that motivate people to travel to these destinations (A10F, A13M).

It would not influence individual states at all apart from tourists visiting all three rather than one destination. I think it is hard to convince a tourist to spend a week only in one country because they're too small. If co-branding is done in a smart way, Lithuania shouldn't care whether tourists come because of the Baltic Region or because of Lithuania. It doesn't matter. The image of the country won't change. It will only get more tourists. It will increase the awareness of their commonalities and differences (A11M).

Similar to actual tourists, potential tourists generally do not perceive any negative influences on the image of the individual countries caused by co-branding. Even though it was mentioned that the image of each country as an individual destination might get blurred (P7F), most interviewees either associated no significant change or positive change with co-branding in that it would provide additional and necessary information for the traveller and put the countries more into the spotlight of international tourism (P9M, P11F, P12F).

It would be like a multiplier effect. It would encourage a positive debate about the countries' differences. Of course, they need to be in agreement what the differences are among them that would have to be communicated in co-branding. But it's a development process. Co-branding would force them to communicate and be perceived with different characteristics and personalities (P4M).

Potential tourists, too, argued that the Baltic States would appear stronger and might be able to clear the blurred image the individual countries currently have (P2M, P8F). Interviewees suggested that the region needs to communicate its differences, or otherwise it would not matter if tourists go to Estonia, to Lithuania, or to Latvia (P1M, P2M, P5F). Potential tourists currently perceive it as difficult to have a clear idea what the countries stand for and what they are like; thus, it would position them better on the international tourism market (P8F).

Co-branding would force them to help each other. They are stronger together. They need to focus on their differences so that they are perceived as different. It becomes more interesting for tourists. The

individual countries would also be perceived as easier and less complicated to travel to. Besides, as an investor I would not be interested in political boarders, but the region; regions like the Alps, the Nordic Sea, or the Baltic Sea (P5F).

Even though potential tourists acknowledged the possibility that individual states might loose their individuality through co-branding to a certain extent, they stressed the necessity to create a co-branded image based on the attractions and individual characteristics of each country (P3M, P6M). Similar to actual tourists, potential tourists recognised an advantage for Lithuania that lags behind in the perception of interviewees (P6M).

They possibly might loose their individuality in terms of being perceived as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They most likely would then be even more perceived as the Baltic States. But it could improve the image of Lithuania. At the same time it certainly wouldn't damage the image of Estonia (P6M).

Overall, interviewees mentioned that positive ones would outweigh potential negative effects in that it would positively change the region's image. The perception of interviewees was such that the three countries could benefit immensely from their tourism potential in the form of attractions, if combined. In their opinion, it would distinguish the countries from one another and emphasise the image of the individual states rather than creating ambiguity (P10M, P13F).

They will be perceived as bigger. The overall image has to be created in a way that each country comes over or is communicated positively. The disadvantage is that if a tourist had a bad experience in one country it might have a carryover effect on the other two. But it's the same when experience is positive (P13F).

During the course of the interviews, actual and potential tourists were asked how their overall image perception of the Baltic States as a region would change in case the three countries adopted a co-branding approach to marketing.

Some actual tourists claimed that their overall image perception would not change, mainly because they are already perceived as one region or construct (A6M, A7M):

It would not change the overall image I have, because they are already perceived as one. They cannot be perceived and noticed individually. But I think by doing so it is more likely that tourists visit all three destinations. The overall stay would lengthen because of the diversity offered. You know, there would be an increased likelihood that all three countries are visited instead of one. It helps on the international market; people have more associations with it and can locate it in their mind more easily if they are marketed as 'The Baltic' (A7M).

While some interviewees' image of the region would not be affected by a cobranding approach (A6M, A7M), most actual tourists would see their image perceptions change positively depending on how each country is represented or communicated under this overarching umbrella (A4M), given they are equally represented (A4M).

It would strengthen the awareness and their presence on the market; most people don't know where Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are. With a little bit of fantasy they know where the Baltic Sea is. It would simply increase touristic attention (A2F).

Additionally, interviewees argued that the region would receive more exposure and become more interesting in the mind of the consumer; it would become bigger, with a more critical mass of attractions, open borders, all aspects that make it easier and attractive to visit the Baltic States during one trip, leading to an increased desire to visit all three countries to experience their differences (A8M, A9M, A10F).

It would tear down the imaginary borders. It communicates to tourists that they will be flexible in crossing the borders. People have a psychological resistance to change countries or cross a country's border within one trip. Co-branding could overcome that and the average length of stay would lengthen in all three of them (A9M).

Interviewees further mentioned that co-branding would change the perception in the minds of the consumer, in that it potentially could address new target markets and types of tourists, for example, those interested in medical tourism or educational tourism (A11M). According to actual tourists, co-branding would increase the awareness of the region and through a positive image it would also provide each of the three Baltic States with the possibility to better market the countryside (e.g., national parks) instead of just focusing on capital cities as currently being done (A12M).

I think people would become more sensible and aware of the region, more interested. Each country is unique and has unique attractions and it makes it more interesting to visit them all on a longer holidays because they are so close to each other. I think it would provide the region with that critical mass of attractions needed to attract tourists that come for longer stays (A12M).

Potential tourists, similar to actual tourists, see the three Baltic States as complementing each other well; the region would receive more attention and, thus, would come more strongly into the limelight of tourism through co-branding (P1M, P8F). Interviewees believe that it would strengthen the overall image; an important aspect since the Baltic States represents the region as a whole (P3M). The current image tourists have of the region might change but it would offer opportunities for communicating the individual countries more clearly and for removing existing inhibition levels (P4M, P5F).

It would overcome perceived barriers to visit these countries. It's true, it would relax me and the countries would become more approachable for me. The individual countries would play a subordinate role because I see these borders as artificial. I think these borders should not play a role in tourism. This feeling of

having to switch countries is always unpleasant and creates reluctance in people. Through co-branding they would in a way communicate that borders are open, that a transfer is easy, and people might be more inclined to travel there or visit for longer (P5F).

Further, potential tourists saw benefit in that the individual country images would be better positioned through co-branding, positively affecting awareness levels, the likelihood of making a travel decision, and interest in spending more time in each of the destinations (P8F, P10M, P11F).

It would be better to have an overall image through co-branding. I would feel addressed and I could imagine that I would then be more likely to respond to their message. It would provide reasons for visiting all three countries. Otherwise I would never think about visiting all three of them (P7F).

# 8.8 Co-branding of the Baltic States

## 8.8.1 Proposed communicated image of co-branded countries

Both groups of interviewees, actual and potential tourists, were also asked about their proposed communicated image of co-branded countries during the interview.

In line with earlier testimonies, actual tourists stressed the importance of showing similarities on an outer layer, as well as the diversity of the individual countries in a sublayer (A2F, A4M).

It has to communicate their overall universality, their overarching similarity, but it is simultaneously important to retain the unique character of each country. I could see two waves in marketing or branding: first, to create and strengthen the brand, meaning the Baltic States or whatever and second, to communicate and focus on the countries' differences. They need to create a story that communicates these differences but also communicates what they

have in common. With such an approach you can target different segments and it would also be interesting for the older and younger generation; for example the city atmosphere for the younger generation and Thomas Mann for the older. [...] However, similarities have to be communicated first to achieve this overarching umbrella effect (A4M).

Actual tourists mentioned that it is important when marketing the Baltic States to communicate their contrast rich atmosphere and environment that is common to all three of them to become attractive to different markets and tourist segments (A2F, A4M, A7M).

It is important to communicate the great diversity that all three countries have: that raw landscape and nature, beauty, history. I could imagine a strip of land with a rowboat on the sea, forest, morning atmosphere, nature, piece and quietness, but also the culture of the cities. I can imagine those small dreamy villages and also big cities with great culture, lifestyle, and nightlife such as Riga. Show the diversity on a small area. It touches different types of people (A7M).

Actual tourists cautioned that it might be convenient to portray the similarities between the three countries. Nevertheless, a careful approach to market the differences was recommended to represent the three countries equally well (A11M).

They have so many commonalities with the Baltic Sea, their traditions, the Hanseatic League influence, and a beautiful landscape. However, it is important to be careful with differences so they are equally represented and equally attractive. If you market Tallinn as the window to the world and Lithuania as the religious part it's not necessarily positive (A11M).

Actual tourists emphasised the need to stress the importance of the three capital cities in any co-branding effort, but also to portray the great diversity all three countries have to offer (A2F, A3M, A6M). Actual tourists also emphasised the need to win the local population over to understand and support the need for a common marketing approach (A2F).

A lot of co-branding could be made through their capital cities since they are extremely different. They are an alternative to Scandinavia, small version of Scandinavia, pictures of Lahemaa National Park up to Lake Peipus, Finnish forests, seas, vodka, historical aspects, modern technology, mansions, architecture, living history, music and singing contests, art, young, ambitious and lively, modern and old, beautiful nature, just around the corner of Scandinavia, but cheaper. But regardless of how they do it, they have to get their people to adopt a mentality that they have common grounds, that they are in a way stapled together and want to become attractive for tourists as one region (A2F).

Similar to the testimonies of actual tourists, potential tourists proposed to focus on the great diversity between the three Baltic States to best communicate what the three countries are and what they have to offer in order to make them distinguishable for tourists (P1M, P4M, P5F, P7F, P9M, P13F).

It's about diversity, about contrasts in their nature, about outdoor, culture, and vibrant lifestyle in Riga on one side and, for example, romantic Hanseatic League architecture in Tallinn on the other. The contrasts make them sexy, interesting, and exciting (P7F).

Potential tourists, too, saw the need to possibly take a two-step approach to branding to equally represent the three Baltic States according to their individual strengths (P4M, P6M).

First, they need to raise awareness with a common image and in a second round, once the critical mass is reached, they have to work out their differences, much like Scandinavia does it (P4M).

Similar to actual tourists, potential tourists cautioned that a careful approach needs to be found that portrays a unique and diverse mix between modernity and nature, the beautiful countryside with the Baltic Sea, as well as modern cities with skyscrapers paired with old and diverse districts in the capital cities. At the same time one needs to be attentive to not patch diversity together so that it becomes unidentifiable (P10M, P11F).

These countries have their unique and attractive differences. Under no condition should it become a mishmash of all the same things. It has still has to communicate their diversity (P11F).

## 8.8.2 *Importance of countries' similarities*

In the last part of the interview, actual and potential tourists were asked what similarities of the three Baltic States they would emphasise in a potential co-branding approach.

Naturally, the testimonies of actual tourists were widespread. However, the common themes that emerged were the small and young countries in Northern Europe (A1F, A8M), a common history, old and modern aspects, the Baltic Sea, amber jewellery, Hanseatic League cities and modern development, culture and technology (A3M, A7M, A9M, A11M).

I see similarities in their traditions, their common history, culture, lifestyle, nature, warmth and friendliness of people, being proud of their independence. These three countries are one. With the term 'Baltic' people have associations, at least they know where it is. They could even market themselves as the amber region (A7M).

Actual tourists emphasised connecting elements and similarities such as the friendliness and openness the local population, their care for traditions as well as the purity of the nature and atmosphere as well as similarities in the landscapes (A9M, A10F, A12M).

For marketing, I would use those choirs and this urge for singing across generations. Perhaps also those small children with flower braids in their hair, the unbelievably beautiful nature, the mystical Baltic Sea, the fields and the wideness of the landscape (A2F).

Based on the absence of personal travel experience, potential tourists' testimonies on proposed similarities for co-branding were less comprehensive, less explicit, and focused more on capital cities. Potential tourists recommended portraying similarities in terms of the countries' culture, their closeness to the Baltic Sea, the nature, the friendliness and openness of the local population, a young urban development and the fact that the three Baltic states historically are one region (P2M, P5F, P7F, P8F, P10M, P12F).

I would see similarities pertaining to the charisma of the three capital cities, their historic ports, modern bars, cafes, their city flair and nightlife, but also commonalities in terms of being Hanseatic League cities, being close to the Baltic Sea, and a culturally rich region (P2M).

# 8.8.3 Importance of countries' differences

When asked what image differences they would emphasise in terms of a cobranding approach, actual tourists stressed that it is important that differences between the countries are communicated to be, and to remain, interesting. In the opinion of actual tourists, it is essential to clearly state which country represents what. Differences between the three Baltic States need to be made very clear even when there are similarities among them so that the countries are being equally represented (A1F, A5M).

Differences have to be more strongly communicated than similarities. Lithuania with their affinity towards religion is very different than the other two countries and Tallinn appears to be more the window to the world with its openness. These differences make it interesting to visit all three of them to be able to compare and contrast (A11M).

In their testimonies, actual tourists argued that even though the very different architecture of the capital cities in each of the three countries would be a differentiating

factor, with Tallinn having a medieval historic district, Riga a Jugendstil/Art Nouveau ensemble, and Vilnius Baroque architecture (A4M, A6M, A7M, A10F, A12M), they still appear to show great, yet more hidden similarities.

Riga is the Baltic metropolis with vibrant lifestyle, restaurants, bars, and café terraces. Tallinn has this medieval charm and Vilnius is the city with 150 churches and cathedrals (A8M).

However, actual tourists also recommended differentiating them according to the different auras or personalities they possess; Riga being very vibrant, Tallinn more romantic and dreamy and Vilnius being religious (A6M, A7M, A9M).

I believe under the surface the capital cities are too similar to only differentiate them by their apparent differences such as architecture for example. You need to include their personality to be able to differentiate them (A9M).

In fact, actual tourists are able to list differences regarding image and personality between the three countries, yet clearly rely upon the personality construct when specifically asked about differences among them. This is not the case for potential tourists, as they lack travel experience and consequently detailed information pertaining to the personality of each country.

Actual tourists argued that each of the three countries has unique aspects that make them interesting per se, but even more so in combination with each other. Estonia stands out with its medieval charm, but more importantly with its rough and diverse nature (A1F, A2F, A5M). The beautifully gentle and generally more rural Latvia impresses with its German-Baltic history and a very Hanseatic capital Riga (A2F, A5M, A8M). Lithuania, on the other hand, is more different than expected in that is it unique with the Curonian Spit/Lagoon, is not pushy, but spectacularly religious (A2F, A5M, A8M).

Estonia is nature [...] in Latvia is Riga and I think Riga is fascinating [...] and Lithuania is the religious one (A1F).

Due to not having had the travel experience of visiting the Baltic States, potential tourists were not able to clearly provide any recommendations pertaining to differences they would portray in a potential co-branding approach to marketing these destinations. They argued for the necessity to communicate differences when marketing all three countries together, but were not sure what these could be (P1M).

Within their limited testimonies, they focused on the three capital cities, and their individual history and culture as differentiating factors (P7F, P8F, P12F).

I would perhaps emphasise Riga with its vibrant lifestyle. On the other hand you would stress a more romantic Tallinn, and a quiet Vilnius (P7F).

# 8.9 Summary

The testimonies from interviews with both actual and potential tourists show that the term 'Baltic States' is perceived to a greater extent as a geopolitical term and to a lesser extent resonates with tourists in the context of tourism. Part of the reason is that the term does not convey any emotions. In addition, the term does not provide the tourist with any information, or create certain expectations on the side of the tourist. When tourists were asked to provide a slogan or tag line for the entire Baltic States region, emotional aspects and personality components were emphasised. Interviewees from both groups suggested that the individual states are not well represented in the countries' marketing efforts, leading to undesirably unclear image perceptions among tourists. Co-branding as a marketing strategy, that potentially could address these aspects, was seen as beneficial

among actual and potential tourists in that it could increase the visibility of the individual states, and also the competitiveness of the entire region in the international tourism market. The influence a co-branding strategy might have on the individual countries' images was seen as positive, as long as the aim of co-branding was not to assimilate the destinations but to emphasise their similarities and differences to create awareness, visibility and interest among tourists. Actual and potential tourists' testimonies suggested that special emphasis needs to be placed on portraying the diversity that can be experienced within the three Baltic States; simultaneously the similarities that tourists also need to make a travel decision and which could encourage tourists to stay longer in the region. Suggestions were made by both groups of interviewees pertaining to a potential image they would perceive as relevant for a co-branding approach. Besides the capital cities and other key attractions in each of the destinations, personality factors were seen as highly important.

It is significant that actual and potential tourists stress the importance of portraying similarities as part of a 'first wave' and the overall concept, as well as differences, in a 'second wave'. However, previous chapters on image and personality results have shown that both groups of tourists identify more similarities than differences pertaining to destination image. Differences are for tourists more clearly observable in the personality of the three countries. Even in Section 8.8.3 of this chapter (Proposed Communicated image – differences) tourists are unable to express them, yet they mention that they need to be communicated.

## **CHAPTER IX: DISCUSSION**

## 9.1 Introduction

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 reported the analysed primary data pertaining to tourist perceptions of Baltic States' destination personality and image, as well as their perceptions of a co-branding marketing approach for the region. Perceptions of actual and potential tourists were captured as they related to each of the three Baltic States. The present chapter develops the analysis of the data further by synthesising the chapters through a discussion of the primary research in which the results are linked to secondary research as provided in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The discussion of primary and secondary research consequently leads to the development of a model of image and personality perceptions of the Baltic States. This model is based on the findings about co-branding perceptions and preferences as related to the Baltic States and serves as a basis for a co-branding approach of the three Baltic States

In Chapter 3, contemporary, as well as seminal, literature about the concepts of image and personality in marketing has been reviewed. Particular attention was given to the concepts of destination image and destination personality, as they generally relate to the marketing of tourism destinations. This chapter commences with a discussion on how both concepts and their role in destination marketing are reflected in the findings. Subsequently, how the primary data is linked to concepts of branding from the general marketing literature is discussed, and how it is reflected in modern destination branding concepts. Ultimately, the co-branding model, based on the perceived image and personality of the Baltic States (Figure 9.1 and Appendix U) and how it informs a co-branding strategy of the Baltic States is developed and discussed.

## 9.2 Current marketing situation of the Baltic States

Businesses generally try to establish long-lasting emotional ties between brands and the consumer (Fournier, 1998). However, it is crucial to be able to differentiate between potential tourists, who do not have emotional ties prior to their visit of a destination (mainly because they lack that personal travel experience, but also perceive the marketing of the destinations and the term 'Baltic States' as not conveying any emotions) and actual tourists on the other hand. The latter simply classify destinations as their favourites based on more emotional aspects they were exposed to. This change of the perspective is not necessarily due to experiencing the hard factors of a destination (e.g., attractions, infrastructure, etc.) but soft ones, such as the personality of the Baltic States, leading to a desired emotional attachment.

Currently, the issue for the Baltic States is an unclear image of the region, as well as for the individual countries. The image perceptions are, for the potential target market, often blurred, informed with prejudice, and potential tourists frequently referred to a blank or white spot on the map in their testimonies. Therefore a lack of interest and motivation to visit the destinations is currently present among the target market. In order to achieve a positive financial performance, it is essential to develop strong and differentiated brands, as well as ties and relationships with the consumer to ultimately result in increased consumer loyalty (Geuens et al., 2009; Malär et al., 2011; Park et al., 1986; Park et al., 2010). The Baltic States need to provide a clearer and more differentiated image perception of the region and individual countries, prior to visit. The communication and marketing about their image needs to be improved to overcome the existing prejudiced lack of knowledge about the region causing the target market to not prioritise a visit to the Baltic States or even prevents them from traveling into the region at all.

Currently, an emotional connection to the three countries and ability to differentiate them is based on a personal travel experience to the region. This suggests that the current marketing is misleading and insufficiently informs potential and actual tourists about similarities and differences between the Baltic States, as well as the distinctiveness of each country and the region. In view of the results of the primary data collection, the insufficient information available to potential but also actual tourists does not permit them to adequately evaluate the products and services these countries have to offer. It similarly does not help the individual countries' destination marketing organisations to brand their individual country or region, or to differentiate it from one another. The current situation does not allow for an intelligent branding and differentiation strategy to facilitate evaluative processes of consumers pertaining to product and services and consequently influencing their decision making process (Aggarwal, 2004; Nandan, 2005).

Brands provide a visible representation of difference between competing products (Nandan, 2005). This is especially important, as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are perceived as one geopolitical region rather than three independent and distinct countries. This suggests that current branding and marketing efforts do not necessarily resonate with tourists. Thus, the individual branding efforts undertaken by all three countries, in order to provide a visible representation of difference between the three countries as competing products, appear to have limited effects (Nandan, 2005). Marketing and brand communication of the Baltic States does not help improve recall of their characteristics for any of the countries or only to an extent that does not permit them to clearly differentiate the Baltic States. Tourists are only able to very clearly differentiate the countries due to their personal travel experience. This represents a potential problem for marketers of the Baltic States as personal travel experience is necessary to be able to assess and reflect on the countries' similarities, differences, image perceptions, and personality and view the

region in a positive way. This makes the barrier for the potential target market to select the countries as a holiday destination more difficult to overcome. However, the Baltic States seem to be a special case in that regard, as they are perceived as very similar, often simple on the surface but very different, complex, and multi-layered but complementing underneath.

Destination image and personality of the Baltic States play a decisive role as influencers on consumer behaviour and purchase intention (Geuens et al., 2009; Hosany et al., 2006, 2007; Keller, 1993; Plummer, 1985; Tasci et al., 2007a). Both concepts are most relevant for the Baltic States as they impact on loyalty between tourists and destinations and position these countries differently in the mindset of the consumer (Geuens et al., 2009).

## 9.3 Image of the Baltic States

Large numbers of tourists have distorted image perceptions about the Baltic States region as well as the individual countries. Their image associations are often blurred, mixed with prejudice, superficial, or shallow. This poses problems for the countries due to the lack of tourist interest grounded in the poor image of the countries especially for the potential target market. Such negative associations are undesirable for any country, but especially the countries which are perceived positively and favourably when tourists have personal experience of visiting. Even though projected and received images can theoretically be different, the congruence between the two images is believed to determine the success or failure of particular marketing approaches (cf. Tasci et al., 2007a; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Since the objective of tourism marketing and destination branding is not just to encourage repeat visits but also to generate or pull new, possibly younger tourists into the destinations, the disconnection between projected and received image appears to be

problematic.

Destination image is a perception of individuals or groups of people as consumers, which is reflected by the sum of brand or destination associations (e.g. objective knowledge, thoughts, feelings, prejudice, expectations, imaginations, beliefs, ideas and impressions) held in their memory (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977; Crompton, 1979; American Marketing Association, 2013). As such, image is a subjective concept (Bigné et al., 2001; Gallarza et al., 2002; Leisen, 2001), and simply reflects what the consumer or tourist associates with a destination, regardless of how much or little is based on reality. While actual tourists' testimonies have a clearer, more differentiated, mostly positive and often romantically distorted image, the image of potential tourists is a vague and undifferentiated one, an often negative and prejudiced image, that concentrates on images and knowledge they have of the countries' capital cities. The potential target market focuses on similarities of the three countries, and the connectedness between them, as they are unable to differentiate them due to the vaguely communicated image from DMOs; testimonies do not reflect profound and comprehensive image associations of the Baltic States and illustrate a greater perceived conformity. However, this perceived conformity between the three Baltic States leads to a dilemma for the three competing destinations in that their individual tourism products, services, and facilities are not being regarded as differentiating factors (Elliot et al., 2010). Instead, the three destinations are continuously being seen as one region promoting unclear image perceptions, stereotypes, and prejudice, which may deter potential tourists from making a travel decision and actual tourists from revisiting. Potential tourists may be deterred entirely to visit the region. Actual tourists, on the other hand, might be negatively influenced or could argue that once they have visited one country, they do not see a need to visit the other two. In consequence, the need to develop a unique image and personality, a niche that differentiates one destination from

another, is crucial for the Baltic States (Morgan et al., 2002). In the case of the Baltic States, a clear and differentiated destination image is essential as an important factor on pre-, during-, and post-visit behaviour (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Lee et al., 2005), in that it influences the choice of destinations tourists make, their evaluations during their visit, as well as future intentions to revisit or recommend a destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Respective images of the Baltic States serve as a predictor for travel behaviour (cf. Hunt, 1975), as influencing factors on travel choice (cf. Pearce, 1982), as well as on effects of positive place image (cf. Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). When a positive image is formed, regardless of whether through secondary sources or personal experience, an increase in interest to (re)visit a selected or all of the destinations is obervable.

## 9.3.1 Formation of destination image

Even before tourists visit a destination, they already create a certain image, perceptions, and expectations about that destination, which is based on what they believe, what they might have heard, and what their previous experience is (Buhalis, 2000). Often negative image associations with the Baltic States is influenced by prejudice, stereotyping, and in some cases informed by previous travel experiences in Eastern European countries or Russia, and this association is not desirable for the Baltic States, in fact it is their aim to *not* get associated too much with their former occupant. It is the richness and character of information sources a tourist uses that impacts on the perceptions and cognitions of destination attributes, which eventually forms feelings such as pleasure or excitement towards a destination (Walmsley & Young, 1998) and thus, creates an overall image of that destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). While first hand travel experience to the destinations typically results in a positive image of the region, as well as individual states,

the lack of information sources that proactively try to market the destinations towards tourists is worrisome. Reliance on secondary sources (e.g., news, friends, magazines, etc.) in building their overall image can be problematic when information on destination image stems solely from non-touristic and non-commercial sources such as exposure to news/TV reports, movies, books or magazine articles, education or opinion of others, such as friends or family that a consumer comes into contact with (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Such non-touristic or non-commercial information such as news or television reports, movies, and the opinion of friends or relatives are currently the most often relied upon sources for destination image, while information from advertisements, travel guides, posters, travel agents, and alike (induced image sources) are present to a lesser extent. Commercials, advertisements, an attention attracting web presence, and similar deliberately placed information through tourism channels are either not noticed or do not have a lasting or sustainable effect. Thus, in the case of the Baltic States, organic and induced information sources are limited, leading to insufficient and inadequate image perceptions of potential tourists, an aspect that actual tourists are able to compensate for and if necessary adjust to, due to their personal travel experience. Image perception changes significantly and almost always positively once the three countries are visited. This suggests that a complex image of the Baltic States is formed through a consumer's actual visit and experience (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

An overall image of a destination in the perception of the tourist is formed by the interplay between a cognitive and affective evaluation of that destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994; Tasci et al., 2007a), with images created through actual visit being closer to reality, more qualified, more comprehensive and less stereotyped than those prior to a personal visit (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1989). This is problematic regarding the potential target market as it clearly shows a reluctance to travel

to the Baltic States, often linked to the perception of being too Russian influenced, economically weak, too similar, and generally unattractive due to missing attractions. Lack of interest, mainly for the lack of exposure and better knowledge is counterbalanced by detailed, specific, sentimental and corny, sometimes romanticised and glorified portrayals of the three countries by those having experienced the region. Destination image perceptions of potential, actual, and repeat visitors can differ significantly (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991), which can be attributed to induced image components that potential tourists have as opposed to actual tourists, who are able to compare and contrast these image components with their personal travel experience. A direct and personal destination experience leads to more favourable perceptions of destinations than those of non-visitors (i.e. potential tourists) (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Leisen, 2001). The Baltic States, as a tourism destination, are not on the priority list of potential tourists, however, such initial reluctance or hesitation to visit the Baltic States would change significantly once the potential target market overcomes the hurdle consisting of stereotypes and negative image perceptions and actually visited the three countries. Visitors experience an inner transformation from viewing the three countries as unappealing prior to their visit to hidden gems or treasures with intention to return once the countries are experienced personally.

## 9.3.2 Components of destination image

Information is processed in two basic modes; discursive processing (cognitive/attribute based, abstract, and symbolic) and imagery processing (multi or single-sensory, memories, feelings, affective, and holistic) (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Information derived from secondary information sources reflects a perception of the Baltic States that is more abstract and focuses on attributes or symbols (e.g., medieval castles, Art Nouveau

architecture, Curonian Spit, etc.). On the contrary, the personal visit is likely to equip tourists with a much more in-depth understanding and travel experience that includes cultural components, emotional snapshots, or sensory experiences (e.g., smell, taste, sight, etc.) and, thus, provides a significantly more qualitative, meaningful, and comprehensive perception of destination image.

Similarly, this thesis shows that inclusion of rational and emotional components in destination image varies; referal to emotional image components is less frequent when image is built without a personal travel experience to the destination. This is important as Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) suggest that all image components are closely interconnected and in sum constitute the overall image of a destination, which again influences the future behaviour of the consumer. Difficulties to link emotional image components to the destinations suggest a lack of a complete image of the destination, leading to an inability to make a travel decision or to a manifestation of their reluctance to consider these destinations in future travel plans. This notion is critical as affective image components might more significantly influence overall image perceptions a consumer has of a destination prior to visiting it and cognitive image may then be more influential when a visit has taken place (Qu et al., 2011). However, this would suggest that potential tourists, whose image associations are blurred prior to visit, rely more on affective image components, whereas actual tourists rely more on cognitive image components in their assessments. In the case of the Baltic States, such a relation has not been observed. Potential tourists seem to process information more rationally and cognitively, while actual tourists show greater emotional affective attachment.

Further, the image of a destination can be assessed with a combination of functional characteristics (e.g., infrastructure, accommodation, climate, price levels, etc.) (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Associations with the individual destinations that are comprised

of unique functional features (e.g., free public transport in Riga, etc.), special events (e.g., singing festivals, etc.), iconic landmarks (e.g., Hills of Crosses in Lithuania, etc.), and special auras (e.g., a romantic and pristine landscape like that in the children's book "Six Bullerby Children") are likely to connect tourists to a destination on an emotional level and are able to influence repeat visit. Further, they are a means to differentiate the three Baltic States from one another; an important aspect for countries that appear to be similar on the surface, but are perceived as destinations that are very different beneath their functional and visible characteristics.

However, it is not only critical for the Baltic States to be visible with their unique features and differences to prevail on the international tourism market and to be chosen as the preferred travel destination out of a list of alternatives; it is also essential to illustrate these differences towards potential tourists interested in the region to provide them with reference points that reflect the diversity of experiences they can make when visiting all three countries (Qu et al., 2011). Namely, it is the unique images that often provide useful reference points to circumscribe and define destinations in the minds of the targeted consumer (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

All three Baltic States are still at a developmental stage with regards to tourism, due to the political transformation having taken place in the Baltic States in the past 20 years, which has led to unclear images in the minds of the consumer (Clottey & Lennon, 2003; Park, 2009). The struggle to build their own national image with the objective to differentiate themselves from each other has not been highly successful in the past and instead has sent mixed and confusing messages, leading to an unclear image in the minds of the consumer (Park, 2009).

## 9.4 Personality of the Baltic States

Brand personality is a means to differentiate products (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, 1997). In accepting the validity of this notion for tourism products, destinations as composite tourism products can be more easily differentiated using brand or destination personality. Destination personality as "the set of human characteristics [or personality traits] associated with a destination as perceived from a tourist rather than a local resident viewpoint" (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006, p.128) is of central importance regarding differentiation of the Baltic States. Related to the previously discussed notion of travel experience relevance in creation of a complete image, it is not surprising that the potential target market only has very vague ideas of the region's personality characteristics and tends to characterise the entire region as an overall colder person. The difficulty in recognizing the distinctness of each individual country is linked to reliance on known stereotypes and prejudices, or diversion to better known countries in that area (e.g., Scandinavian countries, Russia) and application of neighbouring countries' characteristics to the Baltic region. This results in increased negative feelings of distance and reluctance to visit the individual countries. By contrast, when destination personality of the countries individually, as well as the region, is obtained, it demonstrates itself in a greater appreciation for the region's diversity, its authenticity and uniqueness.

While nearly automatic reflection of each country in human characteristics is valuable, it might not necessarily reflect the character traits local residents would attribute to themselves. At times it can represent a purer and more genuine account of destination personality, that is noise free of destination marketing and thus more authentic. Such authentic human personality traits or characteristics are important factors in the decision making process for tourists as they strongly influence our curiosity and interest in a

destination but are likely to determine tourists' travel behaviour (e.g., independent or group travel, travel arrangements, etc.). Additionally, in the perception of the consumer, the countries may be quite similar on the surface, but are quite different underneath. This is important for emotional connection of tourists to a destination as it provides the consumer with more concrete, descriptive, vibrant and comprehensive information than that communicated by the abstract product itself (Landon, 1974; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). It allows tourists to assess and evaluate the fit or match between the personality of a destination and a tourist's self-image or ideal self-image, ultimately influencing purchase intention (O'Cass & Lim, 2001). Destination personality descriptions are more comprehensive, detailed, and emotionally charged and provide a very vivid but accurate account of associations that tourists have with a destination (e.g., Siguaw et al., 1999). The concept of destination personality is much more profound by comparison to image descriptions as it touches on character, atmosphere, culture, and is thus the soul of a destination. In today's international tourism landscape in which destinations increasingly become interchangeable, since functional features are often similar, destination personality can potentially tip the scales when tourists decide whether to visit a destination or continue looking for alternatives.

Visitors to destinations of interest are typically able to distinguish personalities of these destinations even when marketed together as one region (Murphy et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2007a). Prior to a visit, tourists perceive the Baltic States as one region and do not differentiate the individual countries. Importantly, a clear differentiation between the Baltic States is observed and communicated through the personalities of each destination after a personal experience in the region. However, specific to the Baltic States is the unique mix of personalities, which should be marketed together. This makes sense when individual states or regions are too small to market themselves individually (e.g.,

Hall et al. 2006). The pooling of resources seems to be beneficial to gain better exposure on the international tourism market. At the same time destination personality can be the differentiating factor to allow tourists to see the three destinations as individual countries.

It can be difficult for consumers to obtain non-physical information aspects about a product since consumers are not able to apply all their senses (e.g., taste, haptic, sound, scent) (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). However, those non-physical aspects, in addition to the physical ones, are important to obtain an accurate and comprehensive set of information that shapes or reshapes the perceptions of consumers about that product. This results in the inability of non-visitors to immerse into the personality of the three destinations to the same extent that actual tourists can due to their personal travel experience. Actual tourists are able to provide an in-depth description of sensory information they connect with each of the destinations (e.g., religious and charming in Lithuania; contrast of 'posh and poor' in Latvia; Nordic and rugged in Estonia; silence in all three, etc.). By relying on those perceptions actual tourists change their assessment of the three countries, away from destinations that were formerly seen as one region, presumably as very similar countries and Russian influenced, towards appraising the Baltic States as very authentic and diverse destinations with common features, but sharp contrasts. This re-evaluation caused actual tourists to become more interested in the destinations and strongly influenced repeat visit among actual tourists. Potential tourists, lacking that information, need to rely on secondary sources, images, and often prejudices preventing them from working up curiosity about these destinations.

## 9.4.1 Importance of personality for evaluation of a destination

In situations where consumers do not have experience with a product, the time or ability to assess intrinsic attributes of a product, the consumer tends to resort to brand personality information as a substitute (Zeithaml, 1988; Freling & Forbes, 2005a). Brand personality influences the perception of consumers in situations where the evaluation of intrinsic product attributes is difficult, too similar between products or simply not possible at all (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). In these instances, brand personality can serve as the differentiator between brands that may or may not be in competition with each other. Similarly, tourists rely on brand or destination personality information about each destination in order to evaluate them, form their perceptions about them, and to be able to make a purchasing decision (i.e., decision to revisit). This allows them to differentiate the three countries that from a destination perspective are trying to prevail on the international tourism market, but are also in competition with each other. Potential tourists do not have this previous travel experience and are not able to ascribe certain personalities to the destinations, especially when looking at destinations that are not yet developed as a known brand in the mind of the consumer or tourist.

Additionally, there seems to be a clear distinction between the personality of consumer product and destination personality consisting mainly of services that are intangible by nature. In these situations potential tourists try to resort to destination personality but revert to known stereotypes and prejudices to differentiate one destination from another. However, with this limited information, a clear differentiation is not possible for potential tourists. By comparison to actual tourists, potential tourists thus provide a blend of personality descriptions they relate to all three countries as one destination.

A positive brand personality tends to positively influence a consumer's overall brand evaluation and product associations, which can be a differentiating factor when compared to other brands and products (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). While a positive destination personality among actual tourists causes an almost glorified overall assessment of the respective country, stereotypes and prejudice manifests itself among potential

tourists for the respective countries. Additionally, a positive destination personality perception leads to a positive overall assessment of the region and vice versa. This means that in this particular region, the tourists' perception of one country rubs off on the other neighbours and negative aspects are dismissed, similar to observations in the consumer goods sector (Park & John, 2010). However, this also means that potential tourists that do not have a personal experience in those destinations and who are reluctant to visit one country, applied the same hesitation to the other two countries.

Personality and a personification of brands (i.e., brand personality, brand character) might serve as a metaphor for understanding consumer's perceptions of the concept of brand image (Caprara et al., 2001). While it seems possible to describe destinations applying human personalities characteristics, it is unlikely that it is suitable to fully describe a destination brand. Nevertheless, this also shows the importance of brand / destination personality within the personality-image construct. In the case of the Baltic States, the personality of the destination seems to be an essential part or contribution to decision making processes. Once exposed to the destinations, the personality associated with a destination influences tourists' likelihood to revisit; it also seems to provide a possible reason for the tendency among potential tourists to be reluctant to travel to the Baltic States due to that missing exposure. Destination personality is an integral element in decision-making processes, since personality helps tourists to establish a connection between themselves and a destination so that they are able to relate to it. Personality characteristics allow tourists to experience a destination on a much deeper level than it would otherwise be superficially possible.

Brand personality influences brand preference and ultimately the purchase intention (O'Cass & Lim, 2001). When destination personality can be determined, it allows for a differentiation between the three countries and results not only in increased (re)visit intentions but also in emergence of one or two favoured destinations. Nevertheless, the intention to (re)visit the Baltic States almost never excluded a particular country, meaning that the three destinations were somewhat perceived as belonging together regarding a travel itinerary. Contrary to this, the lack of a personal travel experience and missing information on destination personality results in the lack of a particular preference leading to the conclusion that image alone is insufficient in assessing a destination. At the same time, missing proactive marketing of the three destinations and particularly the marketing of the destinations' personality has been criticised. This is important as a well-established brand personality is likely to lead to an increased brand preference patronage, deeper emotional ties with the brand, trust, as well as loyalty (Murase & Bojanic, 2004). Critical in developing durable destination brands is an identification of the values of a brand, the translation of those into a suitable and emotionally appealing personality as well as a targeted and efficient delivery of that message towards the tourist (Morgan et al., 2003).

Even though actual tourists have a good sense of the individual destination personality of the three destinations, concerted action in terms of a proactive brand management that incudes an emotionally appealing personality was not detected prior to the travel experience and within each of the destinations during the actual tourists' stay. For potential tourists these aspects were entirely missing, not sensible, or visible and thus potentially and partially causing their reluctance to consider the Baltics States as

interesting destination; actual tourists criticised the lack of such brand management prior to their travel experience as it negatively impacted information search and as negatively influencing their likelihood to return. This is important as a distinctive brand personality potentially facilitates the creation of unique and favourable associations in the mind of the consumer, it helps identify competing destinations and potentially motivates for tourist arrivals (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007). This suggests that the more specific perceptions of interviewees about destination personality were, the more affinity tourists have to visit or revisit that destination. The potential target market, on the other hand, is vocal in that if they had the knowledge about the distinct personalities of the individual states were, they might be more willing to consider and visit the destination and to eliminate prejudice. Thus, a transparent destination personality potentially can pull down existing barriers by overcoming negative images tourists have but can also increase regular visit among tourists who have already been there.

# 9.5 Role of destination image and personality for a co-branding strategy

In the current understanding of marketing, tourists and tourism providers are considered to be co-creators of value and experience products (Li & Petrick, 2008). The Baltic States are perceived as special and different from many other destinations in terms of being a destination one needs to embark on. It is a destination one needs to be willing to conquer. However, the potential target market associates the countries as destinations mainly for educational travel; they do not connect them with other forms of tourism even though the countries offer great diversity and try to cater for all tastes. At first glance, the destinations do not captivate through obvious beauty, sightseeing, entertainment. One needs to engage with the country, its culture and its people in order to fall in love with it. Thus, tourists understand themselves as co-creators.

A more dynamic and holistic way of thinking in marketing comes along with a shift from local and regional scales towards a more global thinking (Li & Petrick, 2008). If tourists are seen as co-creators of value, competing businesses might as well be potential partners (Li & Petrick, 2008). Each of the three countries engage in individual marketing activities and appear to be in competition with each other, instead of working together. However, tourists (potential and actual) would find the region more interesting if the countries communicated their commonalities and differences together and more clearly to the market. The countries would appear to be larger and would be perceived to offer more in terms of tourism services. Such collaboration is beneficial for the region as it is likely to increase market share for international tourism and become competitive against other destinations that currently seem more popular to travel to.

## 9.5.1 The role of branding in marketing

It is generally true that the perception a person holds of a brand strongly depends on interaction that person has with the brand, which leads to the perception (i.e., brand perception) that affects consumer behaviour and eventually business performance (Landor Associates, 2010). By implication, however, this also means that brand perception is affected by experiences consumers (or tourists) have with products and services, which often starts with a simple brand idea (Landor Associates, 2010). The negative perception some (potential) tourists have of the Baltic States region or the individual countries results from such a missing interaction between the respective destination brands (whether on country or regional level) and the tourist. This missing interaction leads to negative or indifferent perceptions, a lack of interest among tourists, and may ultimately influence tourists to an extent where the destination is excluded from the decision making process and is not visited. The invisibility of information about the Baltic States as a brand causes

After having had experiences with the destinations, negative perceptions about the Baltic States tend to disappear. Instead, extremely positive attitudes towards the respective destination or brand are generated, regardless how distinct these came across. This shows the importance of providing marketing cues for tourists to enable them to interact with and experience destination brands prior to a visit (Gartner, 1989; Reisinger, 2001).

It is important to realise how consumers experience brands today; among other constructs this is reflected in brand personality (Brakus et al., 2009). It is insufficient today to market destinations with nice images only. Images are interchangeable and tourists need cues on rational but more importantly also emotional levels to be able to make an educated travel decision (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The educated and often demanding tourist today is interested in getting a feeling for a destination ideally prior to a visit. Thus, brand/destination personality is seen as a means to get information across that allows tourists to experience a destination or make an assessment about the affective components of a destination prior to a visit, which is likely to affect their purchase intentions (Sirgy, 1982, Zeithaml, 1988). Currently, tourists have no (or insufficient) associations with the destinations or region as a whole prior to visiting the Baltic States. To be able to make educated travel decisions such cues are important for potential tourist as well as for actual tourists. After having had personal travel experience with a destination, post-marketing upon a tourist's return is similarly important as it influences repeat visit.

Brands may be created and designed in marketing but it is essentially the environment and contact points between a product or service and the consumer that determines how a brand is perceived and what associations the consumer connects with it (Landor Associates, 2010). Thus, branding as a marketing strategy may not be able to control consumer perception but it can potentially influence it by pointing towards cues or

signals the consumer can pick up to create associations, which then tells the consumer what a service or product stands for (Landor Associates, 2010). Eventually, these cues, signals, and associations help the consumer to make an educated decision on why one product or service should be selected over another (Landor Associates, 2010). The problem for the Baltic States is that for potential tourists the term 'Baltic States' is a stronger representation than the individual countries even though it is an unemotional and empty term that does not evoke too many associations or attachment and at best describes a geopolitical region where any associations in form of individuality, originality, and uniqueness are gone. On the other hand, for actual tourists, the term 'Baltic States' seems to blanket or cover the three individual countries and their respective uniqueness and richness in terms of tourist potential that are perceived as very interesting in combination.

Currently, the consumer does not receive too many insightful cues or identity signals from the Baltic States as most potential tourists refer to the entire region as the famous blank spot on the map and thus lack associations or perceptions. This suggests that a destination brand – whether for the region or the individual destinations – is currently not sufficiently developed or does not reach the consumer (i.e., tourist). Problematic is the fact that neither actual nor potential tourists are certain whether the countries market themselves individually or as a unit. A clearly developed brand is central for a consumer as it communicates identity of the product, service or a destination (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Currently, the term 'Baltic States' as a brand does not convey any emotions, does not attract tourists, does not raise interest and curiosity as is clearly demonstrated in the proposed slogans interviewees provided. Tourists need a marketing approach that connects the three destinations in order to make them more visible but also to show and communicate the uniqueness and differences to create interest, such as contrasts and affective components. Currently a labelling of the three destinations on the side of the

consumer is not possible since relevant cues are missing. However, these labels seem to help tourists in deciding whether they can categorise the region (or individual destinations) for certain forms or types of holidays (e.g., beach holidays, educational holidays, activity holidays, city tours, round trips, etc.). Additionally, these labels help to eliminate or reduce barriers that currently exist to develop the three countries into more popular travel destinations for a wider audience.

# 9.5.2 Brands in the mind of the consumer

When marketing destinations, regardless of their boundaries, branding needs to be understood as a two-way process in that it needs to be done together with the consumer as co-creator of experience products (cf. Li & Petrick, 2008) instead of to the consumer (Morgan et al., 2010). However, in the context of Baltic States destination marketing, defining boundaries seems to be of great importance for future success. Currently, for the potential target market, the three Baltic States are not perceived as separate destinations but as one due their inability to differentiate the countries as well as missing marketing or branding related cues coming from the individual destinations. The diversity and contrast of the three countries is only apparent after having had a personal travel experience. This shows that the Baltic States are perceived very differently between actual and potential tourists.

The evaluation of the current situation suggests that marketing efforts are either not reaching the consumer or branding is being done to the consumer instead of with the consumer, providing the consumer with information or cues that do not invoke a positive response or might even cause insecurity due to a very different view on the consumer end. Some of this insecurity and confusion may be due to unclear borders; differences in what the consumer sees as a boundary and what tourist marketers, governments, or stakeholders

want the consumer to consider as a border.

However, today tourists (and not necessarily tourism marketers) determine how a destination is to be defined in terms of geographical border (Morgan et al., 2010). The geographical boundaries of the Baltic States are not clear for the potential target market and great confusion exists in terms of associations with the individual destinations. Simultaneously, the boundaries tourists establish for their own purposes, may change over time or according to the specific interest of tourists (Morgan et al., 2010). However, for example, potential tourists only have vague associations with the Baltic States as one region and they are not able to pinpoint any associations with the countries or articulate expectations they have from visiting the individual countries. However, this may change over time as soon as the individual destinations become more popular.

Since consumer behaviour is constantly changing, it is essential to permanently develop and adapt to any of these changes (Morgan et al., 2010). A rich, and most importantly, a relevant personality should be key to branding destinations; a brand personality that permanently improves and progresses along with consumer behaviour changes, while the destination brand's core values remain constant (Morgan et al., 2010). Branding with a rich and relevant personality, adapted to current and changing tourist perceptions of both actual and potential tourists, may be beneficial for each individual destination of the Baltic States as well as the region as a whole. In this context, an overall destination brand for the entire region with core values might additionally be helpful especially for the potential target market to become curious and interested in the destinations.

## 9.5.3 Co-branding of Baltic States as a destination

It is unlikely that autonomous destination marketing or promotional efforts from individual stakeholders within a destination are productive in creating an integral or holistic image of destinations, let alone whether it allows a destination to sustainably advance long term (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Wang & Xiang, 2007). Even though tourists notice occasional, more isolated and individual efforts of companies or organisations to market their services (e.g., Baltic Sea Cruises, Tallink, etc.) they do not perceive a concerted marketing or branding of all three destinations or the region as a whole. However, despite the three Baltic States being individual and independent countries, this may be what many tourists are looking for and it may be advantageous for all three destinations to develop their tourism sector more sustainably and competitively. A common or holistic image or personality does not exist among tourists and has not been developed for the region and/or the individual countries, which may question the marketing strategy of the individual stakeholders.

This thesis suggests that even when a region is contrast rich it is advisable for small individual countries within that region to avoid building individual images and destination brands on their own. Actual tourists, too, perceived them as stronger together. Marketing the three countries together increases the competitiveness of the individual states. A joint marketing strategy is a win-win situation for all destinations and stakeholders involved given the special and unifying circumstances in the Baltic States (e.g., new and upcoming economies, shaken by the 2008 financial crisis, dissociation from Russia, accession to European Union and successively euro area, small and geographically confined countries, tourist perception as one destination, etc.).

Three areas in which a joint marketing approach may be beneficial have been

identified in the literature: "strategy realisation (i.e. increased product portfolio, higher competitiveness), organisational learning (i.e. knowledge destination organisational innovation), and social capital building (i.e. relationship building, etc.)" (Wang & Xiang, 2007, p.79). The individual countries are perceived as small and individually unattractive with limited tourist attractions. A joint marketing strategy might increase the service or product portfolio and lead to higher destination competitiveness on the international tourism market and the decision making process in particular. Countries that are otherwise in competition with each other might benefit in the tourism sector through knowledge transfer and innovation of products and services. This is an important aspect since many product and services either decay in the perception of the consumer or still have an Eastern bloc 'dust' to them. Joint marketing might be more effective to dispel prejudice or urge the destinations to improve. Lastly, the build-up of social capital or relationships within the destinations, but also between destinations and the consumer are reported to be of benefit. No destination today can be effective and prosperous without linked-up relationships between the various stakeholders and entities within a destination (Wang & Xiang, 2007). Since tourists have a general tendency to visit the entire region as opposed to individual countries along with a certain minimum stay, solid relationships between the destinations may also help to design and market combined tourist offerings.

Similar to Naipaul et al. (2009) who explored how smaller, adjacent destinations with a finite amount of tourism products and capabilities are nevertheless able to collaborate in aspects of marketing their destinations within a region, this thesis provides further insight into the possibility of extending collaboration strategies for a common goal between two or more destinations. A co-branding approach is seen as a great benefit as it would help increase the attractiveness of the Baltic States as a tourism destination and improve the visibility of all three countries on the international tourism market. Often

DMOs regard neighbouring destinations as rivals (Naipaul et al., 2009). This is an ideology that may not necessarily be beneficial, as an overly emphasised rivalry among destinations inside a larger region may unfavourably impact the overall capacity and efficiency of regional tourism development and improvement (Naipaul et al., 2009; Prideaux & Cooper, 2003). It can be obstructive to create such strong barriers among the countries, when in fact they could achieve more for tourism as well as for the overall political and economic development if they reappeared as a unit. This is especially true since tourists have that tendency to not travel to individual Baltic States, rather engage in round trips through all destinations. No negative effects of a co-branding approach are foreseen. The distinct national pride, egotistic marketing strategies, and each country's isolation from one another might in fact be hindering. The Baltic States would benefit from such an approach through synergies and accessing untapped potential that currently is not yet marketed properly and thus, creates a blank spot on the map and intra-regional competition where not necessary.

The value in forming partnerships lies in the improvement of product portfolio as well as cost reduction leading to an overall increased competitiveness, beneficial relationships and higher efficiency, also when looking at collaborative marketing arrangements of small neighbouring destinations with limited tourism products and resources on a regional level (Naipaul, et al., 2009). Through a co-branding approach to marketing the Baltic States would create synergies among the three countries. At the same time, it is crucial that each country is well represented in a collaborative marketing arrangement and should preserve its cultural uniqueness and individuality through a form of co-operation or marketing that does not attempt to mix or assimilate the countries' images.

The three Baltic States would not only be able to use synergy effects (e.g., sharing

costs) but would also look bigger through a common marketing approach; it would enable them to show more diversity of the individual states to tourists and thus make the three countries stronger by making a small area internationally more interesting in the perception of the consumer or tourists that would otherwise not consider this region for holidays. The effect of such a common marketing strategy for the consumer can be illuminative, as it would assist the Baltic States to present all three states in the proper light. This might increase the region's competitiveness in that the individual countries would no longer be associated with being isolated, small and individual states where travel among them is perceived to be difficult. The size of the countries would be enlarged in the mind of the consumer and three Baltic States might rather be seen as a region worthwhile visiting for a longer period of time during which more than one, if not all three countries, are visited. This assumption is justified with the general notion that tourists are typically trying to maximise their time, expenditures and other travel benefits by attempting to experience as many different destinations and compatible tourism products and services within a region rather than limiting themselves to just one destination or specific part of a region (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2003).

On a similar note, small destinations with finite tourist offerings benefit from collaborative marketing strategies in that they potentially strengthen a region's market attractiveness as soon as individual destinations target similar market segments or respectively provide complementary product and services and, thus, extend or diversify a region's product and service mix (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). This possibly changes behaviour or consumption patterns, may lead to increased consumer demand and eventually increased spending (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Naipaul et al., 2009). The benefit of the three countries marketing themselves as one region, to increase the competitiveness of the individual states and to satisfy tourists' demands, is demonstrated. While the three

Baltic States taken together are perceived as one region, they are highly diverse and contrast rich; they complement each other well, which makes the region an attractive destination. Collaborative marketing, thus, would increase the region's competitiveness in that the states would no longer be perceived as isolated, small and individual states where travel between the countries is difficult.

For countries that complement each other well, as the Baltic States do, a cobranding marketing approach would increase their tourism potential since the individual countries would be able to offer more to the consumer by appearing more attractive and much more diverse in terms of their tourist attractions, their cities, and nature. The region would ultimately receive more exposure, attention, and become more interesting in the mind of the consumer; it would be perceived as larger, with a more critical mass of attractions, and as having open borders. For tourists these are all aspects that make it easier and attractive to visit the Baltic States during one trip, leading to an increased desire to visit all three countries to experience their commonalities and differences actual tourists perceive as fascinating.

However, one challenge of destination marketing in this context is that destination image is one of the most critical aspects pertaining to the selection process of the consumer, irrelevant of whether the image the consumer or tourist has of the destination is true compared to what the destination is really like (Um & Crompton, 1990). The building of an image through co-operative marketing and branding could potentially build a much stronger destination image than an individual destination could have and this could possibly eventuate in stronger attribute-based brand associations, which may lead to an increased favourability of tourists toward a brand (Cai, 2002). Since the three Baltic States are already perceived to be related, similar, and connected through similar values, a similar cultural and natural environment, a co-branding approach would possibly show the

countries' actual differences and diversity of the region. This might help strengthen their image and increase awareness among potential tourists about the region. As long as all three countries are able to promote their tourist attractions evenly and diversely enough, the interest among tourists will increase and all three countries become more believable (e.g. open borders as part of co-branding) besides improving the pull factors that motivate people to travel to these destinations. At the same time it would reassure those tourists who advocate the preservation of contrasts and diversity that a common image may not mean an equalisation of the countries or blurring of images.

States' represents the region as a whole. The current image tourists have of the region might change but it would offer opportunities for communicating the individual countries more clearly as it might also be an instance for removing existing inhibition levels. The three countries' individual images would be better positioned through co-branding, positively affecting awareness levels, the likelihood to make a travel decision, and interest in spending more time in each of the destinations.

## 9.5.4 Model of co-branding for the Baltic States region

To date, only a limited amount of research has been conducted on co-operative marketing of small neighbouring destinations with a narrow scope of tourism products and resources and only limited knowledge is available on how tourism destinations are potentially able to co-operate or act jointly in promoting their destinations together (Naipaul et al., 2009). This thesis offers unique insights into a co-branding model among similar but simultaneously different countries in the form of the Baltic States.

Through a process of induction from primary data, a model of destination cobranding for the Baltic States has been developed (Figure 9.1). The model brings together

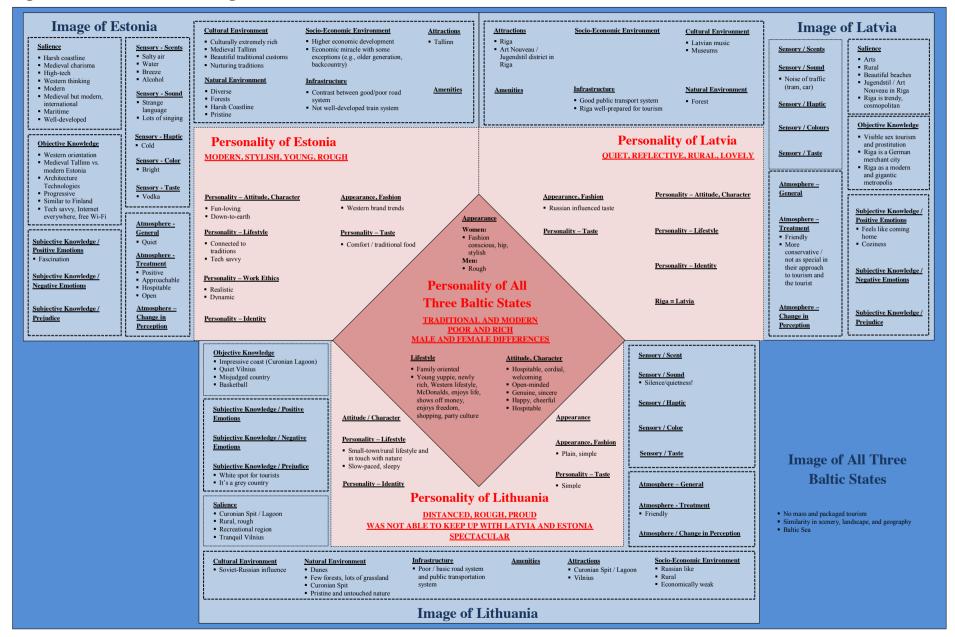
the seven sub-models (Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and Figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4) included in Chapters 6 and 7. To achieve Aim 4, the development of a co-branding model as presented in this thesis followed several stages. Initially, image and personality of each Baltic State separately, as well as a region as a whole, were analysed. This process revealed several categories and themes that were described for both groups of tourists (i.e., actual and potential) in Chapters 6 and 7. A comprehensive overview of each country's personality and image individually, as well as the intersection of personality and image characteristics have been subsequently demonstrated with visual representations presented in Chapters 6 and 7 (Aim 2). This allowed for a demonstration of a single and unified personality and image of actual and potential tourists for each country as well as the personality and image commonalities among them. A personality and image synthesis of both groups of tourists was important to receive a complete view of destinations. At the same time, graphical overviews portrayed an intersection of actual and potential tourits' views. These commonalities, together with major themes as they emerged from the analysis, further represent a foundation and parts of the final co-branding model (Appendix U) discussed in this chapter. Next, in the analysis of tourists' perception about co-branding of the Baltic States (Aim 3), the importance and desirability of such an approach was discovered. It has been disclosed that the region needs to communicate its differences more effectively otherwise it would be irrelevant if tourists visit Estonia, Lithuania, or Latvia. A balanced approach to communicating similarities and differences is necessary, while the importance is to show similarities on an outer layer, as well as the diversity of the individual countries in a sub-layer or inner layer.

In this context it is essential to communicate and market their contrast rich atmosphere and environment that is common to all three of them (i.e., raw landscape and nature, beauty, history, etc.). The Baltic States share many characteristics that could serve

as the first layer of a co-branding strategy: small and young countries in Northern Europe, a common history, old and modern aspects, the Baltic Sea, amber jewellery, Hanseatic League cities and modern development, culture and technology, friendliness and openness the local population, their care for traditions as well as the purity of the nature and atmosphere.

A final model simplifies and graphically represents a phenomenon of destination co-branding as informed by destination image and personality. The model presented in this chapter is a condensed version of the main themes that emerged from destination image and personality. It represents a 'common' image and personality between both groups of tourists. The large blue box represents the overall image of the Baltic region and an intersection of countries' image commonalities. The three light blue L and U-shaped boxes represent the unique image of each Baltic country. The light red boxes placed within the blue ones demonstrate each country's unique personality as part of their unique image. The model culmulates in a dark red box and displays an intersection of personality characteristics among the three countries. As such Figure 9.1 depicts the characteristics from each country's image and personality that can be used for the co-branding approach.

Figure 9.1. Reduced co-branding model of the Baltic States



While it might be convenient to portray the similarities between the three countries, a careful approach to market the differences was recommended to represent the three countries equally well. None of the countries should be underrepresented or represented as less appealing. Further, it is crucial to win the local population over in order to understand and support the need for a co-operative marketing approach. Although the communication of differences and similarities between the countries is essential for co-branding, this should only come as the second sub-layer once an umbrella brand of the Baltic States has been clearly established. Interestingly however, at that point in time the differences should be portrayed more strongly than similarities. Co-branding needs to portray the great diversity all three countries have to offer and it needs to portray the countries' unique and diverse mix between modernity and nature, the beautiful countryside with the Baltic Sea, as well as modern cities with skyscrapers paired with old and diverse districts in the capital cities. These contrasts make them appealing, interesting, and exciting. At the same time, one needs to be attentive to not patch diversity together so that it becomes unidentifiable.

This model clearly demonstrates the intersection of destination image and destination personality of the Baltic States. Personality represents a minor but very important part of the overall image (Hosany et al., 2006; 2007). In fact, destination personality holds a central role in a co-branding approach of destinations. The visual model clearly demonstrates differences in destination image of each country without much intersection of their commonalities. However, the analysis of image commonalities and differences revealed that tourists are unable to communicate countries' differences through image. It appears that while destination image differences exist, they resonate with tourists through destination personality. Thus, when a co-branding model is being developed, DMOs and other stakeholders involved should rely on destination image for the communication of a region's similarities. Interestingly, differences between countries

involved are for tourists only clearly representable in the personality of the three countries.

# 9.6 Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of main themes and categories as revealed by the analyses of the primary data (Chapters 6, 7, and 8) in a wider scope of the current literature. Further, this chapter outlined the analytical progression from the identification of categories and themes in the findings section (Chapters 6, 7, and 8), and in combination with the theories and concepts derived from the literature review (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), developed a destination co-branding model that applies to the Baltic States (Figure 9.1). An extended co-branding model illustrating all image and personality associations as shown in Figures 6.2., 6.3., 6.4., 6.5., as well as 7.2., 7.3., and 7.4., is attached in Appendix U. Chapter 10 presents the conclusions of the study and outlines the contribution to knowledge of the present research. The study is evaluated, and its strengths and weaknesses are discussed. Lastly, recommendations for the industry, as well as for future research, are considered.

#### **CHAPTER X: CONCLUSION**

## 10.1 Introduction

This thesis has focused on examining the role of destination image and destination personality as foundations for destination co-branding of the Baltic States. A review of the pertinent literature was presented as the first stage of the research process. In Chapter 2, this review related to marketing, particularly the concepts of branding and co-branding, together with the concepts of image and personality in marketing. This was then narrowed to review the concepts of destination image and destination personality (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, the importance of co-branding for the tourism industry and the current destination image of the Baltic States, as outlined in the secondary data, was reviewed. Through the self-congruity concept it explained how and why destination image and personality could be beneficial for a co-branding marketing approach. Chapter 5 of the thesis clarified the methodological approach and explained the principles used for this study. The primary research was guided by a subjectivism of ontological philosophy and an inductive approach. Semi-structured interviews with 26 tourists with personal travel experience or interest in the Baltic States (13 interviewees were actual tourists who had been to all three countries; 13 were potential tourists interested in the region) were conducted. Data was analysed by a process of coding that represented categories of description. The results of the data analysis relating to destination personality (Chapter 6) and destination image (Chapter 7) of the Baltic States were outlined, and key categories associated with each of the concepts were identified. In Chapter 8, results pertaining to the evaluation of the potential for co-branding of the Baltic States were reported. The categories arising from the primary data and their relation to the literature were discussed

in Chapter 9, and a model of co-branding for the Baltic States, based on the image and personality of the three countries, was presented.

This chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis. First, the key outcomes of the study are outlined as the synthesis of this study's aims, literature review and results, followed by the contribution to knowledge, and evaluations of strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes the thesis with directions for future research.

## 10.2 Key Outcomes

This thesis has four aims, presented initially in Chapter 1 and re-presented here:

- (1) To critically review the literature on tourism destination image, personality, branding, and co-branding.
- (2) To analyse the destination image and personality characteristics of Baltic countries.
- (3) To evaluate the actual and potential target market's perceptions of co-branding of Baltic countries.
- (4) To establish a conceptual model for Baltic countries' destination co-branding incorporating destination image and personality.

The first aim was achieved through secondary research, which resulted in the theoretical synthesis of relevance of a destination's image and personality for the cobranding approach of the Baltic States. The second, third and fourth aim were achieved by primary research as outlined in the findings and discussion chapters.

## 10.2.1 Contribution based on secondary research findings

To achieve the first aim, to critically review the literature on tourism destination image, personality, branding, and co-branding, the secondary research focused on the review of academic literature in the domain of destination marketing to understand current approaches used in the tourism industry. The initial results of this review suggested that communication, image, reputation, and branding are regarded as key concepts in the field of marketing (Balmer & Greyser, 2006). This review revealed that branding is regarded as one of the most efficient marketing tools in a destination-marketing context (Morgan et al., 2010). When investigating the literature more deeply it became apparent that while branding is about creating an identity and image that endures and grows with time, the concept of brand construction has changed over time. It is typically the consumer that gives a brand a certain amount of relevance and, thus, indirectly decides about success or failure of a brand (Batey, 2008). Thus, the literature is unanimous about the strategic aim of branding being to create a strong and meaningful attachment or relationship between the consumer and the brand (Fournier, 1998; Gobé, 2001; Thompson et al., 2006; Zaltman, 2003). However, the appraisal of theories and concepts in the branding domain revealed that approaches to achieve the connection between a brand and a consumer are versatile. Initially, branding focused more on visible and tangible features of brands, such as physical or more concrete attributes or benefits. However, after the review of the current literature the researcher learned that a multifaceted area of research on branding aims at more abstract and intangible facets of brand image (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). They are more strategically used from a marketing point of view to make brands even more distinguishable (Park et al., 1986).

A second important finding that emerged from the literature and was surprising to learn was regarding neighbouring destinations often perceiving themselves as rivals, an attitude that may not necessarily turn out to be beneficial for their economic development including tourism (Naipaul et al., 2009; Prideaux & Cooper, 2003). For example, small destinations with a limited tourist offering are able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies as it sometimes offers potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire geographical area. It is important to learn that when individual destinations target similar market segments or alternatively offer complementing products or services, collaborative marketing can increase consumer demand and expenditure (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Naipaul et al., 2009).

A third valuable finding that emerged from the literature and was critical for the researcher for the subsequent aims of the study pertains to the formation process of marketing alliances the type / form of relationships typically results in five levels (i.e. strategic networks, collaboration, co-ordination, co-operation, affiliation; Wang & Xiang, 2007). Literature further suggests that the tourism sector also shows an expanding interest in brand partnerships or co-branding (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Chang, 2009; Guillet, & Tasci, 2010). This has been an interesting secondary finding as it is of direct importance for this study, especially considering the fact that no research on this topic was found to date. However, in the consumer marketing literature it is suggested that successful cobranding largely depends on a 'fit', 'match' or 'compatibility' of participating brands (Guillet & Tasci, 2010). It is the consumer's perception about a potential match that eventually determines whether favourable connotations about the separate brands will be carried over to the co-branded product (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Guillet & Tasci, 2010). This finding from the literature is interesting as a separate stream of research suggests that a destination does not necessarily need to be defined by politically controlled boundaries but

rather a geographically defined area, which may consist of a cluster of tourism resources (i.e., an accumulation of tourist resources and attractions, infrastructures, equipment, service providers, etc; Pike, 2008; Rubies, 2001).

However, as part of Aim 1 it was important to understand that regardless of destination boundaries, it is critical to understand branding as a two-way process, meaning that it needs to be done together 'with' the consumer instead of 'to' the consumer (Morgan et al., 2010). One of the conclusions that the researcher was able to draw was that destination branding is mainly about being able to develop a rich and relevant personality for destinations, where constant development and adaptation to any changes in consumer behaviour is necessary so that a brand personality may permanently advance while a destination brand's core value may remain constant (Morgan et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the challenge that remains is that destination image seems to be the most critical aspect within the selection process of the consumer, regardless of whether the image the consumer has of the destination is true compared to what the destination is like (Um & Crompton, 1990). These findings from the literature enabled the researcher to understand why destination marketers are interested in creating or enhancing strong and favourable images for their respective destinations (Cai, 2002).

Further, an analysis of the branding literature in tourism revealed that places or destinations are increasingly complicated to distinguish from one another and are, thus, often substitutable (Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2005). 'Hard factors' of differentiation (e.g. economy, infrastructure, accessibility) are common to most destinations and thus unlikely to represent a point of differentiation for the consumer. Thus, a destination's 'soft factors' (e.g. heritage, culture, architecture, people, and 'feel') become factors of differentiation (Morgan et al., 2010). This led to the conclusion that facilities and services may essentially no longer be differentiators. In consequence, the need to develop a unique image and

personality, a niche that differentiates one destination from another, becomes more important than ever (Morgan et al., 2002). This then suggests that an understanding of the images tourists have of destinations is of high importance in order to assess a destination's performance (Chen & Uysal, 2002) as well as marketer's ability to promote it effectively (Leisen, 2001). Ideally, tourists need both types of information to be able to form their own perception about a destination, which eventually influences their future purchasing behaviour.

To conclude, the literature pertaining to destination marketing is well developed and is expanding in breadth and depth. In addressing Aim 1 of this thesis the researcher was able to conclude that although the studies to date suggest collaborative marketing and emphasise the importance of building brand and differentiation strategies through destination image and personality, the literature is lacking an understanding of destination co-branding as informed by destination image and personality. This is a critical finding that emerged from the literature and is an especially relevant concept for small destinations with limited tourism offerings. In building upon this findings and addressing Aims 2-4 the researcher learned that such destinations may be able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding, as this approach can offer great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire geographical area.

# 10.2.2 Contribution based on primary research findings

To achieve Aim 2, to analyse the destination image and personality characteristics of Baltic countries, the primary research has been conducted and focused on tourists' perceptions of the Baltic States' image and personality as a whole and each country separately. This study makes evident that countries and regions can be thought of and perceived in several ways: through destination image and/or through destination

personality. Findings confirm the literature in that while related, these two concepts are very distinct and as such portray very different, yet relevant, information for tourists and consequently for marketers and other stakeholders involved (Hosany et al., 2006; 2007). This study addressed the leisure tourists' perception of destination image and personality. Destination image and personality perceptions of business tourists are not captured in the present primary research, nor were they the aim of this study.

First of all, there is an understanding in the literature that the three Baltic States are still being perceived in the consumers' minds as a 'forecourt of Russia' despite their persistent attempt to create awareness among consumers that they are oriented towards Western Europe (Huettinger, 2008). Therefore, this thesis examines this notion stemming from the literature and demonstrates important differences between the types of tourists. In this respect the original contribution of this study becomes apparent. These differences between the two types of tourists are first of all portrayed in the clarity of their image perceptions as they relate to the three Baltic States, as well as in the contrast between positivity vs. negativity of the region's image as a whole and each country separately. This study concludes that while actual tourists are able to clearly describe commonalities as well as differences between the three countries, potential tourists have difficulties and provide a more vague, often biased or prejudiced testimony. Their image of the three countries is often charged with vagueness, ambiguity, and / or prejudice, which affects their willingness and interest in visiting the countries individually, much less all three together. This is due to the fact that potential tourists perceive all three countries as one region rather than three different and diverse countries. This is an important finding as it complements current literature on image perception of the Baltic States and clearly demonstrates that rather negative or ambiguous image, as demonstrated in the literature (Huettinger, 2008), is only present for the potential target market. This finding suggests,

not only that theoretically both target groups should be included in the study to form a complete view of a destination, but also further implies that an image can positively change for tourists and proposes a destination experience to hold an important role in the formation of a destination image.

Second, it is important to understand that this study is the first to date that captures image and personality characteristics of the Baltic States. In addressing Aim 2 of this thesis, it has been determined that Estonia stands for the most developed country, the most modern and progressive, it is rather Scandinavian influenced with medieval charm. Latvia represents a more German influenced country with Riga as the most vibrant and attractive capital city leading to the concentration of tourism in the capital city. Lithuania is more Eastern European, very traditional, conservative, homogeneous, and religious. Another important conclusion that can be drawn in this respect is that similar to destination image associations, potential tourists are not able to distinguish between what each country brings to the table, how they differ, yet complement each other. In reflection, it is concerning to learn that a critical tourist market believes that having seen one country is sufficient to get a clear picture of this entire geographic area. There are apparent differences between types of tourists in the clarity of personality perceptions as they pertain to the individual states.

To achieve Aim 3, to evaluate the actual and potential target market's perceptions of co-branding of Baltic countries, the primary research focused on the market perception of a co-branding approach and the role of destination image and destination personality for the successful implementation of this new marketing approach in the tourism industry. First of all, unlike most of the destination image studies that focus solely on the perception of image, the findings of the current study take a step forward in that they use the understanding of the Baltic States' image and personality to explore how these two concepts inform a potentially new marketing approach for the region; namely co-branding

of the three countries together. This second step in this research is important as literature suggests that the term 'Baltic States' is currently regarded purely as a geopolitical term and is not associated with a tourism term or a term used for marketing purposes (Huettinger, 2008). This leaves the consumer with a lot of vagueness, leading to a comparatively undifferentiated image. However, even though an individual representation of the three countries may suffer from the term 'Baltic States', a conclusion that can be drawn based on this study is that it simultaneously makes the region more interesting for visitation and potentially leads to more positive connotations. In fact, the term 'Baltic States' can serve as an overarching umbrella that keeps the countries together; countries that – in the eyes of the tourists – cannot be separated due to their common history, culture, and geographical closeness.

Second, this study further contributes to the current literature in demonstrating a great benefit in a co-branding marketing approach as it would help increase the attractiveness of the Baltic States as a tourism destination and simultaneously improve the visibility of all three countries in the international tourism market. While literature on co-branding, in marketing as well as tourism domains, has been growing (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Young et al., 2001) it has not addressed a perception of destination co-branding and the role of destination image and personality in such an approach. This study is the first to demonstrate that it is too complex to create strong individual country images when countries marketed individually are too small, even though each of them has it's own individual character. At the same time, this study concludes that a potential danger for the image of each country becoming blurred if not done properly is warranted. This study found that it is crucial that each country that engages in co-branding marketing approach is well represented and should preserve its cultural uniqueness and individuality through a

form of co-operation or marketing that does not attempt to mix or assimilate the countries' images.

The third important conclusion that emerged from addressing Aim 3 is pertaining to the consensus among tourists that while commonalities are stressed in the co-branding campaign, each country should also communicate their differences. This is especially true since existing differences were not perceived to be too significant, and that would make a common marketing approach unprofitable for any of these countries, consequently leading to one country dropping out or creating envy among them. An important finding of this research pertains to the many benefits of a new co-branding marketing approach that would likely make the region appear more attractive and much more diverse in terms of their tourist attractions, their cities, and nature, resulting in a broadened spectrum of tourists as well as longer duration of stay at the destination. Not only would the countries be able to use synergy effects (e.g., sharing costs) but would also look or appear to be bigger through a common marketing approach.

Fourth, when image and personality are incorporated as the findings of this research suggest, a conclusion can be drawn that a common marketing strategy would have an illuminative effect for consumers and help the Baltic States to present all three countries in the proper light. Co-branding can increase the region's competitiveness in that the countries would no longer be perceived as isolated, small and individual states where travel between them is difficult. While there are many benefits in marketing the countries together, some concern has been raised that the three Baltic States might not favour a common marketing approach. Thus, these findings confirm the same concern raised in the literature (Naipaul et al., 2009). Emphasis on each of their countries' individuality and independence, rooted in their history, would require a psychological change among the population first. This is of concern and would need to be carefully tackled by the

government of each country who would need to assure and outline the purpose and benefits of such co-operation to the citizens through a clear and open communication strategy. This is especially important, considering that tourists do not foresee any negative effects of a co-branding approach and regard the distinct national pride, egotistical marketing strategies, and each country's isolation from one another as hindering.

To achieve Aim 4, to establish a conceptual model for Baltic countries' destination co-branding incorporating destination image and personality, the researcher analyzed the role of two critical concepts (i.e., destination image and destination personality) in creation of a co-branding of destinations. First of all, the literature suggests that destination image formed by personal factors as well as stimulus factors that contain both perceptual/cognitive elements (i.e. evaluation of beliefs, impressions and knowledge about destination attributes) as well as affective elements (i.e. an individual's feelings toward a destination) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Besides the mental picture of physical characteristics, attributes, and general feelings toward the destination and/or its atmosphere, destination image also includes psychological characteristics of a destination, which are difficult to measure and observe (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). This component could be linked to destination personality as the set of human characteristics or personality traits associated with a destination (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006). These ideas, clues or notions are a nonphysical aspect of information that, in addition to the physical aspects, completes a consumer's product information significantly and configures the perceptions about that product (Freling & Forbes, 2005a). The findings of this study thus contribute to the literature on destination image formation by embracing the notion of differentiating roles of destination image components. For example, Estonia is described as modern, stylish and young; Lithuania seems backwards, distanced, rough and proud, Russian-Polish influenced, religious and held back. Latvia, the reflective, quiet and rural but also

metropolitan country seems blurred and still needs to find its own identity. Overall, the tourists who show greater appreciation for the region's diversity, authenticity and uniqueness perceive the countries as a 'warmer person'. Sadly, potential tourists have only a vague idea of the region's personality characteristics, describe the region as an overall 'colder person', which leads them to be distant and lack enthusiasm for visiting the individual countries. This finding, while important, is very concerning and should be alarming for the DMOs of the Baltic States. This study demonstrates that the Baltic States might be losing a great share of the market simply due to the fact that important differences are not communicated clearly, if at all, in marketing efforts by each individual country. Thus, potential tourists are lacking a complete and, first and foremost, a positive picture of the region.

A second important conclusion that was drawn from this research is an observation that while actual tourists clearly identify commonalities and differences among the three countries, they rely heavily on destination image for the description of similarities and on destination personality to communicate the differences among the three countries. Thus, a critical finding of this study pertains to the importance of portraying similarities as part of a 'first wave' and the overall concept of the Baltic States as well as differences in a 'second wave'. However, it seems easier and more natural for both groups of tourists to identify similarities among these countries through their destination image. This is interesting as it supports the notion that the three countries belong together. While differences among the countries through their image are observable, tourists rely more heavily on the destination personality concept to separate the individual countries in the region. At the same time, tourists have more difficulties expressing differences in comparison to countries' similarities, yet they stress that they need to be communicated.

That said, this thesis demonstrates the enormous role of the destination personality concept in the tourist destination decision-making process.

However, while Aim 4 addressed the question of co-branding incorporating destination image and personality it is important to reiterate that these two relevant marketing and tourism concepts do not represent the only two impressions capturing how a destination is experienced and perceived. Destination reputation, destination salience, differences between projected and perceived destination image, as well as congruity of self (i.e., self congruity) with the destination among others, are all concepts that are important for a full understanding of the destination choice model and consequently marketing approaches such as co-branding (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007b; Tasci et al., 2007a; Tasci & Kozak, 2006).

## 10.3 Contribution to knowledge

This study's contribution to knowledge is the analysis of the perceived image and personality of the Baltic States and their role for a new destination marketing approach, cobranding. This contribution is threefold. First, image and personality of the Baltic States as a region and each of the three countries – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – individually are determined. Second, the target market's perceptions of a co-branding approach for the region with similar historical, geographical, and cultural background is explored. Finally, a model of destination co-branding based on destination image and destination personality is produced.

Previous research has focused on induced and perceived destination image (e.g., Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Tasci et al., 2007a), destination personality (e.g., Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007) as well as destination brand concept (e.g., Morgan et al., 2010; Pike, 2005). Most destinations have exceptional tourism products across the

industry sectors (i.e. accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment and recreational services, etc.), meaning that high-class hotels, prizewinning restaurants, breath-taking shows and a stunning environment with entertaining leisure facilities are to be found nearly everywhere, leading to converging destinations (Morgan et al., 2002). Thus, the need to develop a unique image and personality, a niche that differentiates one destination from another, becomes more important than ever (Morgan et al., 2002). Tourism destination image has been a substantially researched area for a little more than 30 years (Elliot et al., 2010; Pike, 2002). Image as a predictor for travel behaviour (cf. Hunt, 1975), as an influencing factor in traveller choice (cf. Pearce, 1982), studies on the measurement of image (cf. Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; 2003) and its formation process (cf. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994) as well as on the effects of positive place image (cf. Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000) have all contributed to the understanding image plays in destination marketing. Similarly, destination-branding research has received increased attention in the past ten years (Anholt, 2009; Morgan et al., 2010; Wagner & Peters, 2009). Destination brands depend upon services and can be positioned as a means to establish a connection with the consumer as well as to illustrate or outline a range of brand associations such as destination features (i.e. entertainment, attractions, natural environment, culture, etc.; Pike, 2005). These studies have been of great benefit to academia, practitioners as well as students of tourism and management as they give insights into the importance of a positive destination image and consequences of a strong brand. While co-branding in various sectors of the tourism industry is not an entirely new phenomenon, – it is a concept or research stream that existed in this particular industry since the 1930s (Cornelis, 2010; Guillet & Tasci, 2010) – it has been researched to a lesser extent. Recently, co-branding strategies have been applied in service industries, particularly in restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, discount retailers, and theme

parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Young et al., 2001). What literature was lacking, however, was an understanding of destination co-branding. The need to understand this concept, as one of the strategic brand management processes, has already been recognised in the literature (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010). In this regard, this thesis begins to address the concepts relevant for a highly competitive tourism industry through the lens of perceived destination image and personality concepts and explores how it would affect tourists, residents, and other tourism destination stakeholders.

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by first determining currently perceived image and personality of the region that has been largely neglected in academic research and still carries a negative connotation of a Soviet Bloc in the consumers' minds (Huettinger, 2008). While the Baltic States are relentlessly trying to create awareness among consumers that they are oriented towards Western Europe and prefer to be seen as formerly occupied rather than being considered as a former Soviet republic, they are only able to successfully change the mind-set of those that have actually experienced the destination personally.

This thesis demonstrates a major challenge for the Baltic States' tourism industry due to their relative smallness and thus being surprisingly unknown to the majority of potential travellers. Even though the Baltic States have each initiated image campaigns to promote their destinations and investment in their markets, the lack of information about the countries beyond geographic location and affiliation to the European Union is still problematic. This suggests that the Baltic States need to think in more dynamic and holistic ways, and in this context also by broadening their view from a local and regional scale towards more global thinking and consider co-partnering with one another. Since the Baltic States share a cultural and political heritage, geographical closeness, identification with Central and Western Europe, level of education, language skills, entrepreneurship and

strong ethics (Huettinger, 2008), this thesis argues and demonstrates that it is worth considering viewing the three Baltic States as one market or destination. Based on similarities and common characteristics among the three countries, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia would be able to benefit from joint marketing efforts. The original contribution to knowledge in this thesis lies in the demonstration that special destination partnerships or co-branding, a concept where two or more brands facilitate each other in the market with the collective objective to establish a brand more effectively in comparison to what a partner brand would be able to do on its own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005), would be well received among the target or source market. The thesis shows that small destinations with a limited tourist offering would be able to benefit from collaborative marketing strategies, such as co-branding, as it offers great potential to enhance the market attractiveness of an entire region when individual destinations target similar market segments and offer complementary products or services. Such marketing efforts are potentially able to increase consumer demand and expenditure (Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Naipaul et al., 2009).

This thesis, however, suggests a cautious and well thought out implementation of such a marketing approach. An important consideration that countries debating this approach must make is the role of destination image and personality. Destinations are like individuals portrayed with adjectives to reflect on certain characteristics of the destination (Caprara et al., 2001). Consumers are increasingly making lifestyle statements with their selection of destinations, in that destinations not only have to be emotionally attractive to them, but also need to reflect certain aspects of the individual's persona (Morgan et al., 2002). The contribution to knowledge here is reflected in the model of a co-branding approach by demonstrating the importance of an established destination image but also a personification of the destination. A co-branding approach should occur on two levels:

first, identify the destination image of each country involved and look for the complementary elements and use it to fill or give tourism and travel related meaning to the umbrella brand (i.e., the Baltic States); and second, identify or compare each country with a human being to understand their personalities and implement that knowledge in the second wave of marketing efforts to allow for the clear demonstration of each country' uniqueness and possibly connecting the consumer's personality or self concept with the perceived image of the destination. To be exact, a destination, together with its image and personality, needs to meet self-expression needs of the consumer (Murphy et al., 2007) and thus, they need to be clearly communicated in the co-branding efforts. This allows bringing the countries together yet allows them to remain distinct from one another.

In sum, this thesis demonstrates the importance of image as well as personality construct for tourists, which can and should be used consistently in marketing efforts. Further, this thesis demonstrates that a co-branding approach in destination marketing is possible and would be welcomed by tourists as long as each country's differences are clearly portrayed. Finally, the role of destination image and personality for the achievement of a destination co-branding is explored.

## 10.4 Evaluation of research

#### 10.4.1 Strengths of the study

The study has been effective partly due to aims being concise and realistic. A critical review of theories relevant to branding and co-branding, as applied in marketing, as well as the tourism and hospitality field, with a special focus on brand image and personality and their potential relevance for a successful co-branding approach, was conducted. Data pertaining to perceptions of tourists with regard to the image of the Baltic

States and specifically brand personality characteristics, as well as the extent to which the potential for co-branding of distinct destinations exists, was collected. The qualitative data is rich and complex and enables detailed descriptions that are nested in a real context (Miles et al., 2014). Commonalities and differences among the three countries of interest were analysed. From these analyses, a holistic understanding of image and personality of each individual country and the Baltic region respectively, as well as perception of a cobranding approach, and hence a general model of co-branding, based on the image and personality, were established. Thus, the aims of the thesis were achieved.

The way the aims of the study are achieved can be challenged when evaluating the study's quality. The lack of standardisation in qualitative studies may raise concerns about reliability. Further, sometimes qualitative research using semi-structured and in-depth interviews is criticised for lack of generalisations about the entire population. However, positivist concepts of reliability and generalisability are inappropriate criteria for a quality evaluation of a qualitative study. Instead, this thesis offers five other benchmarks for the assessment of qualitative research (Polkinghorne, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 259), which are addressed below.

1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects' description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects' actual experience?

The structure of a semi-structured interview outlines a series of questions that serve as a guide in a discussion with the interviewee. The structure of the questions was adhered to because it allows for some standardisation of the process and consequently consistency of data. Nevertheless, such a structure allows for situations in which some questions were omitted because interviewees already dealt with the topic extensively and posing a question simply to keep the consistency would interfere with the natural flow of the

conversation. At the same time, a semi-structured interview structure allows interviewees to ask clarification questions and raise points they feel are important for the interviewer. Overall, due to the beneficial nature of the semi-structured interviews, it is plausible to conclude that the interviewer did not excessively or intentionally influence interviewees' stories. However, one possible exception relates to question 6: If the destination XYZ (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) was a person what type of person would that be? Please describe this person using personality characteristics. This question in the majority of interviews required a further explanation as destination personality can be an unfamiliar idea at first. Once a probe question was asked (Please imagine destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania) was a person, what would be the taste of that person regarding food, clothing style, lifestyle, etc.; see Appendices C and E), participants were able to fully elaborate on the topic without any further cues given by the interviewer.

Another way in which the interviewer can bias the content of subjects' descriptions is through the exertion of influence as a co-creator of the interview discussions. An interviewer's bias pertains to situations in which comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer creates bias in the way an interviewee responds to the question (Saunders et al., 2012). An interviewer can attempt to impose their own beliefs through questions they ask (Saunders et al., 2012). The interviewer tried, whenever possible, to be a listener, rather than an active participant in a discussion and attempted to stay quiet and not fill silences. Further, typical for qualitative semi-structured research, are situations in which an interviewer is 'surprised by findings' (Cassell & Symon, 1994, p. 31) especially when the descriptions do not conform to the interviewer's preconceptions of the topic. For example, the interviewer held certain images of the Baltic States himself despite never visiting the region. The problems pertaining to alcohol tourism, prostitution, and the extreme contrast between very rich and very poor on the doorsteps of Europe reported

throughout the interviews were completely unexpected. However, no attempt was made throughout the interviews to probe for descriptions of the region that would not reflect this negative image. Therefore, interviewees' descriptions were reported honestly and were not biased by the perceived reality of the interviewer.

It is also possible to cause bias with the choice of the interview location (Saunders et al., 2012). All locations were chosen as to ensure convenience of participants. Interviews were conducted at locations where quietness and non-disturbance were assured yet allowed for a natural setting and interviewees to feel comfortable (e.g., home of the interviewee).

2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?

Interviewees were audio recorded and transcripts were generated from the recordings shortly after the interview. Due to the high quality of the digital audio recordings with two different professional devices there were very few problems regarding accurate transcriptions of unclear sections. After the transcription of each interview, the transcript was read while listening to the audio recording and any inconsistencies were corrected. Finally, the meaning of the interview as per the transcript was compared to the one-page contact summary sheet that was written after every interview to reflect on the main points of the respective interview. The main purpose of utilising these contact summary sheets was to summarise the interview, identify potentially new insights, notice any speculations or feelings about the field situation as brought up by the participants and allowed the interviewer to assure that the same meaning was communicated throughout the transcripts. Therefore, it is suggested that the data was accurate at the word level as well as

at the meaning level. It was further assured that the quotes used in the findings chapter were verbatim quotes from the transcripts.

3. In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?

Overall, a conscious attempt was made to analyse what was said and to maintain the accuracy of data. The interviewer distanced himself in that he did not try to impose a meaning on data where the meaning was not clear. There were not many such occasions throughout the transcript, as the interviewer prepared clarification questions in the process of the interviews to avoid situations in which the analysis might have led to an interpretation based on what the interviewer felt was meant, rather than what was actually said. However, in research cultural differences pertaining to misinterpretation of responses can often become significant in the analytical process. While some minor misinterpretations can occur, it is manifested that the interviewer did not face challenges pertaining to cultural bias since he is of the same nationality as the participants and familiar with the culture and subcultures of different German regions.

4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

The descriptions of actual and potential tourists' perceptions of the Baltic States' image and personality, and that target market's perception of a co-branding approach, as well as the model of co-branding (Figure 9.1. and Appendix U) are induced from the interviewees' explanations and perceptions and represent the original contribution to knowledge. Due to the transparency pertaining to all steps involved in this study, it is

possible to identify the progression throughout the research process, from the interview to the final model. The transparency allows other researchers to model the same approach and follow the same procedural steps.

5. Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?

One of the common misunderstandings in qualitative research pertains to the notion that it is difficult to summarise specific experiences and narratives and to develop them into general propositions and theories (Flyvbjerg, 2011). However, descriptions and models summarising qualitative data are meant to extend beyond the experiences of interviews and represent a more widely applicable knowledge that holds in similar but different situations (Creswell, 2013). While generalisability is not a characteristic of qualitative research and is not the intention of such models, they do allow for further, possibly positivistic, empirical testing and thus, reach a stage of generalisable theoretical models. A model of co-branding emerged by induction of categories from the interviewees' descriptions and experiences and represents the situation of the Baltic States region as perceived by the interviewees. However, while the theoretical model is meant to extend beyond a simple description of the experiences of people interviewed, it needs to be further and deductively tested to be able to conclude that it holds in other situations (i.e., pertains to other groups of countries).

The critical evaluation of the research process using the five criteria outlined above (Polkinghorne, as cited in Creswell, 2013) allows for a certain confidence that the data collection and analytical process, as well as the consequently developed model of cobranding, are methodologically sound and valid. Validity refers to the concept of gaining knowledge and experiences of subjects involved in a study, and subsequently the

researcher's ability to infer meaning from participants' testimonies, in line with what was intended to be communicated (Saunders et al., 2012).

Further, the strength of an inductive approach is its potential to gain a close understanding of the research context and the way individuals construe their social world, features desired in this exploratory research (Creswell, 2013). The inductive approach in both stages (data collection and analysis), thus allowed a deeper and current insight into the complex perception of destination image and destination personality that tourists have on the destinations under research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). By adopting a semi-structured interview structure and not adopting rigid instruments by other researchers, the qualitative approach placed the researcher as a key instrument (Creswell, 2013). It enabled clarification questions to be asked and allowed the interviewer to follow the stream of discussion as it naturally progressed as well as make inferences from behaviours and facial expressions. Therefore, the data gathered is richer than it would have been with a quantitative approach. In fact, this study is one of the few that have explored perception of destination image and in particular destination personality with a qualitative approach. This richness of data made it possible for the researcher to build patterns, categories, and themes inductively from the 'bottom up', by organising them into more abstract units of information that has subsequently allowed for development of the final model (Creswell, 2013).

However, as Schwab (2005) notes, no research is perfect and suffers from flaws, this one is no exception. Thus, the next section reviews limitations of qualitative research as they pertain to this thesis.

While the study has been successful (as documented in section 10.4.1) it has, as any qualitative research, experienced certain limitations. For instance, the literature suggests that the role of branding is to guarantee that a product or service is relevant to the consumer or present in the consumer's mind. This, according to Landor Associates (2010), will ideally then be the preferred choice for the consumer out of a potentially infinite number of options. However, the literature also suggests that consumers today experience brands through brand community (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001), brand attachment (Swaminathan et al., 2009), brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and brand trust (Sung & Kim, 2010) besides brand image and brand personality (Aaker, 1997). Given the fact that a complete coverage of brand relevant concepts for a consumer when choosing a destination would likely be very onerous and consequently lacking detail, a conscious decision grounded in the literature of self-congruity was made to restrict the scope of the thesis to the two factors that are most typically relevant in a brand representation in a consumer's mind. Consequently, the model of co-branding offers and welcomes further supplementation and expansion by qualitative research on alternative concepts relevant for destination experience and brand building, falling within the actual and potential tourists' categories.

Further, qualitative studies suffer from a lack of reliability, which in quantitative research pertains to the notion of information replicability by different researchers (Saunders et al., 2012). Typically, this issue is concerned with interviewer bias, and steps taken to overcome this predisposition were addressed (Section 10.4.1). Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that the intent of the findings derived from the qualitative approach is not necessarily their replicability, as they reflect the participants' and their situations'

reality at the time of the data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The idea behind this argument is that circumstances to be explored are complex and dynamic and qualitative methodology allows the researcher's flexibility to explore the complexity at hand (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, an attempt to ensure replicability by other researchers would not be realistic and/or feasible without compromising the strengths of this type of research.

Related to the concept of generalisability is the issue of small sample sizes in qualitative research. However, there appears to be a growing recognition of this type of research, particularly if and when data saturation occurs (Guest et al., 2006). In this study, data saturation occurred after a few interviews, although the exact point in time when this occurred cannot be determined. It is estimated that between the tenth and twelfth interview the information was beginning to be repetitive and since the coding took place in parallel to the data collection, no new coding categories emerged. The remaining interviews served to a great extent to support the identified categories and in a few occurrences led to relabeling of a category.

In reflection some specific limitations pertatining to the methodology of this study need to be addressed. First, the sample consisted of German participants only. While such sample offers only the perception of one target market and the conclusions drawn pertain only to German tourists, the choice for the German tourism market has been done consciously. Not only is Germany one of the most important target markets for the Baltic States (European Travel Commission, 2010), it is the home country of the researcher, which enabled better rapport between the researcher and interviewees due to researcher's knowledge of the country and its people (Usunier & Lee, 2013). Further, researcher aimed to have an equal geographical representation of participants in the sample. While the sample is small and geographical spread of participants across the entire Germany does not serve the purpose of generalizability, researcher aimed to overcome a potential negative

bias against the countries under investigation due to the joint soviet heritage of East Germany and Baltic States. Second potential limitation of the sample is its inhomogeneity pertaining to participants' age ranging across three generations. However, researcher was aware that the perception about Baltic States between generations might substantially differ due to the fact that the elder generation could have relied more upon cultural and historical aspects of the countries whereas the younger generation could potentially have discussed other aspects. Thus, to eliminate any potential bias and prejudice toward the Baltic States that could occur due to the age of the participants, a rather wide age range has been included in the study. Third, the sample might suffer from the inequality in gender representation. For example, one might conclude that beautiful women in the Baltic States were noticed and countries described as females as part of the discussion on destination personality due to the fact that sample (especially actual tourists) is predominantly male. However, the in depth analysis of all participants demonstrates that female participants raised similar aspects pertaining to the image and personality of the Baltic States as their male counterparts (e.g., noticed beautiful women in the Baltic States too and described the countries as female). Lastly, effects of the interviewer's gender are often found in face-toface interviews (Williams & Heikes, 1993). However, its effect is typically limited to gender specific issues, some political issues, and less often in the domains of health and partnership (Davis, 1997). As the topic of this research is not related to any of the abovementioned sensitive issued the likelihood that researcher's gender had an impact on the interviewees' responses is very low.

Despite its potential weaknesses, it is important to reinforce the value of qualitative research as an approach to research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Adopting a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to collect data in the field, in participants' natural setting

in which they experience the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2013). This characteristic enabled gathering detailed information by talking directly to actual and potential tourists and observing their reactions and behaviours within the context of discussion. Such deep insights into realities of participants are the strength of this thesis, and that could not have been achieved with survey or lab research.

#### 10.5 Recommendations and future research

Often it is expected that research studies provide practical implications and recommendations for the industry, even when the aims of academic research are not industry focused. Due to the qualitative nature of this thesis the reliability and generalisability of the findings are lacking. Thus, it is not possible to give recommendations to the wider tourism industry, applying the co-branding model whenever a group of countries is seeking new marketing approaches. However, some recommendations specifically for the Baltic States could be given, when targeting the German source market. The Baltic States countries need to demonstrate a stronger and more visible co-operation on a national level as well as on the international tourism market, and potentially utilise co-branding as their approach to marketing. For example, in 2014, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were present and shared a platform at the ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show (ITB Berlin, 2014). Their exhibition appearance was significant insofar as the three destinations were indeed grouped together in the same exhibition area to show their geographic proximity but each exhibition stand was arranged back to back so that their presentation to trade visitors and consumers had the adverse effect of a forced marriage as opposed to a portrayal of commonalities, display of cooperation, and clarification of differences. These three countries have to overcome the unwanted urge to present themselves together only due to financial reasons. The message

that potentially comes across is that they are completely unrelated countries and in fact compete against each other for the target market, a situation actual tourists were critical of in the interviews. In consequence, the consumer gets the impression that the countries prefer not to be marketed together as they fear losing their unique characteristics. While the 2014 Baltic States promotional brochure presented at the ITB, targeting German tourists, represents the first joint marketing attempts, it clearly shows the lack of a more integrated branding approach (Estonian Tourist Board / Enterprise Estonia, Fremdenverkehrsamt Lettland, & Staatliches Tourismus-Departament, 2014). For example, in this brochure, three routes (the capital cities route, coastal route, and rural route) through all three countries are presented. However, from the design of the brochure it is apparent that each of the countries still has their own website, unrelated and incoherent logos, and slogans (Wonderfully different - Estonia, Take the time - Latvia, and Creating the future of Lithuania). Practitioners need to realise that an engagement in a co-branding approach will not result in the loss of each country's identity and independence. On the contrary, it will help them raise awareness and interest among tourists when they adopt the approach of co-branding under the umbrella of 'The Baltic'. They need to be seen as a coherent unit, yet at the same time they can and should keep communicating their diversity in terms of their natural and cultural offerings. As one of the interviewees mentioned, the three Baltic States are perceived as three sisters; a blond, a brunette and a redhead, who share the same blood, yet each one of them is unique. Tourists need to perceive the three countries as one destination with three different cultures and unique experiences. Therefore, based on this thesis the following recommendations to tourism providers in the region are made:

- Improve the co-operation between the three Baltic States to create awareness about all
  three countries as Baltic States among potential tourists and among actual tourists to
  encourage repeat visitation.
- 2. Adopt a co-branding branding approach that represents the Baltic States as one region as well as the individual countries with the consideration of diverse destination personality and destination image (e.g., one slogan for all three countries).
- 3. Streamline marketing activities with realistic consumer perceptions about the countries' image and personality.

The co-branding model developed in this thesis does not represent an exhaustive understanding of tourism and marketing factors potentially impacting the co-branding marketing approach, thus, any recommendation beyond the role of destination image and destination personality for the co-branding of the Baltic States is not appropriate. Therefore, suggestions for an extension and development of the academic research area are made in this section. Much remains to be studied, to fully understand the boundaries of destination co-branding. This current research is the first to explore the role of destination image and destination personality in adopting a co-branding destination strategy and the impact this might have for the target market as well as for the destinations. Further studies may help in fully understanding the concepts, processes, and situations that best enable destinations to adopt a co-branding approach. This thesis sheds light on the importance of including similarities among destinations that stem primarily from destination image and stresses the critical role of destinations' differences and uniqueness communicated typically through destination personality. Nonetheless, understanding of the role of other brands and destinations' relevant characteristics in the creation of a co-branding approach remains scarce. For example, while this study approached the target market's perception of co-branding though the lens of consumers' perceptions of destinations' images and personalities, further research could explore the role of tourists' personalities (the concept of self: real, ideal, undesired, extended; Ogilvie, 1987; Belk, 1988) and its relation to destination personality in informing tourists' destination choice process. Further research should also ensure an understanding of how tourists' motivations for travel, past travel experience, and expectations of a destination inform the feasibility of a destination cobranding approach. Another interesting direction further research should explore is the role of co-travellers and/or those that have experienced a destination or expressed interest in visiting it in the near future. Consumers make use of brands that have an image or meaning that is in harmony with certain reference groups, or sociologically speaking with in-groups, to which they belong (or wish to belong) in order to construct a spiritual or emotional connection to these groups (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). This suggests that the role of reference groups is an important factor to consider in the formation of a destination cobranding approach. On a more managerial level, preconditions for collaborative marketing in terms of tourism organisations being impacted by certain environmental factors (i.e. economic, technological, organisational factors, etc.) need to be explored. One of the critical factors that will impact on the success of destination co-branding is the willingness of destinations' inhabitants and consequently their DMOs as well as other stakeholders for such marketing collaboration. Insights provided by such research would allow for refinement and/or extension of the destination co-branding model (Figure 9.1. and Appendix U) presented in this thesis.

In addition to the conceptual expansion of this research, this section offers other methodological approaches to the study of destination co-branding. First, a personal interview is a sound technique when the purpose is to obtain detailed and rich data regarding personal perceptions and experiences. However, its quality depends on the

interviewer asking concise and unambiguous questions, to which the interviewee is willing to answer, the memory of interviewees about their experiences and perceptions, the facilitation of the interview in the environment that allows the interviewee to feel comfortable to articulate their thoughts clearly and freely, as well as the ability of the interviewer to listen and guide the interview. Therefore, other qualitative techniques could be considered to address the same aims, such as the use of research diaries. With this technique the respondents can record their reactions and feelings, specific behaviours, social interactions, activities and/or events (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Such a study permits the researcher to capture participants' everyday behaviour patterns in a discreet way and enables to capture the reality in a given moment as well as over time (Cassell & Symon, 2004). This technique would allow research participants to capture their thoughts and feelings regarding the destination during the course of their holiday and thus capture their perceptions and experience while travelling. Such snapshots of destination image and personality would possibly allow for even more accurate data, as the participants would not have to rely on their memories.

Second, this study focused on potential and actual tourists from Germany, as this country is an important tourist source market for Baltic States tourism (European Travel Commission, 2010) and had, in 2010, seen a slow growth of tourists to all three studied destinations (European Travel Commission, 2010). The studied countries' tourism bureaus' statistics between 2008 and 2010 indicated that Germany had been among the top four countries in terms of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in all three of the Baltic countries. For the purpose of evaluation of co-branding feasibility in the Baltic countries it was, thus, critical to understand the perspective of potential and actual tourists from a country holding such an impact on tourism in all three Baltic States. While German tourists represent an essential target market there are other large and important markets

relevant for the Baltic States to be able to recognise and comprehend tourists' reactions to a co-branding marketing approach. Conducting this study with a different sample from a different but relevant target market would shed light on the perceptions of image and personality by other target groups and complement the destination co-branding model developed by this study.

Third, adopting a positivistic approach to this study and determining the perception of image and personality of the Baltic States through a questionnaire survey among a more representative sample of tourists would allow the testing of the extent to which image and personality categories (that emerged through this qualitative study) are representable on a wider scale. The categories and factors of destination image and personality included in the model of destination co-branding, could be tested quantitatively to obtain a greater confidence, in statistical terms, as to the extent to which the proposed model is representable and generalisable.

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# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: General country profiles – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

## **Estonia**

Estonia (Figure 1) is the most northern located country of the three Baltic States and a coastal state with approximately 3,800 kilometres of rugged coastline to the Baltic Sea.

FINLAND

RUSSIAN
FEDERATION

Zdenogoris

Helsinki
Oteininglan)

Annua

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Figure 1: Map of Estonia

Source: United Nations (2011)

Just as Latvia, the country regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. With regard to the country's geography the official website of the European Union (European Commission, 2011b) describes Estonia as to be predominantly flat with many lakes and numerous islands within its territory, while the landmass mainly consists of farmland and forested areas. The Estonian language belongs to the Finnish group of the Uralic family of languages and is closely related to Finnish and only distantly related to the Hungarian

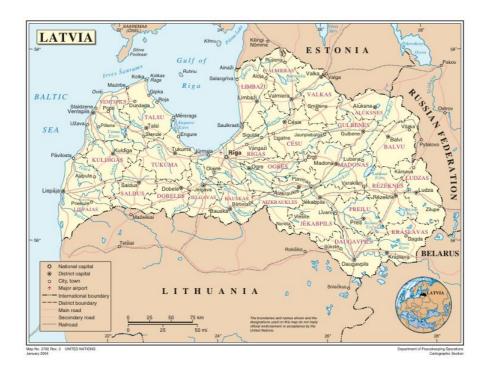
language. Thus, being a member of the Uralic family of languages, the Estonian language is not related to the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family of which the Latvian language and Lithuanian language are a part. The European Union estimates that approximately a quarter of the 1.3 million Estonians are of Russian-speaking origin (European Commission, 2011b).

Tallinn, as the country's capital is known for one of the best-preserved mediaeval cities within Europe, which serves as an enormous tourism attraction for the international traveller. Estonia's economy is fuelled by industry sectors such as engineering, metals, chemicals, wood as well as food products. An outstanding contribution to Estonia's economy provides the tourism sector, which accounts for approximately 15% of the Estonian gross domestic product (GDP).

## Latvia

Latvia (Figure 2) is located between Estonia in the north and Lithuania in the south and is also a coastal state to the Baltic Sea.

Figure 2: Map of Latvia



Source: United Nations (2011)

Just like Estonia, the county regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Being located at the Baltic Sea, Latvia is geographically being described as to be a low lying state with a significant forestry industry supplying timber for the construction and paper industries (European Commission, 2011b). Furthermore, Latvia is known for its rich wildlife as well as textile industry, consumer goods products and machine tools next to tourism, as a main contributor to the country's GDP, attracting international tourists. The ethnic background of Latvia is comprised of 59% Latvian and 29% Russian origin (European Commission, 2011b). Approximately a third of Latvia's population (2.3 million) live in the country's capital, Riga, which is the largest city in all three of the Baltic states with its 730,000 inhabitants (European Commission, 2011b).

## Lithuania

The most southern of the Baltic States is Lithuania (Figure 3), which is also the most populated and largest country of the three. Contrary to Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania was the first of the three Baltic States that broke free from the Soviet Union and their occupation. In 1990 already, Lithuania became a sovereign state by declaring its independence. The website of the European Union ('Gateway to the European Union') describes Lithuania as to be mainly flat with only minor elevations (European Commission, 2011b). The percentage of forested area in comparison to total landmass is at approximately 30% in the county. However, Lithuania is also rich on rivers (758) and lakes (2.800) and possesses a strip of a 99 km long coastline of the Baltic Sea. That area is for the most part a designated recreational area or nature reserve.



Figure 3: Map of Lithuania

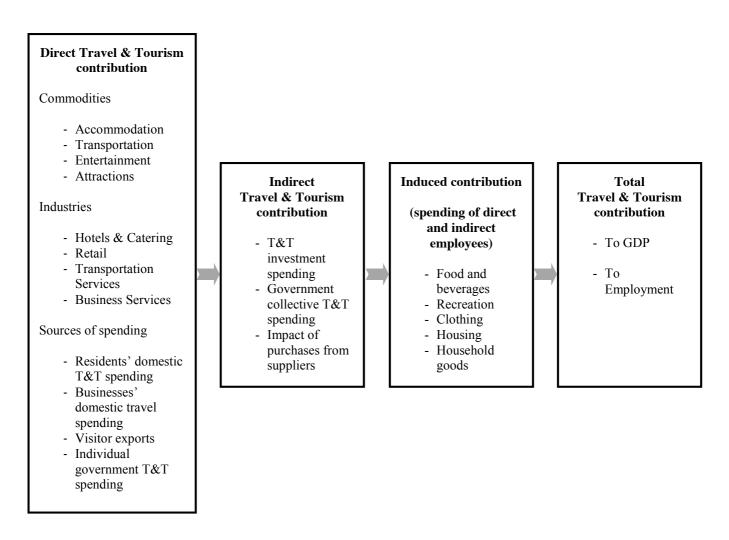
Source: United Nations (2011)

The population (3.4 million) is comprised of 84% of ethnic Lithuanians. Among the sizeable minorities are Poles with approximately 6% and Russians accounting for about 5% of the population. Closely related to the Latvian language, the Lithuanian language is recognized as a Baltic language and belongs to the Indo-European language family. Lithuania's capital is Vilnius, a city known for its historic richness and architecture.

## Appendix B: General tourism profiles – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

To illustrate the state of the travel and tourism industry and their impact on a country's growth, gross domestic product (GDP), jobs and investment, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) frequently releases country reports that allow a comparison of countries with regards to their key economic travel and tourism data. While the UN Statistics Division focuses mainly on the direct economic impact of travel and tourism in their Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) methodology (United Nations, 2010), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) on the other hand acknowledges the total impact of travel and tourism, thus, including indirect and induced effects of travel and tourism (Figure 1) into their annual research publications (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

Figure 1: World Travel & Tourism Council / economic contribution of travel & tourism



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (2011a)

## Tourism in Estonia

Since its independence, Estonia, the most northern of the Baltic States, is considered to be exemplary and most successful with regard to their economic transition from a former Soviet republic to an EU member state (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). Together with Latvia, both countries have in the past been considered as "Eastern Europe's dynamic duo" by *The Economist* magazine (The Economist, 2006). Between the years 2003 and

2006, the Estonian economy grew by over 37 %, an increase largely contributed to the accession effect (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008), the impact of the European Union membership, an effect that made Estonia (Real GDP Growth: 10.1%) next to Latvia (Real GDP Growth: 11.2%) to one the fastest growing economies within Europe in 2006 (European Commission, 2011c). One of the main contributors to the positive development of the Estonian economy is the tourism industry (The Economist, 2006; Enterprise Estonia, 2011).

The WTTC estimates Estonia's travel and tourism industry to directly contribute to the country's GDP with approximately EUR 0.6 billion (3.5% of GDP) in 2011 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). These estimates comprise all economic activity in this sector produced by hotels, airlines, other passenger transport (excluding commuters), restaurants, leisure industries and travel agents, which are directly supported by tourists. In their forecast to the year 2021, the WTTC anticipates this direct contribution<sup>23</sup> to grow to approximately EUR 0.8 billion (3.2% of GDP), which is equivalent to a growth rate of about 3.4% per year (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). However, when looking at the more encompassing effects including investments, the supply chain and induced income components, the total contribution of Estonia's travel and tourism industry is much larger. The WTTC estimates the total contribution<sup>24</sup> in this sector to be EUR 2.1 billion in 2011 (13.6% of GDP), which is believed to increase by 3.3% annually to approximately EUR 3.0 billion (12.2% of GDP) in 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). Keeping these figures in mind, Estonia's travel and tourism sector is responsible for

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Direct contribution to GDP – GDP generated by industries that deal directly with tourists, including hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transport services (excluding commuter services), as well as the activities of restaurant and leisure industries that deal directly with tourists.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Total contribution to GDP – GDP generated directly by the Travel & Tourism industry plus its indirect (capital investment, government collective spending, supply-chain effects) and induced impacts.

directly <sup>25</sup> generating about 21,000 jobs (3.6% of total employment) directly in the aforementioned industries (i.e. hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc.), a number that is not expected to change significantly (0.9% until 2021) during the next years (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). However, when looking again into the total contribution to employment<sup>26</sup> of Estonia's travel and tourism industry, the significance of the industry becomes evident in that it provides for 77,000 jobs (13.3% of total employment) in 2011, which is believed to decrease by 0.2% per year to 76,000 jobs (12.4% of total employment) in 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). Estonia is assumed to handle 2,129,000 international overnight visitors (i.e. tourists) arrivals in 2011, which is estimated to lead to approximately EUR 1.2 billion in visitor spending, including transportation, commonly referred to as visitor exports <sup>27</sup> (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). By 2021 visitor arrivals are believed to have reached 2,620,000, equivalent to expenditures in the amount of EUR 1.8 billion (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011a). When looking broadly into the components of Estonia's travel and tourism industry, the WTTC estimates leisure travel (inbound and outbound) to directly contribute to GDP with a significant 77% to direct travel and tourism GDP in 2011 as compared to 23% coming from business travel. Contrary to the business segment, leisure travel is expected to grow from EUR 1.2 billion in 2011 to an estimated EUR 1.8 billion in 2021. However, business travel is currently contributing EUR 0.4 billion (2011 estimate) to direct travel and tourism GDP, which is believed to remain at the same level by 2021. Furthermore, Estonia is a country that seems to be highly impacted by foreign visitor spending. The WTTC estimates domestic travel spending to lead to approximately 22.3%

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Direct contribution to employment – Number of jobs including employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Total contribution to employment – Number of jobs including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Visitor exports – spending within the country by international tourists for both business and leisure trips, including spending on transport.

of direct travel and tourism GDP in 2011. In contrast, foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts, known as visitor exports, contribute with an estimated 77.7% to direct travel and tourism GDP (2011). While domestic travel spending is expected to remain at a similar level (EUR 0.3 billion in 2011; EUR 0.4 billion in 2021), visitor exports are believed to further increase over the next years (EUR 1.2 billion in 2011; EUR 1.8 billion in 2021).

In Estonia, the aim of the tourism sector is to market the country as a tourism destination and to make international travellers aware of Estonian tourism products and services (Enterprise Estonia, 2011). Enterprise Estonia (2011) states on their website that it is the country's aspiration to highlight the positive reputation of Estonia as tourism destination to create not only awareness but subsequently also demand for all Estonian products and services in the long run, tourism being just one component.

# Tourism in Latvia

For Latvia, the WTTC estimates the travel and tourism industry to directly contribute to the country's GDP to be approximately LVL 430.5 million<sup>28</sup> in 2011, which reflects 3.2% of GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). This direct contribution is believed to increase to LVL 755.1 million or 3.4% of GDP by 2021 at a growth rate of 5.8% per year (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). Considering the wider effects of travel and tourism on Latvia's GDP, including tourism related investments, supply chain impacts as well as induced income components the total contribution from this sector to the country's GDP is estimated to be LVL 1,154.3 million in 2011 (8.6% of GDP) and forecasted to reach LVL 1,988.9 million (9.1 % of GDP) by 2021, reflecting an annual rise of 5.6% and showing the expected significance of the travel and tourism industry for the country in the near future (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). With regard to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Latvia joined the European Union in May 2004.

employment numbers, the WTTC expects approximately 29,000 jobs to be directly affiliated with travel and tourism in 2011, which accounts for about 3.1% of total employment in Latvia (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). With a forecasted increase of 6,000 jobs (20.8%) within the next ten years, the travel and tourism industry will contribute directly with about 35,000 jobs to the job market by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). Again, when looking into the wider effects that the travel and tourism sector has on the job market, the current total contribution to employment from travel and tourism adds up to approximately 77,000 jobs in 2011, which is equivalent to 8.1% of total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). With an increase of 1.5% annually over the next ten years, the WTTC forecasts that travel and tourism will contribute 89,000 jobs or 9.0% of total employment by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). In 2011, Latvia is estimated to attract approximately 1,615,000 international overnight visitor arrivals, leading to visitor exports amounting to about LVL 582.8 million (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). WTTC forecasts (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b) reckon that the country will be able to reach a total of 3,183,000 international tourist arrivals by 2021, which would imply a 7.0% annual increase over the next ten years, adding up to LVL 1,018.0 million in expenditures. With regard to the components of travel and tourism in Latvia, a similar picture exists in comparison to Estonia. Latvia's main portion of travel spending originates from the leisure segment, which is estimated to contribute with about 79.5% of direct travel and tourism GDP in 2011 as opposed to 20.5% coming from business travel segments (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). Travel spending in the leisure segment is believed to nearly double over the next ten years from LVL 715.3 million (2011) to about LVL 1,271.9 million in 2021; similarly the outlook for the business travel segment shows that spending is believed to increase from LVL 184.4 million in 2011 to LVL 312.8 million in 2021

(World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). In contrast to Estonia, Latvia has a different ratio between domestic and foreign travellers. Approximately 64.8% of travel spending originates from foreign visitors as opposed to 35.2% coming from domestic travellers (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). This shows that in comparison to Estonia, Latvia's domestic travel market is more significant in terms of contribution to the country's GDP. In 2011, travel spending from the domestic market is estimated to reach LVL 316.9 million in 2011, reaching a total of LVL 566.7 million by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b). On the other hand, foreign visitors are believed to spend an estimated LVL 582.8 million in 2011, which is believed to increase to about LVL 1,018.0 million in the next ten years (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011b).

## Tourism in Lithuania

Lastly, Lithuania's direct contribution of the travel and tourism sector to the country's overall GDP is estimated to reach LTL 1,502.1 million<sup>29</sup> in 2011, which reflects about 1.5% of Lithuania's overall GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). By 2021, the direct contribution of the travel and tourism sector is expected to have grown by 5.9% annually to an estimated LTL 2,655.0 million, then reflecting 1.6% of the country's GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). Taking the wider effects of the travel and tourism sector into consideration, the WTTC believes the total contribution to reach LTL 5.256.6 million in 2011; the forecast to 2021 shows an increase by 5.3% annually to approximately LTL 8,817.9 million, which is equivalent to about 5.4% of overall GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). According to WTTC numbers, Lithuania's travel and tourism sector directly supports about 20,000 jobs, thereby reflecting 1.5% of the country's total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). The World

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Lithuania joined the European Union in June 2004, and is currently preparing to adopt the Euro as a currency upon fulfillment of the Maastricht criteria (no target date specified). The Lithuanian Litas (LTL) observes a central rate of 3.45280 with a standard fluctuation margin of  $\pm$  15% to the Euro.

Travel and Tourism Council shows the biggest growth potential for Lithuania when compared to Estonia's and Latvia's employment forecasts of the next ten years. Lithuania's travel and tourism sector is expected to directly support 26,000 jobs by 2021, which reflects an increase of 30.8% or 6,000 jobs directly related to this industry sector (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). The overall or total contribution the travel and tourism sector makes to employment statistics are an estimated number of 68,000 jobs or 5.1% of total employment in 2011 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). This number is believed to increase by roughly 1.9% annually over the next ten years so that travel and tourism's total contribution to employment is expected to be at 82,000 jobs by 2021, representing 5.5% of Lithuania's total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). It is expected that Lithuania will be able to attract approximately 1,940,000 international overnight visitor arrivals in 2011, leading to an estimated LTL 3,231.1 million in visitor exports (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). In the outlook the WTTC provides for the next ten years, it is forecasted that international tourist arrivals will increase by about 10.3% annually to 5,161,000, thereby producing expenditures in the amount of LTL 7,263.9 million by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). The size comparison between the leisure and business segment is similar to the one of Latvia. Leisure travel spending (inbound and domestic) is estimated to be at about 79.8% of direct travel and tourism GDP currently (2011) as opposed to the business segment, which contributes with approximately 20.2% (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). The total number of Lithuanian Litas in 2011 generated through leisure spending is estimated to be at about LTL 4,896.8 million, which is forecasted to nearly double to reach approximately LTL 9,187.3 million by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). Business travel spending on the other hand is believed to reach LTL 1,237.0 million in 2011, increasing within the next ten years to about LTL 2,702.1 million by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). Contrary to the Estonian and Latvian travel and tourism sector, the Lithuanian travel and tourism sector seems to be in balance in terms of domestic and foreign visitor spending. Approximately 47.3% of direct travel and tourism GDP is generated through domestic travel spending, whereas only 52.7% is coming from foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). In this context, the WTTC estimates domestic travel spending to generate about LTL 2,902.7 million in 2011 and forecasts to reach LTL 4,625.5 million by 2021 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c). In comparison, foreign visitor spending or visitor exports are believed to reach LTL 3,231.1 million in 2011, which is forecasted to increase to about LTL 7,263.9 million (2021) within the next ten years (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011c).

## **Appendix C: Interview Questions Template – Actual Tourists (English)**

### **Actual Tourists – Interview Plan (English)**

### Introduction

I would like to discuss the following key areas with you: your travels to the destinations (reason, duration, etc.), destination image, destination personality, general marketing of destinations, destination branding, cobranding of destination, and co-branding of destinations influenced by destination image and destination personality.

### I. THE BALTIC STATES

1. Which of the three countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania have you previously visited?

Prompts:

- a) When (approximately) did you visit the country/countries?
- b) For what purpose did you visit the country/countries?
- c) How long did you stay in the destination/destinations?
- d) Where did you stay within the destination/destinations?
- e) What places, locations, tourist attractions did you visit in the destination/destinations?

For the following questions, I would ask you to please think about the three destinations / countries as separate destinations.

## II. DESTINATION IMAGE (OVERALL, COGNITIVE/FUNCTIONAL, AFFECTIVE)

2. Please make a journey back through time and revisualise when you visited destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Tell me your story. What was your experience in destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania like?

Prompts:

- a) Without additional information, kindly be spontaneous and share with me whatever thoughts come to your mind right now, whether positive or negative.
- b) What images and thoughts immediately come to mind?
- c) What did you see, or feel or hear in the destinations, what smells, or tastes can you remember?
- d) What are the first three words that come to your mind to describe the image of country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania?
- e) Why did you choose the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania as a holiday spot?

- f) In what way are the individual Baltic countries x/y/z (Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania) unique or alike?
- g) What separates these countries from one another? For example, in what ways is Estonia different from Latvia and/or Lithuania or in what way does it stand out?
- 3. Please think about the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania, and freely describe your impressions of each of these destinations visited.

Prompts:

- a) When visiting the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania, what were some of the distinctive or unique tourist attractions and features of each of the destinations?
- b) What was the natural environment like?
- c) How did you perceive the cultural environment?
- d) How did you perceive the general infrastructure?
- e) What was the socio-economic environment like?
- f) What amenities did you notice?
- g) How would you describe the general atmosphere?
- 4. Please think about the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania, and freely describe the atmosphere or mood of the respective destination.

Prompts:

- a) How did you feel about destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania prior to your visit?
- b) How were you treated in destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania?
- c) How did you feel/think about destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania after your visit?
- 5. From the countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania you have visited, how does each country stand out from the other two and how are they different? What do you believe are the reasons for that?

Prompts:

a) Do you favour any particular country and if so, why?

## III. DESTINATION PERSONALITY

6. If the destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania were a person, what kind of person would it be? Please describe this person using personality characteristics.

Prompts:

a) If the destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania were a person, what were his/her tastes in food, clothing, lifestyle, etc.?

7. Please visualize and describe a typical visitor to country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. What kind of person would it be? Please describe this person using personality characteristics.

Prompts:

a) Please take a moment to think about destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Think about the kind of person who typically visits destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Imagine this tourist in your mind and then describe this person using personal adjectives such as classy, poor, stylish, masculine, sexy, old, athletic, or whatever personal adjectives you can use to describe the typical visitor of destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania.

### IV. GENERAL MARKETING OF DESTINATIONS

8. Please think of each of the three countries separately. From a tourist perspective (i.e., from your point of view), how are the three individual countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania marketed to the consumer?

Prompts:

- a) As a marketer responsible for each of the three Baltic States, which image would you try to convey through your marketing activities?
- b) What advice would you give marketers who are keen to improve marketing concepts of the three Baltic States? What sort of things should they be doing and what should they not be doing?

For the following questions, I would ask you to please think about the three destinations / countries as one single destination.

### V. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS

9. What comes to your mind and what do you think of when you hear the term 'Baltic States'?

Prompts:

- a) Please think of a tourism slogan or a tagline for the countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania in your own words.
- b) What should a 'Baltic States' brand entail? Do you think it could foster the competitiveness of the individual Baltic countries as a destination? If so, why?
- c) How does the term "Baltic States" currently communicate/represent the individual countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania?

10. If you were a destination marketer and had to think about the Baltic States as one region, what image would you try to communicate to tourists about the Baltic States as a travel destination?

Please also think about historical/cultural aspects, special activities, facilities, or highlights?

Prompts:

- a) Think about a co-branding marketing campaign. What should such a campaign communicate in terms of aspects that the three countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania have in common? Please describe.
- b) Think about a co-branding marketing campaign. What should such a campaign communicate in terms of differences that differentiate the three countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania from each other? Please describe.
- c) In your own opinion, how would a co-branding approach applied to the Baltic States influence the perception a tourist has of the three individual countries?
- d) Would a co-branding approach to marketing influence the image of the individual countries? If so, how? If not, why not?

# VI. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS, INFLUENCED BY DESTINATION IMAGE AND DSTINATION PERSONALITY

11.	Please think about the destination or destinations you visited. How, in your opinion, is the 'destination brand' concept related to 'destination image' and 'destination personality'?		
	Prompts:		
		<i>a</i> )	In other words, the image of Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania is? The personality of Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania is? Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania as a brand stands for?
		b)	What similarities and/or differences do you perceive between the 'destination brand' concept, 'destination image', and 'destination personality'? What exactly is it that you distinguish?

12. Do you personally believe that the brand of country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania in each of the countries' marketing is effectively portrayed and represented well enough and brings out the destination's image / personality? Is the image and personality of each of the three countries features/represented well enough? Please explain your answer.

reflected in the destination brand concept?

Prompts:

a) How does destination marketing as well as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a brand communicate their destination personality (think of websites, promotional activities, and values)? How would you assess its effectiveness towards tourists? Please explain.

In your opinion, to what extent should the image and personality of a destination be

- b) Is it important for you as a tourist that the brand of a destination also communicates a country's personality and image? Why or why not? Please explain your answer.
- c) Is it important for you as a tourist that a brand communication is based on destination personality and destination image? If so, why? If not, why not? Please explain your answer.

For the following questions, I would ask you to please continue to think about the three destinations / countries as one single destination.

13. When you hear the term 'Baltic States' what thoughts and/or feelings arise in you or come to your mind?

Prompts:

- a) How would you describe the Baltic States as one common tourist destination?
- b) What comes to your mind when you think of an icon, a symbol, or a logo for Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia as one destination brand? Try to create one or describe one in your own words.
- 14. In your opinion, how do the destination images / destination personalities of the individual countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania enable the creation of one common destination brand? In your opinion, do you think it is feasible and what would need to happen?
- 15. In your opinion, how (if possible) would a common destination brand potentially change/alter the individual countries' destination image and destination personality?
- 16. In your opinion, what would a new and combined image and personality of this common brand be like?

#### **Conclusion of Interview:**

- 17. Is there anything you would like to add with regards to the three Baltic States, the themes we discussed, the terms or concepts (Destination Image, Destination Personality, Destination Brand, etc.) we talked about? Something I may not have touched on but that you would consider important?
- 18. One last question. What was your motivation to participate in this research project?

## **Appendix D: Interview Questions Template – Actual Tourists (German)**

### **Actual Tourists – Interview Plan (Deutsch)**

### **Einleitung**

Ich möchte gerne mit Ihnen die folgenden Themen besprechen: a) Ihre Reise in die Länder (Anlass, Dauer, etc.), das Image der Destinationen, die Persönlichkeit der Destinationen, das generelle Marketing der Destinationen, das Branding der Destinationen, ein mögliches Co-Branding der Destinationen, sowie ein Co-Branding beeinflusst vom Image und der Persönlichkeit der Destinationen.

### I. DIE BALTISCHEN STAATEN

1. Welche der drei Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen haben Sie in der Vergangenheit besucht?

Prompts:

- a) Wann (ungefähr) haben Sie das Land oder die Länder besucht?
- b) Was war der Grund Ihres Besuches in dem Land oder den Ländern?
- c) Wie lange haben Sie sich in den Destinationen aufgehalten?
- d) Wo genau haben Sie sich in den Destinationen aufgehalten?
- e) Welche Orte/Plätze/Sehenswürdigkeiten haben Sie dort besucht?

Für alle weiteren Fragen denken Sie bitte an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als separate Destinationen

### II. IMAGE DER DESTINATIONEN (GESAMT, RATIONAL, EMOTIONAL)

2. Versuchen Sie sich einmal in die Zeit zurückzuversetzen als Sie sich in der oder den Destinationen Estland / Lettland / Litauen aufgehalten haben. Erzählen Sie mir einfach einmal Ihre Geschichte. Wie war diese Erfahrung für Sie in der Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen?

Prompts:

- a) Ohne zusätzliche Informationen, seien Sie bitte ganz spontan und teilen Sie mit mir jegliche Gedanken, die Ihnen gerade einfallen, egal ob positiv oder negativ.
- b) Welches Image oder Bild haben Sie vor den Augen, welche Gedanken kommen Ihnen unmittelbar in den Sinn?
- c) Was haben Sie gesehen, gefühlt, gehört in den Destinationen oder an welche Gerüche oder Geschmack können Sie sich erinnern?
- d) Was wären die ersten drei Worte, die Ihnen einfallen, wenn Sie das Image des oder der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen beschreiben sollten?

- e) Warum haben Sie überhaupt das Land oder die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen als Urlaubsziel ausgewählt?
- f) In wieweit denken Sie sind die Baltischen Staaten Estland / Lettland / Litauen einzigartig oder vielleicht sogar ähnlich?
- g) Wie unterscheiden sich die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen voneinander? D.h. in wieweit ist beispielsweise Estland anders oder wie setzt es sich von Litauen und/oder Lettland ab?
- 3. Bitte denken Sie an das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen und beschreiben Sie einmal ganz frei Ihre Eindrücke des Landes oder der Länder.

## Prompts:

- a) An welche speziellen oder einzigartigen touristischen Ziele oder Besonderheiten können Sie sich erinnern, wenn Sie sich an das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen erinnern?
- b) Wie empfanden Sie die natürliche Umgebung, bzw. die Natur als solches?
- c) Wie empfanden Sie das kulturelle Umfeld?
- d) Wie haben Sie die Infrastruktur empfunden?
- e) Wie war das sozio-ökonomische Umfeld?
- f) Welche Annehmlichkeiten haben Sie wahrgenommen?
- g) Wie war die Atmosphäre in dem Land oder den Ländern?
- 4. Denken Sie bitte einmal an das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen. Beschreiben Sie doch einmal ganz frei die Atmosphäre oder die Stimmung in dem Land oder den jeweiligen Ländern.

## Prompts:

- a) Wie haben Sie über das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen gedacht/gefühlt, bevor Sie dieses besucht haben ?
- b) Wie wurden Sie in der Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen eigentlich behandelt?
- c) Welche Gefühle/Gedanken hatten Sie über das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen nach Ihrem Besuch?
- 5. Von den Ländern Estland / Lettland / Litauen, die Sie besucht haben, in wieweit denken Sie, dass das eine Land von den anderen beiden heraussteht, bzw. wie unterscheiden Sie sich? Was denken Sie sind die Gründe dafür?

### Prompts:

a) Favorisieren Sie ein bestimmtes Land? Falls ja, was sind die Gründe dafür?

## III. PERSÖNLICHKEIT DER DESTINATIONEN

6. Stellen Sie sich vor die Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen wäre eine Person. Was für eine Person oder was für ein Typ Mensch wäre das? Bitte beschreiben Sie diese Person, indem sie Persönlichkeitsmerkmale oder Persönlichkeitscharakteristiken benutzen.

Prompts:

- a) Wenn die Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen eine Person wäre, was denken Sie wäre der deren Geschmack in Bezug auf Essen (Nahrung), Kleidung, Lifestyle, etc.?
- 7. Bitte visualisieren Sie sich (stellen Sie sich) den typischen Besucher des Landes Estland / Lettland / Litauen vor. Was für eine Person oder was für ein Typ Mensch wäre das? Bitte beschreiben Sie diese Person, indem sie ebenfalls Persönlichkeitsmerkmale oder Persönlichkeitscharakteristiken benutzen.

Prompts:

a) Nehmen Sie sich bitte einmal einen Moment Zeit um an das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen denken. Denken Sie an eine typische Person, die das Land Estland / Lettland / Litauen besucht. Stellen Sie sich diesen Touristen vor Ihrem geistigen Auge vor und beschreiben Sie diese Person, indem Sie persönliche Adjektive benutzen (Beispiel: klassisch, arm, stylish, männlich, sexy, alt, athletisch). Sie können jegliche Adjektive nutzen, die Ihnen in den Sinn kommen und die Ihnen helfen den typischen Besucher der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen zu beschreiben.

### IV. FRAGEN ZUM GENERELLEN MARKETING VON REISEDESTINATIONEN

8. Denken Sie bitte einmal an die drei Länder, allerdings separate voneinander. Aus der touristischen Perspektive (also aus Ihrer Sicht), wie werden die drei Destinationen Estland / Lettland / Litauen aus Ihrer Sicht an den Konsumenten (den Touristen) vermarktet?

Prompts:

- b) Als eine Person, die für die Vermarktung der drei Baltischen Staaten verantwortlich ist, welches Image würden Sie versuchen durch Ihre Marketing-Aktivitäten zu kommunizieren?
- c) Welchen Rat würden Sie Marketing Fachleuten geben, die ein Interesse haben (die bestrebt sind), die Marketing Konzepte der drei Baltischen Staaten zu verbessern? Was sollten diese Marketing Fachleute tun oder was sollten Sie vielleicht nicht tun?

Für alle weiteren Fragen denken Sie bitte an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als eine einzelne Destination.

### V. CO-BRANDING VON DESTINATIONEN

9. An was denken Sie wenn Sie den Begriff "Baltische Staaten" hören, bzw. was kommt Ihnen in den Sinn?

Prompts:

- a) Bitte überlegen Sie sich (denken Sie an) einen touristischen Slogan oder eine "Tag Line" für das Land oder die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen in Ihren eigenen Worten.
- b) Was sollte eine gemeinsame Marke der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen mit dem Namen "Baltic States" oder einem anderen Namen beinhalten? Glauben Sie, dass es die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der einzelnen Baltischen Staaten als Reiseziel fördern würde? Wenn ja, warum??
- c) In wieweit vertritt/kommuniziert/repräsentiert der Begriff "Baltische Staaten" momentan die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen?
- 10. Stellen Sie sich vor Sie sind ein Marketing Experte innerhalb einer fiktiven Tourismus-Behörde der gesamten Baltischen Staaten (als Gesamtregion). Welches Image/Bild über die Baltischen Staaten als Reisedestination würden Sie versuchen an den Touristen zu kommunizieren?

Denken Sie dabei bitte an historische/kulturelle Aspekte, an besondere Aktivitäten oder touristische Einrichtungen und Highlights?

Prompts:

- a) Denken Sie an eine co-branding Marketing Kampagne. Was sollte eine solche Kampagne in Bezug auf Gemeinsamkeiten der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen beinhalten? Bitte beschreiben Sie dies.
- b) Denken Sie nochmals an eine co-branding Marketing Kampagne. Welche Unterschiede unter den Ländern sollte eine solche Kampagne unterstreichen bzw. herausheben? Bitte beschreiben Sie dies.
- c) In Ihrer Meinung, wie würde ein co-branding der Baltischen Staaten die Wahrnehmung von Touristen in Bezug auf die einzelnen Baltischen Staaten beeinflussen?
- d) Denken Sie, das ein co-branding der Baltischen Staaten das Image der einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen beeinflussen würde? Falls ja, wie? Wenn nicht, wieso nicht?

# VI. CO-BRANDING VON DESTINATIONEN, BEEINFLUSST VON IMAGE UND PERSOENLICHKEIT EINER DESTINATION

11.	Denken Sie bitte an die Destination oder die Destinationen, die Sie persönlich besucht haben Wie glauben Sie hängt die Destination als Marke mit dem Image und der Persönlichkeit eine			
	Destination zusammen?			
	Prompts:			

a) In anderen Worten...das Image von Estland / Lettland / Litauen ist\_\_\_\_

Persönlichkeit von Estland / Lettland / Litauen ist \_\_\_\_\_\_? Estland /

Lettland / Litauen als Marke steht für\_\_\_\_\_?

- b) Welche Ähnlichkeiten und/oder Unterschiede zwischen einer Destination als Marke, dem Image einer Destination und/oder der Persönlichkeit einer Destination nehmen Sie wahr? Was genau ist es, dass Sie da wahrnehmen?
- c) In wieweit denken Sie sollte das Image und die Persönlichkeit einer Destination in der Marke (Brand) einer Destination reflektiert sein?
- 12. Glauben Sie persönlich, dass die Marke der jeweiligen Destination Estland / Litauen in der Vermarktung der einzelnen Staaten effektiv herauskommt oder umgesetzt wird und somit das Image und die Persönlichkeit der jeweiligen Länder zur Geltung kommt? Bitte erläutern Sie Ihre Antwort.

Prompts:

- d) In wieweit kommuniziert/reflektiert das Destinationsmarketing sowie die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen als Marke deren Persönlichkeit? Denken Sie dabei an die Internetseiten, Promotionen, etc.)? Wie würde Sie die Effektivität dieser Maßnahmen gegenüber dem Touristen einschätzen? Bitte erklären Sie Ihre Antwort.
- e) Ist es für Sie als Touristen wichtig, dass eine Destination als Marke auch die Persönlichkeit und das Image einer Destination kommuniziert? Warum denken Sie, dass das so ist?
- f) Ist es für Sie als Tourist wichtig dass die sogenannte Brand Communication auf der Persönlichkeit und dem Image einer Destination basiert? Falls ja, warum denken Sie dass dies so ist?

Für alle weiteren Fragen denken Sie bitte weiterhin an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als eine einzelne Destination.

13. Wenn Sie den Begriff "Baltische Staaten" hören, welche Gedanken und/oder Gefühle haben Sie oder nehmen Sie wahr? An was denken Sie?

Prompts:

- a) Wie würden Sie die Baltischen Staaten als einzelne touristische Destination beschreiben?
- b) Welches besondere Merkmal (Icon), ein Symbol, oder Logo können Sie sich vorstellen, wenn Sie an die Baltischen Länder als eine Marke denken sollten? Versuchen Sie dies einmal entweder in Worten zu beschreiben oder auf einem Blatt Papier zu illustrieren.
- 14. Wie glauben Sie könnte das Image und die Persönlichkeit der individuellen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen überhaupt die Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen Marke ermöglichen? Ist es möglich und wenn ja, was müsste passieren und wie könnte es letztlich aussehen?
- 15. Wie glauben Sie würde (sofern eine gemeinsame Marke möglich ist) eine gemeinsame Marke dann das Image und die Persönlichkeit der einzelnen Länder als Reisedestinationen verändern?

16. Wie sähe ein neues und gemeinsames Image und Persönlichkeit dieser gemeinsamen Marke aus?

# Gesprächsabschluss:

- 17. Gibt es irgendetwas, was Sie noch zu den Ländern, den Thematiken, den Begriffen (Image, Persönlichkeit, Marke, etc.) einer Destination hinzufügen möchten, womit ich Sie bisher nicht gelöchert habe?
- 18. Eine letzte Frage. Was war denn eigentlich Ihre Motivation, an dieser Studie mitzumachen?

# **Appendix E: Interview Questions Template – Potential Tourists (English)**

### **Potential Tourists – Interview Plan (English)**

### Introduction

I would like to discuss the following key areas with you: your travels to the destinations (reason, duration, etc.), destination image, destination personality, general marketing of destinations, destination branding, cobranding of destination, and co-branding of destinations influenced by destination image and destination personality.

## I. THE BALTIC STATES

1. From the three Baltic States (Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania), which country would be of interest to visit in the near future? Please explain why, or why not?

Prompts:

- a) For what purpose would you visit the country/countries?
- b) How long would you plan to stay in the destination/destinations?
- c) Where would you plan to stay within the destination/destinations?

For the following questions, I would ask you to please think about the three destinations / countries as separate destinations.

### II. DESTINATION IMAGE (OVERALL, COGNITIVE/FUNCTIONAL, AFFECTIVE)

2. Imagine that next week you will visit destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania for the first time. Tell me your story. What do you think your experience in destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania would be like and what do you imagine to see?

- a) Without having done any research or additional information about the Baltic States, kindly be spontaneous and share with me whatever thoughts come to your mind right now, whether positive or negative.
- b) What image perceptions do you have about the three Baltic countries and what pictures or thoughts immediately come to mind?
- c) What would you expect to see, or feel, hear, smell, taste there?
- d) What would be the first three words that come to your mind to describe the image of country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania that you currently have?
- e) Why would you choose the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania as a holiday spot?

- f) In what way would you perceive the individual Baltic countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania to be unique or alike?
- g) What do you think separates these countries from one another? For example, in what ways is Estonia different from Latvia and/or Lithuania or in what way does it stand out?
- 3. Please think about the countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania and imagine you are currently traveling through these destinations. Please, freely describe your impression of each of these destinations and what you believe you would see/experience.

Prompts:

- a) When visiting the country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania, what would be some of the distinctive or unique tourist attractions you would expect in each of the destinations?
- b) How would the natural environment be like?
- c) How would the cultural environment be like?
- d) How would the general infrastructure to be like?
- e) What would the socio-economic environment be like?
- f) What tourist amenities do you think would be offered?
- g) What would the general atmosphere be like?
- 4. Imagine you were traveling though country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Please freely describe the atmosphere or mood you would expect to sense or experience in the respective destinations.

Prompts:

- a) How do you feel about destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania prior to your visit?
- b) How do you think will you be treated in destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania?
- c) How do you think would your feelings / thoughts about destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania change after your actual visit as a tourist?
- 5. Please think about the perception you currently have of the countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. In your opinion, how does each country stand out from the other two? What are the reasons for it? Is there a country that perhaps is very different or stands out from the others? If so, what would be the reasons for that?

Prompts:

a) Do you believe you favour or would favour any particular country and if so, why?

### III. DESTINATION PERSONALITY

6. If the destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania were a person, what kind of person would it be? Please describe this person using personality traits or characteristics.

Prompts:

- a) If a destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania were a person, what were his/her tastes in food, clothing, lifestyle, etc.?
- 7. Please use all your imagination and try to visualize a typical visitor to country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. What kind of person would it be? Please also describe this person using personality traits or characteristics.

Prompts:

a) Take a moment to think about destinations Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Try to imagine the kind of person who typically visits destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania. Imagine this tourist in your mind and then describe this person using personal adjectives such as classy, poor, stylish, masculine, sexy, old, athletic, or whatever personal adjectives you can use to describe the typical visitor of destination Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania.

### IV. GENERAL MARKETING OF DESTINATIONS

8. Please try to think of each of the three countries separately. From a tourist perspective, how are the individual countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania marketed to the consumer (i.e., the potential tourist)?

Prompts:

- a) As a marketer responsible for each of the three Baltic States, which image would you try to convey through your marketing activities?
- b) What advice would you give marketers who are keen to improve marketing concepts of the three Baltic States Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania? What sort of things should they be doing?

For the following questions, I would ask you to please think about the three destinations / countries as one single destination.

### V. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS

9. What comes to your mind and what do you think of when you hear the term 'Baltic States'?

- a) Please think of a tourism slogan or a tagline for the countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania in your own words.
- b) What should a 'Baltic States' brand entail? Do you think it could foster the competitiveness of the individual Baltic countries as a destination? If so, why?

- c) How does the term "Baltic States" currently communicate/represent country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania?
- 10. If you were a destination marketer and had to think about the Baltic States as one region, what image would you try to communicate to tourists about the Baltic States as a travel destination?

Please also think about historical/cultural aspects, special activities, facilities, or highlights?

Prompts:

- a) Think about a co-branding marketing campaign. What should a co-branding marketing campaign communicate in terms of aspects that the three countries x/y/z (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) have in common? Please describe.
- b) Think about a co-branding marketing campaign. What should a co-branding marketing campaign communicate in terms of differences that differentiate the three countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania from each other? Please describe.
- c) In your own opinion, how would a co-branding approach applied to the Baltic States influence a travelers' perception of the individual countries?
- d) Would a co-branding approach to marketing influence the image of the individual countries? If so, how? If not, why not?

# VI. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS, INFLUENCED BY DESTINATION IMAGE AND DSTINATION PERSONALITY

Prompts:		
1	<i>a</i> )	In other words, the image of Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania is? The personality of Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania is? Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania as a brand stands for?
	b)	What similarities and/or differences do you perceive between the 'destination brand concept, 'destination image', and 'destination personality'? What exactly is it that you distinguish?
	c)	In your opinion, to what extent should the image and personality of a destination be reflected in the destination brand concept?

12. Do you personally believe that the brand of country Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania in each of the countries' marketing is effectively portrayed and represented well enough and brings out the destination's image / personality? Is the image and personality of each of the three countries

features/represented well enough? Please explain your answer.

Prompts:

a) How does destination marketing as well as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a brand communicate their destination personality (think of websites, promotional activities, and values)? How would you assess its effectiveness towards tourists? Please explain.

- b) Is it important for you as a tourist that the brand of a destination also communicates a country's personality and image? Why or why not? Please explain your answer.
- c) Is it important for you as a tourist that a brand communication is based on destination personality and destination image? If so, why? If not, why not? Please explain your answer.

For the following questions, I would ask you to please continue to think about the three destinations / countries as one single destination.

13. When you hear the term 'Baltic States' what thoughts and/or feelings arise in you or come to your mind?

Prompts:

- a) How would you describe the Baltic States as one tourist destination?
- b) What comes to your mind when you think of an icon, a symbol, or a logo for Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia as one destination brand? Try to create one or describe one in your own words.
- 14. In your opinion, how do the destination images / destination personalities of the individual countries Estonia / Latvia / Lithuania enable the creation of one common destination brand? In your opinion, do you think it is feasible and what would need to happen?
- 15. In your opinion, how (if possible) would a common destination brand potentially change/alter the individual countries' destination image and destination personality?
- 16. In your opinion, what would a new and combined image and personality of this common brand be like?

### **Conclusion of Interview:**

- 17. Is there anything you would like to add with regards to the three Baltic States, the themes we discussed, the terms or concepts (Destination Image, Destination Personality, Destination Brand, etc.) we talked about? Something I may not have touched on but that you would consider important?
- 18. One last question. What was your motivation to participate in this research project?

## **Appendix F: Interview Questions Template – Potential Tourists (German)**

### Potential Tourists - Interview Plan (Deutsch)

### **Einleitung**

Ich möchte gerne mit Ihnen die folgenden Themen besprechen: Ihre Reise in die Länder (Anlass, Dauer, etc.), das Image der Destinationen, die Persönlichkeit der Destinationen, das generelle Marketing der Destinationen, das Branding der Destinationen, ein mögliches Co-Branding der Destinationen, sowie ein Co-Branding beeinflusst vom Image und der Persönlichkeit der Destinationen.

### I. DIE BALTISCHEN STAATEN

1. Welches Land von den drei Baltischen Staaten Estland / Lettland / Litauen würde Sie für eine Reise/einen Besuch in näherer Zukunft am meisten interessieren und warum, beziehungsweise warum nicht?

Prompts:

- a) Zu welchem Zweck würden Sie in eines der Länder oder die Länder reisen?
- b) Was denken Sie wie lange Sie in der oder den Destinationen bleiben würden?
- c) Was glauben Sie wo Sie sich im Fall einer Reise innerhalb der Destination oder den Destinationen aufhalten würden?

Für alle weiteren Fragen denken Sie bitte an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als separate Destinationen

### II. IMAGE DER DESTINATIONEN (GESAMT, RATIONAL, EMOTIONAL)

2. Stellen Sie sich bitte einmal vor, Sie würden nächste Woche die Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen zum ersten Mal besuchen. Erzählen Sie mir doch bitte eine Geschichte. Wie denken Sie würde Ihre Erfahrung in der Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen aussehen? D.h. was würden Sie erleben, was glauben Sie zu sehen, etc.?

- a) Ohne dass Sie gerade zusätzliche Informationen haben oder Sie die Möglichkeit haben sich tiefer mit den Baltischen Staaten zu beschäftigen, seien Sie einfach ganz spontan und teilen Sie mit mir an was Sie dabei denken, egal ob positiv oder negativ.
- b) Welches Image oder Bild haben Sie da vor Augen, welche Gedanken kommen Ihnen unmittelbar in den Sinn?
- c) Was würden Sie erwarten dort zu sehen, zu fühlen, zu hören, riechen oder schmecken?

- d) Was sind so die ersten drei Worte, die Ihnen in den Sinn kommen, die das Image beschreiben, dass Sie von dem Land oder den Ländern x/y/z (Estland, Lettland, oder Litauen) im Augenblick haben?
- e) Können Sie sich vorstellen, warum Sie das Land oder die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen als Urlaubsziel wählen würden?
- f) Was denken Sie, in welcher Hinsicht Sie die einzelnen Baltischen Staaten Estland / Lettland / Litauen als einzigartig oder als ähnlich wahrnehmen würden??
- g) Was glauben Sie, wie sich die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen voneinander unterscheiden? D.h., in wieweit ist beispielsweise Estland in Ihren Augen anders oder wie setzt es sich von Litauen und/oder Lettland ab?
- 3. Denken Sie bitte einmal an die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen und stellen Sie sich vor, Sie würden gerade durch diese Destination(en) reisen. Beschreiben Sie bitte einmal ganz frei Ihre Eindrücke in diesen Destinationen, d.h. was glauben Sie dort zu sehen?

### Prompts:

- a) Wenn Sie sich vorstellen, Sie würden die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen besuchen, was wären einige der besonderen oder einzigartigen touristischen Attraktionen in jeder dieser Destinationen?
- b) Wie glauben Sie ist die natürliche Umgebung, bzw. die Natur als solches in diesen Ländern?
- c) Wie glauben Sie ist das kulturelle Umfeld in diesen Ländern?
- d) Welche generelle Infrastruktur würden Sie in den Ländern erwarten?
- e) Wie stellen Sie sich das sozio-ökonomisch Umfeld in diesen Ländern vor?
- f) Welche touristischen Annehmlichkeiten glauben Sie, würden in diesen Destinationen angeboten werden?
- g) Wie glauben Sie ist die allgemeine Atmosphäre in den Ländern?
- 4. Stellen Sie sich vor Sie reisen durch das Land oder die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen. Beschreiben Sie einmal ganz frei welche Atmosphäre oder Stimmung Sie in den jeweiligen Destinationen erwarten würden.

- a) Wie oder was fühlen Sie über die Destination x/y/z (Estland, Lettland, und Litauen) jetzt, vor einem möglichen Besuch?
- b) Wie glauben Sie würden Sie in den Destinationen Estland / Lettland / Litauen jeweils behandelt?
- c) Wie glauben Sie würde das Gefühl was Sie momentan von Estland / Lettland / Litauen haben sich verändern durch einen Besuch, also nachdem Sie dort als Tourist waren?

5. Denken Sie nun bitte einmal über Ihre derzeitige Wahrnehmung nach, die Sie von den Ländern Estland / Lettland / Litauen haben. Wie glauben Sie, unterscheiden sich die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen? Gibt es vielleicht ein Land, welches besonders heraussticht und was könnten Ihrer Meinung nach die Gründe hierfür sein?

Prompts:

a) Glauben Sie, dass Sie ein bestimmtes Land favorisieren würden und falls ja, wieso könnte das so sein?

### III. PERSÖNLICHKEIT DER DESTINATIONEN

6. Wenn die Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen eine Person wäre, welcher Typ Mensch oder was für eine Person wäre das? Bitte beschreiben Sie diese Person indem Sie Persönlichkeitsmerkmale oder Persönlichkeitscharakteristiken benutzen.

Prompts:

- a) Stellen Sie sich vor die Destination Estland / Lettland / Litauen wäre eine Person. Was wäre in Ihren Augen deren Geschmack in Bezug auf Essen, Kleidung, Lebensstil, etc.?
- 7. Bitte nutzen Sie einmal all Ihre Vorstellungskraft und versuchen Sie sich den typischen Besucher des Landes oder der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen vorzustellen. Bitte beschreiben Sie diesen nun, indem sie ebenfalls Persönlichkeitsmerkmale oder Persönlichkeitscharakteristiken benutzen.

Prompts:

a) Nehmen Sie sich kurz einen Moment Zeit und denken Sie an die Destinationen Estland / Lettland / Litauen. Versuchen Sie sich einmal den typischen Besucher dieser Destination(en) vorzustellen. Betrachten Sie nun diesen typischen Besucher und beschreiben Sie ihn dann, indem Sie persönliche Adjektive benutzen (Beispiel: klassisch, arm, stylish, männlich, sexy, alt, athletisch). Sie können jegliche Adjektive nutzen, die Ihnen in den Sinn kommen und die Ihnen helfen den typischen Besucher der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen zu beschreiben.

### IV. FRAGEN ZUM GENERELLEN MARKETING VON REISEDESTINATIONEN

8. Betrachten Sie nun einmal die drei Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen komplett separat voneinander. Aus Ihrer Sicht und touristischen Perspektive, wie betrachten Sie die Vermarktung der einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen gegenüber dem Konsumenten (dem Touristen)?

- a) Als eine Person, die für die Vermarktung der drei Baltischen Staaten verantwortlich ist, welches Image würden Sie versuchen durch Ihre Marketing-Aktivitäten zu kommunizieren?
- b) Welchen Rat oder welche Empfehlung würden Sie Marketingfachleuten geben, deren Interesse es ist das Marketing der einzelnen Baltischen Staaten Estland / Lettland / Litauen zu verbessern? Welche Dinge sollten diese Marketingleute Ihrer Ansicht nach tun?

Für alle weiteren Fragen denken Sie bitte an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als eine einzelne Destination.

### V. CO-BRANDING VON DESTINATIONEN

9. Was fällt Ihnen ein, wenn Sie den Begriff 'Baltische Staaten' hören, bzw. was kommt Ihnen in den Sinn?

Prompts:

- a) Basierend auf den Informationen die Sie haben, versuchen Sie einmal in Ihren eigenen Worten einen touristischen Slogan (Werbespruch) oder eine Tag Line für die Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen zu entwerfen. Wie würde dieser lauten, um Ihr Interesse zu wecken?
- b) Was sollte eine gemeinsame Marke 'Baltic States' beinhalten? Denken Sie dass eine gemeinsame Marke grundsätzlich die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der einzelnen Baltischen Staaten als touristisches Reiseziel fördert? Falls ja, wieso? Falls nicht, warum nicht?
- c) Wie kommuniziert aus Ihrer Sicht der momentane Begriff "Baltische Staaten" die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen?
- 10. Stellen Sie sich vor Sie sind ein Marketing Experte innerhalb einer fiktiven Tourismus-Behörde der gesamten Baltischen Staaten (als Gesamtregion). Welches Image/Bild über die Baltischen Staaten als Reisedestination würden Sie versuchen an den Touristen zu kommunizieren?

Denken Sie dabei bitte an historische/kulturelle Aspekte, an besondere Aktivitäten oder touristische Einrichtungen und Highlights?

- a) Denken Sie an eine co-branding Marketing Kampagne. Was sollte eine solche Kampagne in Bezug auf Gemeinsamkeiten der Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen beinhalten? Bitte beschreiben Sie dies.
- b) Denken Sie nochmals an eine co-branding Marketing Kampagne. Welche Unterschiede unter den Ländern sollte eine solche Kampagne unterstreichen, bzw. herausheben? Bitte beschreiben Sie dies.
- c) In Ihrer Meinung, wie würde ein co-branding der Baltischen Staaten die Wahrnehmung von Touristen in Bezug auf die einzelnen Baltischen Staaten beeinflussen?
- d) Denken Sie, das ein co-branding der Baltischen Staaten das Image der einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen beeinflussen würde? Falls ja, wie? Wenn nicht, wieso nicht.

# VI. CO-BRANDING VON DESTINATIONEN, BEEINFLUSST VON IMAGE UND PERSOENLICHKEIT EINER DESTINATION

11.	der Verga	ange	itte einmal ganz allgemein an die Destination oder die Destinationen, die Sie in nheit persönlich besucht haben. Wie glauben Sie hängt die Marke einer nit dem Image und der Persönlichkeit einer Destination zusammen?
	Prompts:	a)	In anderen Wortendas Image von Estland / Lettland / Litauen ist? Die Persönlichkeit von Estland / Lettland / Litauen ist? Estland / Lettland / Litauen als Marke steht für?
		b)	Welche Ähnlichkeiten und/oder Unterschiede zwischen der Marke einer Destination dem Image einer Destination und/oder der Persönlichkeit einer Destination nehmen Sie wahr? Was genau ist es, dass Sie da wahrnehmen?
		c)	In wieweit denken Sie sollte das Image und die Persönlichkeit einer Destination in der Marke (Brand) einer Destination reflektiert sein?
12.	Litauen in wird und	n dei som	persönlich, dass die Marke der jeweiligen Destination Estland / Lettland / r Vermarktung der einzelnen Staaten effektiv herauskommt oder umgesetzt nit das Image und die Persönlichkeit der jeweiligen Länder zur Geltung kommt? n Sie Ihre Antwort.
	Prompts:	<i>a</i> )	In wieweit kommuniziert/reflektiert das Destinationsmarketing sowie die einzelnen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen als Marke deren Persönlichkeit? Denken Sie dabei an die Internetseiten, Promotionen, etc.). Wie würden Sie die Effektivität dieser Maßnahmen gegenüber dem Touristen einschätzen? Bitte erklären Sie Ihre Antwort.
		b)	Ist es für Sie als Tourist grundsätzlich wichtig, dass die Marke einer Destination gleichzeitig auch die Persönlichkeit und das Image einer Destination kommuniziert Warum denken Sie, dass das so ist?
		c)	Ist es für Sie als Tourist wichtig dass die sogenannte Brand Communication auf der Persönlichkeit und dem Image einer Destination basiert? Falls ja, warum denken Sie dass dies so ist?
Fü	ir alle weit	eren	n Fragen denken Sie bitte weiterhin an alle drei Destinationen / Länder als eine einzelne Destination.
13.	Wenn Sie	den	Begriff "Baltische Staaten" hören, welche Gedanken und/oder Gefühle haben

vorstellen, wenn Sie an die Baltischen Länder als eine Marke denken sollten? Versuchen Sie dies einmal entweder in Worten zu beschreiben oder auf einem Blatt Papier zu illustrieren.

Wie würden Sie die Baltischen Staaten als einzelne touristische Destination

b) Welches besondere Merkmal (Icon), ein Symbol, oder Logo können Sie sich

Sie oder nehmen Sie wahr? An was denken Sie?

beschreiben?

- 14. Wie glauben Sie könnte das Image und die Persönlichkeit der individuellen Länder Estland / Lettland / Litauen überhaupt die Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen Marke ermöglichen? Ist es möglich und wenn ja, was müsste passieren und wie könnte es letztlich aussehen?
- 15. Wie glauben Sie würde (sofern eine gemeinsame Marke möglich ist) eine gemeinsame Marke dann das Image und die Persönlichkeit der einzelnen Länder als Reisedestinationen verändern?
- 16. Wie sähe ein neues und gemeinsames Image und Persönlichkeit dieser gemeinsamen Marke aus?

### Gesprächsabschluss:

- 17. Gibt es irgendetwas, was Sie noch zu den Ländern, den Thematiken, den Begriffen (Image, Persönlichkeit, Marke, etc.) einer Destination hinzufügen möchten, womit ich Sie bisher nicht gelöchert habe?
- 18. Eine letzte Frage. Was war denn eigentlich Ihre Motivation, an dieser Studie mitzumachen?

# Appendix G: Interview Schedule – Pilot

					Pilot In	iterviews					
Interview Code	Gender	Age	Family Status	Household Size	Highest Education	Gross Income	Occupational Status	City of Residence	ZIP Code	Tourist Type	Date
Pilot-1M	Male	44	Married	4	Doctorate	> 110.000	Employed	Ilten	31319	Potential Tourist	11.05.2012
Pilot-2F	Female	41	Married	4	University	n/a	Stay-at-home mom	Sehnde	31319	Potential Tourist	12.05.2012
Pilot-3F	Female	64	Unmarried	2	University	45.000 – 54.999	Employed	Wennigsen	30974	Actual Tourist	13.05.2012
Pilot-3M	Male	70	Unmarried	2	University	35.000 – 44.999	Retired	Hannover	30974	Actual Tourist	14.05.2012

# **Appendix H: Interview Invitation Letter (English)**

Dear Mrs. / Mr. [last name],

My name is Thomas Leib and I am a doctoral student at the Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) in the Department of Food and Tourism Management.

As part of my research I am looking at the destination image of three Baltic States (i.e., Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) from a tourist's perspective or perception. This qualitative study is part of my thesis and thus, a prerequisite to obtain a doctoral degree. The objective is not to collect any personal data and the disclosure of any information to third parties for the purpose of establishing business contacts in the future.

For the data collection of this research study, consumers (German tourists with and without personal travel experience in the Baltic States) all over Germany are being approached. Your knowledge and experiences and your associated impressions from traveling through Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would highly contribute to assess the current tourism and service offers and would provide information about their impact on tourists from the German source market.

Thus, I would like to cordially invite you to participate in my study as an interview partner. As a small incentive for your timely involvement, you would automatically participate in a raffle of a new Apple iPad.

I would be delighted to receive a positive acknowledgement to this request and will be at your disposal in case you have any additional questions. The interview would take place within a three-months period, between May and July 2012 and would be arranged according to your preferences pertaining to location, date, and time.

Should you be interested to participate, I would kindly ask you to contact me with your contact details (Address, Email, Phone) via email (<a href="mailto:thomas.leib@gmail.com">thomas.leib@gmail.com</a>) and a day / time to reach out to you. I would be happy to contact you within a week's time to further coordinate and explain your participation, privacy regulations, or clarify any other questions you may have pertaining to this study and its objectives.

Should you know any other persons from your professional or private social environment, who would also be eligible to participate in this study, I would of course be grateful for any information

I thank you very much for your interest and look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Thomas Leib

Thomas Leib, Doctoral Student
Manchester Metropolitan University
Department of Food and Tourism Management
Hollings Faculty
Old Hall Lane
Manchester, M14 6HR, United Kingdom

Email: thomas.leib@gmail.com

# **Appendix I: Interview Invitation Letter (German)**

Sehr geehrter Herr / Sehr geehrte Frau [Nachname],

Mein Name ist Thomas Leib und ich bin Doktorand im Bereich Food and Tourism Management an der Manchester Metropolitan University (UK).

Als Teil meiner Forschung betrachte ich das Image der drei Baltischen Staaten (Estland, Lettland, und Litauen) als Destination aus der Perspektive oder Wahrnehmung von Touristen. Diese qualitative Studie ist Teil meiner Doktorarbeit und daher Grundvoraussetzung für die Verleihung des Doktortitels. Das Ziel meiner Studie ist es nicht persönliche oder vertrauliche Daten zu sammeln oder solche Informationen an dritte Parteien für geschäftliche Belange oder Werbezwecke weiterzugeben.

Für die Datensammlung zu dieser Studie werden Konsumenten (Deutsche Touristen mit und ohne persönlicher Reiseerfahrung in den Baltischen Staaten) im gesamten Bundesgebiet befragt. Ihr Wissen, Ihre Erfahrungen, sowie die Eindrücke, die Sie im Rahmen Ihrer Reisen durch Estland, Lettland und Litauen gewonnen haben, würden sehr helfen den Tourismus oder das touristische Angebot in diesen Ländern zu bewerten. Sie würden auch Informationen zur Bedeutung der Baltischen Staaten aus dem Blickwinkel von Touristen aus dem deutschen Quellmarkt liefern.

Aus diesem Grunde möchte ich Sie herzlich einladen, an meiner Studie als Interviewpartner teilzunehmen. Als kleines Incentive, würden Sie automatisch an der Verlosung eines neuen Apple iPad teilnehmen.

Ich würde mich ausgesprochen freuen, von Ihnen mit einer positiven Rückmeldung zu hören und stehe Ihnen selbstverständlich jederzeit gerne bei Fragen zur Seite. Das Interview würde in einem Zeitraum der kommenden drei Monate stattfinden, zwischen Mai und Juli 2012, und richtet sich nach Ihrer Verfügbarkeit sowie Ihren Vorstellungen in punkto Ort, Datum, und Zeit.

Sollten Sie an einer Teilnahme Interesse haben, würde ich mich freuen wenn Sie mir per Email (thomas.leib@gmail.com) Ihre Kontaktdaten (Adresse, Email, Telefon) und einen bevorzugten Zeitpunkt für eine Kontaktaufnahme meinerseits zukommen lassen würden. Ich würde mich dann innerhalb einer Woche mit Ihnen in Verbindung setzen um alles weitere zu koordinieren und Ihre Teilnahme und Datenschutzrichtlinien zu erörtern, aber auch um mögliche Fragen zur Studie und deren Zielsetzung im Detail zu beantworten.

Sollten Sie darüberhinaus noch weitere Personen aus Ihrem persönlichen oder beruflichen Umfeld kennen, die ebenfalls für eine Teilnahme an dieser Studie in Frage kommen, würde ich mich über die Weitergabe dieser Information ausgesprochen freuen.

Ich danke Ihnen schon jetzt für Ihr Interesse und freue mich von Ihnen zu hören.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Thomas Leib

Thomas Leib, Doctoral Student
Manchester Metropolitan University
Department of Food and Tourism Management
Hollings Faculty
Old Hall Lane
Manchester, M14 6HR, United Kingdom
Email: thomas.leib@gmail.com

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# Appendix J: Interview Schedule – Actual Tourists

					Actua	al Tourists					
Interview Code	Gender	Age			Occupational Status	Location	ZIP Code	Tourist Type	Date		
A1F	Female	46	Married	3	University	75.000 - 84.999	Self- employed	Nuremberg	90419	Actual Tourist	25.05.2012
A2F	Female	55	Single	1	University	> 110.000	Self- employed	Munich	80798	Actual Tourist	30.05.2012
A3M	Male	64	Married	2	University of Applied Sciences	45.000 - 54.999	Retired	Schwäbisch- Gmünd	73525	Actual Tourist	07.06.2012
A4M	Male	35	Unmarried	3	University of Applied Sciences	75.000 - 84.999	Employed	Darmstadt	64293	Actual Tourist	09.06.2012
A5M	Male	71	Married	2	University	n/a	Retired	Saarbrücken	66119	Actual Tourist	13.06.2012
A6M	Male	36	Unmarried	1	University of Applied Sciences	55.000 - 64.999	Employed	Wiesbaden	65205	Actual Tourist	07.07.2012
A7M	Male	27	Single	1	University of Applied Sciences	25.000 - 34.999	Employed	Bochum	44809	Actual Tourist	15.06.2012

					Actua	al Tourists					
Interview Code	Gender Age			Highest Education	Gross Income	Occupational Status	Location	ZIP Code	Tourist Type	Date	
A8M	Male	39	Unmarried	2	University	45.000 - 54.999	Employed	(Kassel) Leinfelden- Echterdingen	70771	Actual Tourist	05.06.2012
A9M	Male	28	Unmarried	2	University	n/a	Employed	Berlin	10365	Actual Tourist	29.06.2012
A10F	Female	46	Single	1	Middle School	35.000- 44.999	Employed	Mülheim / Ruhr	45468	Actual Tourist	03.07.2012
AllM	Male	53	Married	2	University	85.000 - 94.999	Employed	(Berlin) Bielefeld	33602	Actual Tourist	14.06.2012
A12M	Male	35	Married	4	University of Applied Sciences	n/a	Employed	Ginsheim	65462	Actual Tourist	05.07.2012
A13M	Male	53	Unmarried	2	Middle School	n/a	Employed	Hannover	30449	Actual Tourist	01.07.2012

# ${\bf Appendix} \ {\bf K:} \ {\bf Interview} \ {\bf Schedule-Potential} \ {\bf Tourists}$

					Poter	ntial Touris	sts				
Interview Code	Gender	Age	ge Family Status Household Highest Gross Income Status Locati		Location	ZIP Code	Tourist Type	Date			
P1M	Male	38	Married	3	University	85.000 - 94.999	Employed	Bad Rodach	96476	Potential Tourist	26.05.2012
P2M	Male	36	Married	3	University	65.000 - 74.999	Self- Employed	Stuttgart	70174	Potential Tourist	04.06.2012
P3M	Male	62	Married	2	University	n/a	Self- Employed	Stuttgart	70174	Potential Tourist	06.06.2012
P4M	Male	42	Married	4	University of Applied Sciences	> 110.000	Employed	Potsdam	14467	Potential Tourist	23.06.2012
P5F	Female	37	Married	4	University	75.000- 84.999	Employed	Berlin	10785	Potential Tourist	27.06.2012
P6M	Male	47	Unmarried	2	University of Applied Sciences	55.000 - 64.999	Employed	Bremen	28195	Potential Tourist	19.06.2012
P7F	Female	27	Single	1	University	15.000 - 24.999	Employed	Lübeck / Travemünde	23570	Potential Tourist	20.06.2012

					Poten	tial Touris	ts				
Interview Code	Gender Age		Highest Education	Gross Income	Occupational Status	Location	ZIP Code	Tourist Type	Date		
P8F	Female	35	Married	3	High School	45.000 - 54.999	Student	Hamburg	22764	Potential Tourist	21.06.2012
P9M	Male	34	Unmarried	2	High School	25.000- 34.999	Employed	Berlin	10711	Potential Tourist	28.06.2012
P10M	Male	41	Married	3	University	35.000 - 44.999	Employed	St. Leon-Rot	68789	Potential Tourist	09.07.2012
P11F	Female	34	Married	3	University	65.000 - 74.999	Employed	Erlangen	91052	Potential Tourist	29.05.2012
P12F	Female	30	Unmarried	1	University	35.000 - 44.999	Employed	Köln	50935	Potential Tourist	30.06.2012
P13F	Female	39	Divorced	1	University of Applied Sciences	45.000 - 54.999	Employed	Frankfurt am Main	60528	Potential Tourist	12.06.2012

## **Appendix L: Interview Consent Form (English)**



### **HOLLINGS FACULTY - RESEARCH ETHICS**

Any research undertaken by the student stated below will be conducted, recorded and presented in accordance with the guidelines set out by the University Academic Ethics Committee. These guidelines are known as the MMU Academic Ethical Framework and may be accessed at: <a href="http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/documents/res\_files/ethics/ethical\_framework.doc">http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/documents/res\_files/ethics/ethical\_framework.doc</a>
They are compatible with those published by the ESRC and other responsible bodies.

Name of student:	Thomas Leib

Project/Dissertation title: Co-Branding of Tourism Destinations: The Role of Destination Image

and Personality

### **Student statement:**

Before any research is undertaken, I would like to assure collaborators and participants of the following points:

- Participation in an interview is entirely voluntary.
- Participants are free to refuse to answer a question at any time.
- Participants are free to withdraw from an interview at any time.
- The interview/questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only within Hollings Faculty.
- Excerpts from this interview/questionnaire may be incorporated into a project report or dissertation, but under no circumstances will names or personal characteristics be included without prior consent.

Signed:	Print Name:
Interviewee acceptance:	
Signed:	Print Name:
Date:	

## **Appendix M: Interview Consent Form (German)**



## HOLLINGS FACULTY - FORSCHUNGSETHISCHE GRUNDSÄTZE

Jegliche Forschung von unten genanntem Studenten, wird in Übereinstimmung mit den Richtlinien der Ethikkommission der Manchester Metropolitan University durchgeführt, aufgenommen, und präsentiert. Diese Richtlinien sind öffentlich bekannt unter den "MMU Academic Ethical Framework" und können unter folgendem Link eingesehen werden:

http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/documents/res files/ethics/ethical framework.doc

Diese Richtlinien sind des weiteren vereinbar mit den veröffentlichten Richtlinien des "Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)", sowie weiteren verantwortlichen Gremien.

Name des Studenten: Thomas Leib

Forschungsprojekt /Titel: Co-Branding of Tourism Destinations: The Role of Destination Image

and Personality

### Studentische Erklärung:

Im Vorfeld jeglicher Forschungstätigkeit, möchte ich Mitarbeitern und Teilnehmern folgende Punkte versichern:

- Die Teilnahme an einem Interview ist ausschließlich freiwillig;
- Der Teilnehmer kann zu jedem beliebigen Zeitpunkt die Beantwortung einer Frage verweigern;
- Der Teilnehmer kann zu jedem beliebigen Zeitpunkt seine Teilnahme am Interview zurückziehen;
- Das Interview und gesammelte Daten werden streng vertraulich behandelt, sicher aufbewahrt, und wird nur an der Studie teilnehmenden Personen innerhalb der Hollings Faculty zugänglich;
- Auszüge aus dem Interview sowie erhobene Daten im Rahmen des Interviews dürfen in der Forschungsarbeit verwendet werden. In keinen Umständen werden Namen oder persönliche Charakteristiken, die Rückschlüsse auf den Teilnehmer zulassen verwendet ohne dessen vorheriges Einverständnis.

Name/Vorname des Studienleiters:	
Unterschrift:	
Einwilligung des Studienteilnehmers:	
Name/Vorname des Teilnehmers:	
Unterschrift:	Datum:

# **Appendix N: Demographic Questions (English)**

# **Demographic Information**

To better understand our interviewees, we would also like to collect some demographic information. This will only take a moment.



1. Gend	ler:			□ Ma		Fe	□ emale			
2. Year	of Birth /	Age: _								
3. Natio	nality: _									
4. City /	' Country	of Resid	ence:							
5. City /	Country	of Birth	(if differen	t):						
6. Fami	ly Status:		☐ unmarried		☐ rried	☐ separated		orced	othe	er
7. House	ehold Size	e <b>:</b>	1		2	□ 3	4	5 or r		
8. Highe	est Compl	leted Edu	ıcation:							
	<b>_</b>			]			]			
	ddle nool	High School	Vocat Coll		College	Unive	ersity	Doctorate	(	other
9. Appr	oximate A	Annual G	ross Incom	e (EUR):						
□ <	15000	□ 25000		□ 45000	55000	65000	75000	□ 85000	95000	<b>-</b> >
15000	- 24999	34999	- 44999	- 54999	- 64999	- 74999	- 84999	94999	110000	110000
10. Occ	upational	Status:								
	□ employe	ed	self-		ay-at-		□ eeking		other	

Thank you very much!

# **Appendix O: Demographic Questions (German)**

# Demographische Auskünfte

Zum Schluss benötigen wir nun noch ein paar demographische Auskünfte, da wir die gewonnenen Daten auch nach diesen Aspekten auswerten. Dafür sollten Sie nur einen kurzen Augenblick benötigen.



1. Geschlecht	:		□ weibl		mä	nnlich			
2. Geburtsjah	r / Alter: _		_						
3. Staatsangel	hörigkeit: _								
4. Wohnort / ]	Land:								
5. Geburtsort	/ Land (fall	ls abweichen	d):						
6. Familiensta	nnd:	□ ledig	verhe		getrennt lebend	geschi	J ieden	sonsti	ges
7. Größe des 1	Haushaltes:	1		2	3	4		<b>J</b> er mehr	
8. Höchste ab	geschlossen	e Ausbildun	g:						
Realschule	☐ Gymnasi	um Berufss		chhochsc	hule Unive		☐ Promotion	SOI	nstiges
9. Ungefähres	jährliches ]	Bruttoeinko	mmen (E	UR):					
1500 c	00 25000		<b>4</b> 5000	55000	65000	75000	□ 85000	95000	<b>-</b> >
15000 2499	- 99 34999	44999	- 54999	- 64999	- 74999	- 84999	- 94999	110000	110000
10. Berufliche	er Status:								
	□ estellt	□ selbständig		□ usfrau / Iutter		suchend		sonstiges	

**Herzlichen Dank!** 

# **Appendix P: Sample Interview Transcript – Actual Tourist**

Interview	wer:	Thomas Leib (TL)
Interview	wee:	Actual Tourist (AT)
Address	:	
Date:		
Length o	of Interview:	71 min.
started, of the st	containing and udy, confiden	e interview was given to the interviewee before the actual interview d clarifying detailed information pertaining to purpose and progress tiality issues, participation of the interviewee, data collection, the recording of the interview.
		ion was asked from the interviewee to conduct the interview and a en to the interviewee for signature obtaining the approval.
-	ently the audiourists"]	o-recorded interview started following the interview questions for
TL:	in einem best	, Sie haben ja gesagt dass Sie in den Baltischen Staaten lichen waren Sie denn? Waren Sie in allen drei Ländern, oder war das immten?  , you mentioned that you have visited the Baltic States? What you visit? Did you visit all three countries or did you visit a specific
AT:	Bei zwei wei	r mehrfach in der Gegend und davon das erste Mal in allen dreien. teren Reisen jeweils primär in Estland. Einmal zwar von Lettland
AT:	WellI have The following	eils dann eigentlich mit dem Ziel Estland. been several times in the region and the first time I visited all three. g two trips I have been primarily Estonia. In one instance I started in ch time the primary goal was to visit Estonia.
TL:	den Ländern'	
TL:	Umhumoka countries?	y. What was the reason or motivation of your visitation to these
AT:	neugieriger N	e Malhmwar es ganz einfach so dasswie gesagt, ich bin ein Mensch und nachdem ich sehr lang sehr viele Fernreisen n hab, hatte ich irgendwie das Bedürfnis mal innerhalb von

Europa...mal was zu kucken. Und wir hatten da so ein Schlüsselerlebnis...also wir standen...weil meine Mutter in der Schweiz gelebt hat...da standen wir an der

Schweizer Grenze im Stau vor der Zollabfertigung und da kam im Radio die Nachricht, dass jetzt die Baltischen Staaten...hm...also praktisch zur EU gehören und dass mal also einfach keine Zollkontrollen mehr hat. Und da haben wir so flapsig gesagt, dass wir...da müsste man jetzt eigentlich in die Baltischen Staaten fahren statt in die Schweiz und da haben wir uns angeschaut und gesagt...wo sind die Baltischen Staaten? Und dann haben wir gesagt...gut, dann schauen wir die uns mal an...weil wir...die sind jetzt in der EU...keiner kennt das. Da ist eine deutsche Vergangenheit in gewisser Weise...also klingt spannend, also gehen wir da mal hin.

- TL: Well, the first time...it was simply that...well, as I said, I am a curious person and after having done long-distance travel for many years, I felt an urge to...look at some things within Europe. But we had some key experience... we stood...well, since my mother had lived in Switzerland...we got stuck in a traffic jam at the Swiss border customs office and listened to the radio and heard that the Baltic States are now...well, that they practically belong to the EU and that there are no customs checks any longer. Back then we just joked around and said that we...that one should actually travel tot he Baltic States instead of Switzerland and we looked at each other and asked ourselves...where are the Baltic States? Well, and that was the situation in which we said...let's do that, let's take a look at them since they now belong tot he EU...and nobody knows them. We knew that there was a German history to some extent...that sounded exciting, so we decided to go there.
- TL: Ah...ok. Wie lange haben Sie sich dort vor Ort ungefähr aufgehalten?
- TL: Oh...okay. How long did you stay in those destinations?
- AT: Also das erste Mal...hm...etwas über zwei Wochen und jeweils die beiden anderen Male etwas über eine Woche...jeweils.
- AT: Well, the first time...um...a little over two weeks and the other two times a little over one week.
- TL: Mmhm...also relativ lange dann. Hm...könnten Sie mir sagen sofern Sie sich erinnern wo genau Sie sich dort aufgehalten haben?
- TL: Umhum...well, relatively long then. Um...can you perhaps tell me in case you remember where exactly you stayed there?
- AT: Das erste Mal waren wir mit dem Wohnmobil unterwegs und sind ne Route gefahren.
- AT: The first time we did a road trip with a camper and did a tour.
- TL: Oh, schön...
- TL: Oh, how nice...
- AT: Die könnte ich Ihnen auf einer Karte jetzt ungefähr rekapitulieren, aber wir haben halt ne Tour durch alle drei Länder gefahren, wobei das Wetter im Süden recht schlecht war. Das heißt wir haben also von Litauen ein bisschen was weggelassen, also waren nicht in Vilnius zum Beispiel und sind dann wieder abgedreht weil es im Norden besser war. Und die zwei anderen Male waren wir hauptsächlich in Ottepää, in Estland, jeweils in einem Sporthotel, dass wir bei dieser Rundtour

- gesehen hatten und das uns besonders gut gefallen hatte. Also dann waren wir nicht mehr mit dem Wohnmobil unterwegs, sondern im Hotel selbst.
- AT: I could roughly recall where exactly that was if I had a map, but we basically made a tour through all three countries, while the weather was pretty bad in the South. That caused us to skip a small part of Lithuania, meaning for example that we did not visit Vilnius during that trip and instead turned north since the weather was better there. During the other two trips we mainly stayed in Ottepää in Estonia, each time in some sort of sports hotel that we had seen during our first round trip and which we actually liked very much. There we were not on the road with our camper but stayed in hotels.
- TL: Ah ja...hm...gibt es so ein paar Sehenswürdigkeiten, die dort herausgestanden haben? Sehenswürdigkeiten, die Sie jetzt so ganz spontan erwähnen würden?
- TL: Oh okay...um...were there attractions or sights that somehow stood out? Attractions, you spontaneously can recall?
- AT: Hm...sagen wir mal so...ich mache von Anfang an keinen Hehl daraus, dass mir Estland mit Abstand am besten gefallen hat...aus verschiedensten Gründen, auf die wir vielleicht im Laufe des Gesprächs auch noch kommen. Wenn gleich...hm...zum Bespiel Riga natürlich ne Klasse für sich ist. Das ist natürlich schon eine beeindruckende Stadt. Und...die Kurische Nehrung ist natürlich auch eine ganz tolle Sache, so mit dem ganzen Drumherum. Ja und Litauen...hm...ist wieder ganz anders ...(Lachen). Und ich sag mal, das ist ein bisschen zu kurz gekommen...hm...da könnte ich Ihnen jetzt nicht wirklich gerade ein einzelnes Highlight irgendwie nennen. Aber so die...was mir zum Beispiel auch fehlt ist der ganze östliche Teil, also den...wie heißt der...ja, wie heißt der große See...also den See hoch da sind wir gar nicht...oder diese ganzen Industriegebiete dann da oben oder so... Also landschaftlich...hm...vor allem...also ich bin ja auch vom Beruf vorbelastet...also logischerweise schaue ich da vielleicht mehr drauf. Und dann die...diese...na, da bräuchte ich jetzt ne Karte dazu...Huldiga heißt das glaube ich...das ist glaube ich sogar Lettland in dem Fall...das ist Lettland...ja. Diese Schweiz...also dieses...westlich von Riga ist das. Das ist auch eine sehr schöne Gegend, die mir sehr gut gefallen hat.
- AT: Um...let's put it this way...let me just say that I don't hide the fact that I liked Estonia by far the most...for very different reasons that we may touch on during the course of this interview. Although...um...for instance Riga is a class by itself. That is certainly a very impressive city. Also...the Curonian Spit is absolutely an amazing experience, with everything you can see there. Yes, and Lithuania...um...is again very different (laughter). Let's put it this way, it came off badly...um...right now, I really couldn't name a single highlight there. But this...for instance, what is missing for me right now is the entire eastern part, which means this...what's the name again...well, what's the name of this large lake...well we didn't travel to this lake up there...or these more industrialized areas up there and what not. Well, in terms of the landscape...um...first of all...I am occupationally stamped or biased...so logically I look at these things in greater detail. And then this...these...well, I would need a map now...I think it was called Huldiga...and I believe it actually is Latvia...yes, it is Latvia. It is almost Swiss like...well this...it is to the west of Riga. That is a very beautiful area, which I liked very much.

- TL: Hmhm...ok. Also in diesem Interview geht es ja im Großen und Ganzen unter anderem um die Imagebetrachtung, um die Persönlichkeit einer Destination, aber der werde ich Ihnen im Laufe des Interviews noch etwas dazu sagen, wie dies zu verstehen ist. Jetzt in den folgenden Fragen... möchte ich Sie vielleicht nur einmal bitten, sofern sie das auseinanderhalten können...und ich bin mir sicher Sie können das durch Ihre Reiseerfahrungen...dass sie diese 3 Destinationen oder Länder einmal ganz separat voneinander betrachten.
- TL: Umhum...okay. Well, in this interview we are basically looking at the image and personality of destinations among other aspects, but I will let you know more during the interview how to look at it. For now and in the next questions...I would like to ask you to perhaps more strictly distinguish the 3 destinations or countries from one another and to look at them separately...with your travel experience I am sure you can do that.
- AT: Hmhm...gut.
- AT: Umhum...okay.
- TL: Hm... versuchen Sie sich doch bitte einmal in diese Zeit sich zurückzuversetzen, sich an diese individuellen Reisen zurück zu erinnern, die sie gemacht haben und erzählen Sie mir dann einmal eine Geschichte... wie war diese Erfahrung oder ihre Erfahrung in diesen Ländern, welches... was ihm gerade so einfällt. Vielleicht welche negativen oder positiven Erfahrungen sie gemacht haben und welche Bilder so in ihnen hoch kommen.
- TL: Um...please think back to the days of those trips when you visited the individual destinations and then please try to tell me your story...what experiences did you have or make, what...whatever comes to your mind. Perhaps also what positive and negative experiences you had and what images surface when you think about those trips.
- AT: Hm... ich sollte es zwar nicht machen, ich schicke es aber trotzdem einmal vorneweg. Der Kontrast untereinander ist natürlich enorm. Also wenn man sie durch reist und auch eines nach dem anderen erlebt hat man da auch eine stärkere Meinung dazu weil man ihr den Unterschied dann auch kennt und man weiß wie es sein könnte. Und einmal mit Estland angefangen, was auch passt, weil wir da zuerst ankamen... das war irgendwie sehr angenehm, sehr vertraut. Also man hat auch nicht groß das Gefühl gehabt jetzt irgendwo fremd zu sein... ich habe viel Skandinavien Reise schon gemacht muss ich dazu sagen... abgesehen von der Sprache, die natürlich der Wahnsinn ist, aber auch wieder spannend weil sie so fremd und so anders ist... da hatte ich mit Estland jetzt eigentlich überhaupt keine Probleme da irgendwie rein zukommen, hatte auch die Leute vom Habitus, also die sind so...ne... eher groß, schlank und sehen irgendwie finnisch aus oder skandinavisch aus... war also eher vertraut ne... und auch die Erfahrungen, die waren durchweg... die waren mit den Leuten durchweg positiv, die waren...kamen auf einen zu auch wenn sie dann nur russisch konnten, oder sie haben versucht zu kommunizieren oder einem dann teilweise notfalls auch nur mit Zahlen in die Hand geschrieben und... haben uns mit dem Wohnmobil überall reingewunken. Es war also eigentlich eine richtige Wohlfühlatmosphäre muss ich sagen in Estland.
- AT: Um...I shouldn't do that, but regardless, I must start by saying the following: The contrast between those destinations is certainly enormous. Well, if one travels through all of them and experiences them one after the other, you have a much

stronger opinion to that because you get to realize the differences and know how things are and could be. Let's start with Estonia, which is appropriate since we arrived there...it was very pleasant, very intimate and familiar. Therefore, you didn't have at all the feeling of being foreign anywhere...I have to add that I did quite a few trips to Scandinavia in past years...aside from the language, which is sheer madness but also fascinating because it is so strange and different...I didn't have any problems getting used to that in Estonia and even the people there with regard to their habitus, they are so ...um...rather tall, slender, and their looks is somewhat Finnish or Scandinavian...so it was more familiar...as well as the experiences that were downright...with the people they were positive in every aspect, as they...the people approached us even though some were just able to speak Russian, or at least they tried to communicate and, if necessary, just wrote numbers into our hands and...invited and welcomed us everywhere with our camper. Thus, I have to say it was a truly relaxed atmosphere in Estonia.

- TL: Hmhm...
- TL: Umhum...
- AT: in Lettland...hm... hatten wir auch deutlich mehr Erben der sozialistischen Vergangenheit gefunden... also zum Beispiel völlig unpassende Gebäude auf dem Land... d.h. so riesige Mietskasernen, verfallene Plattenbauten auf dem Land, wo man durchfährt und sagt... um Gottes willen, das ist jetzt hier ne schöne Landschaft. Und dann stehen dann diese Dinger hier herum... alles deutlich verfallener, deutlich trister, melancholischer irgendwie die ganze Geschichte... und dann der wahnsinnige Kontrast zu Riga. Es gibt da sichtbare und große Unterschiede zwischen arm und reich. Riga, dieses völlig aufgebrezelte...dann auch die Menschen...da hast Du die Frauen alle mit solchen Absätzen, und mit Pelz und die fahren einen Porsche Cayenne. Also eine Porsche Cayenne Dichte in dieser Stadt, wie ich sie auf der Welt noch nie gesehen habe. Und dann bist du auf einmal wieder draußen aus der Stadt und siehst Menschen die durch den Müll wühlen als Kontrast...und dann liegt da alles brach, ist alles verrostet und fertig und die Farbe blättert ab... also wahnsinnig krasse Gegensätze.
- AT: In Latvia...um...we clearly saw a greater heritage or more remnants of a socialist past...for instance, very untimely and unattractive buildings in the countryside...in other words giant blocks of flats, decayed industrialized buildings [Plattenbau] in the countryside, where one travels through and says...for heaven's sake, this is a beautiful landscape. And then you have these things in that same landscape...everything clearly run-down and deteriorated, distinctly more depressing, somehow more melancholic the whole thing...and then this insane contrast to Riga. There is a visible and big divide between rich and poor. Riga this completely dolled-up city...and also the people...you have these women in Riga in massive high heels, wearing their furs, driving a Porsche Cayenne. Well, there was a Porsche Cayenne density in that city, something I have never seen before anywhere else in the world. And then you are suddenly outside the city in a backwards countryside and see people sorting through the garbage as a contrast...and everything lies idle and is uncultivated, everything is terminally rusty and broken and the colour comes off in flakes...really insanely stark contrasts.
- TL: Also das war auch nicht in... in Estland so zu sehen oder spüren?

TL: So that wasn't something that you could...that you could see or feel in Estonia?

Hm... nicht so stark. Wobei auch da... und das ist...das war wiederum etwas was AT: in allen... wobei naja eher eigentlich in Estland und Lettland...in Litauen nicht so stark. Das man das Gefühl hatte, die Bevölkerung fällt ein Stück weit auseinander in Russen und nicht-Russen, zumal sich grad die Esten natürlich rein physiognomisch von den russischen "Mitbewohnern" deutlich unterscheiden. Also in...in Nürnberg wohnen ja auch sehr viele russischstämmige. Die sehen anders aus und man sieht's halt einfach und man sieht dass sie da angesiedelt sind und viele von denen stehen dann vor dem Supermarkt mit der Flasche in der Hand... und das ist so eine Ghettoisierung halt... das hat so einen negativen...negativen Touch. Hm... trotzdem hat mir Estland noch am ehesten so den Eindruck gemacht, dass sie am fortschrittlichsten sind, dass dort Optimismus vorherrscht, dort eine Aufbruchsstimmung ist und sie die Leute auch mitnehmen, was weniger in Lettland und überhaupt nicht der Fall in Litauen ist. Und dann...also überall diese Hotspots... wo man herumfährt überall ist da das Gefühl, das Internet ist da... die Welt ist bei euch, ne... und ihr könnt teilhaben, ihr könnt mitmachen und...also eine ganz andere Stimmung in diesem Land.

AT: *Um...not that intense. Although, even there...and that is...that was again* something that...well, rather in Estonia and Latvia...not so much in Lithuania. That you had the feeling that the population falls apart to a certain extent into Russians and non-Russians, especially since Estonians differ significantly physiognomically from their Russian 'fellow citizens'. Well, in ... even in Nuremberg you have a large Russian population. They just look different and you can clearly spot that and you can tell that many of them have resettled there and quite a few of them stand in front of supermarkets with a bottle in their hands...and in a way it is a type of ghettoization...it has some sort of negative...a negative touch to it. Nevertheless, Estonia made the impression that they are the most progressive, that there is this spirit of optimism, an atmosphere of departure and that they are really taking their people along with them. And then...well, everywhere you have these hotspots...wherever you are or go to you have the feeling that there is Internet connectivity ... a feeling as if the entire world is at your fingertips...that you can share and participate and...well, a totally different atmosphere in that country.

TL: Also eine ganz deutliche Aufbruchsstimmung?

TL: You mean a very noticeable atmosphere of departure?

AT: Ja... und vor allem auch... wir waren ja gar nicht so sehr am Anfang dann... man hatte das Gefühl die partizipieren wirklich... auch die Leute die haben wirklich auch die Wahl und die Chance. Während in Lettland, das hatte ja so den bleiernen Eindruck der... der Resignation irgendwie ja auch viel. Es war als würden die sich vor dem so viel erfolgreicheren Estland zurückgesetzt fühlen. In den Läden...ja auch so das Angebot... schlechter und wie gesagt ja auch alles heruntergekommen und... naja bis man überhaupt einmal einen Laden gefunden hat und ne...das alles...naja, so richtig auf dem Land ging es dann eher. Da hatte man das Gefühl, na ja gut...die sind rückständig, aber das waren sie ja schon immer und die sind irgendwie zufrieden damit...ne...aber je städtischer es wurde, desto krasser wurden einfach die... die Gegensätze. Und insofern war Lettland...hm... wenn man auch in der Nähe...am südlichen Rand von Riga gibt es einen botanischen Garten... da

hättest du heulen können... also das war... naja weil die Pflanzen waren teilweise sehr alt und wenn man dann eben sieht... das hat mal jemand mit viel Liebe irgendwann angepflanzt und aufgebaut und sonst wie und das ist dann in einem...einem grausamen Zustand... das ganze... und dann gibt es da ein paar Leute die herum springen und da so ein bisschen versuchen das ganze...naja irgendwas zu retten...na, ich weiß nicht...da könnte man wahrscheinlich so ein paar EU-Mittel reinstecken...[Lachen].

AT: Yes...and what's more...back then we were note really at the beginning of...one had the feeling they truly participate...also the people seem to really have a choice and a chance. While in Latvia, everything had a depressing sensation of...very much of resignation. It's as if they feel cheap towards Estonia being so much more successful. Even in stores...the range of goods...a lot worse and as mentioned, everything was run-down...well, that is if you were able to find a store at all and you know...all that...well, in the countryside things were a little better. There you had the feeling, well okay...they are backwards, but then again they always were and they are somehow satisfied with that...right...but the more urban the environment became, simply the more blatant were the...the contrasts. Latvia was in that sense...um...even nearby...in the southern edge of Riga is a botanical garden...you could have cried...that was...well, the plants partially were pretty old and when you look at that and think...somebody has at some point put all his passion into planting all this, has built it up and all those things and then you see this...in a horrible condition...all of it...and then you have a couple of people bouncing around trying to ... somehow trying to save the whole thing or at least parts of it...well, I don't know...one should actually invest some EU funds into the whole thing [laughter].

TL: [Lachen]...hmhm...

TL: [Laughter]...umhum...

AT: Und Litauen...Litauen hatte dann wieder einen deutlich individuelleren und auch selbstbewussteren Charakter irgendwie. Also da hatte man wieder das Gefühl, das ist ein Land... ich war auch schon in Polen gewesen vorher und das hat mich sehr daran erinnert. Also Litauen war für mich sehr polnisch. Sowie Estland sehr finnisch oder sehr nordisch für mich war, war Litauen recht...nun, recht kontinental und eher polnisch. Lettland war für mich irgendwie so das Land dazwischen. Die sind diejenigen, die möglichweise noch die größten Schwierigkeiten haben. Es ist ein Land, das noch am ehesten das Problem hat seine eigene wahre Identität zu finden wahrscheinlich. Das ist irgendwie so ein bisschen, wie mit dem mittleren Geschwistern. Das ist glaube ich auch immer etwas schwierig. Na also insofern war Litauen auch wieder... es hat eher einen selbstbewussten Eindruck gemacht... auch eher... es war auch nicht so weit wie Estland, aber...hm...doch wieder...ja, auch da viel kaputt und viel alt und sonst wie...aber eher wieder so ein bisserl ne eigene Identität... auch von der Ausstrahlung und von allem. Also es war sehr eindringlich zumindest. Sehr unterscheidbar... also ich habe sie nie verwechselt... ich fand die alle sehr deutlich unterscheidbar und ich hatte nie das Gefühl...hm... wo bin ich denn gerade, sondern ich fand diese drei Länder sehr eindeutig unterscheidbar. Mal abgesehen von der Sprache die sowieso sehr deutlich unterschiedlich ist.

AT: And Lithuania ...Lithuania clearly had a more distinct or individual and also a more self-confident character somehow. Well, there again you had the feeling that

it is a country that...I previously had been to Poland and it strongly reminded me of that. That said, Lithuania seemed Polish to me. In as much as Estonia made a very Finnish or Nordic impression on me, Lithuania was rather...well, rather continental, and more Polish. Latvia to me was somehow that country in between. They are the ones who perhaps struggle the most. It's a country that most likely had a problem with finding their own true identity perhaps. The situation there is somehow a bit similar to the situation with middle siblings. That too is always a little difficult. Lithuania was also in this sense again...it just made a more confident impression...also because...it wasn't at the point where Estonia was, but...um...then again...yes, a lot was broken, old, run-down and those things...but then again it had more of an own identity...also in terms of its charisma or aura and all these things. Well, at least it was very intense or powerful there. It was very distinguishable...well, I never mixed them up...I found all countries very clearly distinguishable from each other and I never had the feeling...um...not knowing where I was and instead thought that they were clearly distinct countries. Of course apart from the language that is also clearly different.

- TL: Hmhm...ja. Wenn sich jetzt noch einmal so zurückerinnern an diese Reisen... was sind denn da so Dinge die sie so gefühlt, gehört haben in diesen Destinationen. Oder vielleicht kommen ihnen irgendwelche besonderen Gerüche oder Geschmäcker in den Sinn, was sie da so wahrgenommen haben. Gibt es darin etwas?
- TL: Umhum...yes. So when you think back to the trips you made...what were the things you felt or heard while being in the individual destinations. Perhaps you can even recall any special scents or tastes you experienced there. Is there something you can share?
- AT: Hm...[Lachen]... also das passt vielleicht gar nicht...aber... Also was ich oft hatte, war gerade zum Beispiel in den Ländern wo man die Erben der Besetzung und der industriellen Produktion... gerade auf dem Land noch sehr deutlich gesehen hatte... da hatte ich oft gewisse Hemmungen, weil ich dachte es könnte ja alles irgendwie etwas radioaktiv sein oder sonst wie verseucht. Oder vielleicht haben die Russen ja irgendwo ihren Müll in den Wald gekippt... und es ist dann was drüber gewachsen...und... also man hat so einen... so eine gewisse Vorsicht vor dem Erbe, weil man nicht so weiß was da so alles da reingekippt worden ist, weil ansonsten... das eindringlichste was ich da oben so eigentlich... vielleicht als Empfindung...hm... das ist dieses Ostseelicht... dieser hellblaue Himmel und dieses...dieses Licht... diese ganz eigentümliche... fast ein bisschen blass... also die Farben sind fast ein bisschen blasser... also nicht vergleichbar mit Sizilien oder was weiß ich...ne... wo dann der Himmel tiefblau ist. Aber es ist ein ganz, ganz intensives...hm... sehr helles, aber eben etwas blasseres Ostseelicht würde ich mal sagen. Und das war... das war eigentlich da überall und das war sehr...sehr grün die Landschaft...sehr grün, sehr saftig und dann dieses... dieses helle, diese unheimliche Helligkeit. Das auf jeden Fall einmal das eindringlichste. Naja und Gerüche... also wir waren zum Beispiel nicht in diesen Industrieregionen, wo sie da den... wie heißt das Zeug... diesen Ölschiefer da abbauen... da muss ja wohl die Luft eher schlecht sein. Aber ansonsten... wir hatten auch viel Wind, was diese Helligkeit oder diese Kühle des Lichts natürlich noch unterstrichen hat... dass es wirklich auch von der Luft her teilweise frisch war, aber...hm... ich finde die

- Länder wirkten alle sehr...sehr...ja, frisch und... und es hatte alles was von Aufbruch... naja, es war ja auch Frühling [Lachen].
- *Um...[laughter] ...well maybe it's inappropriate to mention...but...well, what I* AT: often had or noticed, was especially in countries where the heritage of occupation and industrial production...where that was clearly visible especially in the countryside...I often had certain inhibitions because I thought that everything could potentially be radioactive or somehow contaminated. Perhaps the Russians even dumped something into the forests somewhere...something that eventually is overgrown by now...and...well, one has a certain...a certain caution pertaining to that heritage, because you don't really know what got dumped everywhere, because other than that...the most haunting thing I actually experienced up there...perhaps as a feeling or perception...um...it is that light of the Baltic Sea...this light blue sky and this...this light...this very peculiar...almost a little mealy...well, the colours are almost a little more pale...not comparable to Sicily and what not...you know...where the sky typically is dark blue. Instead it is a very, a very intensive...um...I would describe it as a very bright, but also a little more pale light of the Baltic Sea. And that was ...that was visible everywhere and it was...the landscape was very green...very green, very lushly, and then this...this bright, this incredible brightness. That definitely was the most haunting aspect. Well, and in terms of scents...well, just for instance, we did not travel through these industrialized regions, where they do this ... what's the name of it again...where they win this oil shale...the quality of the air is supposed to be pretty bad there. Apart from that...we also had a lot of wind, something that definitely facilitated this brightness and coldness of the light...so that often the air was also really crisp, but...um...I perceived all countries as being very...very...well, fresh or alive and...and it had something of a fresh start...well, then again it was springtime anyway [laughter].
- TL: Hmhm, klasse, noch irgendwelche Geschmäcker an die Sie sich besonders zurückerinnern? Etwas wo Sie sagen würden...Mensch, das stand so heraus?
- TL: Umhum, great, anything else perhaps in terms of special tastes (flavours) that come to mind? Something where you might say...gosh, that really stood out?
- AT: Geschmäcker...hm... was sie da haben ist tolles Brot. Die haben sehr viel... und vor allem, sie haben sehr viel... eine sehr interessante Küche auch... sie legen auch glaube ich großen ...relativ großen Wert auf...ich hab mal ein estnisches Kochbuch mitgenommen mit so einer Cross-Over-Küche... viel so ländlich traditionelle Sachen, also eher deftig auch...also wir haben auch viel... zum Frühstück viel so diese Milchprodukte...und dieses Kaviar... also jedenfalls sehr lecker alles... also insgesamt so vom...wenn man einmal den Kopf abschaltet auch vom Leib her in der Gegend, wenn es einem so richtig gut geht...sehr gut, muss ich auf jeden Fall sagen. Lecker essen und auch... also ich hab keine... keine negativen Sachen gehabt.
- AT: Tastes... um...what they have is fantastic bread. They have a lot of...most notably, they have a lot...also a very interesting cuisine...I think they place a lot of value...they put relatively great value upon...I once got myself an Estonian recipe book that covered this cross-over cuisine...a lot of those rustic, traditional things, meaning also rather hearty food...and we also had...for breakfast, we had quite a few dairy products...as well as this caviar...anyhow, very delicious everything...and overall...if you don't reason out everything and focus more on

- what your stomach tells you and when it just feels right...very good, I really have to say that. Delicious food and also...I didn't have any...no negative experiences in that respect.
- TL: Hmhm...und das war so in etwa in allen drei Ländern ähnlich? Oder gab es da größere Unterschiede?
- TL: Umhum...and what was perhaps very similar in all three countries? Or were there more differences?
- AT: Also da muss ich sagen... also da haben die Letten deutlich aufgeholt. Also da gab es viel Leckeres auch. Rigaer Black Balsam ist auch lecker [Lachen]...das ist so etwas ähnliches wie... wie Ramazzotti...ne, wie heißt der andere...wie Fernet Branca... also so eine Mischung aus Ramazzotti und Fernet Branca... also sehr lecker. Und dann eben auch dieses tolle Brot und viel Fisch und... und sehr deftig alles. Und...nee, das war aber eigentlich überall... auch dann Litauen, viel geräucherten Fisch...nee, also...
- AT: Well, I have to say...in that respect Latvians really made up some ground. They also had a lot of nice food. Riga Black Balsam is also very tasty [laughter] ...that is somewhat similar to...to Ramazzotti...oh no, what's the other name...it is like Fernet Branca...well, it's like a mix of Ramazzotti and Fernet Branca...actually very tasty. And they also had this amazing bread and a lot of fish and...everything was very hearty. Well...actually, that was really everywhere...even in Lithuania, a lot of smoked fish...well, yeah...
- TL: Hmhm...ok, klasse. Wenn Sie weiterhin die Länder ganz separat voneinander betrachten... was wären so pro Land die ersten drei Worte, die ihnen ganz spontan einfallen würden um das Image dieser Länder jeweils zu beschreiben?
- TL: Umhum...okay, great. Now if you please continue to consider these countries separate from each other...what would be the first three words per country that very spontaneously come to mind to describe the image you have of each of the countries?
- AT: Das Image...hm... oh Gott...das ist schwer. Also Estland... ist nicht nur aufgebrochen, sondern schon ein Stück weit angekommen... zumindest mit einem ziemlich großen Bein und es ist...ja, also hell passt auf jeden Fall auch und es ist aber auch geerdet. Das haben die auch in der Fahne...dieses Schwarz in der Fahne ist ja auch die Erde. Hm...Lettland ist für mich ein Stück weit melancholisch...hm...aber gar nicht so schlecht vom...vom...naja, die Stimmung ist schlechter als sie eigentlich sein müsste. So wirkt es zumindest. Und ansonsten ist Lettland eigentlich fand ich so ziemlich abwechslungsreich...also sehr abwechslungsreich, sehr kontrastreich. Und dann Litauen...Litauen ist...hm...war für mich das distanzierteste von den drei Ländern, also eher von den Leuten her das distanzierteste...vielleicht fast ein bisschen stolz und ansonsten...hm...sehr katholisch [Lachen]...und...hm...eher vielleicht das gewachsenste...also es hat noch am ehesten eine gewachsene Struktur.
- AT: The image...um...good gracious...that's difficult. Well, Estonia...has not just begun its journey, they have already arrived to a certain extent...at least with one big foot and it is...yes, well, bright would definitely be a good fit as well but it is also earthed/grounded. They also have that in their national flag...that black in their national flag eventually symbolizes the earth. Um...Latvia to me is a little

melancholic...um...but not as bad as...as...well, the atmosphere is worse than it actually needs to be. At least that's how it seems. And apart from that I experienced Latvia actually as quite rich in variety...well, very rich in variety, rich in contrasts. And last but not least Lithuania...And Lithuania is...um...it was the most distant of the three countries for me, meaning the most distant with regards to its people...perhaps almost a little too proud and apart from that...um...very Catholic [laughter]...and...um...rather perhaps the most grown/evolved...well, it most likely has a grown structure.

- TL: Okay...prima. Hm...Sie haben vorhin gesagt, oder angerissen...Sie haben da an der Grenze zur Schweiz war das glaube ich...Sie haben da dieses Bild gesehen, was letztendlich Ihre Motivation war in diese Länder zu reisen...gab es davon abgesehen sonst noch irgendetwas, warum Sie ausgerechnet diese Länder als Reiseziel gewählt haben?
- TL: Okay...great. Um...You mentioned earlier, or at least raised the issue...I believe it was at the Swiss border if I remember correctly...you imagined this image, what essentially became your motivation to travel to these countries...was there anything besides that experience that caused you to select these countries as travel destinations?
- AT: Hmhm...wenn man sich so ein bisschen damit beschäftigt...also ich muss sagen, es war natürlich ein...ein spannendes geschichtliches Thema natürlich auch, weil die...hm...deutsche Geschichte ist ja bekanntermaßen konfliktbeladen und...hm...komischerweise geht es aber...oder unser Geschichtsverständnis hört meistens bei Polen irgendwie wieder auf. Dass es dahinter noch deutlich weiterging...so weit denken wir irgendwie schon gar nicht mehr. Und es war irgendwie relativ spannend zu sehen...so oops...Ostpreußen ist so weit da hinten und es hat nicht nur mit dem Krieg und dem Dritten Reich zu tun, sondern das war schon viel, viel früher...und da waren die Deutschordensleute...die kamen sogar hier aus der Gegend...aus Franken...und das war so...wow...puh, da kommt ja noch viel mehr und dann wurde das auch...muss ich sagen...sehr intensiv verstärkt, weil wir...weil ich das erste Mal seit vielen Jahren es erlebt habe, dass ich im Ausland als Deutscher positiv willkommen geheißen wurde. Da wurde gesagt...boh, das ist ja toll, dass ihr da seid...dass die Leute ihr Deutsch herausgegraben haben...und viele sprechen gut Deutsch...nicht bloß die alten, sondern eben auch die jungen, die ganz aktiv deutsch lernen. Und ich muss sagen, das hat einem fast ein bisserl geschmeichelt, dass man sagte...boh...wir haben uns da...wir sind so mit eingezogenem Genick gekommen und die...und die finden uns ganz prima...ne...und freuen sich, dass wir da sind. Also es war gegenseitig verstärkend auch...ne...also wir haben dann auch sehr schnell wieder...also wir sind wieder hingegangen, weil wir gemerkt haben, man ist da wirklich willkommen als Deutscher und das ist ja wirklich nun heutzutage immer noch nicht überall der Fall.
- AT: Umhum...when you intellectually think about this a little...well, of course I have to say that it was a...it is naturally a fascinating historical topic especially since...um...German history is famously conflict-laden and...um...and strangely enough it is...or rather our historical awareness usually stops short in Poland somehow. The fact that it clearly continued behind it...we nowadays don't think about that any longer. It was somehow relatively exciting to see that...oops...East Prussia is located so far back there and it didn't just have to do with the war and

the Third Reich but much, much earlier...there were the Teutonic Knights...and they were also present here...in Franconia...and that was so...wow...phew, there is a lot more to it and then it was also...I really have to say that...very much intensified, because we were...I experienced it for the first time in many years that I was positively welcomed in a foreign country, as a German citizen. They said for instance...huh, it's great that you guys are here...they pulled out their German language skills...and some of them speak German quite well...not just the older ones, but also even the younger generation, that actively studies German. I actually have to say that one felt almost flattered and thought...huh...we were...we basically came with our tail between the legs and they...they find us great...right...and they are delighted to have us. Well, and that was also something that was mutually strengthening...yeah...well, that's again why we very quickly...well, we visited the countries again because we noticed that, as a German citizen, you are really welcome there and this is nowadays truly still not the case everywhere.

- TL: Ja...ja, das ist allerdings richtig. Das ist nicht unbedingt üblich, genau. Schön...in wieweit denken Sie denn, dass die Baltischen Staaten untereinander einzigartig sind oder vielleicht eher ähnlich zueinander? Sie haben ja vorhin gesagt, das kann man ganz...Sie können das ganz klar unterscheiden...
- TL: Yes...yes, that's actually true. That's not necessarily common, you are right. All right...in what ways do you believe are the Baltic States unique between each other or are they rather similar to one another? Earlier you mentioned, that one can...that you can clearly distinguish them from each other...
- AT: Also ich meine...klar, was die gemeinsam haben, ist natürlich die Besatzung durch die Russen und das gleiche Problem mit der...mit der Bevölkerung, dadurch dass sie... dass sie ne auseinanderfallende Bevölkerung haben und dass sie Leute integreren müssen, die vielleicht schwer zu integrieren sind in manchen Stellen. Das haben sie mit Sicherheit gemeinsam...wenngleich meines Wissen mit ungleicher...mit verschiedener...also die Litauer am wenigsten meines Wissens von der Menge her. Klar so etwas verbindet vermutlich, aber ansonsten würde ich sagen, dass die von der Geschichte, on der Sprache und der ganzen Herangehensweise an die Welt nicht besonders viel gemeinsam haben. Und diesen Eindruck haben sie auch nicht besonders erweckt. Also auch die...sagen wir mal...die Grenze...also grad...ich weiß nicht wie diese Stadt...auf der Karte könnte ich es zeigen...diese Stadt zwischen Lettland und Estland...hm...also wo wir dann ein paar mal hin- und hergependelt sind...da ist zwar der Grenzübergang offen, aber ansonsten ist das nach wie vor eine Grenze. Also da merkt man schon...das sind ja nicht Bundesländer, sondern das sind Länder und da hört es auf, also da geht es nicht drüber.
- AT: Well, I mean...evidently, what they have in common is of course the occupation by the Russians and consequently the same problem with...with the population, caused by the...they have a population that falls apart and need to integrate people that perhaps are difficult to integrate in certain ways. That is something they definitely have in common...although to my knowledge unequally...with different...well, according to my knowledge Lithuania is least affected of the three countries pertaining to the magnitude of it. Sure, something like that connects them probably, but other than that I would argue that they don't have a lot in common when focusing on history, language, and their entire approach to the

world. And they actually also didn't really make that impression on me. Well, also even the...let's put it this way...the border...well, I don't...I don't know the name of that city...I could show it on a map...this city between Latvia and Estonia...um...well, we travelled back and forth a couple of times there...even though the boarder checkpoint is open, it otherwise is still a national border. And you definitely notice that...we are not talking about federal states, but these are countries instead and it stops there, and you can't just cross it.

- TL: Hmhm, okay...wo würden Sie sagen sind die Hauptmerkmale, wo sie sich...wo sich die Länder dann unterscheiden?
- TL: Umhum, okay...what would you say are the key features, where they...in which the countries differ?
- AT: naja gut...ich meine...die Sprache...ich denke die...die Esten...also Estnisch wird niemand lernen, weil das ist...das kann man glaube ich gar nicht lernen, wenn man schon erwachsen ist [Lachen]. Das ist glaube ich einfach zu komplex. Und auch Lettisch und Litauisch ist immer noch unterschiedlich genug, wenngleich es vielleicht etwas ähnlicher ist, als das andere. Hm...also schon da denke ich ist ne deutliche Barriere, wenngleich sie sich natürlich auf Englisch oder irgendwas unterhalten können oder Deutsch oder was weiß ich, aber...und dann denke ich schon, dass die...dass die Esten natürlich auch dadurch, dass sie es so vorgelegt haben...das kommt im Normalfall nicht so gut an, also grad für die...für die Letten könnte ich mir vorstellen, ist das ein bisschen ein rotes Tuch, wenn ich da so einen Nachbarn im Norden hab und denke...verdammt, warum können die das und wir müssen unser Land verkaufen...in der Zwischenzeit haben die glaube ich sogar jemanden gesucht, der sie aufkauft oder so...also ich glaube nicht, dass die Esten so gern gemocht sind und die Litauer...wie gesagt, die haben eine sehr katholische und eher anders orientierte Vergangenheit und ich...also die sind verschieden und ich meine das ist ja auch im Prinzip in Ordnung...die Bayern und die Hamburger sind auch verschieden. Und man kann da trotzdem...sie sind klein...ich meine, sie sind...sie sind klein...die können jetzt nicht dicke Arme machen und können sagen...hm... wir stemmen die Welt...ich meine irgendwie zusammenraufen müssen sie sich, aber...ich denke sie sind unterschiedlich und das muss auch kein Einheitsbrei werden. Ich denke die dürfen sich schon...hm...also marketingtechnisch würde man wahrscheinlich eh raten, dass sie bei ihren Unterschieden bleiben...sollen, damit die nicht da verwässern oder irgendwie...ne.
- AT: Well, okay...I mean...the language...I think the...Estonians...well, no one will study the Estonian language, because it is...I actually don't think one can learn it as an adult [laughter]. I believe it's just too complicated. And even the Latvian and Lithuanian languages are still different enough, even though they may be a little more similar to each other than the other language. Um...well, I do think that there is an obvious barrier, even thought they are of course able to communicate in English or so or German and what not, but...then again, I believe that the ...that the Estonians especially by setting such a high standard/pace...normally that is not well received by everyone, especially not by the ...I could imagine that for Latvians that is a little bit like a red rag having such a neighbour in the north, thinking...damn it, why are they so competent and we need to sell our own land...I think in the meantime they were actually looking for someone to buy in or something similar...that said, I don't believe that Estonians

are much liked up there and the Lithuanians...as I said before, they have a very catholic and very different oriented past and I...well, they are different and I guess that's basically also okay...Bavarians and citizens of Hamburg are also different. And there you can still...they are small...I mean, they are...they are small...they can't just throw their own weight around and are not able to say...um...we rock the world...I mean, somehow they need to get their act together, but...I believe they are different and it does not have to become a mishmash. From a marketing perspective I believe they...um...well, one would probably advise them to stick to their differences...perhaps they should so that they don't dilute or something...you know.

- TL: Hmhm...wenn Sie sich jetzt nochmal ein klein wenig in diese Reisen zurückerinnern...gibt es da pro Destination irgendwelche speziellen touristischen Ziele an die Sie sich erinnern und die so ein wenig herausstehen oder denen Sie eine ganz persönliche Bedeutung beimessen würden?
- TL: Umhum...if you now again recall a bit your travels...are there any special tourist highlights per destination that come to mind and that either stood out a little or that you would personally ascribe importance to?
- AT: Also wie gesagt, Vilnius habe ich nicht gesehen, aber die zwei anderen Hauptstädte sind ja auf jeden Fall mal enorme Highlights. Also muss man sagen, es sind ja auch wirkliche kleine Perlen...also...und dadurch...vor allem, da sie so unterschiedlich sind. Also Tallinn und Riga ist ja wohl sehr unterschiedlich aber jedes auf seine Art ganz toll. Dann...was ich zum Beispiel sehr schön fand war das Kuressaare in...auf der Insel von Estland...das Ahrensburg...ehemaliges Ahrensburg. Und es ist ja jetzt schon eine Weile her...Sie haben nicht zufällig eine Karte dabei...?
- AT: Well, as mentioned...I didn't visit Vilnius but the other two capital cities are definitely tremendous highlights. One has to recognise that especially since they truly are small pearls of beauty...well...and thereby...most of all, because they are so different. Tallinn and Riga definitely are very different but each one of them is terrific in its own peculiar way. Also...for instance, what I found very beautiful was the town of Kuressaare in...on that island next to Estonia...Ahrensburg in German...the former Ahrensburg. It's been a while now...you don't happen to have a map?
- TL: Hm...leider nicht...nein.
- TL: Um...no, I'm sorry I don't.
- AT: [Lachen]...und in Lettland, abgesehen von Riga, ist jetzt Kuldīga...ist ein ganz süßes Städtchen...die haben da glaube ich auch ganz viel Filme schon gedreht dort...so Mittelalter-Filme, weil die Kulisse einfach klasse ist. Hm...und dann weiter unten wiederum...Kurische Nehrung...wie heißt die Stadt, wo die Fähre abgeht...auch mit "K"...na die...Entchen von Tharau...die da auf dem Boden steht...wie heißt sie denn...
- AT: [Laughter] ...and in Latvia, aside from Riga, is Kuldīga ...it is a very lovely town ... I believe they have even shot quite a few movies there already ... movies about the Middle Ages, since the set is just terrific there. Um ... and down south again ... the Curonian Spit/Lagoon ... what's the name of the city where the ferry

departs...something with "K" (Kleipėda)...well, this...Ann from Tharau...that figure that sits on the ground there...what's that name again...

- TL: Gute Frage... [Lachen]...
- TL: Good question...[laughter]...
- AT: Ja...[Lachen]...naja gut. Also jedenfalls...wie gesagt, in Litauen habe ich nicht so viele Städte und Gegenden...was natürlich in Litauen natürlich beeindrucken ist, das ist dieser Berg der Kreuze, da bei Šiauliai...dieses...dieses Ding. Ich meine, also man kann es grauenvoll und kitschig und sonst was finden, aber es ist beeindruckend. Das ist es auf jeden Fall, also erwähnenswert so gesehen.
- AT: Yes...[laughter]...well, okay. Anyhow...as mentioned, in Lithuania I have not seen so many cities and districts...of course, something that is very impressive in Lithuania, is the Hill of Crosses, close to Šiauliai...this...this thing. I mean, one can find it gruesome or cheesy and what not but it nevertheless is impressive. It definitely is and, thus, worth mentioning.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...wie empfanden Sie denn in den jeweiligen Ländern so die natürliche Umgebung, bzw. die Natur als solches?
- TL: Umhum...okay...how did you conceive the natural environment in the individual countries, or to be precise, the nature as such?
- AT: Die ist klasse; die ist in allen drei Ländern klasse. Wir haben etliche Nationalparks angeschaut und es...hm...also wie gesagt, es war im Frühling...also die sind natürlich wesentlich unberührter als bei uns. Also in dem einen, da war eine Orchideenblüte...da geht Ihnen...da geht jedem wahrscheinlich sogar...jedem Betonkopf das Herz auf...also das Zeug wächst da wie Unkraut...ne. Tolle alte Bäume...dann waren wir im Endla Moor in Estland, also ein riesiges Moorgebiet, kilometerweit mit einem Turm in der Mitte, wo man das dann überschauen kann. Also das sind Dinge, die sieht man...die kennt man nicht...ne. Das ist schon beeindruckend. Dann die...um Kuldiga [Lettland] herum sind wahnsinnige Mittelgebirgshügellandschaften mit Obstbäumen...also das ist traumhaft. Das ist im Prinzip diese romantische Landschaft, die wir gerne...die wir mal hatten, die wir alle so verklären und die wir alle so lieben und die gibt es da noch.
- AT: It is marvellous; it's marvellous in all three countries. We saw several national parks and it...um...as I said, it was springtime...well, they are naturally much more pristine than here. Well, in one of them was heyday of orchids...that would have made your...that would probably have made anyone's...it would have made any dinosaur's day...the stuff grows there like rambling weeds...yeah. Fantastic old trees...then we visited the Endla nature reserve in Estonia, a gigantic moorland, square kilometres in size with a tower in the middle where one can overlook the whole thing. Those are the things, you can see...but one wasn't aware of beforehand...you know. That really is impressive. Then again...around Kuldiga [Latvia] are incredible low mountain landscapes with fruit-bearing trees...really that is gorgeous. It is basically this romatic landscape that we like to...that we once had, that we glorify and that we cherish so much and you can still see it there.
- TL: Hmhm, also eine ganz ursprüngliche Landschaft?
- TL: Umhum, meaning a very untouched landscape?

- AT: Ja, das ist diese...diese aus...aus den 1850ern...also sprich dieses romantische so schaut die Welt aus...ne...wenn nicht gerade ein Plattenbau mittendrin steht...den könnte man mal wegräumen, aber ansonsten...ne...so Wald, Wiesen und mal ein Hof drin...dann wieder einen See, wo so jeder sagen würde...das ist schön...das ist diese romantische Landschaft, die die Mitteleuropäer so lieben...ne...das ist Bilderbuch.
- AT: Yes, it is this...this...back in the 1850s...this romantic looking world...you know...if there wouldn't just be those industrialized apartment blocks standing in the middle...one could perhaps just get rid of these, but other than that...you know...forests, meadows and a small farm once in a while somewhere...then again a lake where everyone might say...that's beautiful...it is this romantic landscape Central Europeans love so much...you know...like in a storybook.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...und das ist von Litauen bis in den Norden in Estland alles so ähnlich oder wie...?
- TL: Umhum...okay...ad that is similar between Lithuania and Estonia all the way in the north, or...?
- AT: Ja, die Landschaft ist schon...ich meine sie ist abwechslungsreich in sich, aber sie ist...schon ähnlich...wobei ich immer wieder merke, dass Litauen noch am ehesten meine terra inkognita ist, weil mir da...naja da der östliche Teil fehlt. Aber auch im westlichen Teil...und ich sag ja, die Infrastruktur ist gut, die Strassen sind völlig in Ordnung...also da gibt es...ja, mein Gott...wir brauchen...mit Strassen brauchen die Deutschen nicht mehr anfangen. Unsere Strassen haben so nachgelassen seit der Wende [Lachen]...die sind auch nicht mehr besser, als die da drüben. Also insofern...ich sag ja...die...auf der kleinen Fläche finde ich es sehr abwechslungsreich eigentlich.
- AT: Yes, the landscape is...I mean, it is rich in variety per se, but it is...somewhat similar...although I notice time and again that Lithuania is most likely my terra incognita simply because I haven't seen the most eastern part. However, even in the western part...and I always say, the infrastructure is good, the roads are absolutely decent...well, there is...well, good lord...we need...Germans don't need to start talking about their roads. Our roads have worn out so much since the German reunification [laughter]...they are not in a better shape than the ones up there. Well, in that respect...as I say...the...considering the small stretch of land they are actually pretty rich in variety.
- TL: Okay...abgesehen von den Straßen...infrastrukturell, also auch touristische Infrastruktur...als Tourist, gibt es da irgendetwas, was Sie bemerkt haben, vielleicht Unterschiede?
- TL: Okay...the roads aside...in terms of infrastructure, considering also the tourist infrastructure...as a tourist, is there anything you noticed, perhaps differences?
- AT: Zwischen den drei Ländern?
- AT: Between the countries?
- TL: Hmhm...ja...
- TL: Umhum...ves...

- AT: Hm...also wir sind überall untergekommen. Also wie gesagt, mit dem Wohnmobil waren wir ja in allen drei Ländern. Campingplätze in dem Sinn gibt es ja nicht so wirklich viele, weil die haben ja dieses System, dass man beim Hotel...auf dem Hotelparkplatz steht und seinen Stecker in deren Steckdose steckt und dann die Infrastruktur des Hotels nutzt, was super ist. Das gibt es überall...gab es in allen dreien. Hm...Läden...also infrastrukturell hat mir nix gefehlt, in allen dreien nicht.
- AT: Um...well, everywhere we went, we found a place to stay. And as mentioned, with the camper we visited all three countries. Really, they don't have many campsites in the proper sense since they have that system that you just park next to the hotel...at the cark park f the hotel and you then just connect your plug with the outlet so that you can use the infrastructure of the hotel, which is actually pretty neat. They have that everywhere...in all three countries. Um...stores...well, in terms of the infrastructure I did not lack anything, in any of the three countries.
- TL: Okay...gut. Wie haben Sie dann das kulturelle Umfeld empfunden oder wahrgenommen?
- TL: Okay...great. How did you then conceive or perceive the cultural environment?
- AT: Hm...da...ich sag mal, naja gut...man kennt ja diese Geschichten mit diesem Singen und mit diesem...hm...dass die da ihre Revolution quasi über das Singen produziert haben, was ja schon beeindruckend ist und man erlebt das aber auch. Gerade in Estland, da gibt es dann auch immer wieder so...naja, wie so kleine Arenen, wo dann jährlich oder öfters diese Treffen dann sind...auch immer noch...und Bilder davon. Ich war zum Beispiel auch völlig geplättet...es gibt in Lettland...ich hab...ich mache Diashows und vertone die auch und nehme mir daher immer Originalmusik mit, damit ich dann einen Stoff habe. Es gibt also so viel Lettische Musik...auch Popmusik, wo man sagt...hey...ihr seid so ein Miniland...Euch fällt der Putz von der Wand und die haben so viele Bands, die Musik machen und die...hm...Leute, die irgendwie Kunst machen oder auch im tiefsten Wald irgendwo ist was geschnitzt und gerade unten dann...Kurische Nehrung...das ist ja sowieso alles irgendwie geschnitzt...also das ist ja unglaublich. Oder auch so...Kunsthandwerk...also das ist sehr sehr lebendig und ja...traditionell noch verbunden. Also das fand ich sehr sehr beeindruckend...hm...das hat auch die Russische Besatzung nicht totgekriegt offensichtlich. Also kulturell sehr sehr lebendig und auch noch sehr ursprünglich und überall spürbar. Und auch dann natürlich dieses...diese mondänen Seebäder...also man...gerade die an der Küste überall...diese tollen, alten Bäder mit den Kurhäusern und den Promenaden...also dass man auch merkt, die...die hatten ne glorreiche Vergangenheit und die...auch wenn es den Leuten halt teilweise nicht so gut geht...aber das ist schon noch da, also das ist nicht verloren.
- AT: Um...there...let's put it this way, well...everyone knows the stories with them singing and with...um...that they produced their revolution basically through singing, which by itself is very impressive but you can also experience that. Especially in Estonia, there are frequently such...well, similar to small arenas, where they have annual or even frequent meetings...they still have that...and pictures of it. I was absolutely flabbergasted for instance...in Latvia there is ...I have...I produce slide shows of my travelsand also add soundtracks to those, which is why I always bring original music with me so that I have some material. There is so much Latvian music out there...also pop music, where one would say...hey...you are such a mini country...the rendering comes off your walls and

they have so many bands that make music or even in the deepest forest something is being carved out of wood and especially down there... Curonian Spit...there everything consists of wood carvings anyway...well, that really is incredible. Or even...handicrafts...well, that is all very, very alive...and yes, connected to traditions. Really, I found that very, very impressive...um...obviously even the Russian occupation did not manage to kill that. That said, culturally it is very, very alive and also very native/pristine and everywhere noticeable. Also then of course this...these classy seaside resorts...well, you...especially the ones at the coast everywhere...these fantastic, old spas with their casinos and their esplanades...well, you notice that...that they once had a glorious past, which is...even if people are partially not well off...but it's still there, it is not lost.

- TL: Hmhm...okay. Das war auch ähnlich...zwischen den Ländern?
- TL: Umhum...okay. And that was a commonality...between the countries?
- AT: Jedes auf seine Art...vielleicht ein bisschen...der Stil war vielleicht ein wenig anders, aber...hm...es war überall spürbar.
- AT: Every country in another way...perhaps a little...the style was maybe a little different, but...um...you could feel it everywhere.
- TL: Okay, prima. Das...Sie haben es vorhin schon ein bisschen angesprochen...das sozio-ökonomische Umfeld meine ich. Wie sah es da aus in den einzelnen Ländern? Gab es da positive oder negative Eindrücke?
- TL: Okay, great. I...you already touched on certain points earlier...I mean the socioeconomic environment. How did you perceive that in the individual countries? Did you have any positive or negative impressions?
- AT: Lettland hat viele sozio-ökonomische Probleme, die sichtbar werden durch Prostitution, ein Stadt-Land Gefälle und...den Ausschluss von den Russen. Hm...wobei am schlimmsten war es um Riga herum. Das waren auch die einzigen Stellen wo wir zum Beispiel...hm...Prostituierte haben im Wald stehen sehen, was es sonst nirgendwo gab. Och, ansonsten war das jetzt eigentlich nicht so das Thema und diese Geschichten kenne ich auch so von der deutsch-polnischen Grenze, wo mal...wo dann mal irgendwo die Schwalben im Wald stehen...und das also wirklich in diesem Stadtring, der da um Riga herumführt, standen dann halt überall in den Waldwegen Frauen, dass ich gedacht hab...puh, das ist...das ist dann halt schon...hm...Stadt...ne. Also da merkst Du dann...hier ist offensichtlich ein Gefälle und auch um Riga herum...hm...waren wir mal einkaufen und da siehst Du dann halt wirklich, dass da dieses russische Proletariat quasi um diese Supermärkte herumhängt. Logisch...für lange Zeit waren die besetzt und wurden von den Russen schlecht behandelt und heute machen die das gleiche mit der russischen Minderheit. Teilweise sind es einfach auch alte Menschen, die...denen es furchtbar schlecht geht und die da zitternd irgendwie im Müll wühlen und so. Also es ist...diese Geschichten haben wir vor allem um Riga herum eigentlich gesehen. Also auf dem Land selber...logisch... auf dem Land sind die Leute aufgehoben und...und eingeräumt...ne ...in diesem Kontext...aber in den Städten...wobei jetzt aber zum Beispiel in Tallinn hat man so was eigentlich...haben wir so was eigentlich nicht gesehen. Aber gerade um Riga herum war das sehr schlimm.

- AT: Latvia has plenty of socio-economic problems that become visible through prostitution, a city-backcountry divide, and ... and this exclusion of Russians. *Um...it* was worst around Riga. Those were the only spots for instance where we saw...um...prostitutes standing in the woods, something that didn't exist anywhere else. Oh, other than that it didn't seem to be a problem and I personally know these things from the German-Polish border, where ...where these alley cats wait somewhere in the woods...and that was also the case at this city ring road going around Riga, where women stood waiting everywhere in small forest trails, so that I thought...phew, that is...that clearly is...um...a city...you know. Well, in these situations you notice...that there is obviously a differential and even around Riga...um...well, we once went shopping there and you could really see, that there is a Russian proletariat virtually hanging out in front of supermarkets. For a long time they were occupied and badly treated by the Russians and today they do the same to the Russian minority. In some cases it was also older people. who...they obviously struggled and they shiver while rummaging through the garbage and all. Well, it is ... we have actually seen these things mainly around Riga. In the countryside itself...logically...in the countryside people seem to be better protected...and better placed...vou know...in this context...but in the cities...although, in Tallinn for example, you did actually not...we did actually not see such things there. However, especially around Riga, these things were very bad.
- TL: Hmhm...würden Sie sagen, dass da auch so eine Landflucht stellenweise stattfindet? Ist das ein Grund dafür?
- TL: Umhum...would you say that to a certain extent there is also a rural exodus taking place? Might that be a reason for it?
- AT: Ach, das ist jetzt natürlich...hm...
- AT: Oh well, that of course is now...um...
- TL: Das ist wahrscheinlich schwierig zu sagen...
- TL: It is probably difficult to say...
- AT: Naja nee. Vor allem das ist...das Problem ist, dass...hm...es ist ein großer Leerstand oder verlassene Gebäude auf dem Land, nur bei uns auf dem Dorf stehen keine Plattenbauten. Das Problem ist ja, weil die hatten ja wahrscheinlich auch wie alle eine dörfliche, bäuerliche Landwirtschaft und dann...und durch die russische Besatzung haben die Russen da ja überall ihre LPGs draus gemacht...würde man in Deutschland dazu sagen...also diese großen landwirtschaftlichen Kooperativen. Ein Ergebnis davon war natürlich, dass die alle ihre kleinen Bauernhöfe verloren haben, was zur Armut beigetragen hat, was auch sichtbar ist im Hinterland. Das heißt, die haben...das Land hat dem Staat gehört...die haben das alles zusammengezogen und dann haben sie ihre Plattenbauten hingesetzt und da haben dann die Leute in der Landwirtschaft gearbeitet. Und als dann die nicht mehr mit Russland zusammen waren, dann saßen die da...aber wo hätten sie hin sollen? Die hatten ja keine Dörfer mehr und keine Bauernhöfe, also konnten die ja gar nicht auf dem Land bleiben. Was hätten die da tun sollen? Und jetzt stehen natürlich die...die Plattenbauten stehen leer...die bäuerliche Landwirtschaft und Lebensweise in dem Sinne ist ein Stück weit zerschlagen und das ist schwierig...also man sieht auch viel so

Neubaugebiete und so um die Städte herum...also gerade wenn man aus Tallinn herausfährt...das dauert lange bis das aufhört...das ist so eine Wucherzone...also auch so kleine Geschäfte, kleine Betriebe und so kleine Neubaugebiete und so...aber...hm...diese dörfliche, bäuerliche Landwirtschaft...die ist, denke ich...also da ist nicht mehr viel...vor allem in Lettland denke ich ist die ziemlich kaputt. Meines Wissens haben die Russen da vor allem...hm...Viehwirtschaft und Glühbirnen oder irgendwas...also völliger Blödsinn...irgendwas haben die da...hm...angesiedelt dort...und da haben die Leute dann gearbeitet. Und als dann die Russen weg waren...war alles kaputt...was sollen sie machen...ne.

- AT: Well, not really. Above all it is ... the problem is, that ... um ... there is a high vacancy rate or abandoned property in the countryside, just we here don't have prefabricated apartment blocks in our villages. The problem as it presents itself is that they, like many others, probably used to have a small-town, rural type of agriculture and then...and due to the Russian occupation, the Russians transformed them everywhere into their LPGs...that's how you would label it in Germany...well, these large agricultural cooperatives. A result of it was that they all lost their small farms to a certain extent, which contributed to poverty, which is very visible in the countryside. That means, they have...the land was owned by the state...they have consolidated everything, placed their prefabricated apartment blocks on that land, where the people then worked in farming (agriculture). Now, when they didn't belong to Russia any longer, they were left with an egg on their faces...but where should they have gone? They weren't any villages or small farms, so that they couldn't really stay in the countryside. What should they have done there? Today of course, the ... the prefabricated apartment blocks stand empty...the peasant agriculture and farming way of life in that sense is partially shattered and that's difficult...well, so see quite some development areas and such things around the cities ... especially in the proximity of Tallinn...and it takes some time until that ends...that's sort of an expansion zone...well, even those small stores, small businesses and such small development areas and the like...I believe it just is...there is not much left...especially in Latvia it is pretty much dead. If I'm not mistaken it was the Russians who mainly produced...um...cattle industry and incandescent bulbs or something...anyway, absolute rubbish...something they...um...just located there...and that's where the people then used to work. Once the Russians were gone ... everything went dead...and what should they have done...you know.
- TL: Ja...ja...schlimm...hmhm. So aus dem Blickwinkel einer deutschen Touristin...hm...die touristischen Gegebenheiten...war das angenehm, war das akzeptabel...wie darf man sich das vorstellen oder wie würden Sie das bewerten?
- TL: Yes...true...pretty sad...umhum. From the point of view of a German tourist...um...the touristic conditions...was it pleasant, was it acceptable...how should one envision that or how would you rate it?
- AT: Also...hm...
- AT: Well...um...
- TL: Sie haben das ja schon ansatzweise beschrieben...auf der einen Seite haben Sie eine Tour mit dem Wohnmobil gemacht und dann später aber auch Hotels genutzt...

- TL: You already started to describe that to some extent...on one occasion your made a tour with a camper and then later you stayed in hotels...
- AT: Also ich muss sagen...gerade auch das Hotel...wenn man es jetzt mal von der Reise nimmt...prima Standard.
- AT: Well, I have to say...especially the hotel...if we want to take the one of that trip as an example...good standard.
- TL: Das war in Estland, richtig?
- TL: That was in Estonia, correct?
- AT. Ja Estland...also Otepää. Das hat also gar nichts gefehlt...im Gegenteil. Also das war...das hätte man wahrscheinlich bei uns mit mehr Sternen verbrämt, als die das da gemacht haben. Umgekehrt...also da waren auch viel Finnische Touristen...also die Deutschen...es waren zwar auch ein paar Deutsche da, aber die Mehrzahl waren Finnen...also für diese ganzen Wellness-Geschichten und so. Und wir waren über Silvester...Bus-weise Russen, die da offensichtlich ein bisserl gepflegtere Silvester...also nicht nur Sauferei, sondern ein bisserl gepflegtere Silvester feiern wollten...das muss man sich auch mal vorstellen...welche Russe fährt im Prinzip nach Otepää...also das ist...das ist ja nicht direkt an der Grenze. Das ist so ein Stück weg...ne. Das waren einige Busse mit Russen, die da ganz friedlich Familien-Silvester gefeiert haben...ne. Und die Kapelle hat halt immer zweisprachig...hm...agiert. War eigentlich ganz...war ganz lustig. Ja und ansonsten...also es gab überall so kleine Touristenzentren, wo man mal was...wo man...irgendwelche Lädchen, wo man was kaufen konnte oder wo man Informationen gekriegt hat. Es gab genug Kartenmaterial...also...die Entfernungen sind ja auch nicht groß...ich meine, das ist ja jetzt nicht so riesig das alles...und ob das jetzt in den großen Städte oder in den kleineren Städten...überall gibt es ne Touristeninformation und Infomaterial und...und man kriegt überall Unterkunft und...in jedweder Form...ich sag ja...das war überhaupt kein Problem.
- AT: Yes, Estonia...in Otepää. It wasn't lacking anything...quite the contrary. Well, it was...potentially we might have even glossed it over with some stars, more than they would have done. Instead...well, there were a lot of Finnish tourists...well, and the Germans...there were a few German guests but the majority of guest came from Finland...well, they came for all these wellness offers and such things. We stayed there over New Year's Day...there were busloads of Russians, who had the intention to celebrate a more decent New Year...so, not just for drinking, but wanting to celebrate a more upscale New Year...just imagine that...what Russian wants tom come to Otepää...well, that is...that's not really close to the border. That's quite a trip...you know. So there were some busses with Russians, who very peacefully celebrated New Year with their loved ones...you know. And the music ensemble...um...performed always in two languages. That was actually...it was pretty funny. Yes, and apart from that...well, there were small tourist offices everywhere, where you were able to ... where you could ... some small stores, where you were able to buy stuff or where you could get information. There were plenty of roadmaps...well...the distances are not really long...I mean, all that is not very large ... and whether that was is larger cities or smaller villages ... you can find a tourist info with information material everywhere and ... and you can find place to stay everywhere...in any shape of form...as I said...that was absolutely no problem.

- TL: Gut...hm...bei der nächsten Frage geht es so ein bisschen darum, die Atmosphäre oder Stimmung in dem Land oder beziehungsweise den Ländern zu beschreiben. Wenn Sie sich jetzt so zurückerinnern, bevor Sie in diese Länder gereist sind...meine Frage ist, wie haben Sie sich so davor gefühlt, bevor Sie die Länder besucht haben, oder welche Haltung hatten Sie gegenüber diesen Ländern? Dann wie war die Atmosphäre während Ihrer Aufenthalte? Und dann auch noch...wie hat sich Ihr Eindruck oder Ihre Gefühle, Ihre Haltung gegenüber diesen Ländern nach den Reisen in irgendeiner Form oder auf irgendwelche Weise geändert?
- TL: Great...um...the next question is aiming a little at describing the atmosphere or mood in the country or more specifically inside the countries. If you recall the situation prior to traveling into these countries...my question is, how did you feel prior to traveling into the countries or what attitude did you have towards these countries? Next, how did you perceive the atmosphere during your stay? And last but not least also...how did your impressions, your feelings, or your attitude towards these countries change in any possible form or way after your trips?
- AT: Hmhm...also...am Anfang, wie gesagt...ich wusste nicht viel, ich war einfach neugierig und irgendwie gespannt, aber auch durchaus ein bisschen...skeptisch, wie das dann wohl wäre...und...hm...ich muss sagen, ich bin also dort Stück für Stück aufgetaut gewissermaßen...und...hm...es war so eine Mischung aus...aus Sympathie und Mitleid manchmal...also gerade zum Beispiel die Letten haben halt...oder dieses Land hat mir wahnsinnig Leid getan, weil man so das Gefühl hat...die sind so auf der Suche...ne...und die...aber wohin, wie...wohin? Und dann denkst Du...mein Gott, ihr habt so...ihr habt so schöne...so ne schöne Ausgangssituation, aber in so einer großen, bösen EU, wo alles sich um Autos und...und Kontingente und was weiß ich was dreht und was habt ihr zu bieten? Ihr habt so schöne Landschaft...hm...versucht jetzt bitte nicht noch mehr Milch zu produzieren oder sonst irgendwelchen Blödsinn, sondern sucht Euern Weg und macht auf Tourismus und sonst wie...behaltet euer schönes Land und macht keinen Unsinn. Also es war so...so sehr emotional eigentlich auch und...hm...wieder zurückgekehrt muss ich sagen ist für mich das Baltikum eine absolute...also eine absolute Sehnsuchtsgegend. Also es ist nach wie vor wahnsinnig positiv besetzt und...hm...ich hab da auch, wie gesagt...lieben...Bilder und Musik im Kopf zu dem Thema und das hat also absolute...absoluten Sehnsuchtscharakter. Ich habe zwischendrin sogar immer schon mal mit dem Gedanken gespielt...hm...da vielleicht mal irgendwie was zu kaufen oder mir so eine Art Ferienhaus oder irgendwie keine Ahnung...irgendwie da...um öfters mal dorthin...deshalb...deshalb ist es ja auf meiner Xing-Seite ja auch drauf, weil ich dachte da vielleicht ergibt sich mal was...vielleicht mal einen Lehrauftrag...ich hab einen Lehrauftrag an der Hochschule da unten...hab dann mal versucht, ob das vielleicht einen Grund gibt...einen beruflichen Grund da auch mal hin zu kommen oder was...aber ich habe das jetzt nicht so ernsthaft verfolgt, aber wenn das sich jetzt ergeben würde, würde ich da sofort versuchen, irgendwie wieder hinzukommen.
- AT: Umhum...well...like I said, in the beginning...I didn't know much, I was simply just curious and somehow excited, but by all means also a bit...sceptical in terms of what to expect...and um...I have to say, bit by bit I became less reserved in a sense...and...um...it was such a mix of...sympathy and pity sometimes...well, especially the Latvians for instance just have...or in other words I felt extremely

sorry for that country, because you have the feeling that...they are in search of something...you know...and they...but where, how...where. And then you think to vourself...Good Lord, vou have such ...vou have such a beautiful ...such a beautiful starting situation, but in such a large, nasty EU, where everything is concerned with cars and ...and quotas and what not, and what do you have to offer. You have such a beautiful countryside...um...please don't even try to produce more milk or any of that rubbish, but instead look out for your own path and focus on tourism and such things...preserve your beautiful country and don't do any bullshit. That said, it was very ... actually it was also very emotional and...um...once returned, I really have to say that the Baltic countries are definitely...are an absolute nostalgic region. Well, it is has incredibly positive connotations and...um...there, as I mentioned, I actually have...love...I have images and music in my mind in that regard and it has an absolute...absolute nostalgic character. From time to time and in between I was toying around with the idea...um...to perhaps buy something there or to get myself some sort of holiday cottage or the like, I don't know...to somehow be able to go there more often...that's why...that's why I listed it on my Xing profile page, because I thought maybe something is coming up...perhaps some kind of teaching assignment...I have a teaching assignment at a college down south...and I once tried to see if there is a reason to ... a professional reason to perhaps go there ... but I wasn't maybe serious enough about it, but if an opportunity would present itself, I would immediately try to somehow get there.

- TL: Hmhm...glauben Sie, dass es...so wie es Ihnen gegangen ist...dass Sie also erst einmal ein bisserl reserviert vielleicht waren und dann durch diese Erfahrungen mittlerweile ja sehr positiv darüber denken...glauben Sie dass es diese Initialzündung braucht oder besonders braucht in diesen Ländern als Tourist, wenn man aus Deutschland kommt...wenn wir das vielleicht einmal mit anderen Destinationen vergleichen?
- TL: Umhum...do you think that...similar to what you personally experienced...meaning that you initially were perhaps a little reserved and now, through your personal travel experience, think very positively about it in the meantime...do you believe that it needs this type of initial spark or particularly needs it in these countries as a tourist, when coming from Germany...for instance when we put this in contrast with other destinations?
- AT: Hm...naja...sagen wir einmal so...hm...ich will mich jetzt nicht überschätzen, aber ich glaube nicht, dass der Durchschnittstourist sich jetzt so mit der Destination auseinandersetzt, wie ich das jetzt vielleicht gemacht hab. Und was ich so mitkriege, ist ja so...ist der normale Berührungspunkt mit dem Baltikum...naja, sind irgendwelche Kreuzfahren, wo man halt dann in Riga und Tallinn ein Mal rausgeschmissen wird und dann kann man sich das mal angucken. Und wenn man Glück hat, kriegt man noch irgendeine Bustour irgendwo schräg durch. Hm...wenngleich...es anhaltend...also, das fällt mir gerade wieder ein...ich hab da diesen Bücherbund oder was das da ist, oder auch [unverständlich] ...und das gibt so Blätter, die immer so Reisen mit anbieten...ne...also, so abseits der Reisebüros oder so organisierte Reisen. Da ist eigentlich immer das Baltikum drin. Immer. Da ist eben viel diese...diese Deutschordensvergangenheit oder so diese geschichtlichen Stätten oder so. Also ich denke es gibt ein Klientel von...von Leuten, die da ein bisserl Interesse daran haben und so was...und die vielleicht

auch ein bisschen gebildet sind und ich glaube die kann man damit ansprechen. Aber ich glaube so der Durchschnittsbürger...der ...der sich auch in der deutschen Geschichte jetzt vielleicht nicht so...dem das auch jetzt ...eher vielleicht auch ein bisserl egal ist...ich weiß nicht womit man den jetzt da hinten hinlockt, weil so...gut kommt man da jetzt auch nicht hin. Also gerade die Flüge sind teilweise nicht so leicht zu kriegen und dann bist Du erst in der Hauptstadt und dann musst Du wieder irgendwo hin und ...Wohnmobil liegt auch nicht jedem und einen Strandurlaub...würde ich jetzt da wahrscheinlich auch nicht machen...Also...ich denke, es wird...es wird wahrscheinlich schon eine spezielle Klientel sein...oder bleiben, die da Urlaub macht.

- AT: *Um...well...let's put it this way...um...now I don't want to overestimate myself,* but I don't think that the average tourist deals with a destination as much as I perhaps did. And what I typically notice is that...the usual point of contact with the Balic countries...well, are some sort of cruises, where you typically get thrown off the boat in Riga and Tallinn and you are then able to take a quick look at it. If one is lucky, you get a boat tour across the whole thing. Um...although...it's still...well, I just remember now...I am a member of this book club or whatever it is, or this [not audible] ... and there are pamphlets that once in a while offer all sorts of trips...you know...meaning without a travel agent or organized travel. Usually there are always the Baltic countries present. Always. It typically covers this...this Teutonic Order topic or other historic places and such things. I guess there is a clientele of ... of people, who have a slight interest in these or similar things...and who perhaps are more educated and I believe one can target that group of people with that. However, I think the ordinary citizen...the one...someone who maybe is not so familiar with German history...someone who...who perhaps doesn't even care...I just don't know how you would be able to lure that person into that corner because it's ...it's not that easy to get there. Especially flight are sometimes hard to get and you typically then arrive in a capital city but then you need to get to other places and...a camper is not in the nature of everyone and beach holidays...I myself would perhaps not even think about going there for that reason. Well...I think it most likely ... perhaps it's most likely a very special clientele ... who go on holidays there and it will remain to be that way.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...Sie haben vorhin gesagt, Sie favorisieren ein Land...Estland.
- TL: Umhum...okay...You mentioned earlier that you favour a certain country...Estonia.
- AT: Hmhm.
- AT: Umhum.
- TL: Hm...könnten Sie mir vielleicht nochmal im direkten Zusammenhang die Gründe hierfür nennen? Warum setzt sich das für Sie so sehr von den anderen beiden ab? Was macht es so besonders für Sie?
- TL: Um...in a direct context, could you perhaps once again state the reasons for that? Why does this country stand out from the other two in your opinion? I what way is it so special to you?
- AT: Hmhm...gut, ich meine das mag ja natürlich sein, dass ich das...wenn Lettland mal aufholt...dass ich das...hm...wie gesagt, zum Beispiel Riga ist für mich so ein

typisches Beispiel. Riga ist...ist wahnsinnig aufgebrezelt und...und hat ne irrsinnige Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich. Und da bin ich eben so ein Typ, der fühlt sich da nicht so wohl. Weil ich selber bin eher so Mittelfeld und finde das auch okay...also ich gucke mir im Urlaub nicht so gern irgendwelche Leute an, die im Müll wühlen oder andere, die da ihre Pelze spazieren tragen. Also das sind so Dinge, die brauche ich nicht unbedingt. Hm...während Estland...das hat irgendwie...jetzt zum Beispiel Tallinn und Nürnberg hat...finde ich sehr...hat sehr viel gemeinsam. Das ist so ein...so von der Ausstrahlung der Stadt. Das hat was bürgerliches, es hat so diese alten Handwerkstraditionen und hat was arbeitsames, strebsames...also es ist irgendwie ne positive...Stadthaltung...sag ich jetzt mal...ne...nicht so aufgedonnert und...so. Und ansonsten, wie gesagt war Estland einfach von der Homogenität...also es war in sich am homogensten und...und dann hat...einfach denke ich...sieht man ja jetzt auch an deren wirtschaftlichen...Entwicklung. Da ist ein Zug dahinter irgendwie...ne...die hatten ne Idee, ne Vision und die haben sie durchgezogen. Die haben wenig Leute...und die wollten...und dann kann man so was offensichtlich auf die Beine stellen...ne...sie sind Musterschüler in der EU und...und...wie gesagt, schon damals, als ich da war...da gab es in jedem Kuhkaff einen Hotspot und überall im tiefsten [unverständlich] hast Du Dein Handy rausgezogen und hattest vollen Funkempfang...also die haben es halt einfach gemacht...ne...die haben nicht darüber geredet und gejammert und sich überlegt, wo sie irgendwelchen Fördermittel anzapfen, sondern die haben es einfach gemacht. Und das scheint auch ne Mentalitätssache irgendwo zu sein und...so gesehen, von der Mentalität sind sie denke ich am ehesten Finnen...die halt aus irgendeinem Grund auf der anderen Seite des Meeres gelandet sind...aber...die sind glaube ich auch ein bisserl anders drauf. Und das war insgesamt das sympathischste Land...so rundum am sympathischsten.

AT: Umhum...well, I mean there is a possibility that I'm going to...as soon as Latvia catches up...that I'm going to...um...as I said, Riga for instance to me is a typical example. Riga is ... is incredibly dolled up and ... and has an insane divide between the poor and the rich. I'm the type of person who just feels uncomfortable there. I myself am sort of a middle class person and I'm okay with that...that's why when I'm on holiday I dislike watching some people, who either dig through the rubbish or others who walk about their furs. Those are things that I don't really need. *Um...whereas Estonia...that's somehow...for instance Tallinn and Nuremberg* have...I believe...have a lot in common. That's such a...in terms of the city's charisma. Is has something bourgeois, it has the old traditional craftsmanship and it has something hardworking, ambitious...well, it has somehow a positive...countenance...I would say...you know...not as much glammed up and...such things. Other than that, and as mentioned, in terms of homogeneity was Estonia...well, by itself it was the most homogeneous country and...then did...that's how I see it...I guess it's clearly visible also by reference to their economic...development. Somehow there is power behind it...you know...they came up with an idea, had a vision and then pulled through with it. They have a few people...and they were motivated...and obviously one can then pull something together...you know...they are the model student of the EU and...and...as mentioned, even back then when I was there ... there was a hotspot in every onehorse town and wherever you went in the deepest [not audible] you were able to pull out your mobile phone and had full coverage...well, they basically just did things...you know...instead of just talking about it and complaining where to get

subsidies, they just did it. And that also seems to be somehow a matter of their mentality and...if you look at it that way, in terms of mentality they seem to be more Finnish...for some obscure reason they just ended up on the other side of the ocean...nevertheless...I just believe they are a little different. Altogether, that was the most sympathetic country...overall the most sympathetic.

- TL: Hmhm...okay...jetzt bei den nächsten beiden Fragen geht es um die Persönlichkeit von Destinationen. Sagt Ihnen das grob was...die Persönlichkeit einer Destination? Oder soll ich da noch etwas genauer definieren, was ich meine...
- TL: Umhum...okay...now in the next couple of questions we are touching on the personality of destinations. Does that broadly ring a bell...personality of a destination? Or should I clarify it a little, what exactly I mean...
- AT: Geben Sie nochmal so...ne Richtung...
- AT: If you could point again to ... a direction ...
- TL: Gerne. Also wenn Sie zum Beispiel ein Produkt betrachten...wie beispielsweise das iPhone...dann gibt man denen ja...oder kann man diesen Produkten ja Persönlichkeitsmerkmale geben...oder eben auch Persönlichkeitscharakteristiken, die man auch einem Menschen geben würde. Ein iPhone kann schlank sein, ein iPhone kann innovativ sein, sexy sein...es gibt da ganz verschiedene Assoziationen mit solchen Produkten. Und das gleiche kann man auch auf Destinationen applizieren...macht es das etwas klarer?
- TL: Sure thing. Well, if you consider a consumer product for example...for instance the iPhone...then one tends to give those product...or one could attribute certain personality characteristics, similar to those once could attribute to human beings. An iPhone could be seen as slender, an iPhone could be innovative, could be sexy...there are a number of different associations one could have with such products. And you can apply the same to destinations...does that help in any way?
- AT: Hmhm...okay.
- AT: Umhum...okay.
- TL: Stellen Sie sich jetzt bitte einmal vor Estland, Lettland und Litauen, beziehungsweise diese Destinationen separat betrachtet...stellen Sie sich vor, diese Destinationen wären jeweils eine Person...hm...was für eine Person oder was für ein Typ Mensch wäre das in Ihren Augen? Beschreiben Sie mir das einmal anhand von solchen Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen oder menschlichen Charakteristiken.
- TL: If you now please imagine Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, or these destinations viewed individually, was a person...um...what kind of person or what type of human being would that be in your opinion? Please describe that person on the basis of such personality characteristics or human character traits.
- AT: Naja gut...da bin ich wieder bei den gleichen Adjektiven wie vorhin auch...also, wie gesagt, ich denke Estland ist eher organisiert und zupackend, strebsam und...und ja organisiert...also diszipliniert in gewisser Weise...bürgerlich. Und Lettland hat einfach so ein bisserl was...etwas resigniertes...etwas melancholisches mit im Rucksack. Ich hab keine Ahnung was es ist. Also die sind...das ist einfach das...das Land hat so was von...so ein bisschen in die Hacken

- getreten, so ein bisschen eingeknickt. So wie jemand der einen Schlag zu viel abgekriegt hat vielleicht...ne. Es ist als ob die kapituliert haben. Und Litauen ist für mich...hm...ja...wie gesagt...ich hab da quasi ne Person vor dem Auge gewissermaßen...also eher so ein bisschen drall, selbstzufrieden, ein bisserl...bisserl in sich ruhender und distanzierter einfach...so in sich ruhend und stärker abgeschlossen, stärker...hm...mit sich selbst beschäftigt irgendwie und...und...vielleicht auch konservativer auf ne Art.
- AT: Well, okay...I'm coming back to the same adjectives I used before...well, as I said, I think Estonia is rather organized and hands-on, ambitious and...and yeah, organized...also disciplined in certain ways...bourgeois. And Latvia simply has a little bit of...a little resigned...has something a little bit melancholic in their rucksack. I don't know what it is. Well, they are...it simply is that...the country has something of...they appear as if they have been kicked into their heels, a little surrendered. Like someone who perhaps got beaten up a couple of times too often...you know. It is as if they have capitulated. And Lithuania on the other hand is to me...um...yeah...like I said...I kind of visualize a person...well, who is rather a little plump, self-satisfied, who is a little...a little withdrawn, more...um...self-absorbed somehow and...and...perhaps also more conservative in a certain way.
- TL: Hmhm...okay. Jetzt...andersrum betrachtet...hm...visualisieren Sie für sich selbst bitte einmal den typischen Besucher oder Touristen des Landes, beziehungsweise der Länder...sofern die unterschiedlich sind überhaupt. Versuchen Sie bitte einmal diese Person auf eine ähnliche Art und Weise zu beschreiben. Was ist das für ein Tourist?
- TL: Umhum...okay. Now...if we look at it the other way around...um...would you please also visualize the typical visitor or tourist of the individual countries or alternatively of the region...provided they are at all different. Please try to describe that person in a very similar fashion. What kind of tourist is that?
- AT: Hm...das ist jetzt deutlich schwieriger...also da täte ich mir glaube ich schwer, die drei auseinander...weil...welcher Tourist würde jetzt nur eines der drei Länder...also das ist jetzt natürlich wieder ne Prämisse. Also ich würde jetzt vermuten, dass keiner nur ein Land besuchen würde wahrscheinlich, sondern man würde immer das Bedürfnis haben, die drei miteinander zu erleben. Vielleicht noch einen Abstecher oder Flug nach Sankt-Petersburg oder irgendwas...das kann man auch noch ankucken. Nee, aber...hm...ich denke der...der...hm...das große Pfund von...von Lettland ist Riga und ich denke Riga ist faszinierend für Leute, die eben...ich sag ja...Gold, glänzend, Reichtum, sonst wie...shoppen...hm...mondän...ne...also so in der Art...also ich denke das ist das anziehendste an Lettland, aber das ist nicht unbedingt Lettland...das ist Riga...ne...aber es ist halt nun mal in Lettland. Und ich denke Litauen...das ist natürlich so eher diese...ich sag ja, diese königlichen Geschichten oder eben Kurische Nehrung, Thomas Mann und diese ganzen Sachen...also Litauen reduziert sich denke ich relativ stark auch auf die Kurische Nehrung und dann eben so diese...hm...Königsvergangenheit, die aber so eher in Richtung Polen...vielleicht...ragt. Wenn einen das interessiert. Und Estland ist so gesehen wahrscheinlich sogar am wenigsten...anziehend, weil es hat die wenigsten Highlights eigentlich...eigentlich. Hm...vielleicht wirkt es auch deswegen so homogen, weil es in dem Sinn nichts hat, was so wirklich heraussticht. Weil

Tallinn ist zwar ne schöne Stadt, aber ich würde sie jetzt nicht...im Vergleich zu Riga, ist Tallinn kein Highlight, weil Tallinn hat zwar eine schöne in sich geschlossene Altstadt und ist ansonsten auch ganz knuffig, aber es ist jetzt nicht...hm...auf der Bandbreite...ne...es ist jetzt nicht so der Star und...und auch alle anderen Städte, die ich jetzt so im Kopf hab sind jetzt nicht...also so gesehen ist Estland...hm...also wahrscheinlich am ehesten durch seine Homogenität...also vielleicht...so gesehen vielleicht durch den...für den Touristen von außen am wenigsten interessant, weil es eigentlich weniger herausragendes zu bieten hat. In sofern...wie sieht der Tourist aus, der Estland bevorzugt...naja, eben jemand der Gleichklang und...und Natur am liebsten mag. Der würde wahrscheinlich am ehesten Estland bevorzugen.

- AT: *Um...now that is clearly more difficult...well, I think I would find it difficult to* keep the three separate...because...what tourist would only see one of the three countries...well, that of course is a premise. Well, I would probably assume that no one would just visit only one country but would rather always have the desire to experience the three together. Perhaps even a side trip or flight to St. Petersburg or something...that's something you could additionally include. Nah, but...um...I think the...the...um...what weighs most in...in Latvia is Riga and I think Riga is fascinating for people, who just...as I said...gold, glamour, wealth, and such things...shopping...um...chic...you know...well, those kind of things...that said, I think that is the most fascinating aspect regarding Latvia, but that does not necessarily reflect Latvia...it is Riga...you know...but it just happens to be in Latvia. And I believe Lithuania...that of course if more like this...as I mentioned, these royal stories or even the Curonian Spit, Thomas Mann and all these things...well, in my opinion Lithuania reduces itself to the Curonian Spit and then again this...um...this royalty past, but that leans more towards the direction of Poland...perhaps. In case someone is interested in that. And Estonia in this sense is perhaps even the least...attracting, because it has in fact the least amount of highlights...basically. Um...and perhaps that's why it appears to be the most homogeneous country, because in that sense it doesn't have anything that truly stands out. Because even though Tallinn is a beautiful city, I would not necessarily...by comparison to Riga, Tallinn is no highlight, because while Tallinn has a beautiful coherent historic district and is otherwise also quite cuddly, it doesn't have the ... um ... the same range ... nah ... it is not as much the star and ... and even all other cities that I presently can think of are not ... if you look at it that way, Estonia is...um...well, perhaps rather through its homogeneity...well maybe...in that sense perhaps...on the face of it the least interesting for the tourist, because it actually has fewer highlights to offer. In this respect...what kind of tourist is it that favours Estonia...well, simply someone who likes consonance and ... and nature the best. That person would perhaps rather prefer Estonia.
- TL: Okay...okay. Gut. Jetzt geht es so ein bisschen in Richtung generelles Marketing von Reisedestinationen. Hm...wie denken Sie aus Ihrer touristischen Perspektive heraus...wie denken Sie, dass diese drei Länder überhaupt vermarktet werden? Denken Sie...wie würden Sie das evaluieren? Ist das zufriedenstellend, gut...hm...was denken Sie darüber?
- TL: Okay...okay. Great. Now we are moving a little more towards the general marketing of tourism destinations. Um...what do you think from your perspective

- as a tourist...how, in your opinion, are these three countries generally being marketed?
- AT: Puh...hm...da tendiere ich ausnahmsweise fast zu der Aussage...das kann ich nicht beurteilen, weil...weil woran soll ich das bemessen? Ich war ein paar Mal da, aber ich habe jetzt nicht...wie soll ich...?
- AT: Phew...um...as an exception, I'm inclined to almost make the point that...that I'm not able to evaluate that because...because according to what should I measure it? I was there a couple of times but I did not...how should I...?
- TL: Ok...hier vielleicht eine kleine Hilfestellung. Ich merke aus dem bisherigen Gesprächsverlauf, dass Sie ein ausgesprochen intensives Wissen über diese Länder haben. Würden Sie sagen, dass die Länder sich ausreichend hier in Deutschland vermarkten...beispielsweise in Reisebüros anhand von Werbematerialien, die man so sieht...oder auch im Internet...oder...
- TL: Okay...perhaps a little assistance from my end. I notice from the course of our conversation up to now that you have a downright comprehensive knowledge about these countries. Would you say that these countries market themselves adequately here in Germany...for instance at travel agencies with promotional materials that put on display...or even perhaps on the Internet...or...
- AT: Das kann ich trotz allem nur mutmaßen, weil dadurch dass ich eben selber nicht in Deutschland oder was...diese Materialien gesucht habe, könnte ich jetzt noch nicht einmal sagen, ob man was findet. Ich habe in keinem Reisebüro hier in Deutschland jemals nach dem Baltikum gefragt. Ich weiß es nicht. Kann ich echt schlecht sagen und das einzige was ich sehe ist dass es relative viele organisierte Rundreisen gibt. Über die stolpert man förmlich. Also das gibt's wohl sehr...ne...also Rundreisen und Kreuzfahrten, die dorthin gehen. Das scheint der Schwerpunkt zu sein. Ich bin...ich habe nicht gesucht, aber wenn ich unabsichtlich über irgendetwas falle, ist es immer das. Und ansonsten, was ich zum Beispiel weiß ist dass es Internetshops mit Produkten aus dem Baltikum gibt, die auch ganz gut funktionieren. Aber ich hab jetzt...ah genau, ich weiß dass es von...hm...ich glaube, irgendwie Russen oder Polen haben mir das erzählt...es gibt ja diese russischen und polnischen Supermärkte und so was... auch gerade in Nürnberg und so...da kann es sein, dass es da auch teilweise Produkte gibt, aber...ich denke, das könnte...also, wenn ich jetzt allein denke vom zufällig drüber stolpern ist es wenig, woraus ich schließe, dass man das intensivieren könnte...weil ich bin eigentlich recht viel unterwegs und ich würde es wahrscheinlich zufällig sehen, weil ich ja wüsste was es ist, weil ich kenne ja die Produkte oder ich kenne ja die Sachen.
- AT: I can still only speculate on that because since I myself never looked here in Germany for such materials, I couldn't even say if you would find anything at all. I have never asked anyone in a travel agency here in Germany for information on the Baltic States. I don't know. It's really difficult to say and the only thing I do see is that there is relatively many organized round trips. One literally almost stumbles over those. That said, there seem to be a lot...you know...well, round trips and cruises that go there. That seems to be the focus. I am...I never looked for it but whenever I unintentionally stumbled over something, it is exactly that. Apart from that, what I know for example is that there are Internet companies that offer products from the Baltic States and that seems to work quite well. But I

currently have...ah exactly, I know that there is...um...I think Russians or Polish people told me that once...there are these Russian and Polish supermarkets and such things...even in Nuremberg and so forth...it is possible that there are also certain products available but...I think, it could...well, if I just think about accidentally stumbling over these things, it is relatively little from which I conclude that one could definitely intensify that...because I'm on the road quite a bit I would most likely come across these things since I knew what it is and because I know these products or things.

- TL: Hmhm...ja. Wenn Sie sich vorstellen Sie wären eine Marketingexpertin in diesen oder für diese Länder...welches Image würden Sie versuchen von den drei Baltischen Staaten zu kommunizieren...oder wo sagen Sie...das müsste man vielleicht verbessern?
- TL: Umhum...yes. If you imagined you were a marketing expert inside those or for those countries...what image of the three Baltic States would you try to communicate...or where would you say...that ought to be improved?
- AT: Hm...naja, es ist natürlich blöd, wenn man die eine Frage nicht gescheit beantworten kann, hängt man bei der nächsten, weil...ich hab keine Vorstellung davon, was momentan kommuniziert wird, weil ich treffe ja nicht drauf. Ich weiß ja daher gar nicht, wie die versuchen da sich darzustellen...ne.
- AT: Um...well, of course it's silly if you can't answer that one question properly you are also stuck with the next one because...I don't have a perception about what is currently being communicated because I just don't get in touch with it. That's why I don't know how they try to represent themselves...you know.
- TL: Okay...und mal abgesehen davon, was gemacht wird...was würden Sie grundsätzlich sagen...welches Image würden Sie kommunizieren oder versuchen zu kommunizieren?
- TL: Okay...and aside from what is being done...what would you generally say...what kind of image would you communicate or try to communicate?
- AT: Naja gut, ich meine die müssen mit dem Pfund wuchern, dass sie haben...und das ist natürlich die...hm...die Landschaft und das geschichtliche Erbe. Und da haben sie...da müssen die kucken, dass sie die Gebäude erhalten und dass sie die, die man erhalten kann...dass sie die auch herzeigen...dass man die ankucken kann. Also gerade diese...diese...hm...Rittergüter und diese ganzen alten Gemäuer. Also ich erinnere mich an eines...ein ganz berühmtes...da ist eine...da ist ne Nervenheilanstalt drin zum Beispiel...ne...das ist ja...und die zerfällt förmlich. Das ist ein wunderschönes Gebäude, aber die machen das natürlich runter...ne...also solche Sachen müsste man natürlich kucken, dass man das...dass man die am Leben erhält und ansonsten...hm...ich würde nicht versuchen in den Breitentourismus zu gehen, sondern eben feine...feine Angebote für das Klientel...das Klientel, was ich da vielleicht anziehen will...da würde ich vielleicht noch ein bisserl genauer...ich weiß nicht, ob man da nicht ein paar Golfplätze bauen muss, oder ob man da noch ein paar...irgendwas...ne...so ein bisserl speziellere Sachen vielleicht noch ins Angebot mit aufnehmen, aber...ansonsten denke ich sind das die Leute...ich sag ja auch, wer fährt Wohnmobil...ich meine...ne...da weiß man schon wer das gerne macht. Und die gehen gerne essen

- und die kaufen aber auch mal was schönes ein und die...ne...das ist...ich denke das kann man schon ganz gut runterbrechen, was diese Leute wollen.
- AT: Well fine, I mean they would have to make the most of the talents they have...and that of course is the ...um ...the landscape and the historic heritage. And on a related note...they need to see that they preserve their buildings and that those that can be preserved...are being made accessible to the public...so that you can actually look at them. That is especially these...those...um...manors and all these old ruins. Well, I remember one of them...a pretty famous one...that is a... for example, one with a psychiatric hospital inside...you know...that's ...it's literally falling into ruins. It is a gorgeous building but they of course are absolutely ruining it...you know...that said, these things need to be looked after so that one...that one keeps these things alive and apart from that...um...I would...I would not try to go into the direction of mass tourism but instead offer finer...finer offers for the clientele...the clientele that I want to perhaps focus on...perhaps I would more specifically...I don't know, whether one doesn't have to build a couple of golf courses or if a couple of ... something ... you know ... to perhaps incorporate some more special things into the offer but...other than that we are talking about people...and as I said, the one who travels with a camper...I mean...you know...one should know what they like. And these people like eating out but they also like to buy something nice once in a while and they...you know...that is...I believe one could easily break down pretty nicely what these people want.
- TL: Hmhm...okay. Jetzt ist es ganz wichtig für alle weiteren Fragen...da möchte ich Sie bitten, über alle drei Destinationen oder alle drei Länder als eine Destination zu verstehen...ne.
- TL: Umhum...okay. It's now fairly important for the next questions...I would like to ask you to please view all three destinations or all three countries as one destination...you know.
- AT: Hmhm...
- AT: Umhum...
- TL: Hm...einmal grundsätzlich...was verbinden Sie mit dem Begriff "Baltische Staaten"? Denn für manche ist das ja nur ein geopolitischer Begriff. Aber was verbinden Sie damit?
- TL: Um...just in principle...what do you associate with the term "Baltic States"? For some, this may just be a geo-political term. But what would you associate with it?
- AT: Geopolitisch...
- AT: Geo-political...
- TL: Hmhm...das sagt ja nur aus, dass die Baltischen Staaten ein geographisch, politisch einzuordnendes Gebiet sind.
- TL: Umhum...that just says that the Baltic States are a region that can be categorized geographically and politically.
- AT: Hmhm...hm...schon klar. Hm...es ist eine gewisse Ambivalenz, weil...nachdem ich dort war, weiß ich, dass man eigentlich allen dreien mit dem Begriff nicht gerecht wird aufgrund der großen Unterschiede. Dieser Begriff "Baltische Staaten"

schmeißt sie in eine Topf, womit man ihre Eigenarten eigentlich damit unterdrückt und verdeckt. Das ist eigentlich schade, aber andererseits...hm...sind sie natürlich von ihrer Lage und von ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte halt nun mal in diesem Topf miteinander drin. Also, es ist eine gewisse Ambivalenz. Und ansonsten...die sind...die sehen halt für die Gegend wo sie sind etwas verloren aus und scheinen halt wie ein bisserl vom Himmel gefallen, weil sie sind nicht...sie sind nicht russisch, sie sind nicht polnisch...sie sind...sie sind hinten...von uns aus gesehen irgendwo...hinten, aber sie sind nicht so wie man sie erwarten würde...dass man da hinten ist. Also es ist...es ist eine Exklave in irgendeiner Weise.

- AT: Umhum...um...all right. Um...there is certain ambivalence because...after I have been there I know that this term 'Baltic States' basically does not do the countries any justice because of their huge differences. This term 'Baltic States' throws these countries into the same pot and it somehow suppresses and hides their originalities. That actually is sad but on the other hand...um...based on their location and their common history they are already in this pot together. So there is certain ambivalence. Aside from that...they are ...based on where they are located they do look like a little lost in the region and seem to just have fallen from the sky somehow because they are not...they are not Russian, they are not Polish...they are...they are back there...from where we are they seem to be somewhere...back there but they are not as one might expect them to be...meaning back there somewhere. So it is...it is an exclave in some way.
- TL: Okay...prima...hm. Sagt Ihnen persönlich der Begriff oder das Konzept des "Cobranding" etwas?
- TL: Okay...great...um. Are you familiar with the term or the concept of co-branding?
- AT: Ich könnte jetzt mutmaßen, aber...ich gehe nicht täglich damit um.
- *AT:* I could speculate now but...it is not something I deal with every day.
- TL: Hmhm...also es geht darum...wenn Sie sich vorstellen...beispielweise aus dem Konsumgüterbereich kennen Sie ja sicherlich Dr. Oetker Backmischungen. Und nehmen wir einmal an, Sie haben eine Schokoladen-Backmischung und Dr. Oetker geht zur Firma Lindt hin und würde sagen...wir wollen Eure Schokoladenstückchen in unserer Backmischung. Und dann würden die das tun und Sie hätten dann somit zwei...im Prinzip eigenständige Marken, die da heraus zusammen ein gemeinsames Produkt entwerfen...
- TL: Umhum...well, this is what it's about...if you imagine...for instance, you are very probably familiar with Dr. Oetker baking mixtures from the consumer goods area. Let's assume you have a Dr. Oetker chocolate baking mixtures and Dr. Oetker approaches the company Lindt and would ask...we want your chocolate chunks in our baking mixture. And they would agree to do that and with that you would consequently have two...basically independent brands who create a common product...
- AT: Hmhm...
- AT: Umhum...
- TL: Hm...wenn Sie das mal applizieren sollten auf die Baltischen Staaten...denn sie haben da ja auch individuelle, eigenständige Marken...es sind ja Destinationen als

Marken...sie hatten ja gerade gesagt, dass die etwas schwach ausgeprägt sind...hm...könnten Sie sich dann einen touristischen Slogan vorstellen oder diesen spontan entwickeln, der diesen drei Ländern als gemeinsame Destination gerecht werden würde?

- TL: Um...now if you were asked to apply that to the Baltic States...because here you also have individual, independent Brands...they are destination brands...you just mentioned that they are somewhat not pronounced (distinct)...um...could you then imagine a tourism slogan or perhaps very spontaneously develop one that would do justice to the three countries as a common brand?
- AT: Hm... [Lachen].
- AT: Um...[laughter].
- TL: [Lachen] Schwierige Frage wahrscheinlich...
- TL: [Laughter] Probably a difficult question...
- AT: Puh...naja gut...so gesehen ist ja das Baltikum...es ist ja gewisser Maßen schon diese Dreieinigkeit von irgendwas...ne...
- AT: Phew...well, good...the Baltic States are in that sense...to a certain extent they are somehow already this trinity of something...you know...
- TL: Hmhm...das ist richtig, aber da haben Sie ja gerade gesagt, das ist...
- TL: Umhum...that's correct, but you also just said that it is...
- AT: Richtig, das ist ambivalent. Naja klar. Aber es ist…es ist natürlich…ach Du liebe Güte…da müsste man jetzt das puzzeln anfangen, ob man da aus den…
- AT: Correct, it is ambivalent. Sure. However, it is ... of course it is ... dear me!... one would have to start doing a jigsaw puzzle now to see if one can make...
- TL: Also wenn Sie alle drei jetzt vermarkten würden...oder gemeinsam vermarkten sollten...gibt es da irgendwie so einen Spruch, der Ihnen spontan in den Sinn komm...irgendwas wo Sie sagen würden...Mensch, das würde mich jetzt als Tourist irgendwie...erreichen...oder mein Interesse entfachen dorthin zu gehen.
- TL: Well, if you would try to market the three now...in other words, if you would try to market them together...is there a somehow a slogan that very spontaneously comes to mind...something where you might say...wow, as a tourist that would somehow...reach me now...or would catch my interest to go there.
- AT: Hm...naja gut. Ich meine, man müsste...oder man könnte vielleicht versuchen diese...diese Attribute, also das was wir so hatten...so Geschichte, Natur und...und vielleicht irgendwie lecker essen oder keine Ahnung...hm...ein bisserl auf die drei Länder zu verteilen...also der eine steht dafür, der andere steht dafür, und so weiter...das wird dann natürlich auch wieder keinem gerecht...aber man kann natürlich versuchen diese...so ein bisserl zu sortieren...ne...was man wo mehr findet und da werden also von mir aus...also logischerweise wäre Estland eher der...Naturteil...und die anderen wären eher die Königstädte oder was weiß ich wie...ja also...oder die Kirchen oder keine Ahnung...also dass man versucht die so ein bisschen...mit drei Begriffen, die...die eben diese Art von Touristen ansprechen...also wie gesagt...Natur, Geschichte und das dritte fällt mir gerade nicht ein...hm...zu subsummieren und dann da ein bisschen die Schwerpunkte zu

- verteilen. Vielleicht irgendwie in die Richtung...weil jetzt irgendwelchen neuen Wortschöpfungen aus den drei Anfangsbuchstaben oder Anfangssilben der Länder...das ist wahrscheinlich nicht so.
- AT: *Um...well, okay. I mean, one would have to...one could perhaps try to...try to use* these attributes we were talking about before...that history, the nature and...and perhaps deliciously eating our or I don't know...um...one would have to spread them a little across the three countries...meaning one of them stands for, the other stands for and so on and so forth...of course that doesn't do justice to any of these...but of course one could try to...to organize (sort) them a little...you know...in terms of what could be found here or there and as far as I'm concerned this will...well, logically Estonia would rather occupy the ...the nature ...and the others might be the royal cities and what not...well, yeah...or the churches or I don't know...therefore, one could try to ...with three terms that ...that speak to this type of tourists...well, as I said...nature, history and the third I can't remember right now...um...one could subsume those and then distribute the focus areas a little. Perhaps something like that...because to create some new coinage now taken from the initial letter or starting syllable of the countries...probably doesn't make much sense.
- TL: Okay...gut. Wenn Sie...und sie haben das gerade sehr schön gesagt...es gibt da eine unglaubliche Vielfalt...das müsste man für jedes Land wahrscheinlich für sich herausstellen...glauben Sie...wenn man so was machen würde...also so ein cobranding...so eine Strategie und die dann alle gemeinsam vermarkten würde...glauben Sie, dass das dann die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der einzelnen Baltischen Staaten fördern würde? Und wenn ja, warum...beziehungsweise wenn nein, wieso nicht?
- TL: Okay...good. If you...and you articulated that very nicely just now...there seems to be an incredible diversity...that is something that probably would have to be emphasized for each of the three countries...do you think...if one did something like that...meaning such a co-branding...a strategy that would market them all together...do you think that it would increase the competitiveness of each of the three Baltic States? And if so, why...and respectively if not, why not?
- AT: Hm...jetzt Moment...hm...Wettbewerbsfähigkeit jetzt in touristischer Hinsicht oder...rein touristischer Hinsicht?
- AT: Um...now wait a second...um...competitiveness with regard to tourism...or in a tourism context?
- TL: Ja...richtig.
- TL: Yes...correct.
- AT: Also...gut...aus deutscher Sicht...wir sind viel größer...wir sind...ne...wenn ich jetzt Schweizer wäre, würde ich das vielleicht anders sehen...weiß ich nicht, aber...für uns sind das sehr kleine Länder. Und so gesehen...oder es ist nun mal nicht die Schweiz...also vielleicht von der Größe her aber nicht von der Leistungsfähigkeit und von der Anzahl der Menschen auch nicht. So gesehen halte ich es für utopisch, dass jeder für sich alleine überhaupt...was richtig auf die Füße stellt. Also die wären eigentlich...die wären nicht nur blöd...ich denke es wäre falsch wenn da jeder versuchen würde sich selber da irgendwie...hm...in den Vordergrund zu stellen. Ich denke die sind dann am stärksten, wenn sie wirklich

alle drei an einem Stick ziehen und eben versuchen sich da...da einen Schulterschluss...ich meine das wird den einen mehr ärgern als den anderen, weil...wie gesagt, wenn ich Este wär, würde ich auch sagen...muss ich da meinen lahmenden Bruder da mit hinter mir herziehen...ne...aber...zähneknirschend würde ich...das ist ähnlich wie bei uns mit den verschiedenen Bundesländern...ne...die Bayern denken sich auch...mein Gott, muss ich Mecklenburg-Vorpommern mit durchfüttern...ne...aber die haben auch was zu bieten letzten Endes...ne. Also so gesehen denke ich müssen die...die müssen miteinander...ich denke da gibt es gar keine Alternative.

- AT: Well...good...from a German perspective...we are much larger...we are...you know...if I was Swiss citizen I might see it a bit different...not sure, but...for us those countries are rather very small. If you look at it that way...and we are just not talking about Switzerland...well, perhaps size-wise but not in terms of productive capacity and definitely not number of people. In that sense I find it utopian anyway that each one of them tries to individually...achieve something. Actually, they would be ... they would not just be stupid ... I also think it would be downright wrong if each one of them would try to put themselves somehow...um...to the foreground. I only believe they are strongest once they really act in concert and try to...to collaborate (close their ranks)...I mean that might anger one of them more than the other because ... as I mentioned ... if I was an Estonian citizen I might also argue...do I really have to drag my lame brother along with me...you know...but...teeth-gnashingly, I would...that is very similar to us with the different federal states...you know...Bavarians also think...Good Lord, do we have to really support Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania...you know...but in the end they also have to offer something...you know. In that sense, I believe they have to ...they have to collectively...I think there is not alternative to
- TL: Hmhm...Wenn wir nochmal für einen Moment auf den Begriff "Baltische Staaten" zurückkommen...in wieweit denken Sie dass dieser Begriff momentan die Länder...die einzelnen drei Länder momentan kommuniziert oder repräsentiert?
- TL: Umhum...If we one again and just for a moment go back to the term "Baltic States"...in what way do you think does that term currently represent the countries...does it currently communicate or represent the three independent countries?
- AT: Hm...stellen wir nochmal etwas davor...was heißt denn das überhaupt? Was ist eigentlich das Baltikum? Also das Mare Baltikum ist die Ostsee. Puh...also abgesehen davon dass sie Ostseeanrainer sind...aber das sind viele andere auch noch...ne...also warum jetzt die drei das Baltikum sind weiß ich gar nicht. Ich weiß nicht wer sich das überhaupt mal ausgedacht hat, dass die drei jetzt das Baltikum sind. Weil, wie gesagt, auch das Mare Baltikum geht ja noch viel weiter als die drei Länder und es ist gar nicht klar welches Land was vertritt...also so gesehen trifft der Begriff ja eigentlich überhaupt nicht...das ist einer dieser Begriffe, die jeder im Hut führt, aber eigentlich keiner genau weiß warum und was er eigentlich bedeutet. Also das ist wieder einmal das übliche...wenn man dann darin herumbohrt, merkt man dass...das fällt ja auseinander...da ist ja eigentlich gar kein...da ist gar nix dahinter.

- AT: Um...let's look at something else first...what does that actually mean? What is that Baltic countries? Well, the "mare baltikum" is the Baltic Sea. Phew...well, apart from the fact that they are part of the Baltic rim...but there are also many others...you know...that said, I don't even know why exactly those three countries are labelled "Baltic States". I don't know who came up with it anyway that the three are suddenly the "Baltic States". Because, as I said, even the "Baltic Sea" pertains to so much more than just these three countries and it is not clear which country represents what...and if you look at it that way it's actually an improper term...it is one of these terms everyone uses but no one really knows why and what it actually means. That is once again the usual...and if you then probe that you notice...it all falls apart...there is actually no...there is nothing behind it.
- TL: Hmhm...ja...okay. Hm...stellen Sie sich bitte einmal hypothetisch vor, Sie wären Marketingexpertin einer fiktiven Tourismusbehörde aller drei Baltischen Staaten und denken Sie bitte auch an eine solche Co-Branding Marketingkampagne. Welche...oder was sollte...welche Gemeinsamkeiten oder welche Unterschiede sollten bezüglich dieser Länder in einer Marketingkampagne herausgestellt werden?
- TL: Umhum...yeah...okay. Um...please try to hypothetically imagine you being a marketing expert of a fictional tourism authority of all three Baltic States and please also think about such a co-branding campaign that we talked about. Which...or what should...what commonalities and what differences should then be emphasized in a marketing campaign for these countries?
- AT: Also ich denke es ist generell mal sehr wichtig, dass
  Unterschiede...hm...sind...weil nur dann macht es...bleibt es interessant. Wenn ich
  jetzt sage...naja, es ist wurscht wo Du hinfährst...Hauptsache Du bist irgendwo im
  Baltikum...dann wäre das falsch. Sondern es sollte auf jeden Fall...innerhalb
  dieses Begriffs auf die Unterschiede sehr stark abgehoben werden...also das ist
  auf jeden Fall ganz wichtig und auch ganz wichtig eben klar zu machen, wer
  wofür steht...vielleicht sogar ein wenig überspitzt. Also das denke ich wäre
  sehr...hm...sehr wichtig das auf jeden Fall herauszuarbeiten, eher sogar ein bisserl
  zu überhöhen, wer...wer wofür ist. Wenn dann der Tourist nach Litauen fährt und
  merkt...da gibt es auch Wald...ist schön...oder wenn er merkt, es gibt auch in
  Estland schöne Städte und nicht nur in Litauen...okay, aber...erst einmal würde
  ich versuchen das so ein bisschen zu...Gegensätze herauszuarbeiten.
- AT: Well, I generally think it is very important that differences ...um ...are ...because only then it makes ... it remains interesting. Now, if I would say ... well, I couldn't care less where you go ... the main point is that you stay somewhere within the Baltic States ... then that would be wrong. By all means, instead it should ... within this terminology the differences should be made clear ... that definitely is very important and it is similarly important to point out ... who signifies what ... and perhaps even in an a little exaggerated form. Well, I think that would be very ... um ... very important to definitely carve that out and rather to elevate a little who ... who stands for what. If then the tourist travels to Lithuania and notices ... they also have forests ... it's beautiful ... or if that tourist notices that there are also beautiful cities in Estonia and not just in Lithuania ... okay, but ... first of all I would try somehow to ... to carve out the contrasts.
- TL: Okay...also Sie sagen eher Gegensätze als zu viele Gemeinsamkeiten?

- TL: Okay...so you are saying rather the contrasts than too many commonalities?
- AT: Richtig...richtig...
- AT: Correct...correct...
- TL: Okay...gut. Hm...glauben Sie denn, dass so eine Co-Branding Marketing Kampagne die Wahrnehmung von Touristen in Bezug auf die einzelnen Länder oder einzelnen Staaten beeinflussen würde? Und wenn ja, was denken Sie auf welche Weise? Falls nicht, wieso meinen Sie nicht?
- TL: Okay...good. Um...do you by the way think that such a co-branding approach might influence the perception of tourists with regard to the individual countries or individual states? And if so, in what way do you think that might be the case? If not, why not?
- AT: Hm...klingt vielleicht fast schizophren, aber ich denke dass man damit eigentlich sogar fast die Wahrnehmung, dass es drei verschiedene Staaten sind, sogar eher schärft.
- AT: Um...it almost sounds schizophrenic but I believe that by doing so one would actually sharpen the awareness that it is actually three different states.
- TL: Hmhm.
- TL: Umhum.
- AT: Sogar...so nach dem Motto "wir sind die drei anderen". Also...ne...wir sind generell anders als die anderen, aber auch wir drei sind anders. Also ich denke, dass das damit sogar sehr stark zu befördern wäre. Weil ich finde...wenn man etwas zusammenfasst, kann man die Unterschiede sogar hinterher besser...wieder...ne...weil man kann innerhalb dieser Menge...kann man dann sortieren. Also ich denke das ist...im Gegenteil...es ist gerade nicht schädlich.
- AT: In fact...pretty much along the lines of "we are the other three". Well...you know..."we are generally different than the others but also each one of us is different". Well, I think with that approach it could be very strongly promoted. Because you see...if you consolidate something you are afterwards often able to see the differences much better...again...you know...because within this set...one can still sort and shelve it then. That said, I think it is...on the contrary...it is particularly not harmful.
- TL: Hmhm...gut. Denken Sie, dass es...dass ein solches Co-Branding das Image der einzelnen Länder beeinflussen würde? Also wenn Sie jetzt so einer gemeinsamen Strategie folgen...dann gibt es ja auch irgendwo ein gemeinsames Image und gemeinsame Persönlichkeit...
- TL: Umhum...good. Do you think that it... that such a co-branding approach would potentially influence the image of the individual countries? Well, if you decided to follow such a concerted approach...consequently you then also create some sort of common image and personality...
- AT: Es zieht auf jeden Fall hoch...es hebt alle hoch [Lachen]. Auch die, die es dringend nötig haben.
- AT: It definitely pulls them up...it lifts all three up [laughter]. Even the ones that are in the dire need of it.

- TL: [Lachen]...okay...gut. Hm...jetzt...wenn wir mal ganz kurz weggehen von den Baltischen Staaten und wenn Sie einmal andere Destinationen betrachten, die vielleicht schon ein sehr ausgeprägtes Image und Persönlichkeit haben und eine deutliche Marke darstellen...hm...wie glauben Sie hängt eine Destination als Marke mit der Persönlichkeit und dem Image einer Destination zusammen...oder wie hängen diese drei Konzepte grundsätzlich zusammen? Das ist sicherlich eine sehr abstrakte Frage...
- TL: [Laughter] ...okay ...great. Um ...now ...if we just briefly step away from the Baltic States and if we for now look at other destinations that perhaps already have a very distinct image, personality, and have a solid brand ...um ...how in your opinion is a destination as a brand connected with the personality and image of a destination ...in other words, how are these three concepts generally interrelated? That certainly is more of a conceptional question ...
- AT: Sagen wir mal so...hm...ein gutes Marketing ist es dann, wenn ich es schaffe das so zur Deckung zu bringen, dass derjenige, der davon angezogen wird, dort auch das vorfindet was er zu finden hofft. Ne...das heißt ich darf im Prinzip nicht was vorgeben zu sein, was ich nicht bin...sondern ich muss das Versprechen, was ich gebe auch erfüllen. Und ich denke je besser mir das gelingt, desto...desto stärker habe ich auch eine Vervielfältigung dieses Effektes...weil diese Leute reden ja auch darüber. Und wenn es total hip ist irgendwo hinzugehen, dann kommen die anderen auch...ne...wenn es da richtig gut ist. Während...es gibt ja nichts schlimmeres, als wenn ich da irgendwelche negativen...da kann ich nur noch billig sein...ne... Wenn...wenn es irgendwo mistig ist, dann muss ich so billig sein, dass die Leute trotzdem kommen. Aber wenn ich eben das nicht will, wenn ich...dann müssen meine Versprechen passen und dann müssen meine...dann müssen diese drei Bausteine, die Sie gerade genannt haben...die müssen dann halt auch wirklich sauber aufeinander sitzen. Und dann denke ich, ist das ...ist das auch okav.
- AT: Let's put it this way...um...it is good marketing, if I manage to align it in such a way that a person who feels attracted by it is going to find whatever that person hopes to find there. You know...that means that in principle that I should not pretend to be something I am not...instead I need to fulfil the promise I make. And I believe the better I am in this regard, the...the greater will be the multiplication of that effect...because these people also talk about it. And if it is absolutely hip to travel to some place, then others will follow...you know...if it is really great there. Whereas...there is nothing worse than experiencing some negative...in that case I can only try to be cheap...you know... If...if some place is really rotten, at least it's got to be so cheap that people come nevertheless. However, if I don't want that and if I...then the promises I make need to be adequate and then also my...the tree building blocks you just mentioned...they need to neatly fit on top of each other. Then I think it is...then it is okay.
- TL: Hmhm...nehmen Sie als...als Touristin die Unterschiede zwischen diesen Dingen wie Persönlichkeit, Image und Marke einer Destination...nehmen Sie das wahr? Aktiv?
- TL: Umhum...do you as...as a tourist, do you perceive differences between these things such as personality, image, and brand of a destination...do you sense that? Actively?

AT: Also...hm...ich meine man...man kriegt ja so Kampagnen mit für so...für Länder. Zum Beispiel die Türkei hat ja ne Zeit lang sehr viel Werbung gemacht oder Marokko...oder, ne...sieht man ja so die...hm...ich bin ja selber schon lange nicht mehr in der Türkei gewesen und kenne aber genug Leute die dorthin in die Türkei fahren und weiß warum die dahin fahren...und ich muss halt da zum Beispiel sagen...wenn ich das Plakat sehe, dann können die mir viel erzählen. Das ist doch nicht der Grund, warum da einer hinfährt. Das ist einfach...ihr seid einfach billiger als Mallorca...und allerhöchstens noch von Ägypten zu toppen, aber ansonsten könnt ihr mir da den Pegasus hinmalen, wie ihr wollt...das ist nicht [lachen]...nein das ist nicht der Grund warum da jemand hingeht. Und...und sogar, wenn jemand da zum Golf spielen hingeht...dann macht er das nur weil er sich eben nicht vier Mal im Jahr Spanien leisten kann. Dann muss es halt ein Mal die Türkei sein. Ne, also das ist so eine Imagekampagne wo ich sage...ja...sprechen sie in diesen Rüssel...ne...so wie bei Ice Age. Also das...hm...haut nicht hin. Während, wenn ich...wenn ich eben wirklich andere...hm...in Marokko kann ich es schlechter beurteilen, aber ich würde mal tippen, dass es ein bisserl ne ähnliche...hm...Richtung geht. Zumindest wenn es mal unspezifisch Marokko ist. Ich kenne zum Beispiel in Ägypten Gegenden...das hat mit Ägypten nichts mehr zu tun...das ist...das sind absolute, abgeteilte Landstriche...da ist eine großer Zaun darum herum und da ist eine andere Welt. Aber der würde auch keine Ägypten-Kampagne machen...der macht dann ne Kampagne für seine...für sein Territorium. So gesehen ist es...wenn ich ein ganzes Land bewerbe, dann tue ich mir natürlich erstens leichter, wenn es klein ist...klar...kann ich natürlich viel besser unter einen Hut kriegen, weil ich dann nicht so auseinanderfalle und...und wenn ich dann auch wirklich mit einem top Ziel werbe und das darstelle und die Leute fahren dann da hin...finden das dann auch tatsächlich vor...dann...was kann mir besseres passieren.

AT: Well...um...I mean you...you typically pick up on such campaigns for...for countries. For example, over quite a long time Turkey advertised a lot or Morocco...or, you know...you come across those things...um...I myself have not been to Turkey for a long time but I know plenty of people who go there and I know why they go to Turkey...and I really have to say just as an example...if I see that poster they can tell me all they want. After all, that's not the reason why someone would go there. That is simply...you are just cheaper than Mallorca...and at best can be beaten by Egypt, but other than that you can draw the Pegasus for me all you want...that is not [laughter] ... no really, that is not the reason why someone would go there. And...and even if someone would go there to play gold...then he does that only because he is just not able to afford going to Spain four times a year. Thus, it's got to be Turkey once a year. No really, that is some type of image campaign where I would argue...yes...please speak into this trunk...you know...like in Ice Age. Well, that...um...that won't work. Whereas, if I...if I would really...um...with Morocco I can evaluate it not as well but my guess would be that it points a little into a similar...um...direction. At least when looking at Morocco in an unspecific way. For instance in Egypt, I'm familiar with regions...they don't have anything to do with Egypt any longer...that is...those are absolutely detached regions...there is a large fence built around them and inside is a different world. They would not run a campaign on Egypt either...they might run a campaign for their...for their territory. In that sense it is ...if I promote an entire country I would of course find it easier if that country is

small...sure...naturally I could much better reconcile everything because I wouldn't then fall apart that much and...and if I then promote a top destination and portray that and people then go there...and actually find exactly that...then...what better things could happen.

- TL: Hmhm...aber Sie würden schon sagen, dass Image und Persönlichkeit...hm... reflektiert sein sollte in der Marke?
- TL: Umhum...but would you then say that image and personality...um...should be reflected in a brand?
- AT: Unbedingt, weil es gibt nichts schlimmeres, als wenn es dann nicht hinhaut.
- AT: Most definitely because there is nothing worse than if it doesn't work eventually.
- TL: Okay...gut. Hm...es dauert nicht mehr lange...wir sind gleich fertig.
- TL: Okay...good. Um...it won't take much longer...we are almost done.
- AT: Ja [lachen]...
- AT: Okay [laughter] ...
- TL: Glauben Sie persönlich, dass die Marken der jeweiligen Destinationen, also von Estland, Lettland und Litauen, momentan in der Vermarkung der einzelnen Staaten...sofern Sie das sagen können...glauben Sie, dass das derzeit effektiv herauskommt und effektiv umgesetzt wird?
- TL: Do you personally think that the brand of each destination, meaning of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in the marketing of the individual destinations is currently...provided that you are able to assess that... do you believe that it currently is shown to its advantage and is effectively being implemented?
- AT: Puh...ich kenne keine Kampagne oder keine...keine Broschüre oder irgendwas, wo die jetzt alle drei irgendwo drin wären. Und umgekehrt...in den Sachen, über die ich...die ich vorhin erwähnt habe...über die ich gestolpert bin oder die ich gesehen habe...da wird, finde ich, zu wenig darauf abgehoben. Also da kommt es gar nicht raus. Also da...was ich zum Beispiel immer finde ist, dass das zum Beispiel...dass Riga erklärt werden muss, weil Riga fällt so aus dem Rahmen dort in diesem ganzen Kontext...das muss man irgendwie erklären...das muss man irgendwie...begründen, weil...das kann ich nicht einfach so sagen...ja, fahr hin...da ist Deine Stadt und die kuckst Du Dir an und dann fährst Du weiter und...hm...es ist zu wenig, finde ich.
- AT: Phew...I am not familiar with any campaign or any...any brochure or something of that kind, where all three of them would currently be represented somehow. And conversely...in those things that I...that I mentioned earlier...the ones I stumbled upon or that I have seen...those, in my opinion are insufficiently given prominence to. Well, basically nothing comes across. Well, there...for example something I always notice is that for instance...that Riga needs to be explained because it is so strikingly different in this whole context...one has to always explain that...one has to somehow...justify it because...it's difficult to explain...yes, go there...that's your city and you take a look at it and then you move on and...um...in my opinion that is not enough.

- TL: Ja...okay. Sie als Touristin...wenn Sie eine Destination auswählen...schauen Sie auf diese Dinge? Schauen Sie dann darauf...okay, was für ein Image oder Persönlichkeit hat jetzt die Destination Ihrer Wahl oder...sagen Sie, ich gehe rein nach anderen Dingen oder...ja...lassen Sie sich davon beeinflussen?
- TL: Yes...okay. You as a tourist...whenever you pick a destination...do you consider these aspects? Does it matter to you...okay...what type of image or personality the destination of your choice has or...or do you say, I go by other criteria or...well...are you influenced by that?
- AT: Ich denke schon. Also ich hab zum Beispiel jetzt gerade...hm...ein ganz konkretes Beispiel. Ich hatte...wir wollten einen Urlaub machen und...hm...haben aber jetzt verschiedene größere Ausgaben gehabt und waren jetzt gerade einmal auf dem Punkt...jetzt kucken wir doch mal, ob man irgendwie was findet, was jetzt vielleicht nicht so teuer ist und was die Kinder auch lustig finden und jetzt kucken wir doch mal was wir machen. Und da war...guckst Du eben so...und dann war eben die Wahl...Bulgarien. Und dann hab ich dann zum Schluss gesagt...also bei dem Image...das bringe ich nicht fertig...das schaffe ich nicht...da kann ich nicht hin. Also...es geht nicht...ich kann ja nicht sagen, ich war in Bulgarien...ne. Jetzt fahren wir nach Polen...und da kann man natürlich auch sagen...puh...aber...hm...wir machen jetzt keine Rundreise in Polen oder so was, aber wir gehen da auch nicht hin...weil in Bulgarien, da habe ich fast nur die Wahl zu sagen, ich gehe in irgendein Hotel und mache da...hm...all-inklusive oder weiß der Geier. Wenn ich schon sehe, dass der Großteil der Hotels nur all-inklusive Angebote hat, dann weiß ich doch schon automatisch, was es geschlagen hat. Dann weiß ich wer dahin fährt und warum. Und dann muss ich halt sagen...okay, sorry...ist für mich scheinbar die falsche Destination. Und wenn ich jetzt ein schönes Ferienhaus in Polen direkt an der Ostseeküste habe, wo ich sage ich bin immerhin in der Nähe vom Baltikum [lachen]...und es ist das gleiche Meer... [lachen]...dann ist das für mich eine ganz andere...also so gesehen mache ich jetzt gerade eine Ersatzart...einen Baltikum-Ersatzurlaub, indem ich es nicht ganz bis nach hinten schaffe, aber ich bin immerhin an der polnischen Ostseeküste. Also die haben jetzt...so gesehen profitiert jetzt Polen von meiner Begeisterung für das Baltikum. Weil ich sage...okay...es ist zumindest...ich stelle mir es ein bisschen ähnlich vor. Ich gucke jetzt mal, ob es da auch so hübsch ist. Vielleicht ist es ja da auch ganz nett. Zumindest war das jetzt hipper und konnte man eher kommunizieren...auch im Bekanntenkreis gewissermaßen...so jetzt mal ganz unter der...hm...Schamgrenze...hm...als zu sagen, ich fahre nach Bulgarien...wo ich gesagt habe...also ne...geht nicht...sorry, kann ich nicht [lachen].
- AT: I would imagine. Well, for instance I have currently ...um ...a very specific example. I had ...we wanted to go on holiday and ...um ...recently had a couple of different larger expenses and got to the point ...let's try to find something that isn't perhaps so expensive but what the kids still perceive as fun and let's try to see what we could potentially do. And there was ...we were just looking at things ...and then the winner was ...Bulgaria. In the end I then said ...well, with that image ...I'm not able to do that ...I can't handle it ...I won't go there. Anyway ...it's impossible ...I cannot say I was in Bulgaria ...you know. Now we decided for Poland ...and of course with that you could also say ...phew ...but ...um ...we are not going for a round trip in Poland or something of that kind but we are neither going there ...because in Bulgaria, the only choice I could make would be to say that I stay at some sort of hotel and do a ...um ...an

all-inclusive something or what not. As soon as I notice that the majority of hotels only has all-inclusive offers I automatically know what's in store for one. Then I also know what kind of person travels there and why. And then I simply have to say...okay, sorry...apparently this is the wrong destination for me. And if I now have a beautiful holiday cottage in Poland directly at the Baltic Sea where I can say that at least I am close to the Baltic States [laughter] ... and it is even the same ocean...[laughter]...then to me it is something completely different...well, if you look at it that way I am currently doing some sort of compensation...a compensational Baltic States holiday and even though I don't manage to get there all the way, I am at least at the Polish Baltic Sea cost. Well, they now have...in that sense Poland benefits from my enthusiasm for the Baltic States. Because I would say...okay...it is at least...I imagine it to be a little similar. I will now take a look and if it is similarly beautiful. And perhaps it is also quite nice there. At the very least it seemed to be more hip and one could communicate it better...virtually also among our circle of friends and acquaintances...now to be under the boundary of shame...um...to be brutally honest...um...than to say, I am going to Bulgaria...where I said...well no...that won't work...sorry, I can't do it [laughter].

- TL: Okay... [lachen]. Daraus schließe ich auch, dass es für Sie schon auch ganz wichtig ist, dass die Persönlichkeit und das Image einer Destination...dass das in der Brand Communication auch ganz deutlich herauskommt?
- TL: Okay...[laughter]. From that I take that it is also very important to you that the personality and image of a destination...that it is clearly recognizable in the brand communication.
- AT: Ja, richtig. Aber deswegen muss ich nicht ständig nach...hm...Marseille, New York und an die Côte d'Azur und was weiß ich...also so nicht...ne...
- AT: Yes, correct. But that does not mean that I constantly need to go to...um...Marseille, New York and to the French Riviera and what not...that's not what it is...you know...
- TL: Nein, nein...schon klar.
- TL: No, no ... of course not.
- AT: Sondern einfach wo man sagt...das ist ein...das hat Qualität. Also das ist...
- AT: Yes, just simply to a place where you can say...that is a...that has quality. Well, that is ...
- TL: Also das muss auch deckungsgleich irgendwo sein mit Ihren eigenen Erwartungen...
- TL: So that needs to be somehow congruent with your own expectations...
- AT: Ja, also es ist... es hat einen Anspruch. Vielleicht trifft es das am besten. Also es ist ein Urlaub, der...oder in einer Destination die einen gewissen Anspruch hat, außer all-inklusive und sonnenbaden. Und da würde ich sagen ist das Baltikum fast nicht zu toppen, weil da...ich sag ja, da kannst Du Bildungsurlaub machen und trotzdem Wellness und trotzdem baden und trotzdem...was weiß ich wie...ist einfach klasse.

- AT: Yes, well it is...it has to have a demand (standard). Maybe that's the most accurate way to put it. So it is a holiday that...or in a destination that has a certain demand/requirement apart from all-inclusive and sunbathing. And at that point I would argue are the Baltic States hard to top because there...as I mentioned, you can go on educational leave there and at the same time engage in wellness and even go for a swim and still...all that I know...it is simply great.
- TL: Hmhm...jetzt kommt so eine kleine Kontrollfrage...wenn Sie nun den Begriff "Baltische Staaten" als reinen Begriff hören oder betrachten, welche Gedanken und welche Gefühle haben Sie oder verbinden Sie damit?
- TL: Umhum...I am now having some sort of control question for you...if you hear or look at the term "Baltic States" just as a term, what thoughts and feelings do you have or do you associate with it?
- AT: Hm... [lachen]...hatte ich ja glaube ich schon einmal erwähnt...also wie gesagt...Sehnsucht...hm...Sympathie...und auf jeden Fall das Bedürfnis, da mal irgendwann wieder hinzufahren.
- AT: Um...[laughter] ...I think I already mentioned that...well, as I said...a desire...um...sympathy...and definitely the urge to go there again at some point.
- TL: Hmhm...gibt es denn ein bestimmtes Logo oder ein Symbol, wo Sie sagen würden...das steht für mich für die Baltischen Staaten als Gesamtheit oder könnten Sie mir in Worten eines für alle drei Destinationen beschreiben?
- TL: Umhum...is there a particular Logo or a symbol where you would say...to me that stands for the Baltic States in its entirety or could you perhaps describe on for all three destinations in your own words?
- AT: Ja...das ist diese...wahrscheinlich das, was ich ja schon gesagt habe...dieses romantische Landschaftsbild der 1850er Jahre...also einfach...ich sag ja...ein schöner alter Baum, ne Wiese, heller Himmel, heller Ostseehimmel, ein bisserl Wolken, bisschen Wind...Freiheit...so was.
- AT: Yes...that's this...it's most likely what I already mentioned...this romantic scenery of the 1850s...well simply...as I said...a beautiful old tree, a meadow, a bright sky, a bright Baltic Sea sky, some clouds, a cool breeze...freedom...such things.
- TL: Okay...schön. Hm...glauben Sie, wenn Sie die Baltischen Staaten betrachten und das Image und die Persönlichkeit dieser doch sehr individuellen Länder oder Destinationen...glauben Sie überhaupt, dass die Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen Marke möglich ist? Falls ja, wie würde das aussehen und was müsste dazu passieren in Ihren Augen? Falls nicht, wieso nicht? Also auf gewisse Art und Weise haben wir ja so etwas ähnliches schon, wenn wir mal die Schweiz, Österreich, Deutschland, Frankreich als Alpenraum betrachten. Das ist ja im Prinzip auch eine Marke. Glauben Sie, dass so etwas machbar ist mit den Baltischen Staaten, so konträr und unterschiedlich sie auch jetzt sein mögen?
- TL: Okay...nice. Um...do you think if you take a look at the Baltic States and the image and personality of these quite distinct countries or destinations...do you at all believe that the development of a overarching brand is possible? If so, how would that potentially look like and what would need to happen in your opinion? If not, why not? Well, in a certain way we already have something similar if we consider parts of Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and France as alpine region.

- Basically that is a brand. Do you think that something like is doable with the Baltic States, as contrary and different they may be?
- AT: Also ich denke schon. Weil ich sehe wenig Nachteile für die. Und vor allem, die haben immer...ich meine, wie wollen die sich entwickeln...die haben doch eigentlich nur den Tourismus...was sollen die groß machen? Also die wären ja...sollen sie sich etwa mit Atomkraftwerken zustellen oder was und Strom verkaufen...also mir fällt jetzt gerade gar nichts anderes ein was die noch machen könnten. Also insofern sehe ich das...ja, eigentlich sehr...sehr optimistisch, dass die sich da so irgendwie zusammenraufen und das irgendwie hinkriegen.
- AT: Well, I think so. Simply, because I only see very few disadvantages for these countries. And especially because they always...I mean how do they intend to grow...basically they just have the tourism industry...what other big things could they do? Well, they would be...should they block themselves with nuclear power plants or such things and sell electricity...well, I currently can't think of anything else they could do. That said, I view this...well, actually quite...very optimistic that they somehow manage to get their act together and manage it somehow.
- TL: Und dann...wie wir das schon gesagt haben...trotzdem aber die Unterschiede herausstellen in einer gemeinsamen Vermarktung in touristischen Bereich?
- TL: And then...as we discussed before...still emphasize the differences in a common approach to marketing in the field of tourism?
- AT: Ja, ja...natürlich. Es muss ja nicht Gleichmacherei sein, aber einfach an einem Strick ziehen...gemeinsam.
- AT: Yes, sure...of course. It doesn't have to be a levelling down but instead to just act in concert...together.
- TL: Hm...glauben Sie, dass eine solche gemeinsame Marke dann das Image und die Persönlichkeit der einzelnen Länder...hm...verändern würde?
- TL: Um...do you think that such a common brand would perhaps then...change the image and personality of the individual countries?
- AT: Naja, ich denke dass sie alle davon profitieren...sogar...ja, wie fast immer so...auch der Stärkere profitiert, wenn er die Schwächeren mitzieht. Das tut immer allen gut...das ist in der Familie so, das ist...ich sag ja...in einem föderalen System so...das ist immer so. Auch der Starke...der angeblich Stärkste profitiert immer noch und logischerweise...die Schwächeren profitieren gleich zwei Mal...also das ist klar. Aber profitieren tun die alle würde ich sagen.
- AT: Well, I think they would all benefit from that...even...yes, as almost always...even the strongest would benefit if he takes the weaker ones along. It always does good to everyone...that's the case inside a family, it is...as I said...the case in a federal system...it is always like that. Even the stronger one...the supposedly strongest still benefits and logically...the weaker ones benefit twice...that is evident. Anyway, I would say they all benefit.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...im Prinzip letzte Frage. Wie sähe dann Ihrer Meinung nach...wenn wir das gemeinsam vermarkten würden...wie sähe dann ein gemeinsames Image und eine gemeinsame Persönlichkeit dieser drei Länder Ihrer Meinung nach aus?

- TL: Umhum...okay...basically we are at the last question. How, in your opinion...if we did a common marketing...then how would a common image and a common personality of these three countries in your opinion look like?
- AT: Hm...naja, ich denke das ist...auch wenn es nicht drei Seiten einer Medaille geben kann, aber...hm...wenn man es schafft, dass jeder für etwas steht, dann kann man ja trotzdem sagen...wir sind die drei Seiten von etwas. Wir sind die drei Aspekte von etwas. Also ich denke, es ist ja...hm...kein Problem klarzumachen...ich sag ja...wie drei Geschwister in gewisser Weise. Zu sagen...okay, wir sind zwar...der eine ist blond, der andere brünett oder wie auch immer...aber trotzdem...hm...wir haben Dinge die uns verbinden und jeder von uns hat ein gesundes Selbstbewusstsein...wir stehen zusammen und wir packen es zusammen...also so Hand auf Hand...also ich denke da kann man zusammen stark sein, ohne dass man da persönlich oder dann als Land zurückstehen muss. Ich denke das ist so eine...das sind so drei Geschwister...drei unterschiedliche Geschwister.
- AT: Um...well, I think that is ...even if there is no such thing as three sides of a medal but...um... if one manages that each one of them stands for something, you could nevertheless then say...we are three sides of something. We are the three facets of something. That said, I believe it is ...um...no problem to clarify...as I said...like three sisters in a sense. It is not a problem to say...okay...indeed, we are ...one of us is blond, the other one brunette or whatever...but still...um...we have facets that connect us and each one of us has a healthy self-confidence...we stand together and we rock it together...well, kind of like all for one and one for all...well I believe they can be strong together without risking personally or as a country having to take a second place. I think that is a...they are like three sisters...three different sisters.
- TL: Hmhm...klasse. Gut. Gibt es noch irgendetwas zu den Ländern, zu den Thematiken die wir besprochen haben, zu den einzelnen Begriffen wie Image, Persönlichkeit und Marke...zu denen Sie noch etwas hinzufügen möchten? Etwas, was wir in unserem Gespräch noch nicht besprochen haben oder was Ihnen besonders wichtig in diesem Kontext ist abschließend?
- TL: Umhum...great. Good. Is there anything pertaining to the countries, to the themes we discussed, to the different terms such as image, personality and brand...anything where you would like to add something? Some aspect we haven't yet touched on in our conversation, which would be important to you to mention as a last point?
- AT: Puh...also ich...ich denke die dürfen ruhig...also gerade auch die...die Esten sowieso, aber auch die anderen...die dürfen ruhig ein bisschen stolz sein auf das was sie da haben...ich meine, ob sie es jetzt verdient haben oder nicht ist ja jetzt sagen wir mal egal, aber...sie haben sehr schöne Grundlagen, sie haben ne prima Lage, sie haben...hm...sie haben sich da freigekämpft und haben eine bewegte Geschichte. Also ich denke so ein bisschen Stolz und Selbstbewusstsein dürfen die ruhig haben und...und ich sag ja...viel Glück auf dem Weg...ich werde das mit Sympathie weiter verfolgen, was die da treiben.
- AT: Phew...well I... I think could be...well, especially the... Estonians anyhow but also the others...they could dare to actually be a little proud of what they have there... I mean whether they have earned it now or not may be a different story but...they have a very beautiful foundation, they have a great location, they

have ...um...they forced their way and have a moving history. That said, I think they should have a little pride and self-confidence and...I would tell them...good luck on your journey...I will monitor what they will do with a lot of sympathy.

- TL: Allerletzte Frage. Was war Ihre Motivation, an dieser Studie mitzuwirken?
- TL: Very last question. What was your motivation to participate in this study?
- AT: [Lachen]...das ist ja fast ketzerisch [lachen]...hm...wahrscheinlich liegt es unter anderem daran, dass ich so positiv eingestellt bin gegenüber diesen drei Ländern und...hm...ja vielleicht...ich muss gerade selber ne Masterarbeit schreiben...also ein ganz anderes Thema, aber ich...hm...ich denke mir, wenn alle Ihnen absagen, dann haben Sie Schwierigkeiten irgendwo...also irgendeiner muss sich ja quasi... Ich glaube an das Prinzip des Fließens im Leben...also wenn man selber was fließen lässt...irgendwas kommt immer zurück. Das ist so.
- AT: [Laughter] ...now that is almost heretical [laughter] ...um...among other factors perhaps the main reason is that I am so positively minded towards these three countries and ...um...yes, perhaps...I currently have to write a master thesis myself...well, a very different area but I...um...I could imagine if everyone would decline you might get into trouble somewhere...and someone just has to support that. I strongly believe in the principle of a flow in life...that said, if you allow something to flow...something else will always come back to you. It's that simple.
- TL: Prima. Darf ich Sie vielleicht gerade noch bitten diese demographischen Fragen auszufüllen und dann habe ich Sie glaube ich lange genug belästigt und danke Ihnen sehr, sehr herzlich für das Gespräch und Ihre Zeit heute.
- TL: Great. May I perhaps just ask you to please complete these demographic questions and then I believe I have harassed you long enough and would like to thank you very, very much for our conversation and your time today.

[End of Interview]

## Appendix Q: Sample Interview Transcript - Potential Tourist

Interviewer: Thomas Leib (TL) Interviewee: Potential Tourist (PT) Address: Date: Length of Interview: 64 min. An introduction to the interview was given to the interviewee before the actual interview started, containing and clarifying detailed information pertaining to purpose and progress of the study, confidentiality issues, participation of the interviewee, data collection, research findings and the recording of the interview. In a summary permission was asked from the interviewee to conduct the interview and a consent form was given to the interviewee for signature obtaining the approval. Subsequently the audio-recorded interview started following the interview questions for "potential tourists"] TL: Gut, lass uns anfangen. Ich habe Dir ja gesagt, es geht um die baltischen Staaten... TL: Great, let's start. I already mentioned that the interview deals with the Baltic States... PT: Ja. Da war ich noch nicht. PT: Yes. I have never been there. TL: Das ist gut so... TL: And that's good... PT: Okay... PT: Okay... TL: Du bist ja trotz allem ein potenzieller Tourist. TL: You are still a potential tourist... PT: Hm, stimmt. PT: Um, that's true. TL: Ich mache diese Interviews mit zwei Personengruppen, mit potenziellen und

aktuellen Touristen. Ganz generell geht es eben um die Imagebetrachtung von

- Destinationen, die Persönlichkeit von Destinationen und dann auch generelle Marketingfragen, sowie Fragen zum Branding von Destinationen. Wenn Du mal ganz spontan bist, welches Land von den drei baltischen Staaten würde Dich jetzt für einen Besuch in näherer Zukunft am meisten interessieren? Und warum?
- TL: I am conducting these interviews with two groups of people, potential and actual tourists. Generally, these interviews are looking at image perceptions of destinations, about destination personality and also entails general marketing questions as well as questions regarding destination branding. If you were spontaneous, what country of the three Baltic States would currently interest you the most to visit in the near future, and why?
- PT: Also das einzige, was ich über die baltischen Staaten gehört habe und das sowohl über Lettland also auch Estland...also ohne Unterschied...ist, dass sie sehr schön sind und dass die Häuser vor allem sehr schön sind und sehr bunt. Und ich kenne nur eine Person, die da schon war, und das ist halt auch die einzige...ja, die einzigen Informationen die ich darüber habe oder bisher kenne. Und ich weiß nur, dass es da sehr grün ist, dass sie am Meer sind und dass sie sehr klein sind. Hm...also, es ist also wirklich relativ wenig...im Gegensatz zu anderen Ländern, wo ich noch nicht war...weiß ich sehr wenig darüber auch weil man auf Reisen nur sehr wenige Leute davon trifft...bzw. aus Erfahrung kenne ich halt gar keinen. Und deshalb ist das wirklich noch sehr so ein weißer Fleck im Prinzip und grundsätzlich würde ich dann Lettland und Estland sowohl als auch gleichzeitig glaube ich besuchen.
- PT: Well, the only thing I had heard about the Baltic States was something that was equally relevant for Latvia and Estonia...so no difference...was that they are very beautiful and that their houses are especially beautiful and very colourful. And I only know one person that has been there already and that really is the only...well yes, the only information I have about the countries and what I know so far. I just know that it is very green there, that they are located next to the sea and that they are very small. Um...well, that said it is relatively little...by comparison to other countries where I have not been so far...I don't know very much about it also because you don't meet very many people from there while traveling...or in other words, I don't know anyone from experience. That's precisely why that is basically still a white spot and generally I would be tempted to visit both Latvia and Estonia rather at the same time.
- TL: Wieso sagst Du Estland und Lettland? Und nicht Litauen?
- TL: Why do you mention Estonia and Latvia? Why not Lithuania?
- PT: Hm...weil über Litauen weiß ich noch weniger als über Lettland und Estland. Und der Bekannte, der mir eben über diese beiden was erzählt hat, hat Litauen da nicht wirklich erwähnt.
- PT: Um...well, because I know even less about Lithuania than I do about Latvia and Estonia. And that friend of mine who had told me a little about the two countries also didn't mention Lithuania really.
- TL: Ach. Aber der war da?
- TL: Oh, okay. But he had been there?
- PT: Der war glaube ich auch nicht da, nein. Der kennt auch die beiden Länder auch nur

- von seinen Touren mit der Aida, auf der er damals gearbeitet hat. Und, ja...hm...also Litauen kein Bild.
- PT: I believe he had not been there, no. That person also just knows these two countries from the cruise trips he made with the AIDA, where he used to work back then. And yes...um...so really no impression about Lithuania.
- TL: Also noch weißer, ein noch etwas weißerer Fleck, wäre das so?
- TL: So more white, it's an even whiter spot on the map, would that be true?
- PT: Richtig.
- PT: Correct.
- TL: Okay...was würdest Du sagen, zu welchem Zweck Du dort hinreist?
- TL: Okay...what in your opinion would be your motivation to travel there?
- PT: Auf jeden Fall vielleicht Wandern. Wobei das natürlich nicht sich unbedingt auf Berge bezieht. Sondern einfach auf grüne Landschaft, Land und Leute kennen lernen. Ähnlich vielleicht auch aus den Gründen, warum man vielleicht nach Irland reist oder nach Island oder so. So in die Kategorie würde ich es eigentlich eintragen.
- PT: Definitely perhaps hiking. Whereby that does not necessarily refer to mountains. It rather refers to a green landscape and getting to know a country and its people. Similar perhaps as to why one would travel to Ireland or to Iceland and such destinations. That's how I would perhaps try to categorize it.
- TL: Bist Du ein Wandermensch?
- TL: You are a hiker?
- PT: Hm...naja weniger. Also, ich könnte nicht Ferien nur mit Wandern verbringen...ganz egal ob eine oder zwei Wochen. Also da bräuchte ich eine schöne Stadt, ein bisschen Kultur, lecker Essen gehen. Ich brauche keinen Strand oder so aber ich könnte es nicht nur im Grünen aushalten...glaube ich.
- PT: Um...well, to a lesser extent. Well, I couldn't spend my holidays just with hiking...regardless if we are talking about one or two weeks. Well, I would need a beautiful city, a little bit of culture, eating out nicely. I wouldn't needs a beach or something like that but I couldn't just be in the countryside...I think.
- TL: Okay...was glaubst Du...wie lange Du dort in den jeweiligen Destinationen bleiben würdest?
- TL: Okay...what do you think...how long would you stay in the respective destinations?
- PT: Hm...mit Destination meinst Du die Länder oder die einzelnen Städte?
- *PT: Um...with destinations you mean the countries or rather the individual cities?*
- TL: Die drei einzelnen Länder.
- TL: The three individual countries.
- PT: Die Länder...hmhm...also ich habe keine richtige Vorstellung von der Größe. Aber ich würde pauschal sagen also vielleicht zwei Wochen in jedem Land. Also so...dass man es...ja, wenn man schon mal da ist, auf jeden Fall separat bereist und

- da halt dann alles mitnimmt...ja...alles was sich für Touristen bietet. Klar...die Hauptstädte beispielsweise und dann vielleicht noch ein bisschen das Umland...oder je nachdem, was wirklich attraktiv ist.
- PT: The countries...umhum...well I don't really have a clear picture about their size. But in general I would probably say about two weeks in every country. Well, meaning...that you can...yes, since you are already there that you are able to travel them individually and that you can absorb everything...yes...everything that is offered to tourists. For sure...the capital cities for example and then perhaps also a little bit of the surrounding area...just depending on what is really attractive.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...würdest Du die einzeln bereisen oder würdest Du die alle zwei oder alle drei zusammen bereisen?
- TL: Umhum...okay...would you travel them individually or would you combine two or all three of them?
- PT: Schwierig zu sagen. Kommt drauf an...ich glaube, da würde ich mich erst einmal informieren. Wie...welche Städte da wirklich...ja...besonders empfohlen werden, wie so die Distanzen sind, und wie man das am besten bereist. Kann man da gut mit dem Auto fahren beispielsweise oder muss man da fliegen. Wir hatten letztes Jahr einen sehr schönen Urlaub durch Andalusien mit einem Mietwagen gemacht...hm...und das für zwei Wochen, das war super. Also so etwas grundsätzlich kann ich mir gut vorstellen.
- PT: Difficult to say. It depends...I think I would try to get some more information first of all. How...really what cities are there...yes...what is especially recommended, what the distances are, and what the best way is to get around. For example, are you able to travel around by car or would you have to take a plane. Last year we went on a very nice holiday through Andalusia with a rental car...um...we did that for two weeks and it was super. So basically something like that I could imagine.
- TL: Okay...gut. Wo glaubst Du würdest Du Dich...im Falle einer Reise...wo würdest Du Dich dann innerhalb der Destinationen oder innerhalb der Länder aufhalten?
- TL: Okay...good. Where do you think...in case you did travel there...where would you stay within these destinations or the respective countries?
- PT: Wo?
- PT: Where?
- TL: Mmhm [bejahend].
- TL: Umhum [affirming].
- PT: Mit wo meinst Du welche Stadt oder welche...oder ob ein Hostel, oder Hotel, oder etwas in der Art?
- PT: By saying where you mean what cities or what...or whether I would use a hostel, a hotel, or something different?
- TL: Hm...nicht so sehr auf ein Hotel runter gebrochen. Sondern in welchen Gegenden würdest Du Dich innerhalb der Länder aufhalten. Würdest Du eher sagen...okay...ich würde eher in der Stadt bleiben, oder vielleicht eher auf dem Land, oder ist es möglicherweise eine Kombination von Dingen?
- TL: Um...not necessarily broken down to a hotel. Rather in what regions/spots you

could imagine to stay within those countries. Would you rather say...okay...I would mainly stay in a city or would you stay more in the countryside, or would it perhaps be a combination of things?

- PT: Hm...also wenn...dann glaube ich um wirklich das Land und Leute kennen zu lernen...hm... würde ich eine Kombination machen. Also grundsätzlich bietet sich ja immer für das Reisen meistens...ja...der größte Flughafen an. Das ist oft die Hauptstadt oder so. Und ja...da dann zu beginnen und eventuell je nachdem, was das Land noch so bietet...wenn es...dadurch dass es am Meer liegt kann man da vielleicht auch ganz schön entlang fahren oder so. Nur beispielsweise. Das würde ich dann auch auf jeden Fall sehen wollen.
- PT: Um...well, if I did that...I think in order to really get to know the country and its people...um...I would do a combination of things. Well, basically for traveling what is mostly useful is...well...the largest airport. That often is located in or close to the capital city. Well, and...and perhaps start there and depending on what else the country has to offer...for example if it...since it is located next to the sea I could imagine that it is perhaps quite pretty to drive along the shoreline or something like that. Just as an example. And I would definitely then also want to see that.
- TL: Hmhm...okay. Für die nächsten Fragen bitte ich Dich, die Destinationen...so weit Du es eben kannst...voneinander separat zu betrachten. Hm...wenn Du das nicht kannst, kannst Du mir das aber auch sagen. Es geht hierbei um das Image einer Destination. Image als Begriff, ist das klar?
- TL: Umhum...okay. For the next couple of questions I would like to ask you to please view the destinations...in as much as you can...to view the destinations separately from each other. Um...in case that is difficult, please say so. The questions revolve around the image of destinations. Are we clear what I mean with the image of a destination?
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Was da alles reingehört, welche Komponenten und so?
- TL: Also what is part of it, what components and such things?
- PT: Ja, grundsätzlich schon.
- PT: Yes, basically I think so.
- TL: Okay...also nochmal grundsätzlich alles was Du emotional, rational damit verbindest. Auch Einzigartigkeiten etc. gehört alles zu Deinem Image. Mir ist wichtig, dass es Dein Image ist und nicht das Image was von irgendeiner Marketingorganisation transportiert wird. Selbst wenn Dein Image natürlich davon beeinflusst sein kann.
- TL: Okay...well again, basically everything you emotionally and rationally connect with the destination. Even aspects that stand out or such things belong to the image you have of a destination. What is important to me is that we are talking about the image you have, not what a destination marketing organization tries to convey. However, that might naturally influence your image.
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].

- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Stelle Dir mal vor, Du würdest nächste Woche in diese drei einzelnen Destinationen reisen und würdest die zum ersten Mal eben besuchen. Erzähle mir mal eine Geschichte. Was denkst Du...wie würden Deine Erfahrungen aussehen, was glaubst Du zu sehen, was würdest Du erleben, gibt es etwas positives, etwas negatives, welche Bilder hast Du im Kopf?
- TL: Try to imagine you would travel to these individual three destinations next week and would visit them for the first time in your life. Tell me a little story. What do you think...what would your experiences look like, what do you expect to see, what would you witness, anything positive, or perhaps anything negative, what images do you have in mind?
- PT: Oh Gott, ich glaube, ich hätte mir mehr über die Länder durchlesen sollen.
- PT: Good heavens, I think I should have read some more about these countries.
- TL: Nein, nein, nein, dann bist Du schon wieder beeinflusst. Ich bin an Deiner momentanen Sichtweise interessiert.
- TL: No, really not, because that would again have influenced you. I'm really interested in your current perspective.
- PTHm...ja, die Sache ist, jetzt sind wir wieder bei dem weißen Fleck eigentlich. Dadurch, dass ich da eben keinen und nichts von diesen Ländern bisher kennen gelernt habe und...das glaube ich bildet so meine Images am aller stärksten. Es ist wirklich relativ unbefleckt. Also oft gibt es ja Destinationsmarketing...wie 'Incredible India' [doubtful] oder so etwas...mir fällt dann sofort was dazu ein. Und ich habe dann auch den Vergleich, weil ich kenne natürlich relativ viele aus Indien...aber eben bei Estland, Lettland oder Litauen...wenn ich mir da jetzt eine Geschichte überlege...also ich glaube, ich würde ein kleines Auto sehen, was da durch die Landschaft fährt und ab und zu mal in kleinen, urigen Städten halt macht...in Bed & Breakfast Hotels übernachtet. Total nette Leute in der Bäckerei kennen lernen, ein bisschen Kultur sich anschauen, alte Gebäude, vielleicht ein Museum hier und da...aber auch...ja...durchaus Kultur, ich bin sicher, es gibt da ganz viele Möglichkeiten. Aber es ist wirklich nur so ganz grob, denn ich bin da absolut unbefleckt. Also ich...wenn ich mir jetzt...glaube ich, einen Film über Lettland ansehen würde, würde ich vermutlich auch...ja...einfach das dann für bare Münze nehmen und wahrscheinlich auf jeden Fall Lust kriegen, das mal auszuprobieren. Also das ist so generell irgendwie was, wie man bei mir Reiselust wecken kann.
- PT: Um...well, the thing is, we are now actually right at that white spot on the map. Due to the fact that to this date I never met anyone or learned anything about these countries and...I think that most strongly influences the images I have. It really is relatively blurred. Well, often there is destination marketing...like 'Incredible India' [doubtful] or something like that...and then typically I immediately have something in mind. And then I also have a comparison because I know quite a few people from India...but regarding Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania...if I start thinking about a story now...well, I think I would see a small car that drives through the landscape and once in a while stops in small, rustic villages...and stays overnight in bed and breakfast hotels. You will get to know very nice people at the local bakery, you can look at some cultural sites, old buildings, perhaps museums here

and there...but also...yes...definitely culture rich...and I'm sure there are many things to see. However, that is just my broad view of it since I'm absolutely clueless. Well, I...if I now...I think if I would watch a documentary about Latvia, I would probably...well...I would then simply take that at face value and would most likely suddenly feel like trying that out. That is generally something that potentially can arouse my desire to travel.

- TL: Gibt es irgendetwas positives oder was negatives, was Du so denkst, dort zu sehen, zu erleben?
- TL: Is there anything positive or something negative that you would expect to see and experience there?
- PT: Hm...also ich glaube mit negativen Erwartungen bin ich noch auf keine Reise gegangen. Aber ich weiß nicht genau, wie das mit dem Wetter wäre. Also grundsätzlich reizt mich zum Beispiel Großbritannien weniger weil ich weiß...okay...da regnet es viel und deshalb würde ich da auf jeden Fall besonders gut meine Reisezeit wählen. Und ich glaube, das wäre eben in diesen Ländern ebenfalls so. Also das wäre vermutlich eher die Sommerzeit oder zumindest später Frühling, früher Herbst. So etwas in der Richtung.
- PT: Um...well, I believe I never embarked on a journey with any negative expectations. However, I don't know exactly how the weather would be like. So basically Great Britain is less appealing to me because I know...okay...it's raining a lot there, which is why I would choose the time I would travel there very carefully. I just think that it would be very similar in those countries. That said, it would most likely have to happen some time during the summer or at least in late spring, early fall. Anyways, something like that.
- TL: Hmhm...gibt es irgendwie Bilder, die Du im Kopf hast zu den Ländern?
- TL: Umhum...are there perhaps any images you connect to these countries??
- PT: Mein einziges Bild ist eigentlich durch den bereits erwähnten Bekannten, der eben mit der Aida in diesen kleinen Häfen angelegt hat. Und der dann diese kleinen, bunten Häuser am Ufer gesehen hat und total begeistert war. Und ich habe glaube ich ähnliche Bilder mal gesehen. Hm...ich weiß nicht genau, im Fernsehen oder es kann auch ein anderer Ort gewesen sein, aber das ist so mein Bild. Also kleine, verschieden farbige Häuser und...korrigiere mich bitte am Ende, ob dass das falsche Bild ist...hm...aber das ist glaube ich so das einzige, was mir spontan dazu einfällt.
- PT: My only image comes actually from this friend of mine I mentioned earlier, who landed in those small harbours with the Aida. Who then saw these small, colourful houses on the shoreline and was absolutely enthusiastic about it. And I think I once saw similar images somewhere. Um...I'm not sure if that was on TV or somewhere else but that is sort of the image I have. Just small houses in different colours and...please correct me in the end if I was off track...um...but that really is all I can spontaneously think of.
- TL: Okay...bis jetzt hast Du noch keine großen Unterschiede gemacht. Siehst Du irgendwelche Unterschiede zwischen den drei Ländern?
- TL: Okay...up to now you didn't make any differences. Can you think of any between the three countries?

- PT: Hm...ich glaube dafür weiß ich zu wenig darüber.
- PT: Um...I think I just don't know enough about it.
- TL: Okay, ist das also für Dich eigentlich eher eins?
- TL: Okay...is that because you view it as one perhaps?
- PT: Ja, genau. Also differenzieren könnte ich es noch nicht.
- PT: Yes, exactly. Well, I could not differentiate it at this point.
- TL: Wenn Du es jetzt nicht differenzieren kannst...dann sage mir doch mal so die ersten...und trotzdem das Image beschreiben solltest, sage mir mal so die ersten drei Worte die Dir in den Sinn kommen und die das Image des oder der Länder für Dich beschreiben.
- TL: If you can't differentiate it currently...why don't you give me the first...but if you were asked to describe their image...why don't you give me the first three words that come to mind that would describe the image of one or all three countries.
- PT: Puh...hm...klein, grün und weit weg. Und ich glaube aber auch, die beschriebenen Bilder waren immer sehr warm und ich glaube auch dass speziell eben auch...ja...die Leute damit gemeint waren. Und die Kultur an sich, obwohl es ja auch eher wirklich vielleicht auch dem geschuldet, dass es so kleine Länder sind...dass man einfach da noch ein anderes Gefühl untereinander hat. Und das vermutlich auch dadurch, dass Touristen da vielleicht nicht ganz so häufig sind. Also das ist reine Vermutung...ja...sehr, sehr gut aufgenommen werden. Es ist auf jeden Fall grundsätzlich ein positives Bild.
- PT: Phew...hm...small, green, and far away. But I also think that the images that were mentioned always were described as warm and I believe that this must be especially true for...yes...for the people. And the culture itself even though it might be due to being small countries...that one still has a different contact with each other. Most likely that is also due to the fact that tourists are perhaps still uncommon. Well, that's just a wild guess but...yes...that you are being treated very, very hospitable. It is definitely a generally very positive image.
- TL: Was wäre Deine Motivation, dort hinzugehen?
- *TL*: What would be your motivation to go there?
- PT: Etwas neues zu entdecken. Also es ist ja keine klassische Destination wie...ach ja...wir fahren heute, also wir fahren diesen Sommer wieder nach Lettland. Habe ich noch nie jemanden sagen hören. Und ich glaube bei bestimmten Destinationen macht das den Urlaub besonders attraktiv. Weil es echt ist. Und weil es nicht für Touristen herbeigeführt wird oder so. Sondern weil es einfach...ja...ganz normal ist.
- PT: To discover something new. Well, it really is no typical destination such as...oh well...something to the effect of we are going this summer to Latvia again. I never heard anyone say that. And I believe that makes some destinations very interesting to be considered for holidays. Because it is real. And also because it is not being created for tourists or so. Just because it is simple...yes...just normal.
- TL: Und dazu zählst Du die Baltischen Staaten?
- TL: And you would consider the Baltic States to be such a destination?

- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Was glaubst Du, in welcher Hinsicht die baltischen Staaten einzigartig sind oder sehr ähnlich zueinander?
- TL: In what way would you think are the individual Baltic States unique or do you view them to be very similar to each other?
- PT: Ich glaube ähnlich sind sie, weil ich sie nicht differenzieren kann. Einzigartig...gut, bunte Häuser gibt es auch in Mexiko. Also das wäre nicht einzigartig. Ich glaube dafür muss man einfach mehr Informationen haben. Also um was einzigartig zu finden muss man es glaube ich erlebt haben. Irgendwie gehört da so eine persönliche Erfahrung dazu. Einzigartig ist für mich was ganz besonderes. Und ich glaube das würde ich nicht aufgrund einer einzelnen Beschreibung von einem Bekannten, ja, glauben. Also da bin ich persönlich jemand, der dann das schon auch überprüfen würde, um es einzigartig zu finden.
- PT: I think they are similar, simply because I cannot differentiate them. Unique...well, Mexico also has colourful houses. Therefore that wouldn't be unique. I believe one just needs to have more information about them to make such a statement. Well, to find something unique or special, one must have experienced it. Somehow there needs to be a personal experience connected to it. Uniqueness is something very special to me. I think just based on a pure description of some friend of mine I would not...well...I would not think so. In that context I am someone who prefers to verify that personally to find something unique.
- TL: Okay...gibt es irgendwas wo Du denkst, da könnten sich die Länder voneinander unterscheiden? Es reicht ja manchmal, wenn man so eine Vermutung hat. Also da muss man ja gar nicht auf irgendwas zurückgreifen...was weiß ich...einen Atlas oder ein Reisebericht von einem Bekannten...sondern man hat ja grundsätzlich eine Vermutung. Also wenn ich zum Beispiel...
- TL: Okay...is there something where you could imagine the countries to be different? Often it is enough to make an assumption. Sometimes one doesn't need to revert to something...I don't know...an atlas or a travelogue of a friend...sometimes one has a basic presumption. For example, when I...
- PT: Also unterscheiden tun sie sich sicher schon allein in der Sprache. Also ich würde jetzt nicht davon ausgehen, dass die zufällig alle die gleiche Sprache sprechen, nur weil sie so nah beieinander sind. Und...ja...vielleicht auch in den Mentalitäten...also so was Land und Leute angeht...ist vielleicht das eine Land ein bisschen mehr im Süden, dadurch auch wärmer, grüner eventuell. Also da gibt es sicher Unterschiede. Welche...nun, das müsste man halt erst einmal rausfinden.
- PT: Well, they definitely are different simply in their language. Well, I would not assume that they all coincidentally speak the same language just because they are located so close to each other. Well, and ... yes ... perhaps also in their mentalities ... you know, regarding the countries and their people ... perhaps one country is more in the south, and due to that perhaps a but warmer, potentially more green. I'm sure there are differences. Which ones ... well, that's something one would have to find out first.

- TL: Hmhm...okay...jetzt gehen wir so ein bisschen noch tiefer ins Image rein. Stell Dir weiterhin vor bitte, dass Du durch die Destinationen reist. Ich würde gerne natürlich Deine Eindrücke wissen von diesen Destinationen. Also das heißt was glaubst Du dort zu sehen in Bezug auf touristische Attraktionen zum Beispiel?
- TL: Umhum...okay...we now dive a bit deeper into the image of these countries. Please continue to imagine that you are currently traveling through these destinations. I would like to get your impressions of these destinations. That means, what would you believe to see with regards to tourist attractions for example?
- PT: Hm...es ist halt wirklich schwer ein Image oder ein Bild zu beschreiben von etwas, was noch so schwach ist.
- PT: Um...I find it really difficult to describe an image or picture of something that is still so blurred or weak.
- TL: Klar, das ist ein schwaches Image.
- TL: Sure, it has to be a weak image.
- PT: Ja, ein schwaches Image, ja, oder ein schwaches Bild in meinem Kopf. Aber wenn ich so an diese "Art" von Städten denke...würde ich glaube ich...ja...also vergleichbar wäre meine Erwartungshaltung glaube ich mit einfach kleinen Dörfern und relativ kleinen Städten. Das heißt nicht, dass sie in irgendeiner Art und Weise weniger entwickelt sind oder so...das gar nicht. Und wahrscheinlich sind die auch sehr alt und gut erhalten. Aber dass man da eben...ja... weiß ich nicht...vielleicht Kirchen anschauen kann...dass es gewisse Museen gibt, alte Gebäude...ja...vielleicht auch Galerien oder Geschichte, etc. Und ich glaube dass...also ich kann mir vorstellen, dass es bestimmte Attraktionen in bestimmten kleinen Orten gibt und dass man aber für die nächste Attraktion wieder ins Auto steigt und weiter fährt. Also ich kann jetzt so...vom Gefühl her...glaube ich würde ich nicht davon ausgehen, dass ich das alles an einem Ort finde, sondern das ich auf jeden Fall reisen muss oder darf...wie auch immer.
- PT: Yes, a very weak image...true...or a weak image at least in my head. But when I think of these "types' of cities...I think I would...yes...well, perhaps my expectation would be similar to that of small villages and relatively small cities. Now that does not mean that they are in any way less developed or so...for sure not. And perhaps they are also quite old and well maintained. But I would image that you can...well...I don't know...perhaps look at churches...that there are museums, old buildings...yes...perhaps even galleries and history and such things. And I believe that...well, I could imagine that there are special attractions in certain small villages but that you have to get into a car to reach the next attraction. Well, I can...it's just a feeling...I think I would not expect to find everything in one location but instead that I would definitely have to travel or can travel...however you want to look at it.
- TL: Wie glaubst Du sieht so die Natur aus?
- TL: How would you imagine the nature to be like?
- PT: Grün.
- PT: Green.
- TL: Grün...okay. Grün, grün, grüne Wiese, grüner Wald, grün hügelig?

- TL: Green...okay. Green, green meadows, green forest, green hilly?
- PT: Ja, grüne Wiese trifft es glaube ich ganz gut. Wälder sind da sicher auch, Berge würde ich jetzt nicht erwarten. Sicher auch Seen oder...ja...so generell glaube ich viel Natur.
- PT: Yes, I could see green meadows. I'm sure that there are also some forests but I would not necessarily expect mountains. Definitely some lakes or ... yes ... generally I would expect a lot of nature.
- TL: Okay...was heißt...viel Natur?
- TL: Okay...what does that mean...a lot of nature?
- PT: Also viel Natur...sprich weniger verdreckte Großstädte...dafür...ja...auch wirklich viel Landschaft, viel Natur, gute Luft. Es hat sicher auch dann mit den Destinationen zu tun, die eventuell ein bisschen Weiter auseinander sind und da vermutlich viele Felder dazwischen liegen. Ich hoffe, ich liege jetzt nicht total daneben?
- PT: Well, just a lot of nature...meaning fewer dirty lager cities...instead...yes...really a lot of landscape, nature, clean air. It definitely has something to do with the destinations potentially being located further away from each other, having presumably a lot of land in between. I hope I'm not completely off track right now?
- TL: Ich weiß es nicht. Ich war auch noch nicht da.
- TL: I don't know. I haven't been there myself yet.
- PT: [Lachen]
- PT: [Laughter]
- TL: Wie glaubst Du ist so das kulturelle Umfeld dort? Du hast jetzt schon gesagt Kirchen gehören jetzt für Dich dazu.
- TL: How would you imagine the cultural environment to be like? You already mentioned that you connect churches to it.
- PT: Ja, klar. Religion spielt in ländlichen Regionen oft eine große Rolle. Kultur...also ich kann mir gut vorstellen, dass die Menschen auch...ja...bedingt durch die Lage des Landes und der Geschichte da...sehr, sehr eng sind...sehr offen sind, sehr warm sind. Und...also wie gesagt...ich wüsste jetzt gar nicht genau, welche Sprache die sprechen...muss ich gestehen. Und...ja...also bei der Kultur...das finde ich eigentlich noch mit am interessantesten bei den verschiedenen Ländern. Auch die, die ich bereits gesehen habe. Wäre ich sehr gespannt, wie das da wäre.
- PT: Yes, of course. Religion often is of great importance in more rural regions. Culture...well, I can imagine that the people even...well...due to the location of the country and history...that they are very, very close to each other...very sincere, very warm-hearted. And ...as I said before...I would not know currently what language they are speaking...I have to admit that. And ...well ...with regards to their culture...I find that most interesting when looking at the difference countries. Even when looking at those I have already seen. I would be curious how things are up there.
- TL: Welche generelle Infrastruktur und welche spezielle touristische Infrastruktur

- würdest Du erwarten?
- TL: What general infrastructure and what tourism specific infrastructure would you expect to see there?
- PT: Also ich bin sicher, dass es da eine Infrastruktur gibt. Aber ich glaube, ich würde jetzt keine 'hop-on-hop-off' Busse erwarten...beispielsweise...sondern ein gut ausgebautes System. Die wären wahrscheinlich auch nicht so unpünktlich wie in Italien beispielsweise. Weil es einfach oben im Norden liegt. Aber ich glaube schon dass es gut durchdacht ist und oft sind ja gerade in diesen Ländern, die vielleicht jetzt noch nicht auf jedem Touristenwunschzettel stehen, oft sehr gut strukturiert in sich. Und die haben vielleicht einfach noch nicht so große Resonanz bekommen. Aber sie sind von dem, was sie haben und wie das dargestellt wird oft sehr gut aufgebaut.
- PT: Well, I am sure that they have an infrastructure. But I also believe that I could not expect and hop-on-hop-off busses there ... just as an example ... rather a well developed system. For instance, they most likely wouldn't even be as unpunctual as in Italy. Just because they are located further north. But I think it is well thought out and it is often true for countries that are not exactly listed on every bucket list of tourists that they are often and in principle well structured. Perhaps they have just not received a lot of attention so far. But they are well developed in terms of what they have and how that is being represented.
- TL: Und in punkto touristische Infrastruktur? Zum Beispiel Hotels?
- TL: How about the tourism infrastructure? For instance when looking at hotels?
- PT: Hotels? Klar gibt es Hotels.
- PT: Hotels? Of course they have hotels.
- TL: Klar gibt es Hotels...okay. Vergleichbar mit unserem Standard, oder ein anderer Standard?
- TL: Naturally they have hotels...okay. Are they comparable to our standard or do you see this to be any different?
- PT: Ja, was ist unser Standard?
- PT: Well, what is our standard?
- TL: Unser Standard...nun, zum einen hast Du...vom zwei- oder ein-Sterne...oder sagen wir vom Bed & Breakfast bis zum fünf Sterne Haus hast Du alles...
- TL: Our standard...well, for a start you have...from two stars or one star...well, let's say you have everything starting with bed and breakfast places all the way up to five star hotels...
- PT: Also ich kenne zwar die Hotelketten relativ gut aber ich habe noch keins in Litauen oder Estland oder so…von denen gehört. Also ich würde grundsätzlich davon ausgehen, dass es auf jeden Fall unabhängige sind. Unabhängige Hotels. Sicher viele kleine privat geführte, eher weniger groß, weil es auch nicht zum Touristenstrom passen würde. Sondern…ja…also Bed & Breakfast klingt für mich gut…könnte ich mir glaube ich auch ganz gut vorstellen…wenn man eben mit dem kleinen Auto so von Stadt zu Stadt reist, und dann über die Felder fährt. Und das passt glaube ich auch zu dem Bild der Leute, was ich habe. Eben dass die Oma da

- neben ihren ganzen Kindern auch ein paar Beherbergungsgäste unterbringt und dass das alles sehr...ja...sehr natürlich noch ist und weniger kommerziell.
- PT: Well, I am quite familiar with chain hotels but in Lithuania or Estonia, I have never...never heard of any. That said I would generally assume that they are definitely independent. Independent hotels. Sure, there are many small privately owned and managed hotels, rather small, because it would not correspond with the flow of tourists. Rather...well...bed and breakfast to me sound about right...I could imagine that pretty well...when you travel by car from one city to the next, driving through the fields. And that would actually match with the image I have of the people there. Simply that there is this grandma who, besides having her own children, also accommodates a couple of tourists and that everything is very...well, yes...very natural and less commercial.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...wie stellst Du Dir so das sozio-ökonomische Umfeld vor?
- TL: Umhum...okay...how would you imagine the socio-economic environment?
- PT: Ja, sozio-ökonomisch. Ich weiß nicht, wie die Staaten dastehen.
- PT: Well, in terms of socio-economic aspects. I don't know what the situation is in those countries.
- TL: Also wirtschaftlich zum Beispiel...was glaubst Du...womit die ihr meistes Geld machen? Gibt es ganz besondere Industriezweige, die so ein bisschen herausstehen? Vielleicht verbindest Du irgendwelche Produkte damit. Oder sozial gesehen...haben wir eine Situation wie in Spanien oder sieht man viele Bettler auf der Straße...wie stellst Du Dir das einfach vor? Ich meine, es gibt da keine falsche Antwort.
- TL: Well, economically for instance...what do you think...how do they earn their money? Are there any special industrial sectors that stand out a little? Perhaps you connect certain products with these countries. Or socially...do we have a situation similar to the one in Spain or would you expect to see a lot of beggars on the street...what could you imagine? I mean, really there is no wrong answer.
- PT: Ich werde sofort auf Wikipedia nachschlagen...[lachen]...aber...also ich wüsste jetzt keinen speziellen Industriezweig, den ich mit diesen Ländern verbinde. Auch kein Produkt konkret. Es gibt ja sicher...oder hoffe ich für das Land...einige Rohstoffe, die da abgebaut werden und ab und angebaut werden...die da...ja...einfach dadurch wirtschaftlich es den Menschen gut gehen lässt. Wie gesagt, Tourismus ist sicher...ja wahrscheinlich auch ein Business, was sehr stark wächst. Was aber...ich kann mir vorstellen... eher einen Bruchteil darstellt von dem, was die Länder einnehmen. Also es ist auf keinen Fall so verschuldet wie Spanien oder Italien. Davon würde ich jetzt gar nicht ausgehen. Sondern ich glaube...ich stelle mir das alles total idyllisch da vor...und auch keine Bettler auf der Straße, wenn ich mit dem Auto vorbeifahre... sondern eher ein ziemlich ausgewogenes System auch...ja...auch was die demografischen Punkte anbelangt. Sie werden wahrscheinlich keine italienischen Großfamilien bilden...aber grundsätzlich...warum sollten sie nicht ausgewogen sein und da auch ein gutes System draus entstehen lassen. Wenn jeder ein Kind bekommt oder zwei...also grundsätzlich könnte ich mir zum Beispiel auch vorstellen...dass die ältere Generation auch im Hause der jüngeren lebt oder so. Also das würde ich glaube ich schon sehen. Ich weiß gar nicht warum. Aber es ist halt so...keine Ahnung.

- PT: I'm going to look at Wikipedia right away...[laughter]...but...really, I wouldn't know any special industry sector that I could connect to these countries. Not even a specific product. I am sure there are...well, I would hope for the countries...some commodities, that are being exploited, that are cultivated or harvested...that are...well...simply because it leads to prosperity among the people. As I said, tourism is definitely...it is most likely also a business that shows significant growth. That however...at least that's what I would assume...that constitutes just a fraction of the countries' earnings. Well, it is definitely not as much debt-ridden as Spain or Italy. I would definitely not make that assumption. I would rather believe that...I imagine this all to be very quaint/idyllic...and I don't see any beggars on the street when I pass them by car...much rather quite a balanced system and ... yes ... even in terms of demographic aspects. They most likely do not form extended families like in Italy...but generally...why wouldn't they be well balanced to create a great system out of it. If everyone gets one child or maybe two...well, basically I could also imagine for example...that the older generation lives under the same roof of the younger one and such things. I could really see that happening. I don't even know why. But that's what I think...really no idea.
- TL: Gibt es irgendwelche besonderen Annehmlichkeiten touristischer Art, die Du erwarten würdest dort?
- TL: Are there any special tourism-related amenities that you would expect there?
- PT: Gutes Essen...was auch immer das bedeutet. Ich wüsste jetzt auch keine Spezialität oder Essen, was ich damit verbinde. Und ich glaube was ich erwarten würde, ist einfach Gastfreundlichkeit. Dass ist so das wichtigste glaube ich, wenn ich irgendwo hinfahre. Und ich bin jetzt auch nicht unbedingt der Typ, der im fünf Sterne Großhotel übernachten möchte sondern jemand der wirklich auch einen guten Einblick in die Kultur und vielleicht einen Tick vom Alltag mitbekommen will...und wirklich so die Geschichten der Leute mitbekommen möchte. Also mehr als nur das, was eventuell in Prospekten oder so steht. Annehmlichkeiten brauche ich aber im Urlaub jetzt an sich auch nicht großartig. Sondern eher einfach ein sauberes Zimmer, was auch immer das ganz basic bedeuten kann. Und...ja...ich glaube an sich...Sicherheit, wenn ich mich bewege, weil meine Handtasche ist meistens offen. Und ich würde auch jemandem antworten, wenn ich ihn auf der Straße treffe und...sofern ich antworten kann. Aber ich glaube, das sind so meine wichtigsten Punkte.
- PT: Great food...whatever that would mean. I currently wouldn't know any delicacy or special dish that I could connect to it. And I think what I would expect is quite simply hospitality. That is generally the most important aspect whenever I travel somewhere. And I am neither the type of person that wants to stay at a large five star hotel, rather someone who is eager to get a deeper insight into a culture and perhaps wants to witness a tick of everyday life...who really wants to absorb some of the stories people have. That said, I want to know more than what potentially stands inside of any brochures or so. I don't very much need amenities per se when on holidays. Simply rather a clean room, whatever that could mean on a basic level. And...yes...I think by itself...I need security when I move around because my handbag is typically wide open. And I would also answer to anyone I meet on the street and...well, that is if I can. But I think those really are my most important points.

- TL: Hmhm...welche Atmosphäre erwartest Du? Wie glaubst Du, ist die Atmosphäre dort?
- TL: Umhum...what atmosphere would you expect? How in your opinion would the atmosphere be like?
- PT: Welche Atmosphäre erwarte ich...hm...
- PT: What atmosphere would I expect...um...
- TL: Stell dir vor...hm...Du sitzt auf dem Marktplatz in Tallinn, in Riga oder in Vilnius oder wo auch immer...und was glaubst Du, wie es da ist?
- TL: Just imagine...um...you are sitting on the market square in Tallinn, in Riga, or in Vilnius, or wherever...what do you think, how would that be like?
- PT: Also ich sehe bei Marktplätzen immer ganz viele ältere Leute, die einkaufen...buntes Treiben, ganz schönes Wetter, viele bunte Stände, viel Gemüse, Blumen...alles was es so gibt. Und eher so...ich glaube...wenn ich an solche Länder denke, dann stelle ich mir das vor allem sehr natürlich vor. Also wirklich nicht so stark kommerziell wie es jetzt hier in vielen Ländern bereits ist. Sondern eben auch dadurch, dass es noch nicht so bekannt ist...einfach eine sehr...sehr einfache, sehr positive Atmosphäre.
- PT: Well, with regard to the market squares I always see many older people who go shopping...colourful activities, great weather, many colourful stalls, a lot of vegetables, flowers...whatever they have. And much rather...I think...when I think about these countries, I imagine everything to be very naturalistic. Really not as highly commercialized as we have it already here in many countries. Rather and especially because it is still not very known...simply a very...a very simple, very positive atmosphere.
- TL: In allen dreien?
- TL: In all three of them?
- PT: Ja. Ich unterscheide nicht.
- PT: Yes, I don't differentiate.
- TL: Okay...jetzt gehen wir ein bisschen weiter in Richtung Atmosphäre, Stimmung. Jetzt und heute...bevor Du reist...wie sind denn so Deine Gefühle, Deine Gedanken zu diesen Ländern? Was sind das für Gefühle, die Du da hast?
- TL: Okay...we now go a bit deeper into the atmosphere and mood/ambiance. Here and now...before visiting the destinations...how would you describe your feelings, your thoughts towards these countries? What kind of feelings is it that you have?
- PT: Gefühle zu den Ländern...
- PT: Feelings towards these countries...
- TL: Hmhm...was fühlst Du über diese Destinationen?
- TL: Umhum...what do you feel when you think about these destinations?
- PT: Also, ich glaube dadurch, dass mein Bild noch relativ vage ist, wären meine Gefühle an sich über diese Destinationen noch nicht sonderlich stark. Sondern vielleicht eher über die Reise an sich und das hätte vor allem ganz viel mit Neugier

zu tun oder mit Entdeckungslust. Und ich würde halt schauen...okay, brauche ich da ein Mückenspray oder nicht, oder was packe ich da am besten ein...und würde mich aber auch auf jeden Fall vor der Reise schon ziemlich gut informieren über das, was man da am besten machen kann oder wo wir unbedingt hin müssen...und ob vielleicht auch jemand in meinem Bekanntenkreis da auch schon mehr Erfahrung hat als ich vielleicht weiß...eben außer diesem einen Bekannten. Und...ja...also ich glaube, meistens sind meine Reisen immer vorher im Job mit ziemlich viel Stress verbunden und deshalb habe ich dann eine relativ geringe Erwartungshaltung an sich...an die Reise oder die Destination...sondern ich bin einfach froh, wenn es losgeht.

- PT: You know, I believe the fact that my image is still relatively blurred causes my feelings towards these destinations to be not overly strong. Perhaps they are more strong about the trip itself and that would have to do a lot with my curiosity or with my lust for conquest and discovery. And I would try to...okay, do I need a mosquito repellent there or what other items do I need to pack...and I would try to inform myself as best as possible prior to the trip about everything that one can do there and where one needs to have travelled...and also if there is anyone among my circle or friends and acquaintances who has more experience with it than I currently have...well, apart from this one friend I mentioned. Also...well...well, I think most of the time I have a pretty stressful job prior to going on holiday which is why I have relatively low expectations per se...in terms of the trip or destination...I'm just glad once I get to go.
- TL: Okay...was glaubst Du, wie Du dort behandelt werden würdest? In den jeweiligen Destinationen?
- TL: Okay...how would you expect to be treated there? Inside the individual destinations?
- PT: Grundsätzlich immer gut. Also warum sollten die mich auch schlecht behandeln?
- PT: Generally always good. What reason could they have to treat me badly?
- TL: Nun...es gibt ja so eine gemeinsame deutsche Historie auch und...
- TL: Well...for instance, there is this common German history that could...
- PT: Ja, aber...dafür kann ich ja nichts. Und...nein...in Bezug dessen würde ich glaube ich da keine Vorurteile zumindest nicht in der Behandlung erwarten. Und gut möglich, dass wenn man ins Gespräch kommt oder so...dann da durchaus noch mal einen ganz anderen Blickwinkel bekommt. Wie es ja so oft ist, wenn man in Länder reist. Vielleicht auch gerade wenn man mit der älteren Generation spricht...und man da Geschichten erfährt, die einem so gar nicht bewusst waren. Oder weil sie halt auch nicht in den Geschichtsbüchern ganz vorne stehen oder so. Und gerade das finde ich aber dann auch interessant. Eben weil es etwas besonderes ist und weil es anders ist und weil es einem selbst ja auch viel bringt, indem man seinen Horizont erweitert, beispielsweise...hm...was war nochmal die Frage?
- PT: Yes, but...that's not my fault. And...no...in that respect I would not expect any prejudices in terms of how I'm being treated. And it might well be that in a conversation for example...one gets a totally different perspective on such things. That happens quite often when you travel. Perhaps especially when talking to the older generation...where you then hear stories that before one wasn't even aware of or that have not made it onto the covers of history books and so on. But that is

something I find especially interesting. Precisely because it is something special and different and because it helps every one of us personally by broadening our horizon for example...um...what was the question again?

TL: Oh...wie Du denkst, dass Du behandelt wirst.

*TL*: *Oh...how you would expect to be treated.* 

PT: Ach so...gut.

PT: Oh, okay...good actually.

TL: Okay, ich denke das ist behandelt...hm...was glaubst Du, wie dieses Gefühl sich dann verändert, was Du momentan hast...durch diese Erfahrung in diesen Ländern?

TL: Okay, I think we covered that aspect...um...how do you think might this feeling then change, the feeling you currently have...through your actual travel experience in those countries?

PT: Hm...das ist halt schwer im Voraus zu sagen.

*PT: Um...it is actually pretty difficult to comment on that in advance.* 

TL: Ich weiß...trotzdem...wie glaubst Du...wie könnte sich das verändern?

TL: I know...but still...what do you think...how could that change?

PT: Also...ich glaube...dass...also ich bin noch nie irgendwo hingereist und bin davon ausgegangen, dass mir da was schlechtes widerfährt. So dass ich dann auch nicht davon ausgehen würde, dass ich danach irgendwie negative Gefühle dem Land gegenüber...oder der Leute gegenüber hätte. Aber natürlich hätte man dann halt ein viel konkreteres Bild und...ja...auch wahrscheinlich viele Situationen, mit denen man eventuell nicht gerechnet hat. Man hat viel gelernt auf der Reise sicherlich, weil man vorher halt auch einfach noch so unbeschrieben dem gegenüber ist. Und ich kann mir gut vorstellen dass...wenn man so mit Freunden zusammen sitzt und so über die letzten Urlaube spricht oder so...dass dann auch ganz viele Fragen oder einfach vielleicht auch unbedarfte Fragen von Freunden kommen, die eben genau so wenig über das Land wissen wie ich momentan.

PT: Well...I believe...that...well, I never travelled anywhere with the assumption that I somehow would have any negative feelings for the country afterwards...or towards the people. But certainly one would have a much more concrete image and...yes...one probably knew about many situations one potentially had not planned to experience before. One would definitely learn a lot on that trip, simply because one is still inexperienced or naive towards the whole thing. And I could also imagine that...when you sit together with your friends and talk about past holidays...that quite a few questions and perhaps also naïve questions might come your way from friends who know as little about the country as I do currently.

TL: Gibt es irgendein Land für Dich, dass da so ein bisschen aus den anderen heraus sticht? Oder ein Land, was Du favorisieren würdest, von dem was Du jetzt kennst, gelernt hast oder meinst zu wissen?

TL: For you, is there one country that stands out from the others a little? Is there perhaps a country you would favour going by what you currently know, what you have learned or supposedly know.

- PT: Also selbst wenn ich jetzt eins nennen würde und Du mich dann fragst warum das, könnte ich es glaube ich nicht beantworten. Aber so intuitiv…ich weiß nicht…vielleicht Estland.
- PT: Well, even if I named one in this context and you would then ask me why I chose that particular one over another I don't think I could give you an answer. However, intuitively...I don't know...perhaps Estonia.
- TL: Okay...warum?
- TL: Okay...why is that?
- PT: Ich weiß es nicht...gemein...ja, ich weiß es echt nicht. Ich weiß, früher in Erdkunde konnte ich mir die Länder immer nur schwer merken. Aber Estland und Lettland ging eben immer noch ganz gut, weil der Name ähnlich ist. Aber ich weiß es wirklich nicht.
- PT: I don't know...that's mean...yes, I really don't know. I remember, many years ago in geography classes I had a hard time memorizing the countries. However, somehow Estonia and Latvia did work for me, because the name is somewhat similar. But honestly, I don't know.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...jetzt gehen wir so in Richtung Persönlichkeit einer Destination. Persönlichkeit von Destinationen...ist klar, was damit gemeint ist?
- TL: Umhum...okay...we now move on towards destination personality. The personality of destinations...is it clear what that means?
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Ja? Okay...gut.
- TL: Yes? Okay...great.
- PT: Hm...ich denke Charaktereigenschaften und so...
- PT: Um...I believe character traits and such things...
- TL: Genau. Also, Du kannst ja einem Land Charaktereigenschaften wie einem Menschen zuschreiben. Insofern ist meine Frage...wenn Du Dir die Destinationen oder die Destination...wenn es ein Gebilde für Dich ist...als Mensch einmal vorstellst...oder als Person vorstellst...was für ein Typ Mensch wäre das? Was für eine Person wäre das? Bitte beschreibe mir diese Person anhand von Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen. So in etwa...wie wenn Du jemandem beschreiben würdest...stell Dir vor Du sitzt auf dem Marktplatz in Mailand und scannst die Leute...Du sagst dann beispielsweise...mei, sieht der spießig aus...oder so. So, wenn Du mir das einmal beschreibst. Wie sieht dieser Mensch aus und was ist das für ein Typ?
- TL: Exactly. Well, we can assign character traits or certain attributes to a country much like we do to people. Thus, my question is...if you try to imagine the destinations or destination...in case it is one construct for you...if you try to think of it as a human being...or as a person...what type of human being would it be? What kind of person would it reflect? Please describe that person to me using character traits. Much like...as if you would describe someone...imagine you are sitting at the central market place in Milan and are scanning the people that pass

by ...then you might for example say ...well, that one looks smug ...or something else. Well, if you could now describe that person. How would that person look like and what type of person would it be?

- PT: Hm...wie sieht das Land als Person aus?
- PT: Um...how does the country look as a person?
- TL: Genau.
- TL: Correct.
- PT: Boh, ich möchte unbedingt die Ergebnisse der Research am Ende lesen.
- PT: Huh...by all means, I really want to read through the results of your study once you are done.
- TL: [Lachen]...kriegst Du.
- TL: [Laughter] ... you certainly can.
- PT: Hm...wie sieht die Person Estland, Lettland und Litauen aus? (...)
- PT: Um...how does Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania look if it was a person? (...)
- TL: Hm...und das kann jetzt auch gerne in die Vorurteile reingehen. Das ist vielleicht zwangsweise so, dass man dazu neigt...aber das macht gar nichts. Beschreibe einfach ganz frei.
- TL: Um...now that may well be prejudiced. Perhaps anyone in that situation tends to do that and can't even avoid using them...but that's okay. Just describe freely you thoughts.
- PT: Also...ich würde sie mir ganz und gar nicht wie einen Italiener vorstellen, der da mit großen Designerklamotten umherläuft. Das heißt nicht, dass nicht beispielsweise Leute in Tallinn oder so genauso Designerklamotten oder Mode von ZARA tragen würden, wie auch in anderen Städten. Aber grundsätzlich...puh...wie würde ich die Person beschreiben? Ich glaube, dass sie groß sind, warum auch immer. Und sie sind wahrscheinlich im Gegensatz zu den südlichen Kulturen zwar offen und aufgeschlossen, aber eben anders als Südländer. Und da...
- PT: Well...I would not imagine them at all to be similar to Italians, who walk around in designer clothes. However, that does not mean that people in Tallinn for example would not equally wear design clothes or fashion from ZARA just as in any other city. But generally...phew...how would I describe that person? I believe they are tall, for whatever reason. And in contrast to more southern cultures they are perhaps approachable and communicative but most likely in a very different way than Mediterranean type of people. And there...
- TL: Wie anders?
- TL: How so?
- PT: Wie anders...ja. Nicht so laut und offensiv...sondern ja...durchaus bedacht. Aber wie gesagt...dass heißt nicht, dass sie nicht offen und extrovertiert sind. Und...ich finde das wirklich schwierig. Ich hoffe, das haben die anderen auch gesagt. Wahrscheinlich auch...obwohl ich auf meinen Reisen noch keine Menschen aus diesen Ländern getroffen habe...aus der...ja...sehr gut in beispielsweise der

- englischen Sprache, sehr gut ausgebildet.
- PT: How different...well. They are not as loud and aggressive...but well...but quite thoughtful. But as I said...that does not mean that they are not open-minded and extroverted. And...I find that really difficult. I hope your other participants mentioned the same. Probably even...even though I never met anyone during my trips from these countries...from...well... they must be good in the English language, they are well educated.
- TL: Okay...hm...was wäre von dieser Person, die Du mir gerade beschrieben hast...der Geschmack in Bezug auf Essen, Kleidung und Lebensstil? Du hast schon gesagt er ist groß...also was hat er beispielsweise an...?
- TL: Okay...um...of the person that you just described...what would be their taste in terms of food, fashion, and lifestyle? You already mentioned that the person would be tall...well, what would the person wear for example.
- PT: [Lachen]...also...erst einmal Essen. Deftiges Essen. Gute Hausmannskost.
- PT: [Laughter]...well...let's start with food. Hearty food. Good home cooking.
- TL: Hm...mehr Fleisch...Fisch? Oder beides?
- TL: Um...more meat...fish? Perhaps both?
- PT: Ja, Fisch wahrscheinlich durch die Nähe zum Wasser. Aber klar, warum sollen die nicht auch mal eine Wurst essen. Und Kleidungsstil, ich glaube, da unterscheiden die sich nicht.
- PT: Well, perhaps fish due to the proximity to the water. But on the other hand, why wouldn't they eat a sausage once in a while. And in terms of how they dress, I don't think they differ in any way.
- TL: Von?
- TL: Differ from what?
- PT: Tja, was sage ich da. Von anderen Nordosteuropäern.
- *PT:* Oh well, look...differ from other north-eastern Europeans.
- TL: Hallo? Okay...
- TL: Hello? Okay...
- PT: [Lachen]...ja, also ich glaube...was den Kleidungsstil angeht sind es...ich weiß nicht...kann man das so mit Skandinavien oder so vergleichen(?) Ich würde auch sagen...die haben so die gängigen Marken...weiß nicht...tragen da die Männer Röcke? Wer weiß...aber ich glaube jetzt auch...nichts spezielles oder so etwas. Die werden auch sicher nicht mehr im Fell rumlaufen. Und, ja, ganz normal.
- PT: [Laughter]...yes, well I believe...regarding the style of clothing it is...I don't know...could you compare that to the style in Scandinavia or so (?) I would even say...they also have the typical brands...I don't know...do men wear skirts there? Who knows...but I also think...nothing special or so. They certainly no longer walk around in a skin.
- TL: Und Lifestyle mäßig?
- TL: And in terms of their lifestyle?

- PT: Lifestyle mäßig...hm...ja, auch die müssen ganz normal zur Arbeit gehen...und wahrscheinlich dann abends Freunde treffen und ins Kino gehen. Also ich glaube, da geht man halt immer sehr stark von sich aus...und das würde ich da auch ähnlich sehen. Also es gibt vielleicht auch viele kleine Bars oder so wo man sich dann trifft und Zeit miteinander verbringt. Aber genauso auch Fußballklubs oder Mädels Runden, Bücher lesen...keine Ahnung. Da würde ich auch...ja...wirklich von dem ausgehen, was wir in Deutschland als normal empfinden.
- PT: In terms of lifestyle...um...well, they also need to go to work regularly...and perhaps will then meet friends in the evening and go to the cinema. Well I think, when you make such assumptions you try to judge by what you would do...and I would think that is true there as well. That said, I would think that perhaps they have many small bars or so where everyone meets and spends time together. At the same time they should have football clubs or girls circles, they read books...no idea. In that respect I really would...yes...assume that they do things in a similar way that we in Germany would consider to be just normal.
- TL: Denkst Du, dass es da Unterschiede gibt?
- TL: Do you believe that there are differences?
- PT: Bestimmt.
- PT: Very likely.
- TL: Irgendeine Idee, welche es sein könnten?
- TL: Any idea what that could be?
- PT: Nein. Nicht wirklich.
- PT: No. Not really.
- TL: Gut. Jetzt gehen wir in die andere Richtung. Jetzt benutzen wir mal die gleiche Kreativität und Du sagst mir mal, wie der typische Tourist dieser drei Destinationen aussieht für Dich.
- TL: Great. We now go into the other direction. Please be as imaginative and try to describe the typical tourist of the three destinations.
- PT: Hm...ich glaube das sind auf jeden Fall nicht die klassischen Kegelklubs. Weil...die fahren ja nach Malle. Und...ich würde daher denken, dass speziell Leute von diesen Destinationen angezogen werden, die speziell dem Massentourismus entgehen wollen...die auf jeden Fall interessiert sind an Kunst und Kultur...auch an Land und Leute. Vielleicht auch Wanderer. Ja...auf jeden Fall Leute, die so ein bisschen das Andere suchen...und anders im Sinne von Echt, von traditionell, von ganz normalen anderen Leuten. Und...ja...man kann vielleicht auch sagen, dass es vermutlich weniger Leute sind in unserem Alter sondern demografisch vielleicht...ja...ab 40...ab 45. Ich glaube, es ist einfach nicht die klassische Destination...oder die klassischen Destinationen sind...für die man zum einen mal ein Wochenende wo hinfährt oder zum anderen eine Destination, die man SOFORT auf der Wunschliste hat. Sondern da muss man vermutlich auch einfach ein bisschen mehr gereist sein, um überhaupt auf diese Länder zu kommen. Wahrscheinlich erzähle ich hier totalen Müll (lachen)...
- PT: Um...I believe it is definitely not the typical skittles clubs. Because...they of course

go to Majorca. And also...I would imagine that especially those destinations attract people who wish to avoid any mass tourism...who are absolutely interested in arts and culture...as well as in the countries and their people. Perhaps even hikers. Well...definitely people who are looking for the different...and different meaning authenticity, meaning traditional, meaning to meet the ordinary people. And...well...one can even go so far as to say that it is probably fewer people in our age but instead when looking at it demographically...well...people as of 40...perhaps 45 years of age. I believe it is simply not the typical destination...or typical destinations...where you would go for a weekend or a destination you would have on top of your wish list. Instead, I guess you must have already travelled a bit in your life before having them on the radar. Perhaps I just tell rubbish here [laughter]...

- TL: Nein, überhaupt nicht...im Gegenteil. Jetzt hast Du mir wunderbar Image und Persönlichkeit beschrieben...die Du wahrnimmst. Jetzt gehen wir mal so in Richtung Marketing von Reisedestinationen. Separat betrachtet...und das kannst Du vielleicht auch durchaus separat sagen...wie betrachtest Du die grundsätzliche Vermarktung der Länder gegenüber dem Deutschen Konsumenten, oder deutschen Touristen?
- TL: No, absolutely not...quite the opposite. In a marvellous way you just described the image and personality...you perceive of the destinations. We now move towards the more general marketing of travel destinations. If you look at them separately...and for this question you can perhaps even differentiate...how would you generally the marketing of these countries towards the German consumer, or the German tourist?
- PT: Also...wie gesagt...ich habe noch nichts mitbekommen. Von daher würde ich sagen, wird da auf jeden Fall zu wenig gemacht. Und das...obwohl ich ja zuletzt in Hamburg oder auch jetzt in Köln in relativ großen Städten gewohnt habe...wo auch beispielsweise in Hamburg...ja...sehr viele Kulturliebhaber wohnen, die auch durchaus wirklich mal das andere sozusagen entdecken wollen. Und ich würde da auf jeden Fall viel Potenzial sehen. Oder auch hier in Köln mit einer relativ guten Gehaltsdichte...da glaube ich auch dass es viele Leute gibt, die durchaus mal was anderes probieren würden...als das...was so der Massentourist sieht. Und...ja...also da ist mir wirklich noch nichts entgegen gekommen. Daher habe ich auch wahrscheinlich so eine geringe Vorstellung von...so wie es da aussieht ohne dagewesen zu sein.
- PT: Well...as I said...so far I never caught up anything. That's why I would be tempted to say that they definitely don't do enough on that end. Despite the fact...even though I recently lived in Hamburg or now in Cologne, which are large cities...and for instance in Hamburg...well...there are many culture vultures, who would be interested in really getting to know or discover something different. And that's where I could see a lot of potential. Or even here in Cologne with relatively good salaries...I would imagine there are many people who would like to try something different...other than...what the mass tourist looks at. But...well...I really never came across anything. That's also perhaps why I have such a limited perception of...of how it looks there without having been there.
- TL: Und das aber benötigen würdest...also mehr Informationen?
- TL: And that would be something you needed...I mean more information?

- PT: Genau.
- PT: Yes.
- TL: Du bist ja Consultant soweit ich weiß. Hm...stelle Dir bitte einmal vor, Du bist als Consultant zuständig für die Vermarktung der drei baltischen Staaten. Welches Image würdest Du durch Deine Marketingaktivitäten versuchen zu kommunizieren?
- TL: You are a consultant by profession as far as I know. Um...please try to imagine that as a consultant you would be responsible for the marketing to promote the three Baltic States. What image would you try to communicate through your active marketing measures?
- PT: Also...ich glaube, ich würde unabhängig von den dreien herausarbeiten, was das jeweilige Land so besonders macht. Und da muss man halt überlegen...aufgrund der Größe...ist es sinnvoll, da eine Joint-Kampagne zu führen...im Sinne der Baltischen Staaten oder auch die wirklich zu differenzieren und...ja...beispielsweise bei den großen Veranstaltern darum werben, und vor allem auch die Veranstalter sowohl als auch Touristen darüber in Kenntnis setzten, was es so besonders macht, für einen Urlaub dorthin zu reisen.
- PT: Well...regardless of this trinity, I think I would try to carve out what makes each of the individual countries so special. And then you need to see whether...based on their size...whether it makes sense to run a joint campaign...in the sense of 'these are the Baltic States' or to really differentiate them and...well...for instance with the big tour operators...to especially promote and to inform operators and tourists what is so special about going there on holidays.
- TL: Mal eine blöde Frage, wieso sprichst Du ausgerechnet diese Joint-Kampagne und Differenzierung an als Stichworte?
- TL: Perhaps a silly question but why of all things do you emphasize cues such as a joint campaign and differentiation?
- PT: Weil ich ja nicht weiß, was es differenziert...aber ich bin sicher, da gibt es verschiedene Unterschiede. Und das kann halt ja auch ein sehr positiver Aspekt sein...dass durch die Größe und die Nähe man diese Unterschiede gemeinsam erleben kann als Tourist...wenn es...ja...weiß ich nicht, sagen wir mal eine Rundreise von zwei Wochen durch alle drei Länder gibt. Oder gibt es so viele verschiedene Attraktionen in den jeweiligen Ländern, die es so besonders machen, dass man sich auf jeden Fall Zeit...oder mehr Zeit, für jedes einzelne Land nehmen sollte.
- PT: Because I don't know what differentiates them...but I am sure there are differences. And that can also be a very positive aspect...that due to their size and spatial proximity tourists are able to experience all these differences in a combines form...if it...yes...I don't know, if for example there is a round trip through all three countries over a period of two weeks. Or alternatively, there are so many different attractions in each of the countries making it so special so that one needs to plan in more time...or even more time for each individual country separately.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...welchen Rat würdest Du als Consultant den Marketingfachleuten geben, deren Interesse es ist, das Baltikum zu vermarkten? Was sollten die anders

- tun oder was sollten die überhaupt tun, Deiner Meinung nach? Oder wie schaffen die es, dass Carmen ins Baltikum reist?
- TL: Umhum...okay...what advice would you as a consultant then give those marketing people whose interest it is to promote the Baltic States? What in your opinion should they do different or what should they do at all? What do they have to do so that travels to the Baltic States?
- PT: Ich glaube, sie müssten dafür gar nicht so viel tun. Allerdings müssen die glaube ich einfach Neugier wecken...und das aber so stark gestreut, dass man eben die Leute erreicht. Also...ich würde es jetzt zum Beispiel nicht im Fernsehen oder so erwarten...sondern vielleicht...ja...bei verschiedenen Kulturausstellungen...oder halt zu schauen, welche Zielgruppe will ich ansprechen und wo erreiche ich diese in Deutschland oder den anderen Ländern. Ich glaube, da geht auch viel über...also zum Beispiel fällt mir jetzt kein baltisches Restaurant hier in der Nähe ein. Also es gibt halt einfach sehr, sehr wenige Berührungspunkte. Und dadurch muss man wahrscheinlich einfach mehr Aufwand betreiben, um auch tiefer einzusteigen. Also das kann halt auch mit bestimmten Veranstaltern eine besondere Kampagne sein...vermutlich sind sie ohnehin auf allen Tourismusbörsen etc. Aber das spricht dann nur eben die Mitarbeiter der Branche an. Das ist sicher auch ein langer Prozess...aber...ja...vielleicht auch mit...wie heißt das...mit Dokumentationen, die gezeigt werden in den verschiedenen Städten oder ... Themenabende, die man vielleicht organisiert in Zusammenarbeit mit Hotels und Restaurants oder so.
- PT: I think they wouldn't have to do that much. Nevertheless, they simply need to arouse curiosity...but that is such a widespread way that they actually reach the people. Well...I wouldn't expect to see anything on TV and such channels...but rather perhaps...well...at different cultural events...and they need to decide what target audience they want to address and where in Germany or other countries that target audience can be reached. I believe a lot works through...I can't think of any Baltic restaurant here in the area for instance. That said, really there are only very limited points of contact. And that's why one needs to significantly expend effort to get to the bottom of things. Well, for example that could be done through special campaigns together with tour operators...and most probably they are attending the main tourism fairs anyway and so on and so forth. However, that only focuses on players of the industry. It certainly will be a long process...but...well...perhaps also...what's the name again...using documentaries that are being shown in different cities or ... even theme nights that are being organised together with hotels and restaurants and such things.
- TL: Prima...für alle weiteren Fragen bitte ich Dich nun...etwas, was Du wahrscheinlich sowieso schon gemacht hast...die drei Destinationen oder die drei Länder genauer gesagt...als eine Destination zu betrachten. Behalte das mal so im Hinterkopf. Was fällt Dir grundsätzlich ein, wenn Du den Begriff "Baltische Staaten" hörst? Und schaue nur mal auf den Begriff...was kommt Dir dabei in den Sinn?
- TL: Great...for the next questions I would like you to ... something you probably already did...to view the three individual destinations or the three countries...to view them as one destination. Just keep that in mind for now. What in general comes to your mind when you hear the term 'Baltic States'? And please when considering just that term...what do you think of?
- PT: Hm...

- *PT*: *Um*...
- TL: Der Begriff "Baltische Staaten" oder "Baltikum"...
- TL: The term 'Baltic States' or 'Baltic countries'...
- PT: Du meinst...Baltikum...hm...Balkan eben...wie gesagt, da gibt es noch nicht so viel. Deshalb sehe ich immer nur diese drei kleinen Länder auf der Karte. Und ich glaube, da ist so das erste Bild was ich beschrieben habe von den bunten Häusern. Ansonsten...gibt's da wirklich nur ganz wenig.
- PT: You mean...Baltic countries...um...the Balkans really...as I said, it does not resonate very much. That's why I only see these three small countries on a map. And there is this one image I already described with these colourful houses. Other than that...there is not a lot.
- TL: Okay...weckt dieser Begriff "Baltische Staaten" irgendwelche touristische Assoziationen? Macht er Dir Lust zu reisen...ist es sexy für Dich...der Begriff...um dorthin reisen zu wollen?
- TL: Okay...does that term 'Baltic States' awaken any tourism related associations? Does it whet your appetite to travel...is it in any way sexy for you...I mean the term...to wanting to travel there?
- PT: Nein, sexy ist der Begriff, Baltische Staaten' sicher nicht. Es klingt sicher interessant, aber es weckt vielleicht auch zu einem gewissen Grad eine Neugier...aber nicht so einfach...und es ist nicht wirklich sexy und deshalb war ich da glaube ich auch noch nicht. Und deshalb bin ich glaube ich auch noch nicht in die Gelegenheit gekommen, dass ich mir sofort einen Reiseführer kaufen wollen würde und es einfach mal nachschlagen, was genau sich dahinter verbirgt.
- PT: No, the term 'Baltic States' is definitely not a sexy term. It certainly sounds interesting, and perhaps it even arouses curiosity to a certain extent ...but really not in a very apparent way...and it's not sexy, and that's why I haven't been there yet. I guess that's why I also never gotten into the situation that I desperately wanted to purchase a travel guide to look up what's behind the whole thing.
- TL: Hmhm...versuche nun einmal in Deinen eigenen Worten einen...versuche mal in Deinen eigenen Worten, einen touristischen Werbespruch zu entwickeln...oder eine "tagline" für alle drei Länder. Wie würde der lauten, für alle drei Länder zusammen.
- TL: Umhum...in your own words, why don't you try...in your own words, please try to develop a tourism slogan...a tag line for all three countries. How would you word that for all three countries as one destination?
- PT: Einen Werbeslogan...hm...also ich glaube...ich...und da geht man halt wahrscheinlich wieder von sich aus...dass würde ich vorher halt durch Fokusgruppen oder so überprüfen...ähnlich wie Du in diesem Interview...was genau die Vorstellung ist. Eventuell ist die Vorstellungskraft ja möglicherweise bei vielen Leuten so gering wie bei mir. Deshalb würde ich glaube ich auf Schlagworte eingehen, die Neugier wecken und die vielleicht auch in Kontrast stehen zu dem, was man anfänglich für ein Bild hat. Also...vielleicht sind die Städte ja viel größer als ich denke und die Wälder viel kleiner oder so. Und um einen konkreten Werbeslogan zu finden...also es wird da ja oft mit Buchstaben gespielt...wie

"Incredible India"...und ich glaube, bei Malaysia ist das ähnlich. Puh...es ist schwer...es ist echt schwer. Ja, vielleicht würde ich einfach auch das relativ weit gefasst lassen im Sinne von "Baltische Staaten...so nah und doch so unterschiedlich". Weil "so nah" kann sich zum einen auf die Reisedistanz beziehen und dabei auch auf die Staaten unter sich. Und "so unterschiedlich" kann halt vieles bedeuten...und kann in diesem Fall...je nachdem wie man das hinterlegt oder mit welchen Bildern oder Farben oder Gefühlen...sich zum einen auch wieder auf die Länder beziehen, zum anderen aber auch unterschiedlich im Sinne von dem, was man vielleicht für ein Bild hat. Auch wenn man keins hat.

PT: An advertising slogan...um...well I think...I...again, depending on my own perspective...I would first try to get that examined in detail by focus groups or something like that...similar to what you are doing with your interviews...in terms of what the actual perception is. Potentially, the power of imagination is as poor with others as it is on my end. That said I would probably make use of catchwords/catchphrases that arouse curiosity and that perhaps are also in contrast with the initial image one has. Well...perhaps the cities are much larger than I think they are and forests a lot smaller or so. And in order to find a precise strapline...often they play around with letters of the alphabet...such as "Incredible *India"* and I think the same is true for Malaysia. Phew...it's difficult...it is really difficult. Well, maybe I would even leave it as broad within the meaning of 'The Baltic States...so close, yet so diverse'. Because 'so close' can either be linked to the travel distance [from Germany] but also to the closeness between the three countries. And on the other hand 'so diverse' has a lot of meanings...and in this case...depending on how you establish it and what images, colours, or feelings you assign to it...it can again be linked to the countries but also be different in terms of what image perceptions one has. Even if you don't have any.

TL: Okay, klasse. Der Begriff Branding sagt Dir zwangsweise was. Ich nehme an, Du hast Dich auch spätestens in Deiner Arbeit damit beschäftigen müssen, nicht wahr?

TL: Okay, great. I assume the term "branding" sounds familiar to you. My guess is that you have to deal with it in your professional work, correct?

PT: Mmhm [bejahend].

PT: Umhum [affirming].

TL: Sagt Dir der Begriff Co-Branding etwas?

TL: What about the term "co-branding"?

PT: Habe ich schon mal gehört...könnte ich jetzt aber nicht definieren.

PT: I have heard it before...I just couldn't provide a definition right now.

TL: Okay...lass uns das mal an wir das an einem Produkt festmachen. Du kennst mit Sicherheit Dr. Oetker Backmischungen?

TL: Okay...let's tie it to a consumer product. I am sure you are familiar with baking mixtures from Dr. Oetker?

PT: Mmhm [bejahend].

PT: Umhum [affirming].

TL: Hmhm...und da gibt es auch die Schokoladen-Backmischung.

- TL: Umhum...and among their assortment of baking mixtures they also have chocolate version.
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend]. Oh ja, Schokoladen-Backmischung für Schokokuchen.
- PT: Umhum [affirming]. Oh yes, chocolate cake baking mixture.
- TL: Genau. Wenn jetzt...die Firma Dr. Oetker...ich weiß nicht...ob sie das getan hat...oder wenn sie hypothetisch an die Firma Lindt herantreten würde und sagt...Leute, wir wollen aber Schokoladenstücken von Euch da drin haben...
- TL: Exactly. Now...if for instance the company Dr. Oetker...not sure if they have done that...if they would hypothetically approach the company Lindt and say...guys, we want your chocolate pieces in our baking mixture...
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend]...ach so.
- PT: Umhum [affirming] ...got it.
- TL: Dann...was dann passiert ist...Du hast zwei etablierte Marken und die kreieren ein gemeinsames Produkt.
- TL: Then...what then happens is ...that you have two established brands and they create a common product.
- PT: Ähnlich wie McFluryy mit Daim oder so.
- PT: Similar to McFlurry and Daim or so.
- TL: Ja genau so...oder "Intel Inside", zum Beispiel. Da gibt es ja tausende Beispiele. Jetzt appliziere das mal bitte auf die Baltischen Staaten. Da hast Du die drei Länder, die mehr oder weniger etablierte Marken sind, ein gewisses Image haben, eine Persönlichkeit haben. Und die basteln sich jetzt eine gemeinsame Marke...
- TL: Yes, exactly...or 'Intel Inside' for instance. There are thousands of examples out there. Now please try to apply that to the Baltic States. Here you have three countries that are give or take established bands with a certain image and a certain personality. And they would now design an umbrella brand...
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend]....die Baltischen Staaten.
- PT: Umhum [affirming] ... the Baltic States.
- TL: Genau. Kommen wir jetzt in Deine Richtung mit dem vorhin angesprochenen Joint Marketing. Joint Marketing ist ein bisschen noch was anderes, aber das wichtige daran ist...bei dem Co-Branding...dass die Marken als solches bestehen bleiben...und zwar als kräftige Marke. Weil... bei der Schokoladen-Backmischung von Dr. Oetker...nennen wir es mal eine hochwertige Marke in Anbetracht all dieser ganzen Backmischungen...und Lindt ist natürlich als Schokoladenmarke auch eher hochwertig, nicht?
- TL: Exactly. Let's move towards what you earlier said in terms of joint marketing. A joint marketing is perhaps still a little different, but what's important...in terms of co-branding...is that the individual brands as such remain intact...as a potentially strong brand. If you take Dr. Oetker's chocolate baking mix...that would be a premium brand...and Lindt on the other hand as chocolate brand would also rather be upscale, correct?

- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Dass ist ganz wichtig, dass sie bestehen bleiben. Aber sie kreieren etwas gemeinsames, was ein Aufhänger irgendwo ist, um es zu kaufen. Nun...was sollte eine gemeinsame Marke...nennen wir sie mal baltische Staaten...oder wie auch immer Du sie dann nennst...was sollte diese beinhalten Deiner Ansicht nach?
- TL: And it's important that they remain intact. But they create something together that looks interesting for consumers to purchase. Now...what should an umbrella brand...let's label it Baltic States for now...or whatever name you would assign to it...what should this common brand entail or contain in your opinion?
- PT: Was sollte sie beinhalten? Nicht mit wem sollte sie gemacht werden?
- *PT*: What should it entail? Not with whom it should be done?
- TL: Nein, es geht um die drei Staaten...also alle drei zusammen. Wir wollen ja nicht irgendwie Litauen oder so da rauslassen, oder Estland, oder Lettland. Das lassen wir jetzt mal außen vor.
- TL: We are looking at the three countries...the three countries together. We don't want to somehow forget about Lithuania, or Estonia, or Latvia. We don't want to leave someone in the cold.
- PT: Hm...was sollte sie beinhalten.
- PT: Um...what should it entail.
- TL: Genau...also was passiert denn dann?
- TL: Right...well, what happens then?
- PT: Hm...ich denke auf einmal wird das alles ganz groß. Es dann sind nicht mehr diese kleinen individuellen Länder...die vielleicht...ja...geringere Möglichkeiten haben...sowohl finanziell als auch von den touristischen Attraktionen her. Die werden groß oder größer...haben mehr Power...können vielleicht mehr Diversifizieren. Und...hm...sie sind vielleicht mehr attraktiv weil sie dann unterschiedlich sind. Ja...und was sollten sie beinhalten? In dem Co-Branding, was sie nach außen transportieren, meinst Du?
- PT: Um...I think all of a sudden they are large. It wouldn't be those small, individual countries any longer...who perhaps...well, who might have limited resources...financially as well as in terms of number of attractions. They become large or larger...they might have more power...and could diversify better perhaps. And also...um...they could be more attractive perhaps because they are more different. Yes...and what should they entail? You mean with regards to co-branding and what message they communicate?
- TL: Ja, zum Beispiel...
- TL: Right, for example...
- PT: Welche Message, oder?
- PT: What message, or what?
- TL: Ja, zum Beispiel. Oder leichter gefragt, glaubst Du...dass dieses...wenn man dieses

- machen würde...das co-branding...glaubst Du, dass dies die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der einzelnen Länder fördern würde?
- TL: Yes, for instance. Or put differently, do you believe that it...if one decided to do something like that...I mean a co-branding approach...do you believe that it would increase the competitiveness of the individual countries?
- PT: Nun...ich glaube ja und nein und es kommt auf die Situation an. Also grundsätzlich sollte man sich sicher zusammenschließen wenn es darum geht, die Region als solches...sprich diese drei Staaten...bestimmten Touristengruppen zu erschließen. Also da ist es sicher absolut sinnvoll. Was man auch glaube ich bedenken sollte...ich gehe davon aus, dass sie in jedem Fall unterschiedlich sind, und dadurch auch unterschiedliche Merkmale haben...dass sie in bestimmten Gebieten oder vielleicht auch für bestimmte Touristen unterschiedlich attraktiv sind. Also dann da auch einfach als einzelnes Individuum sozusagen Marketingaktionen fahren sollte...und nicht unbedingt dann unter dem "umbrella" der Baltischen Staaten. Also ich kann mir gut vorstellen, dass es da Unterschiede gibt, so dass man da einfach...ja...auf beide Seiten schauen sollte. Insofern kann man da beispielsweise jetzt wieder zu dem Beispiel der Kreuzfahrt zurückzukommen...es ist wahrscheinlich...sind da die verschiedenen Länder vielleicht unterschiedlich attraktiv? Ich weiß jetzt nicht genau...mein Bekannter hat wahrscheinlich nur an einem Hafen halt gemacht oder so...so dass die Touristen dann von da aus vielleicht herumgereist sind, für den Tag, den sie ja meistens dann nur haben. Das heißt, die Schiffe würden sicherlich nicht da mehrere Stationen so kurz hintereinander machen. Und da ist es gut möglich, dass eben vielleicht nur eins der drei Länder besonders attraktiv ist. Wobei man für gewisse Kulturtouristen etc. da sicher gute Reisepakete schnüren kann oder auch eher durch die Nähe zueinander da verschiedene Sightseeing Attraktionen gemeinsam bewerben sollte.
- PT: Well...I think yes and no and it depends on the situation. Well, basically they should band together when trying as a region to...meaning those three countries...when trying to break into certain markets or tourist groups. It definitely makes a lot of sense there. However, what should not be forgotten is ... and I just assume now that they are definitely different and through that have differing characteristics...that in certain regions or perhaps even for certain tourists they may be interesting to a different extent. That said, it may be necessary to promote it in a way that targets tourists in different ways...and not just under an umbrella labelled 'Baltic States'. Well, I can imagine quite well that there are differences so that one should...well...simply look at both sides. In this respect we can perhaps again refer to the cruise example...is it likely that... are the different countries perhaps discriminately interesting for it? I wouldn't know currently...this friend of mine most likely stopped in one harbour or so...so that the tourists then perhaps travelled around from that stopover point for the one day they typically only have. That means that those ships would probably not make one stop shortly after another. Thus, it is possible that perhaps only one country is of special interest to them. At the same time it might be possible to create some great travel packages for culturally interested tourists so that they should promote very different sightseeing attractions together due to their spatial proximity.
- TL: Hmhm...wenn Du Dir diesen Begriff noch mal anschaust..."Baltische Staaten"...wie kommuniziert dieser aus Deiner Sicht denn die einzelnen Länder?
- TL: Umhum...if you once again look at that term...'Baltic States'...in your opinion,

how does that term communicate the three individual countries?

- PT: Nur sehr wenig.
- PT: Only very little.
- TL: Warum?
- TL: Why is that?
- PT: Weil ich glaube, wenn man auf der Straße Leute fragen würde, hätte nicht sofort jemand alle drei Länder parat. Weil es einfach auch immer...ja...separat voneinander kommuniziert wird. Und da muss man vermutlich auch erst einmal so eine gewisse Aufklärung vornehmen, um anschließend die Vermarktung überhaupt voran zu treiben.
- PT: Because I think that if you asked people on the street not everyone would be able to name all three countries. Simply because it is ... well ... they are always promoted separately. And therefore you have to educate a lot first of all before starting any promotional activities.
- TL: Wenn Du Dir vorstellst, Du wärst Marketingexperte für die gesamte Region...
- TL: Imagine you were a marketing expert for the entire region...
- PT: Für alle drei Staaten?
- PT: For all three countries?
- TL: Ja, für alle drei Staaten als eine touristische Destination. Hm...welches Bild über die Baltischen Staaten als eine touristische Destination würdest Du dann versuchen, zu kommunizieren an den deutschen Touristen?
- TL: Yes, for all three countries as one tourism destination. Um...what image for the Baltic States as one tourism destination would you then try to communicate to the German tourist?
- PT: Ich glaube ich würde mir zuerst anschauen, was sind die Bedürfnisse der deutschen Touristen, jetzt abgesehen von den Kegelklubs. Und ich glaube, da unterscheiden sich deutsche Touristen sehr stark. Da gibt es glaube ich Zielgruppen für alle möglichen Destinationen und die würden aber nicht unbedingt alle befriedigt werden können von den baltischen Staaten. So dass man da glaube ich sehr gezielt und sehr differenziert vorgehen muss. Um genau zu schauen wen kann ich ansprechen und was sind die Bedürfnisse dieser Touristen und wie passt das zu unseren Ländern. Weil...natürlich kann man das auch von der anderen Seite sehen und sagen ...okay, was bieten unsere Länder und wie passt das, oder welche Touristen passen dazu. Vielleicht sind es gar nicht Deutsche. Kann ja sein...und wenn ja, warum nicht?
- PT: I believe first of all I would look at what needs German tourists have apart from those skittles clubs. And I would assume that at that point German tourists differ quite a bit. I am sure there are target groups for a variety of different destinations and they could not all be satisfied by the Baltic States. That said, one would have to approach it very specifically and in a differentiating manner to identify who can be addressed, what are the needs and wants of tourists, and how that can be matched with those countries. Because ... well, of course one could also look at it from another angle and say... well, what do our countries have to offer and where is the

- match or what tourists could be attracted. Maybe it is not even Germans. That's a possibility...and if so, why not?
- TL: Wenn Du Dir diese Co-Branding Kampagne nochmals überlegst...was für Gemeinsamkeiten oder was für Unterschiede sollten da herausgestellt werden? Denn es ist ja ganz wichtig, oder der Sinn der Sache, dass wenn man so etwas macht...dass es ja nicht um des Spaßes halber gemacht wird, sondern man möchte damit ja einen Sinn verfolgen...sprich man möchte eventuell neue Touristen anlocken...aber man möchte vielleicht auch über eine gemeinsame Strategie die allgemeine Wahrnehmung schärfen. Und das tust Du ja oftmals durch gewisse Gemeinsamkeiten, die Du dabei herausstellst, und auch Unterschiede.
- TL: If you think about such a co-branding approach once again...what commonalities or what differences would you emphasise in it? Since it is very important or it makes sense that if such an approach is chosen...that it is not being done for the fun of it but that it makes sense for everyone involved...meaning to potentially attract new tourists...but perhaps also increase awareness through a joint strategy. And often you can do this by emphasizing commonalities and also differences.
- PT: Hmhm (bejahend). Also ich glaube...wenn man eine Joint-Kampagne macht...dann würde ich mich weniger auf die Gemeinsamkeiten als auf die speziellen Charakteristika der Länder konzentrieren. Das heißt, ich glaube die große Gemeinsamkeit ist einfach die Nähe und die leuchtet allen ein.
- PT: Umhum [affirming]. Well, I believe...if one followed the approach of a joint campaign...I would focus less on commonalities and instead more on special characteristics of the individual countries. That said, I believe the one big commonality is the spatial proximity of these countries and that should be apparent to everyone.
- TL: Die Nähe zueinander?
- *TL:* The spatial proximity towards each other?
- PT: Die Nähe zueinander. Aber auch bei der Joint-Kampagne glaube ich geht es darum...was macht diese Länder aus oder was...ja...was für...auf was für die Bedürfnisse können sie eingehen. Und das würde mich als Tourist bewusst oder unbewusst glaube ich am meisten interessieren. Ich glaube ich wüsste nicht...also für mich wäre es glaube ich nicht wichtig, dass vielleicht in allen drei Ländern die gleiche Spezialität andersrum gekocht wird...oder so. Sondern wirklich was macht sie aus und das unabhängig davon ob sie an einem Stand stehen oder an drei verschiedenen. Ich glaube, es geht...ja...wenn es so um USPs geht, dann ist das unabhängig, ob zusammen oder getrennt.
- PT: The proximity between the countries. But even with a joint approach it is important to know...what constitutes these countries or what...well...what kind of ...what kind of needs can they fulfil. And that's what would interest me the most as a tourist consciously or subconsciously. I believe I wouldn't know...well, I think it wouldn't be important for me to know that in all three countries the same delicacy would perhaps be prepared in certain differing ways...or something like that. But more so what constitutes them, regardless whether they represent themselves on one stand or three different ones. I believe it is ...well...when looking at USPs it doesn't matter whether looking at it together or separate from each other.

- TL: Wenn du jetzt Deine Wahrnehmung der Baltischen Staaten anschaust, dann repräsentierst Du wahrscheinlich einen großen Teil der Bevölkerung.
- TL: If you consider your own perception about the Baltic States, then you most likely represent a large part of the population...
- PT: Das ist möglich, ja.
- PT: That's possible.
- TL: Also ich gehöre auch dazu. Ich schließe mich da nicht aus.
- TL: Well, I would be one of them. I don't exclude myself.
- PT: Interessant wie Du auf das Thema gekommen bist.
- PT: Interesting how you then came up with the topic.
- TL: Ja, nicht? Hm...würde so ein Co-Branding die Wahrnehmung von Dir als potentieller Tourist in Bezug auf die einzelnen Staaten beeinflussen? Und wenn ja, wie?
- TL: True. Um...would such a co-branding approach influence your perception as a potential tourist in terms of the individual countries? And if so, how?
- PT: Hm...Du meinst das Co-Branding aller drei gemeinsamen Staaten?
- PT: Um...you are referring to a co-branding including all three countries?
- TL: Genau. Hm...beziehungsweise...nein...nicht aller drei gemeinsam. Du hast jetzt eine Wahrnehmung von dem einen oder dem anderen oder in irgendeiner Kombination gehabt...
- TL: Exactly. Um...or to be precise...in fact no...not all three together. You have a perception of one or the other country in whatever combination...
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirming].
- TL: Okay...wenn Du jetzt dieses Co-Branding machst...wie würde sich die...wie würde das Deine Wahrnehmung in Bezug auf wirklich die einzelnen Staaten beeinflussen?
- TL: Okay...if you then followed a co-branding approach...how would the...how would your perception change in terms of the individual countries?
- PT: Also ich glaube, dass die baltischen Staaten...ich finde es echt schwierig...so einen Bereich darstellen für mich oder vielleicht auch andere, von dem man schon mal gehört hat. Wie gesagt...den ich beispielsweise nur wenig Differenzieren kann. Und dass...wenn man überhaupt da speziell auf die Unterschiede fokussiert...die es gibt...und die man eben so als...ja...normaler Tourist...über die man da nicht informiert wurde oder über die man auch nicht gehört hat. Dass ist glaube ich das, was dann besonders hängen bleiben würde...wenn das Deine Frage beantwortet.
- PT: Well, I think that the Baltic States...I find it really difficult...for me and perhaps even for others they represent a region that you have at least heard of. As mentioned before...a region I find very difficult to differentiate. And that...if you specifically focus on differences at all...differences that exist...but that one as a...well...as a normal tourist...about which one was never informed and has never heard about. I think that is what would especially stay with you...in case that

answers your question.

- TL: Hmhm...tut es. Wenn man so eine Co-Branding Kampagne macht dann erzeugt man ja ein gemeinsames Image, eine gemeinsame Persönlichkeit irgendwo...zwangsweise. Glaubst Du, dass diese Strategie dann das Image der einzelnen Länder auch beeinflusst? Glaubst Du, dass dies vielleicht irgendeinen Effekt hat, wenn Du das Gesamtimage zum Einzelimage betrachtest?
- TL: Umhum...it does. If one would follow such a co-branding approach it would also generate a common image and somehow also a common personality...naturally. Do you believe that this strategy would consequently also influence the image and personality of the individual countries? Do you believe that it would have some effect comparing the overall image with the individual images?
- PT: Ja, das glaube ich schon.
- PT: Yes, I would think so.
- TL: Okay...in welcher Form denkst?
- TL: Okay...what do you think in what way?
- PT: Weil das, was man sich da auf die Fahne schreibt, man ja auch dann halten muss.
- PT: Well, whatever promises you wish to put on your banner you also need to keep.
- TL: In den einzelnen Destinationen?
- TL: Inside the individual destinations?
- PT: Ja, in den einzelnen Destinationen, genau. Und die ja mitunter...wie ich glaube...ja ganz unterschiedlich sind und es deshalb glaube ich schwierig ist...so dass man vielleicht Begriffe findet, die für die einzelnen Länder gelten aber in unterschiedlichen Blickwinkeln gelebt werden. Also wie...was ich vorhin so ins Blaue gesprochen habe...oder so, mit diesem...so nah und so unterschiedlich...oder so ähnlich. Dass man eben...wenn es um diese gemeinsame Strategie geht...eher vielleicht das Ziel die Neugier zu wecken spezifiziert...anstatt vielleicht zu versuchen, einen Begriff für alle Staaten zu finden, was sich möglicherweise gar nicht vereinbaren lässt.
- PT: Yes, inside the individual destinations, correct. The individual destination that are...as I could imagine...quite different and that's why it's difficult...to perhaps find terms that somehow fit to the individual destinations but are lived from different perspectives. You know...what I mentioned just out of the blue earlier...with this...so close yet so different...or something like that. Really that one...when it comes to a common strategy...rather specifies the aim to arouse curiosity...instead of perhaps trying to find a term that fits with all countries, something that potentially is incompatible.
- TL: Okay, gut. Bei der nächsten Frage erhoffe ich mir sehr viel von Dir, weil Du...ja...
- TL: Okay, good. With the next question I expect a lot from you since you seem to be...well...
- PT: [Lachen]...der Druck steigt.
- PT: [Laughter]...now that increases the pressure.

- TL: [Lachen]...den Druck, den müssen wir ein bisschen erhöhen. Ja genau. Nein, Unsinn...aber ich merke, dass Du ein reflektierender Mensch bist und ein sehr tiefsinniger Mensch bist, was auch gut für die kommenden Fragen ist. Daher gehen wir jetzt mal kurz weg von den baltischen Staaten für einen kleinen Augenblick. Wenn das okay ist für Dich?
- TL: [Laughter] ...the pressure needs to be increased. Exactly. No, no worries ...but I notice that you are a reflective and deep person, which is great for the next questions. That's why we briefly move away from the Baltic States for just a moment. If that is acceptable for you?
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirmative].
- TL: Großartig. Hm...was für Destinationen hast Du denn schon so besucht in der Vergangenheit? Destinationen, die eine sehr starke Marke darstellten?
- TL: Great. Um...what destinations did you visit in the past that at the same time also portrayed a strong brand?
- PT: Die ein starke Marke in der Werbung hatten oder für mich?
- PT: That are a strong brand in marketing or that I perceived as a strong brand?
- TL: Für Dich.
- TL: For you.
- PT: Für mich...hm...also was mich im letzten Jahr sehr stark beeindruckt hat war Andalusien. Weil ich da eben auch...klar...ich wusste das ist Spanien und alles...aber ich hätte jetzt nicht unbedingt den direkten Bereich abstecken können mit meinem Finger auf der Landkarte. Und war dann sehr...sehr positiv beeindruckt von den Städten...hauptsächlich aber auch vom Meer. Und ich habe die Zeit da sehr genossen. Und ich glaube da war es auch durchaus so, dass ich grundsätzlich da mit einer positiven Grundeinstellung reingegangen bin, aber kein spezielles Bild hatte oder hohe Erwartungen, die dann hätten nicht erfüllt werden können. Also das war ganz und gar nicht der Fall. Oder auch so die Marken oder die Bilder...die besonderen Erinnerungen an eine Destination...sind sicher Mexiko und Cuba. Das war im Jahr zuvor und Mexiko hatte ich zwar auch schon...ja...so eine gewisse Vorstellung...auch vielleicht durch Mexikaner oder Latinos, die man zuvor getroffen hat. Aber ich hätte jetzt kein Bild malen können mit einem Tuschkasten, wie es da aussieht. Und zumal auch durch die Größe das Land ja ein ganz, ganz unterschiedliches ist. Und was mich da glaube ich am meisten beeindruckt hat ist nicht der tolle Strand in Playa del Carmen, sondern auch die Vielfältigkeit oder die Leute. Dazu gehört sicher auch die Sprache, die Kultur, die Geschichte, das Essen...all das, was einen Urlaub besonders macht, mal abgesehen vom schönen Hotelzimmer sage ich jetzt mal. Und das war ganz speziell auch in Cuba so, wobei ich da nur Havanna kenne und wir da in meinem ersten Hotelzimmer ohne Fenster geschlafen haben. Das war ein altes Kloster in der Altstadt von Havanna und ich glaube, was mich da am meisten beeindruckt hat sind zum einen Gespräche, die wir mit Kubanern geführt haben, die glücklicherweise Englisch gesprochen haben...und uns über ihr Leben und ihr...ja...eigentlich von ihrem tatsächlichen Leben abseits von diesem Bild oder den Guantanamera-Gesängen...so wie es tatsächlich ist und dass es da eben auch so...ja...so ganz unterschiedliche Facetten gibt. Also ich

glaube Cuba war unheimlich schön und unheimlich traurig zugleich. Und das war auch auf jeden Fall ein Urlaub der mir in Gedanken blieb...oder...so was so gerade Gefühle oder Eindrücke angeht...noch ganz lange begleitet hat und auch es immer noch tut, wenn ich in der Zeitung irgendwas über Cuba oder Havanna lese. Also da ist es glaube ich...hat es sehr stark damit zu tun, wie intensiv die Erfahrung war, wie tief man da eintauchen konnte und ich glaube...hm...also eintauchen für mich heißt dann eben auch, dass ich nicht beispielsweise am hop-on-hop-off Bus teilnehme...das gehört sicher auch dazu...weil klar sind das die großen Attraktionen...aber eben auch...und da kommt es halt darauf an wie man reist...ob in der Gruppe oder individuell...wie viel Zeit nehme ich mir. Klar...auch welches Budget habe ich dafür...aber auch dass man Gelegenheiten oder Situationen schafft, um Touristen richtig einzufangen. Und da hat halt auch jede Zielgruppe individuelle Bedürfnisse...aber da kann ich halt auch dann nur für mich sprechen...das sind halt...ja...so Situationen oder Destinationen die mich dann ganz lange begleiten.

PT: For me...um...well, something that deeply impressed me last year was Andalusia. Because there I also ... well, of course ... I knew it is Spain and everything ... but I would not have been able to find the region with my finger on a map. And then I was very...very positively impressed by the cities...but mainly also from the sea. And I greatly enjoyed the time there. And I believe I had this experience because I generally went there with a positive basic attitude towards the region but at the same time didn't have a special image or expectations in mind that potentially could not have been fulfilled. Well that definitely wasn't the case. Or even those brands and images...those special memories of a destination...are definitely from Mexico or Cuba. That was a year prior and Mexico for me was already...well...I had a certain perception ... perhaps also through Mexicans and Latinos I had met before. But I would not have been able to draw a picture with a paint box about how it might look there. Especially so, because even the size of the country made it seem very different. However, what impressed me the most was not the amazing beach in Playa del Carmen but the diversity and the people. And part of that was definitely the language, the culture, the history, the food ... everything that makes a holiday special, quite apart from a nice hotel room I would argue. And that was the same special experience in Cuba, although I only know Havana and we slept there in the first hotel room of my life that didn't have a window. It as an old monastery in the old town of Havana and I believe what impressed me most were the conversations we had with Cubans who luckily spoke English...and they told us about their life...and their...well, actually their real life aside from this typical image and those Guantanamera songs...their life as it really is and that there are so...well...so many different facets to it. Well I think Cuba was amazingly beautiful but at the same time incredibly sad. And it really was a holiday that got stuck in my memory...or...especially pertaining to feelings and impressions...something that was on my mind for a long time and actually still is as soon as I read something about Cuba or Havana in the newspaper. Well, I think it is ... it has a lot to do with how strong or intensive the experiences were, how deep one managed to immerse into a destination and I believe...um...to immerge to me also means that I don't use the hop-on-hop-off bus...well I guess it's part of it...because those are the big attractions...but it also means...depending of course how you travel...whether in a group or independently...it also means how much time I take for a destination. Sure...it also depends on the budget I have...but also that one creates opportunities and situations to really capture tourists. And of course every target group has

individual needs and wants...but I can only speak for myself at that point...those are ...well...those are then situations or destinations that stick with me for a long time.

- TL: Okay...
- TL: Okay...
- PT: War dass so das, was Du gedacht hast?
- PT: Was that something you had expected?
- TL: [Lachen]...das war ein guter Anfang, ein phantastischer Anfang, muss ich sagen. Wenn Du jetzt an diese Destination denkst...wie glaubst Du hängt die Destination als Marke mit dem Image und der Persönlichkeit einer Destination zusammen?
- TL: [Laughter]...I have to say that was a great start, a fantastic start. If you now think about these destinations...how in your opinion is a destination brand related to the image and personality of a destination?
- PT: Manchmal nur sehr wenig.
- PT: Sometimes not very much.
- TL: Und wann ist das so? Beschreibe mir das mal.
- TL: And when is that the case? Can you describe that for me?
- PT: Nun...weil eine Destination...wenn wir von Ländern sprechen...kann natürlich nur schwer in drei Schlagworten beschrieben werden. Und das passt unter Umständen in bestimmten Ecken auch ganz und gar nicht zu dem Image oder zu dem Bild, weil Image hat ja auch was mit Wunschdenken zu tun. Und das entspricht manchmal nicht der Realität. Also wie will ich das schöne Havanna beschreiben...oder wie es den Menschen im Moment tatsächlich geht. Und wie hängt das in der Geschichte zusammen. Aber natürlich werden Touristen nur angezogen von den positiven Aspekten, die man in den Vordergrund stellt...und nicht eventuelle Beigeschmäcker. Obwohl man vielleicht nicht über einen negativen Beigeschmack, aber über eine Besonderheit das Land nochmal vielleicht...ja...ganz anders vermarkten oder auch in ein ganz anderes Licht setzen kann.
- PT: Well...because a destination...especially when talking about countries...can only with great difficulty be described with three words of course. And those three words potentially don't even fit to the image or picture in certain areas because image also has something to do with wishful thinking. And that sometimes doesn't correspond with reality. So how do I want to describe the beautiful Havana...or how people are actually doing there right now. And how is that connected to history. But of course, tourists are only attracted by the positive aspects that one features...and not by potentially existing negative connotations. Although, perhaps one wouldn't necessarily be able to promote a negative connotation, but one could perhaps feature a peculiarity of a country...and thus...market it in a very different way and shed a different light on it.
- TL: Hmhm...okay...welche Ähnlichkeiten nimmst Du denn wahr zwischen Marke, Image und Persönlichkeit einer Destination? Oder welche Unterschiede? Wie würdest Du die voneinander abgrenzen, diese Begriffe oder Konzepte?
- TL: Umhum...okay...what similarities do you sense between the brand, image, and

personality of a destination? Or what differences? How would you differentiate these terms or concepts?

PT: Also es gibt schon Unterschiede, aber grundsätzlich hängen sie ja auch sehr nah miteinander zusammen. Also die Marke...das ist, was es darstellt und das Image ist das, was andere darüber denken oder das, was andere wahrnehmen...und das als allererstes ist natürlich oder sollte sehr eng verknüpft sein. Weil nur so wird es auch glaubwürdig wenn man erst einmal dahinter blickt und vielleicht dem ersten...hm...Image oder dem ersten Bild was man so hat auf den Grund gehen möchte. Insbesondere wenn vielleicht gewisse Neugier geweckt wurde und man dann vielleicht mal einen Katalog aufschlägt oder mehr darüber liest...oder vielleicht jemanden trifft, der dort bereits war...und dann würde sich natürlich sehr schnell herausstellen, ob die Marke dem Image gerecht wird oder nicht. Deshalb ist es natürlich sehr, sehr wichtig glaube ich, da transparent...um nicht zu sagen ehrlich...zu sein. Und...ja...Persönlichkeit ist dann glaube ich das, was bleibt. Also das, was Touristen mitnehmen...das, was sie tatsächlich erleben...und da ist es natürlich zum einen immer von ihnen selbst abhängig, auf was sie sich einlassen und wofür sie bereit sind. Vielleicht wollen sie auch gar nicht wie ich die Geschichten hören, sondern lieber abends im Bett noch ein bisschen Fernsehen oder so. Also die Bedürfnisse sind da ja ganz unterschiedlich und auch das, was man als idealen Urlaub beschreiben würde. Also ich glaube wenn man da 10 Leute befragt hat man 10 Antworten. Und ich glaube, Persönlichkeit ist ganz individuell und wird wahrscheinlich auch so wahrgenommen. Beispielsweise hat eine Bekannte von mir mal drei Tage in Dubai verbracht und würde ein ganz anderes Bild beschreiben als ich. Klar, ich habe da zwei Jahre verbracht...also das ist grundsätzlich was ganz anderes. Aber auch die Erfahrung, die sie in dieser Zeit gemacht hat...oder so, wie sie das Anhalten eines Arabers bewertet hat, der sie aus dem Compound...wo sie untergebracht war...ziemlich weit ab vom Schuss, ohne Taxi und irgendwie Transfermöglichkeit zur Mall zu kommen, zu der sie wollten. Die hat dieses Angebot als absolut negativ bewertet, obwohl sie es letztendlich angenommen haben um da weg zu kommen und halt auch sicher und gut dahin gebracht wurden, wohin sie wollten. Und das lockere Angebot...und für meine Begriffe würde ich es auch so bewerten...am Abend vielleicht etwas Trinken zu gehen und so...und da wäre der Araber aufgrund seiner Kultur sicher auch nicht allein gewesen. So wie sie es aufgenommen hätte, hätte ich es durch meine eigene Brille ganz anders aufgenommen...und das ist ihr aber sehr, sehr negativ im Gedächtnis geblieben. Und deshalb glaube ich ist es ohnehin sehr...sehr schwierig, da alle Touristen glücklich zu machen. Ich glaube, das kann man gar nicht. Und...ja...Persönlichkeit hängt halt mit der Persönlichkeit des Touristen zusammen und deshalb ist glaube ich dieses Zielgruppenmarketing auch extrem wichtig.

PT: Well, there are differences but generally they are very much connected with each other. Well, the brand...that's what it represents and image is what others think about it or what others perceive of it...and that first and foremost should logically be connected very closely. Only then it becomes credible when one looks behind the outer layer and wants to perhaps...get to the bottom of a first image or picture once comes across. And that may be especially true in situation where a certain curiosity was aroused and where one then perhaps opens a catalogue and reads more about it...or where you meet someone who had already been there...naturally then it would quickly become apparent whether the brand satisfies the image or not. Therefore it's certainly very very important in my opinion...to be very

transparent at that point...not to say to be very honest. And...yes...personality then is what stays. Meaning that what tourists take with them...that, what they actually have experienced...and that depends a lot on the tourist itself, what they get involved in and what they are ready for. Perhaps they don't even want to hear those stories and rather prefer to stay in bed at night watching television or something like that. Well, the wants and needs are naturally very different and also what one would describe as the perfect holiday. And I think if you asked 10 different people you might even receive 10 different answers. And I believe personality is determined on an individual basis and is most likely also being perceived that way. For example, a friend of mine once spent 3 days in Dubai and would describe a totally different image than the one I have. Sure, I lived there for two years...well, that is of course something very different. But still, the experience she went through during this time...for instance, how she viewed an Arab guy who pulled over at a compound...where she staved at the time...which was far off the beaten track without a taxi within reach of other transfer possibility to get to a mall she wanted to see. She very negatively evaluated the offer for a lift she got even though they accepted it just to get away from where they were and were nicely and safely driven to where they wanted to go. You know, and that nice casual offer...and I might have evaluated it as such...to perhaps go for a drink that evening...you know the Arab person would not have been alone that evening based on his cultural values. However, the way she took it would have looked very different from how I look at it...anyways, it stuck with her in a very negative way. And that's why I believe it is anyway very...very difficult to make all tourists happy. I personally believe it is not possible. And ... yes ... personality depends on the personality of each tourist, which is why a target marketing is so essential.

- TL: Okay...gut...hm...inwieweit denkst Du sollte das Image und die Persönlichkeit einer Destination dann in der Marke reflektiert sein?
- TL: Okay...good...um...in what way then should image and personality of a destination be reflected in a brand?
- PT: Also ich glaube dass Marke, Image und Persönlichkeit auf jeden Fall aufeinander abgestimmt sein sollten. Und vielleicht verschiedene Blickwinkel der Destination oder so beschreiben oder die USPs herauskehren. Aber sie sollten grundsätzlich auf jeden Fall in eine Richtung deuten, denn ansonsten verfehlt es seine Wirkung.
- PT: Well, I think that a brand, image, and personality should definitely be in line with each other. And they should perhaps describe different perspectives of a destination or emphasize its USPs. But in principle they should definitely point towards the same direction to not miss out on its impact.
- TL: Ist Image für Dich eigentlich die größere Größe oder Persönlichkeit?
- TL: Is image actually for you the bigger factor or is it personality?
- PT: Ich glaube Image ist das, was einen in die Destination bringt. Und Persönlichkeit ist das, an was man sich erinnert.
- PT: I think image is what makes you travel to a destination. Personality on the other hand is what you will remember of it.
- TL: Das heißt also, Persönlichkeit in Deinen Augen kann man erst in der Destination erfahren?

- TL: Does that mean that in your opinion you can only experience personality once you are at the destination?
- PT: Ja, ich glaube schon.
- PT: Yes, I believe so.
- TL: Was wäre denn dann, wenn die Persönlichkeit schon vorher erfahrbar wäre?
- TL: What if personality were already sensible before a trip takes place?
- PT: Wie wäre das?
- PT: How so?
- TL: Hm...vielleicht durch Marketingaktivitäten. Persönlichkeiten sind ja Charakteristiken, oder Persönlichkeitszüge, die Du beschreiben kannst. Die Du...wie soll ich das sagen...
- TL: Hm...perhaps through marketing activities. Personality consists of characteristics, or character traits that you could describe. Something you could...how shall I put this...
- PT: Aber...ich glaube da ist die Grenze zwischen Image...also das...was ich transportieren will...und dem wie es wirklich ist...und das ist für mich Persönlichkeit...ganz, ganz, dünn.
- PT: Well...I think the boundary between image...well that...what I want to convey...and what the reality is...and that to me is personality...that is a very very fine line.
- TL: Die kann in jedem Fall dünn sein, ja.
- TL: That may very well be a fine line, yes.
- PT: Also wie kann ich eine Destination bevor ich sie bereise erlebbar machen? Das hat sicher verschiedene Möglichkeiten. Es hat mit Essen, mit Leuten, mit Sprache, mit Aktivitäten oder Sehenswürdigkeiten zu tun. Aber ich glaube das richtige Erleben...das kann nur in der Destination erfolgen. Ansonsten ist es glaube ich ganz schwer...das zu transportieren und dann auch dem Touristen die Möglichkeit zu geben, eine "richtige Erwartungshaltung" zu haben, die dann nicht enttäuscht wird.
- PT: So how can I make a destination come alive before traveling it? There are certainly different possibilities. It has something to do with food, with people, with language, with activities or landmarks. However, I believe the real experiencing...that can only take place in the destination. Otherwise I think it is very difficult...to convey that and to provide the tourist with the possibility to develop real expectations that are not being fulfilled later on.
- TL: Hmhm...das mag sein. Hm...du als Tourist...ich habe zwar eine vage Vorstellung von dem, wie Du da bist, aber [lachen] wenn Du Dich für eine Destination entscheidest oder wenn Du Dich...ja...wenn Du Dich für eine Destination entscheidest, orientierst Du Dich dann eher am Image oder an der Persönlichkeit oder an der Marke einer Destination? Was glaubst Du?
- TL: Umhum...that may be true. Um...you as a tourist...I'm sure I have a vague idea of what you are looking for...[laughter]...when you decide for a destination or when you...well...if you decide for a destination, do you then orientate yourself towards the image, the personality, or the brand of a destination? What do you think?

- PT: Na, Persönlichkeit kann ich ja jetzt nicht sagen.
- *PT*: Well, I wouldn't now be able to say personality.
- TL: Na ja gut...also Destinationen versuchen natürlich schon eine gewisse Persönlichkeit manchmal zu kommunizieren.
- TL: Well okay...destinations sometimes of course try to communicate a certain personality.
- PT: Auf jeden Fall.
- PT: Definitely.
- TL: Also was ist der Aufhänger dann für Dich? Sind das wunderschöne Bilder? Ist das beispielsweise ein Ägypten mit...keine Ahnung...weißer Sandstrand, mit diesen Liegestühlen und diesen weißen Tüchern drum herum? Oder...
- TL: So what's the plug there for you? Is it beautiful pictures? Is it for instance an Egypt that is marketed as...well...perhaps white sandy beaches, with beach chairs and white towels on top? Oder is it...
- PTAlso ich glaube es ist beispielsweise bei...eines meiner Traumdestinationen, wo ich eigentlich schon vor zwei Jahren hinwollte...und auch dieses Jahr war es immer aus organisatorischen Gründen dann irgendwie ins Wasser gefallen...ist Peru. Und...Peru aber eigentlich nicht als Destination an sich...sondern der Machu Picchu. Warum auch immer. Und ich glaube, ich habe da über diesen Ort und diese Besonderheit gehört und den Trail...den man erst entlang läuft um dann den Sonnenaufgang über dem Machu Picchu sieht...und das als legendäre und schönste Erfahrung gilt überhaupt...das hat mich neugierig gemacht um zu schauen...okay, wo liegt das überhaupt, wie komme ich da hin, mit was kann ich das verbinden. Und mittlerweile weiß ich...ich will auch zum Titikakasee und das hängt mit einer Flugreise innerhalb des Landes zusammen. Das heißt ich muss sowieso schauen, wie kann ich das noch verbinden und so kommt man natürlich auch auf Cusco und...klar in Lima landet man sowieso. Also ich glaube, was mich daran speziell gereizt und neugierig gemacht hat war anfangs eine persönliche Erfahrung von einem nahen Bekannten und dann die Gelegenheit darüber mehr zu erfahren. Und das aber auch ohne dass ich aktiv suchen musste, sondern man hat halt einen gewissen Focus oder man ist demgegenüber offener und wenn dann gewisse Informationen zufällig kommen, verlinkt man das gleich und ist dann grundsätzlich auf jeden Fall aufgeschlossen und interessiert. Und...war das jetzt die Persönlichkeit oder die Marke? Ich glaube das Image war es nicht. Wahrscheinlich die Marke, weil Peru hat sicher den Machu Picchu als USP.
- PT: Well, for instance I believe that ...one of my dream destinations ...that I already wanted to visit two years ago ...and also this year had to somehow also be cancelled due to a number of organisational reasons ...that's Peru. But ...Peru not actually as a destination per se ...rather the Machu Picchu. For whatever reasons. And I think, I have heard about that place, that distinctiveness and that trail ...that you first have to hike along to then see the sunrise of the Machu Picchu ...something that counts as the most legendary and beautiful experiences of all ...that made me very curious to then see ...okay, where is that located, how do I get there, and what can I connect that with. And in the meantime I know ... I also want to see Lake Titicaca and that again requires and air passage with the country.

That means I needed to look anyway to what additionally things I would be able to connect it and that's obviously how one stumbles across Cusco and...of course one touches down in Lima anyway. So I think what really attracted me specifically to this and made me so curious was the personal experience of a close friend in the beginning and then the opportunity getting to know more about it. However, but that without the need to actively search for it but you just have a certain focus or you are more open-minded towards it and as soon as you stumble over certain information you are able to link that to something and you are generally more receptive and interested. Now...was that the personality or brand? I believe it wasn't the image. Most likely the brand because Peru certainly has the Machu Picchu as a USP.

- TL: Das heißt...wenn ich Dich richtig verstehe sagst Du...dass es gewisse Destinationen gibt wo eher die Marke im Vordergrund steht und es gibt gewisse Destinationen, wo eher das Image im Vordergrund steht. Und natürlich gibt es möglicherweise gewisse Destinationen, wo die Persönlichkeit eher im Vordergrund steht...Persönlichkeit, als Seele zum Image? Ist das so richtig wiedergegeben?
- TL: That means...if I understand you correctly you are saying that...that there are certain destination where the brand may be in the foreground and the there are certain destinations where it may be more the image. And naturally there are potentially destinations where it is the personality...personality as the soul of image? Did I render that correctly?
- PT: Ja, genau. Also ich tue mich immer noch schwer die Persönlichkeit als Image zu sehen.
- PT: Yes, exactly. But I still have a hard time viewing personality to be the same as image.
- TL: Oh nein, das sollst du nicht als Image sehen.
- *TL:* Oh no...no one asks you to see view it to be the same as image.
- PT: Aber...ja klar...also ich meine in gewisser Art und Weise transportiert man halt das am besten was man hat. Und gehört Machu Picchu jetzt zur Marke? Sicherlich zum Image auch...weil es gehört einfach zu den Weltwundern. Aber das, was es besonders macht...ist das ein Teil der Persönlichkeit? Weiß ich nicht...
- PT: But...yes, of course...I mean in a certain way you try to convey as best as possible what you have. And does the Machu Picchu belong to the brand? It definitely also belongs to the image...simply, because it belongs to the wonders of the world. But the aspects that make it special...is that part of the personality? I don't know...
- TL: Wenn Du eine Reise tätigst...suchst Du dann nach Destinationen, wo sich Deine eigene Persönlichkeit mit der Persönlichkeit der Destination widerspiegelt irgendwie? Ich meine wie Du die Gegend um den Machu Picchu oder sagen wir mal Peru und Deine Motivation beschreibst...es wäre ja naheliegend dann, das zu vermuten?
- TL: When you are about to make your travel decision...are you somehow looking for destinations where your personality is reflected in that of the destination? I mean it seems obvious to make that assumption...listening to how you describe the region around the Machu Picchu or Peru and your motivation to go there.

PT: In welcher Form? PT: In what way?

TL: In diversen Formen...

TL: In any way...

РΤ٠ [Lachen]...Also ich glaube unbewusst sucht man ohnehin immer das, was einem gleicht...was auch immer das bedeutet. Also ich weiß noch genau, als ich in Dubai war...war Teil der Aufgabe unserer Abteilung jeden Montag mit den Stammgästen oder den Gästen aus Suiten den Gastcocktail zu...ja...zu überleben, könnte man fast sagen. Und da waren halt viele Gäste, die dreimal im Jahr nach Dubai gereist sind...und das meistens dann...weiß ich nicht...für fünf Tage oder für eine Woche vielleicht. Und diese würde ich behaupten, haben auch total nach Dubai gepasst. Und wahrscheinlich auch...wenn sie dann zurück sind und ihren Freunden und Bekannten erzählen, dass sie wieder in Dubai waren...im Burj al Arab oder sonst einem fünf Sterne Haus...und da ganz toll gegessen haben, viel geshoppt haben und es wieder richtig schön war. Dann glaube ich schon, dass das die Persönlichkeit der Touristen spiegelt. Deshalb ist es denke ich auch so wichtig, zielgruppenorientiert das Marketing auszurichten...weil nicht jeder Tourist wäre glücklich in jeder Destination. Und ich glaube, manchmal macht man das bewusster oder eben auch unbewusst. Oder es ist vielleicht auch eine Erklärung dafür, warum speziell diese Touristen...bei diesen Gästecocktails...allesamt immer Indien ganz schrecklich fanden als Destination. Weil sie die Armen, Hungernden nicht während ihre Urlaubs sehen wollen. Und das passt natürlich super zu Dubai denn es gibt da keine sichtbaren Bettler.

PT: [Laughter] ... Well, I believe subconsciously one always looks for something that is somewhat alike...whatever that means. I remember very well when I lived in Dubai...one task or responsibility of our department every Monday was to have a guest cocktail together with our regular guests or guests staying in hotel suites...or you could almost say to survive that. And there were many guests who came to Dubai three times a year...and most of the time for...I don't know...for five days or perhaps even a week. And I would argue that these people perfectly belonged to Dubai. Probably even...as soon as they got back home they talked to their friends and acquaintances that they had just been to Dubai again...stayed at the Burj al Arab or any other five star property...enjoyed fantastic delicacies, went shopping, and had an amazing time. In that particular case I believe that it reflects the personality of tourists. And that's why believe it is so very important to coordinate a target-group-specific marketing...because not every tourist would be happy in every destination. I also believe that sometimes this is being done more on a conscious level, sometimes more subconsciously. Or maybe it is even an explanation for why specifically the tourists...for whom we hosted the guest cocktail...that all of them absolutely disliked India as destination. And that's because they don't want to see the poor and the starving during their holidays. And that corresponds to Dubai because there are no visible beggars.

TL: Und das ist noch schön, ja.

TL: Plus, it is beautiful there.

PT: Genau. Von daher würde das wahrscheinlich die These bestätigen, warum ich unbedingt dann nach Machu Picchu will. Hm...wüsste ich aber nicht...denn so alt

- bin ich ja nicht.
- PT: Exactly. That said, it would probably also confirm the hypothesis why I desperately wish to travel to the Machu Picchu. Um...I wouldn't know if that's true...since I'm not that old.
- TL: [Lachen]...okay...kommen wir allmählich zum Ende des Interviews. Glaubst Du...wir haben jetzt lange über Image, Persönlichkeit und Marke von Destinationen gesprochen...glaubst Du, dass die Marke und natürlich auch Image und Persönlichkeit der Baltischen Staaten der Vermarktung momentan ausreichend zur Geltung kommt?
- TL: [Laughter] ...okay...we are getting close to the end of the interview. Do you think...and we talked for quite some time now about image, personality and destination brands...do you think that at present the brand and of course also the image and personality of the Baltic States are featured sufficiently in their marketing?
- PT: Nein, das kann ich natürlich nicht denken, einfach auch weil ich ja davon gar kein Bild richtig habe. Und von daher liegt da sicher ganz viel verborgenes Potenzial, dies noch zu stärken und zu fokussieren. Und...also...
- PT: No, I absolutely don't think so simply because I don't even have a real image of it. As such, I think there certainly is a lot of deeply hidden potential that needs to be unlocked to strengthen the region and focus attention on it.
- TL: Das heißt momentan siehst Du es eher als ineffektiv an.
- TL: That means that currently you view it as rather ineffective?
- PT: Richtig. Also in meiner Wahrnehmung gab es eben noch keins. Und möglicherweise von der Zielgruppe, die ich zwischendurch beschrieben habe, würde ich wahrscheinlich auch noch gar nicht reinfallen. Das kann natürlich damit zusammen hängen...je nachdem, wie das Marketing ausgerichtet ist. Und...also ich habe Machu Picchu auf meiner Reiseliste, ich möchte auch unbedingt nach Südafrika...und ich weiß nicht, ob ich persönlich der "geeignete" Tourist für Litauen, Estland oder Lettland wäre...hm...vielleicht in zehn Jahren. Vielleicht hat auch dadurch das Marketing genau sein Ziel erreicht...hm... es hat mich nur nicht angesprochen, vielleicht habe ich es auch einfach nur nicht wahrgenommen weil es noch nicht in meinem Focus ist...hm...vielleicht weil ich noch nicht der Tourist für diese Staaten wäre.
- PT: Correct. Well, I have not noticed anything from my perspective. And perhaps I would also not be considered belonging to the target group that I described here and there in during the interview. However, that can be due to ...well, depending how the marketing is oriented. And ...well, I have the Machu Picchu on my travel list, I desperately also want to go to South Africa ... and I really don't know whether personally I would be the appropriate tourist for Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia ...um ...maybe in ten years time. Perhaps thereby marketing has actually reached its objective ...um ... it just hasn't spoken to me yet but maybe I just didn't sense it because it is not yet on my radar ... um ... maybe because I am just not yet the appropriate tourist for these countries.
- TL: Gibt es Länder, die ausschließlich für eine gewisse Touristengruppe sind? Gibt es so etwas wirklich? Oder ist es dann einfach nur mangelndes Marketing?

- TL: Are there countries specifically for certain tourist groups? Is there really such a thing? Or is it in the end just poor marketing?
- PT: Ich glaube, das kann man nicht pauschalisieren. Weil speziell ein Land wie...wie Deutschland...hat die See und die Berge und dazwischen ganz viele große Städte, die sicher für ein Wochenende ganz viel zu bieten haben. Daher ist das schon...ja...sehr vielfältig. Aber in Fällen wo dann nur ein Bruchteil an Fläche besteht...kann man sich ja trotzdem unterschiedliche Touristen heranziehen. Die Frage ist...aufgrund der Distanz...für welchen Zeitraum und wo würden diese Touristen herkommen...dass sie auch vielleicht nur für wenige Tage in dieses Land reisen?
- PT: I think you can't generalise that. Because especially a country like...Germany...it has the sea and mountains and many larger cities in between who definitely offer a lot of things for a weekend. That's why it is...well...very diverse. But in cases that only has a fraction of surface area...you can still grow and develop different tourists. The question just is...due to the distance...for what time frame and where would tourists come from...so that they are even coming to that country for perhaps only a couple of days?
- TL: Hmhm...okay...wenn das Baltikum als Gesamtdestination es schaffen würde, ein ausreichend interessantes Image zu schaffen und eine Persönlichkeit, die Du vielleicht irgendwie Sexy oder ansprechend findest, würdest Du eher geneigt sein, dort hin zu gehen?
- TL: Umhum...okay...if the Baltic countries as one destination would manage to create a sufficiently interesting image and personality that you might then perceive as somehow sexy or attractive, would you then be more inclined to travel there?
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend]. Also ich glaube, die müssten einfach nur meine Neugierde wecken.
- PT: Umhum [affirmative]. Well, I believe they simply need to somehow arouse my curiosity.
- TL: Das heißt...also was wir unter Markenkommunikation verstehen, muss dann natürlich auf Image und Persönlichkeit beruhen? Weil sonst hast Du diesen Effekt nicht, richtig?
- TL: That means...whatever we understand as brand communication then has to obviously be based on image and personality? Because otherwise you may not have that desired effect, is that what you mean?
- PT: Nun, die Frage ist halt…ist Markenkommunikation…gibt es da noch andere Bestandteile oder Focusse…gibt es noch kleinere Größen? Image und Persönlichkeit sind offensichtlich natürlich die Größten Anteile davon.
- PT: Well, the question simply is...is brand communication...is there perhaps even other components or foci...are there any smaller components? Image and personality are certainly the seemingly largest parts of it.
- TL: Okay...Dich zu fragen, wie Du die baltischen Staaten als einzelne touristische Destination beschreiben würdest...oder nein...andersrum...vorhin habe ich Dich mal gefragt, welche Gedanken oder Gefühle Du hast, wenn Du die einzelnen Baltischen Staaten beschreibst. Du hast mir so ein paar Ideen gegeben. Würde das anders sein

- bei der Gesamtdestination?
- TL: Okay...To ask you how you would describe the Baltic States as one single destinations...or no...vice versa...earlier I asked you what thoughts or feelings you have when describing the individual countries. You mentioned a couple of things. Would that be any different when considering it as one region?
- PT: Nein. Denn ich glaube auch in der Beschreibung vorhin habe ich das...wie gesagt...wenig differenziert.
- PT: No. Because I think even in the description I gave earlier I did...like I said...I didn't differentiate it very much.
- TL: Gibt es irgendein Symbol...wenn Du Dir vorstellst...man macht dieses Co-Branding...gibt es irgendein Symbol oder ein Logo, was Du mit Worten beschreiben könntest, was die Gesamtdestination beschreiben könnte...der repräsentieren würde?
- TL: Is there a symbol...if you imagine...they would do this cobranding approach...is there a symbol or a logo you could describe with words...that would describe this one destination...or represent it?
- PT: Ich fürchte nicht.
- PT: I'm afraid I can't think of any.
- TL: Gibt es irgendwelche Komponenten, die Du da reintun würdest? Etwas, was für Dich unbedingt enthalten sein müsste...außer grün?
- TL: Are there perhaps any component you would include in such a logo or symbol? Something, that needs to be included in your opinion...apart from being green?
- PT: Grün und die bunten Häuser vielleicht. Und...also in dem Logo sollten ja auf jeden Fall immer...sollte auf jeden Fall immer das vertreten sein was eine Region oder ein Land oder vielleicht auch drei Länder...aber das glaube ich dann eher weniger...auszeichnen oder besonders machen oder mit der Geschichte einher gehen und...ja...sie einfach besonders machen.
- PT: Green and perhaps those colourful houses. And ...well, no matter what a logo should always ...it should always represent what a region or a country and perhaps even three countries ...but that might be difficult ...what they portray and what makes them special and it should be aligned to history and ...well ...what makes them special.
- TL: Im Fall der Baltischen Staaten...wäre es ein modernes oder ein traditionelles Logo?
- TL: In the case of the Baltic States...would that be a modern or more traditional logo?
- PT: Also ich würde eher für ein traditionelles gehen. Weil schließlich soll ja so ein Logo nicht einfach irgendeinem Trend hinterher laufen. Nur weil jetzt gerade grüne Wiesen besonders "in" sind und in 20 Jahren irgendein anderes. Man würde das glaube ich nur schwer erst aufbauen und dann wieder ändern können. Es sollte also wirklich was sein, was mit dem dann verwurzelt ist. Und das ist grundsätzlich dann traditionell.
- PT: Well, I would go for a more traditional one. Especially since such a logo should not simply run after some trend. Just because green meadows may be in currently and in 20 years from now it can be quite different. It would be very difficult to

- establish something like that to then change it at some point. Thus, it should be something that is deep-rooted with the destination. And that is generally more traditional.
- TL: Okay...wir kommen zu den letzten Fragen. Wie glaubst Du könnte...wir haben gesagt, die drei Länder haben alle ein eigenes Image, stellen eine eigene Marke dar, haben eine eigene Persönlichkeit. Ist denn überhaupt die Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen Marke dann möglich in Deinen Augen?
- TL: Okay...we are approaching the final questions. How in your opinion could...we said earlier that all three countries have their separate image, have their own brand, and have their own personality. Is the development of a common brand then at all possible in your opinion?
- PT: Ich glaube, man kann eine Marke nicht...also ich würde nicht die Marke der Baltischen Staaten sehen. Ich glaube, es gibt auch keine Marke für Skandinavien weil sie einfach zu unterschiedlich sind. Und...ja...es gibt da sicher...das ist die Region oder...und es gibt ja sicher auch Gemeinsamkeiten, aber darum geht es ja gar nicht. Sondern es geht eher um die Unterschiede zu den anderen Ländern und dadurch auch untereinander. Und von daher...ich glaube...ich würde...das heißt ja nicht, dass man nicht zusammen auftreten kann. Aber ansonsten...ich würde die Marke der unterschiedlichen Länder besonders hervorheben und als Baltische Staaten diese gemeinsam vertreten.
- PT: I think a brand cannot be...well, I would not see a Baltic States brand. I also believe there is no brand for Scandinavia because they are simply too different. And...yes...sure there is...that is the region or...and there are certainly commonalities but that's not what matters. What matters are the contrasts to the other countries and contrasts between each other. That's why...I believe...I would...that doesn't mean that they cannot appear together. However, apart from that...I would put special emphasis on the brands of the individual countries but have them commonly represented as Baltic Countries.
- TL: Ist das nicht das Gleiche...oder ähnlich?
- TL: Isn't that the same...or similar?
- PT: Nein, weil dann entweder hat man die Marke "Baltische Staaten" oder...
- PT: No, because either you have the brand 'Baltic States' or...
- TL: Ach so...Du sagst...das, was Du beschreibst ist im Prinzip eine Art paralleles Branding.
- TL: Oh...okay. You mean...what you describe is basically a form of parallel branding.
- PT: Ja, genau. Oder wir als Baltische Staaten...sprich Estland, Lettland, und Litauen stehen nebeneinander...weil wir gehören zusammen...aber wir sind alle unterschiedlich. Also die sollten einfach kommunizieren dass sie großer und stärker zusammen sind...aber eben auch unterschiedlich untereinander und anders als andere
- PT: Yes, exactly. In other words we as Baltic States...meaning Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania stand side by side...because we belong together...but we are all different. Well, they should communicate that they are bigger and stronger together...but then also different amongst themselves and from other countries.

- TL: Hmhm...hättest Du da nicht Angst bei einem gemeinsamen Marketing...dass dann irgendeine Destination unter geht? Eine Destination insbesondere, die nicht so stark ist wie eine andere?
- TL: Umhum...wouldn't you be afraid that when you do such a collective marketing...that one destination could potentially suffer? A destination perhaps that may not be as strong as the other?
- PT: Warum?
- PT: Why is that?
- TL: Na ja...weil wenn Du die mehr oder weniger einzeln vermarktest aber nur...na ja...nur gelegentlich gemeinsame Auftritte hast...dann ist das was anderes als wenn Du ganz bewusst die existierenden Marken erst einmal unangetastet lässt und höchstens verstärkst von jedem einzelnen Land. Aber wenn Du dann eine gemeinsame alle Staaten beinhaltende Marke entwickelst, die vielleicht besonders stark ist, um vielleicht diese Initialzündung bei vielen Touristen zu schaffen, die bisher dieses Ganze als einen weißen Fleck, als eine Einheit betrachtet haben...
- TL: Well...if you market them more or less individually and only...well...only sporadically have joint appearances...it is then very different from an approach that specifically does not touch the individual brands and only once in a while reinforces them. But in case you are developing an all-encompassing brand for all countries, that may perhaps be quite strong in order to achieve this initial spark among many travellers who have up to that point viewed the entirety as a white spot or as one unit....
- PT: Ich glaube das kommt ganz darauf an, ob diese einzelnen Marken beispielsweise unterschiedlich stark sind. Wenn sie da relativ ähnlich aufgestellt sind...und das heißt nicht, dass sie nicht verschieden sein können...dann halte ich es für besser, dass sie individuell bleiben und als baltische Staaten gemeinsam auftreten. Wenn aber beispielsweise vielleicht zwei Staaten viel stärker sind im Sinne von eine größere Präsenz haben, vielleicht auch für Touristen aus verschiedenen Gründen attraktiver erscheinen...dann ist sicher eine gemeinsame Marke sinnvoller...obwohl dann natürlich auch die Unterschiede und der Besonderheiten der einzelnen Länder in dem Sinne weniger berücksichtigt werden können. Weil bei einer gemeinsamen Marke geht es ja um die Gemeinsamkeiten und nicht um die Unterschiede.
- PT: I think it strongly depends whether the individual brands are varyingly strong for instance. If they are relatively similar positioned at that point...and it doesn't mean that they can't be any different...then I would consider it to be advisable that they remain individual and appear together as the Baltic States. However, if for instance two countries are much stronger in the sense that they have a greater presence...then a common brand might certainly make more sense...even though differences and particularities of the individual countries can be considered to a lesser extent in that sense. And that's because a common brand is all about commonalities and not so much about differences.
- TL: Wieso?
- *TL:* Why is that?
- PT: Nun, ich denke weil eine Marke muss ja immer spezifiziert sein.

- PT: Well, I think a brand always needs to be specified.
- TL: Ja, kann sie das nicht trotzdem sein? Im Alpenraum zum Beispiel...wenn Du sagst...wenn Du die Alpen vermarkten würdest...dann hast Du ja auch schon Österreich, Schweiz, Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien mit dabei. Das ist ja auch ganz unterschiedlich.
- TL: True, and that is not possible then? If you look at the Alpine regions for instance...if you say...if you want to promote the Alps...then you automatically have Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Italy included. That is very different.
- PT: Aber ich habe zum Beispiel noch keine Marketingaktion wahrgenommen von den Alpen...was natürlich auch an meiner Zielgruppe liegen kann. Also von der Alpenregion. Obwohl...eben, und wenn ich an die unterschiedlichen Länder denke, die Du gerade genannt hast...dann würde ich damit auch unterschiedliche Dinge assoziieren. Also ich fahre in die Schweiz oder nach Zürich aus unterschiedlichen Gründen als nach Italien.
- PT: But for example, I have never witnessed any marketing activity focusing on the Alps...which of course can be due to the fact that I'm in a different target group. Well, I really never witnessed anything regarding the Alpine region.

  Although...precisely, and if I think about the different countries that you just mentioned...then I would also associate very different things with them. Well, I'm traveling to Switzerland or to Zurich for very different reasons than I would have when traveling to Italy.
- TL: Hmhm...könnte es dann nicht sein bei dieser Form des Marketing...wenn Du sagst keine gemeinsame Marke im Prinzip...ist dann...dass der Tourist, der vielleicht in Estland war dann sagt...ich war ja jetzt in Estland...dann brauche ich auch nicht weiterfahren nach Lettland oder Litauen. Ich habe ja alles schon gesehen.
- TL: Umhum...wouldn't it be possible then with this approach to marketing that...if you don't want a common brand basically...that...that the tourist who perhaps visited Estonia then says...I've been to Estonia now...I don't need to go on to Latvia or Lithuania now. I've seen everything.
- PT: Mmhm [bejahend].
- PT: Umhum [affirmative].
- TL: Weiß Du wie ich meine...wenn Du nicht über eine Dachmarke dann kommunizierst...das ist unser gesamtes Portfolio. Und wenn Du dass willst, dann findest Du das hier, hier und hier. Und was anderes da und dort.
- TL: You know what I mean...if you then don't communicate through an umbrella brand...that this is the entire portfolio...and if you are interested you can find it here, here, and here. If you want something else, you need to go here and there.
- PT: Hm...die Frage ist halt auch...wenn der Tourist in diesem einen Land so glücklich war, findet er das, was ihn glücklich gemacht auch in den beiden anderen Ländern oder würde das sein positives Image des einen Landes vielleicht negativ beeinflussen? Einfach weil er das Ganze als...ich sage mal eins...und glaube ich auch mit Dachmarke...assoziiert...weil es einfach drei Länder sind. Und ich glaube, da müsste ich einfach mehr über die einzelnen wissen, um wirklich besser

entscheiden zu können, sollte man das als eins vermarkten oder sind sie einfach so unterschiedlich und haben so unterschiedliche Qualitäten, dass vielleicht der eine Tourist in dem einen Land auch gar nicht glücklich wäre in dem anderen Land.

PT: Um...but the question is at the same time...if a tourist was really happy in that one country, does he also find what made him so happy in both of the other countries or would that negatively influence the positive image he had of the first country? Simply, because he perceived everything as...let's call it unit...and I could imagine then connects with the umbrella brand...even though it actually is three countries. I just believe one would need to know more about the individual countries to really be able to make a better decision whether they should be marketed together or if they are simply so diverse and have such varying qualities so that perhaps one tourist in one country might not even be happy in the other.

TL: Das heißt jetzt...Du sagst, es ist im Prinzip...

TL: So that means...you are saying, basically...

PT: Beispielsweise wir hatten im Ritz Carlton in Wolfsburg an den Wochenenden immer totale Flaute, weil wir natürlich durch unseren Eigentümer VW unter der Woche versorgt wurden. Aber am Wochenende waren wir leer. Und deshalb hatte man sich entschieden, sich dann auf die Autostadtbesucher zu fokussieren, die unter anderem noch nie in einem fünf Sterne Haus waren...und auch da nie wieder hingehen werden. Das waren sicherlich Gäste, die einen besonderen Preis bekommen haben, durch die aber auch die meisten Beschwerden generiert wurden. Der Grund war der dass sie das Bild oder diese Erwartung eines fünf Sterne Hauses und speziell eines Ritz Carlton hatten...dass sie, sobald sie durch die Drehtür treten...sofort schweben. Und das war leider nicht der Fall. Das heißt, diese hohe Erwartungshaltung, die absolut unreal war, konnte niemals erfüllt werden. Man konnte diese Gäste auch nicht zufrieden stellen. Das hatte halt auch was mit einem...ja...mit einem gewissen Lerneffekt oder Erfahrungswerten zu tun. Und ich glaube einfach...dass man...dass es nicht das Ziel sein sollte, einfach nur viele Touristen zu generieren sondern auch die passenden oder kompatiblen Touristen. Ich weiß natürlich nicht, ob man das mit einer Destination dann gleichsetzen kann, aber das hatte wiederum Auswirkung auf vielleicht andere Gäste...auf andere Gäste in diesem Haus, die unter Umständen die Woche verlängert haben, übers Wochenende geblieben sind aus unterschiedlichen Gründen...und sich dann aber am Wochenende nicht mehr so wohl gefühlt haben wie unter der Woche, weil es plötzlich eine ganz andere Atmosphäre und andere Gäste waren.

PT: For example, on weekends we always had an absolute decrease in occupation at the Ritz Carlton Wolfsburg, since our owner Volkswagen supplied us during the week. But weekends were pretty empty. That's why the decision was made to target visitors of the 'Autostadt' who among other things had never been inside a five star property...and most likely will never stay in one again. Those were guests who received a special rate but who also complained most at the same time. The reason for it was they had the perception or expectation towards a five star property and especially towards a Ritz Carlton...that they would, as soon as they had gone through the revolving door...that they would immediately hover over everything. Unfortunately that was certainly not the case. That means that these high expectations that were absolutely unrealistic could have never been fulfilled. And really, you couldn't satisfy these guests. That had something to do with...well...a certain learning effect or experience. I just believe...that one...that it should not be

the ultimate goal to simply generate as many tourists as possible no matter what but instead the appropriate and compatible tourists. Of course I don't know if we can equate that with a destination, but that situation had in return an effect on perhaps other guests...other guests staying at this property who perhaps extended their stay and stayed over the weekend for different reasons...but suddenly didn't feel as comfortable over the weekend like they had previously during the week, just because suddenly there was a totally different atmosphere and a different clientele.

- TL: Das mag auch sicherlich durchaus ein Problem sein bei...also wenn Du eine touristische Attraktion als Destination betrachtest. Bei einem Land, weiß ich nicht. Es kann natürlich möglich sein. Okay...aber Du glaubst...dass...wenn ich Dich eben richtig verstanden habe, dann sagst Du, dass eine gemeinsame Marke möglicherweise das Image und die Persönlichkeit der einzelnen Länder verändern könnte?
- TL: That may certainly be an issue when...well...if you consider attractions to be a tourism destination. On a country level...I'm not sure if the same applies. It certainly might be possible. Okay...but you believe...that...if I understood correctly then you are saying that a common brand potentially changes the image and personality of the individual countries?
- PT: Ja. Und da hängt es halt sehr stark damit zusammen, wie unterschiedlich oder wie ähnlich die einzelnen Länder wirklich sind. Und ich glaube, anhand dessen muss man einfach schauen, sprechen die überhaupt die gleichen Touristen an. Weil darauf kommt es letztendlich an.
- PT: Yes. And it strongly depends how diverse or how similar the different countries really are. I just think that based on those factors one needs to see whether they are actually at all addressing the same tourists. Because that's what it ultimately comes down to.
- TL: Okay...prima. Hm...gibt es etwas...irgendetwas, was Du noch zu den Ländern, zu den Thematiken, zu den Begriffen Image, Persönlichkeit, Marke hinzufügen möchtest...etwas was wir noch nicht berücksichtigt haben, was Du aber als wichtig erachtest?
- TL: Okay...great. Um...is there something...anything you would like to add to the topics we discussed, to the concepts such as image, personality, or brand we talked about...anything that we haven't covered so far but you would see as important?
- PT: Hmhm...hm...da fällt mir spontan ehrlich gesagt nichts ein. Ja doch... also vor allem auch interessanterweise kann man ja doch...wie ich heute gesehen habe...relativ viel über etwas sagen, wovon ich eigentlich keine Vorstellung habe. Oder wovon man glaubt, keine Vorstellung zu haben. Unbewusst hat man sie vielleicht oder kreiert sie dann im Augenblick. Und ansonsten...ja...ich glaube, ich werde noch mal auf Wikipedia oder so schauen.
- PT: Hmhm...um...I really can't think of anything right now. Oh well...interestingly enough it is possible...as I have noticed today...to talk quite a lot about something of which I actually have no real perception. Subconsciously one might have that or creates it in the very moment. Apart from that...well...I think I will access Wikipedia and such things after this.
- TL: [Lachen]...okay. Letzte Frage...ich habe Dich irgendwann mit der Frage

- angeschrieben, ob Du da mitmachen würdest bei der Studie. Was war die Motivation dann zu sagen ja, mache ich? Abgesehen vom Ipad als Incentive?
- TL: [Laughter] ... okay. Last question ... some time ago I asked you whether you would be willing to participate in this study. What was you motivation to agree to that?
- PT: Hm...grundsätzlich glaube ich bin ich demgegenüber auf jeden Fall aufgeschlossen und weil ich auch schon mal in einer ähnlichen Situation war und weiß, wie herausfordernd das sein kann.
- PT: Um...basically I believe that I am definitely very open-minded towards these things and since I have once been in a similar situation I know how demanding that can be.
- TL: Dann danke ich Dir ganz, ganz herzlich. War toll.
- TL: In that case I would like to thank you very much. It was great!

[End of Interview]

## **Appendix R: Post-Interview Contact Summary Form**

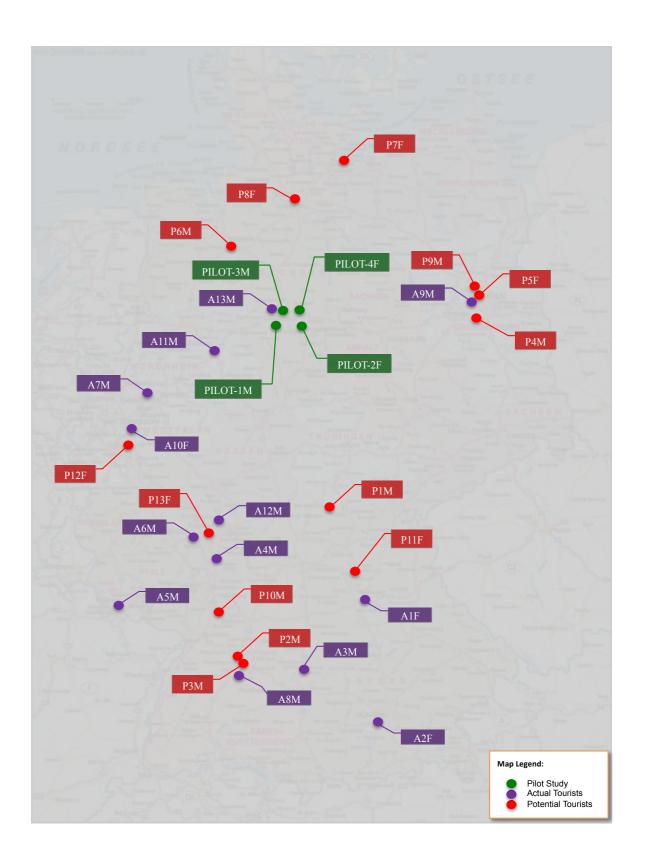
## Contact Summary Form<sup>30</sup>

Contact:		Site:	
Address:		Contact date:	
Phone:		Today's date:	
1. What were the ma	in issues or themes that s	truck you in this	contact?
	nation (received / failed to	o receive) on ea	ch of the target questions
Question	Information		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Adopted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important for this contact?
4. What target questions evolved that could be applied for the remaining data collection and why?

**Appendix S: Interview Map (Germany)** 



#### **Appendix T: Final Coding Tree (NVivo)**

#### 1. COUNTRY CHOICE

- 1.1. Time of Visit
- 1.2. Visit Reason / Motivation
- 1.3. Visited Places
- 1.4. Length of Stay
- 1.5. Attractions
- 1.6. Frequency
  - 1.6.1. Estonia
  - 1.6.2. Latvia
  - 1.6.3. Lithuania
  - 1.6.4. Travel path
- 1.7. Mode of travel
- 1.8. Accommodation
- 1.9. Country visited

#### 2. DESTINATION IMAGE

#### 2.1. ESTONIA / LATVIA / LITHUANIA / ALL THREE COUNTRIES

- 2.1.1. Objective Knowledge
  - 2.1.1.1. Beliefs
    - 2.1.1.1.1. Positive
    - 2.1.1.1.2. Negative
  - 2.1.1.2. Ideas
    - 2.1.1.2.1. Positive
    - 2.1.1.2.2. Negative
  - 2.1.1.3. Impressions
    - 2.1.1.3.1. Positive
    - 2.1.1.3.2. Negative
  - 2.1.1.4. Thoughts / Opinions
    - 2.1.1.4.1. Positive
    - 2.1.1.4.2. Negative
- 2.1.2. Subjective Knowledge
  - 2.1.2.1. Emotions and Feelings
    - 2.1.2.1.1. Positive
    - 2.1.2.1.2. Negative
  - 2.1.2.2. Imaginations
  - 2.1.2.3. Prejudice
- 2.1.3. Sensory Reflection
  - 2.1.3.1. Sounds
  - 2.1.3.2. Smells
  - 2.1.3.3. Taste
  - 2.1.3.4. Color
  - 2.1.3.5. Haptic
- 2.1.4. Atmosphere
  - 2.1.4.1. Perception before visit
  - 2.1.4.2. Expected treatment
  - 2.1.4.3. Change Before and After Visit
  - 2.1.4.4. Attractions
  - 2.1.4.5. Natural Environment
  - 2.1.4.6. Cultural Environment
  - 2.1.4.7. Infrastructure
  - 2.1.4.8. Socio-Economic Status
  - 2.1.4.9. Amenities

#### 2.2. Country's Salience

- 2.2.1. Estonia
- 2.2.2. Latvia
- 2.2.3. Lithuania

- 2.3. Countries' Preferences
- 2.4. Countries' Similarities
- 2.5. Countries' Differences

#### 3. DESTINATION PERSONALITY

#### 3.1. ESTONIA / LATVIA / LITHUANIA / ALL THREE COUNTRIES

- 3.1.1. Personality characteristics of destination
  - 3.1.1.1. Physical Appearance
  - 3.1.1.2. Psychological Characteristics
  - 3.1.1.3. Lifestyle
  - 3.1.1.4. Taste Preference (Food)
  - 3.1.1.5. Fashion
- 3.1.2. Typical Visitor Personality
  - 3.1.2.1. Physical Appearance
  - 3.1.2.2. Psychological Characteristics
  - 3.1.2.3. Lifestyle
  - 3.1.2.4. Taste Preference (Food)
  - 3.1.2.5. Fashion

#### 4. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS

- 4.1. Associations with term "Baltic States"
  - 4.1.1. Tourist Slogan or Tag Line
  - 4.1.2. Suggested meaning of brand "Baltic States"
  - 4.1.3. Individual countries representation through term "Baltic States"
- 4.2. Competitiveness through Co-Branding
- 4.3. Proposed communicated image of co-branded countries
  - 4.3.1. Commonalities in co-branded countries
  - 4.3.2. Differences in co-branded countries
- 4.4. Influence of Co-Branding on individual country image
- 4.5. Perceptual Change of countries through co-branding

## 5. CO-BRANDING OF DESTINATIONS INFLUENCED BY DESTINATION IMAGE (DI) AND DESTINATION PERSONALITY (DP)

- 5.1. Meaning of DI, DP and Brand
  - 5.1.1. Destination Image
  - 5.1.2. Destination Personality
  - 5.1.3. Destination Brand

#### 5.2. Relations between DI, DP and Brand

- 5.2.1. Similarities between DI, DP and Destination Brand
- 5.2.2. Differences between DI, DP and Destination Brand

#### 5.3. Impact of DI, DP and Brand (GENERAL)

- 5.3.1. Reflection of DI and DP in Destination Brand
- 5.3.2. Effectiveness of personality communication
- 5.3.3. Importance of Di and DP communication
- 5.3.4. Importance of DI and DP as basis for Brand creation

#### **5.4.** Co-Brand creation (Baltic states)

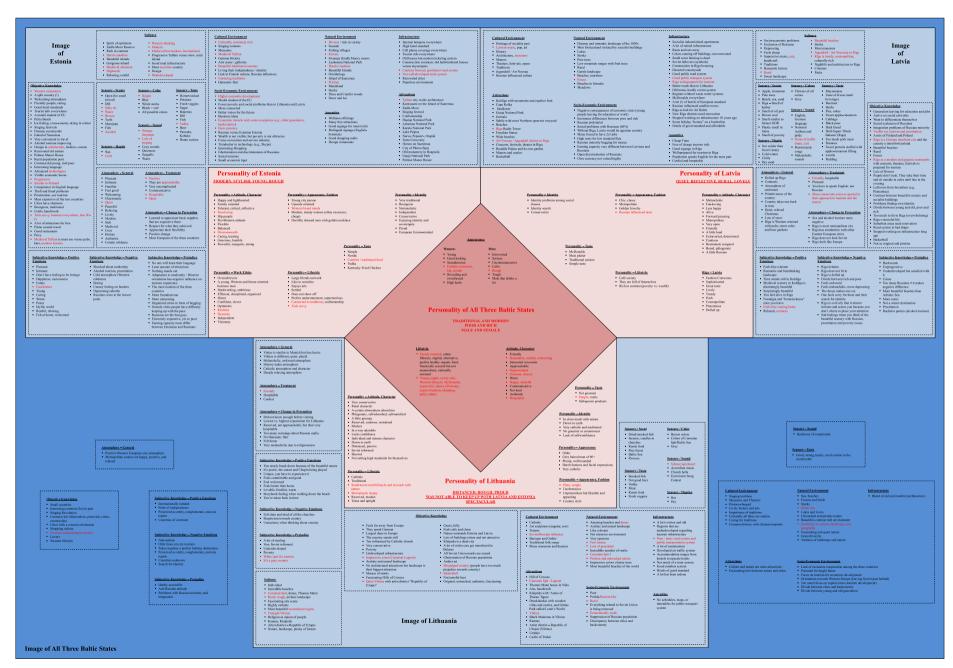
- 5.4.1. Thoughts about Baltic States brand
- 5.4.2. Feelings about Baltic States brand
- 5.4.3. Symbol or Logo of Baltic States brand
- 5.4.4. Role of each country's DI and DP in Co-branding
- 5.4.5. Impact of Co-branding on each country's Di and DP
- 5.4.6. New common DI and DP

#### 6. MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION

#### 7. OTHER INTERESTING COMMENTS

Appendix U:	Model of co-branding based on the perceived image and personality of
	the Baltic States

See following page.



## **Appendix V: Conference Publication – ICHRIE Annual Conference 2013**

Leib, T., Reynolds, D., & Rhoden, S. (2013, July). Tourists' perception of the Baltic
States: An exploration of destination personality. Paper presented at ICHRIE Annua
Conference, St. Louis, USA. <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> As part of this thesis, the above-mentioned paper was submitted to the ICHRIE Annual Conference 2013. Only an abstract was published in the proceedings to allow for future journal publications.

# TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF THE BALTIC STATES: AN EXPLORATION OF DESTINATION PERSONALITY

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#### **Abstract**

Destination personality is a fundamental antecedent for creating participants' travel preference. This paper explores perceived destination personality of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and its effect on tourists' visit decision process. Twenty-four in-depth interviews with potential and actual tourists to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were conducted. Data were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. Results suggest that potential tourists cannot differentiate the personality of the three countries due to a lack of marketing communication. Actual tourists make clear differentiation, perceiving: Estonia as modern, stylish, and young; Latvia as quiet, reflective, and rural; and Lithuania as distanced, rough and proud.

**Key Words:** Destination Personality, Baltic States, Destination Marketing

### **Appendix W: Conference Publication – EuroCHRIE Annual Conference 2013**

Leib, T., Rhoden, S., Reynolds, D., Miller, A., & Stone, C. (2013, October). Tourists' Perception and Evaluation of a Region's Destination Image: The Case of the Baltic States. Paper presented at EuroCHRIE Annual Conference, Freiburg, Germany.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> As part of this thesis, the above-mentioned paper was submitted to the EuroCHRIE Annual Conference 2013. Only an extended abstract was published in the proceedings to allow for future journal publications.

# Tourists' Perception and Evaluation of a Region's Destination Image: The Case of the Baltic States

(EXTENDED ABSTRACT)

Thomas Leib, Manchester Metropolitan University Steven Rhoden, Manchester Metropolitan University Dennis Reynolds, Washington State University Amanda Miller, Manchester Metropolitan University Chris Stone, Manchester Metropolitan University

The paper aims to explore national images of the Baltic States; Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia by considering their similarities and differences from the perspective of actual and potential tourists and suggests possible implications for marketing and image building of these destinations. This project specifically aims to fill in the existing void in Baltic States image knowledge, and contributes to the on-going debates on countries' image generation and its importance for the tourism industry.

A qualitative method was deemed appropriate for the study and enabled the gathering of in-depth, realistic and accurate insights into the interviewee's perceptions. To measure a range of possible images, data were collected from both people who had visited the countries previously (actual tourists) and people who had never visited (potential tourists). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. To obtain a sample of actual and potential tourists. non-probability purposive sampling technique was used. Consistent with the overall approach to the study, an inductive approach to coding was applied. Codes in the form of tags were applied to categorise the data. Cross-case comparison of codes was then conducted to explore similarities and differences in image perception between individual interviewees and interviewee groups (potential and actual).

The results indicate that Lithuania is the country that stands out in the perception among tourists. Images are less certain and the country does not quite align with the two other Baltic States. It is described as an incongruous, distinct country with stark contrasts. Interviewees perceive Lithuania as pristine and unconsumed, leading to associations such as quiet, unreal, placid, fairy-tale-like, original, down-to-earth, rural, wooded and sometimes harsh. However, less positive images were also evident: actual tourists' image is that of an archaic, backward and poor country with a visibly dilapidated infrastructure.

In terms of its natural environment, interviewees described Latvia as a destination with a beautiful, looked-after nature, rural, down-to-earth, and charming and with a lovely and pleasant landscape.

The positive images continued regarding its tourist attractions: beautiful mansions and estates, nice beaches and attractive coastline comparable to Italy and Southern France. Actual tourists, however, report a remarkable contrast and divide between the capital city, Riga, and the countryside.

Actual tourists perceive Estonia as a rural agrarian state, attractive, very diverse and charming regarding its landscape. They describe the image they associate with the natural environment as adorable but unknown, simple, remote, a maritime island landscape (e.g., Saareemaa), a country with beautiful lakes that are neat, pristine and enchanted just like in Astrid Lindgren's Six Bullerby Children. The atmosphere is described as a unique mix between intimate, familiar and a high feelgood factor. At the same time all tourists report an image of Estonia described as very modern, technically oriented

The primary contribution of this study pertains to tourists' specific images of three neighbouring countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The findings demonstrate that images of individual destinations were dependent on personal travel experience influences. Actual tourists have more concrete and specific image association of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia than potential tourists for whom perceptions are more abstract, blurred, vague, often stereotypical and limited. On the whole, potential tourists' images are formed based on their image of the countries' capital cities, and few had more comprehensive image associations including the backcountry.

The study demonstrates that the three countries are perceived to be similar, yet different at the same time. This provides academia with a clearer understanding of how this region is currently seen by tourists and thus adds to a knowledge base that can be utilized by the industry. The paper enhances our knowledge of Baltic States and as such leads to the possibility of innovative destination marketing and has important implications for community development and knowledge creation among industry and academia alike.

Keywords: Destination Image, Baltic States

#### Appendix X: Conference Publication – APacCHRIE Annual Conference 2014

Leib, T., Reynolds, D., Rhoden, S., Miller, A., & Stone, C. (2014, May). Tourists' Perception and Evaluation of a Region's Co-Branding Ability: The Case of the Baltic States. Paper presented at APacCHRIE Annual Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> As part of this thesis, the above-mentioned paper was submitted to the APacCHRIE Annual Conference 2014. Only an extended abstract was published in the proceedings to allow for future journal publications.

#### 12<sup>th</sup> APacCHRIE Conference 2014

## Tourists' Perception and Evaluation of a Region's Co-Branding Ability: The Case of the Baltic States

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Key Words: Tourism, co-branding, destination marketing, Baltic States.

#### **Extended Abstract**

The Baltic States, namely Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, represent one of the newer destinations on the international tourism market. However, they are geographically small, have limited resources to promote themselves, and are located in a region that is unlikely to attract immediate attention from potential tourists. The region has also experienced considerable change in recent years, including membership in the European Union and NATO as well as eventual adoption of the euro by all three countries.

In concert with these changes, consumers or tourists are being exposed to information pertaining to changes in the political, economic, or social landscape either directly or indirectly through various channels in a 'shrinking' globalizing world. Thus information allows consumers to develop their own impressions, feelings, associations, and perceptions regarding world affairs, and eventually to form their own images of a country or region such as the Baltic States. Ultimately, consumers connect such information with countries or regions when making travel plans.

Much of this perception formulation is driven through marketing and branding. Marketing and branding are inseparably linked since the ultimate goal of marketing is to establish a brand in the mind of the consumer (Ries & Ries, 2002). Branding is widely regarded as one of the most important objectives of marketing (Cai, 2002). Brands support consumers in the product selection process, promising that a product or service is relevant to the consumer and keeping it in the consumer's mind.

In the tourism sector, we observe expanding interest in brand partnerships or cobranding as a special form of brand extension (Chang, 2009), whereby two or more brands support each other in the market to establish their brands more effectively than they could by marketing on their own (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005). Co-branded products can acquire the salient attributes of both parent brands, making co-branding a particularly attractive alternative to brand extension (Park et al. 1996, Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Recently, co-branding strategies have been observed in service industries, for example in restaurants, hotels, food service franchisors, and theme parks (Cornelis, 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Young, Hoggatt, & Paswan, 2001). Even small destinations with limited tourist offerings may benefit from collaborative marketing strategies like co-branding, because such an approach can offer considerable potential for enhancing the market attractiveness of an entire geographical area.

The purpose of this study, then, is to assess the feasibility of co-branding destinations and the resulting impact on tourist satisfaction as well as behavioral intentions by creating an empirically based conceptual model of co-branding in the Baltic countries. Additionally, we sought to identify strategies with which to optimize such destination branding/marketing efforts.

Consumers use brands with images or meanings that harmonize with certain reference groups or, sociologically speaking, with in-groups to which they belong (or wish to belong) in order to construct a spiritual or emotional connection. Naturally, attachment to brands with images that are associated with an in-group is stronger and thus, more congruent, compared with attachment to brands whose perceived images are more consistent with that of an out-group (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) and which therefore may be subconsciously rejected. However, some brands appear to have a greater influence on reference groups than others. Products must be individually perceived as exclusive and visible, which means that for reference group influence to affect brand or purchase decision, a product or brand should not be owned by everyone and the place where a product is consumed or a purchase takes place should be noticeable or identified by other consumers (Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

The role of brands in the service sector is most likely of greater importance than in any other sector due to the intangibility of the business (McDonald & de Chernatony, 2001). The intangibility or perishability of offerings in the service sector leads to the perception that the purchase of services is riskier than the purchase of goods (Laroche, McDougall, Bergeron, & Yang, 2004).

By extension, this means that countries or even cities and entire regions (i.e., tourism destinations) can act in many respects similarly to brands. Anholt (2005) argues that countries are perceived by tourists or the general public positively or negatively and are subsequently linked to specific qualities and characteristics. These perceptions can cause consumers to perceive the countries' products differently as well as behave differently towards such countries based on the perceived images.

Co-branding extends these marketing concepts and links marketable items through so-called representations of brands, typically through product or corporate brand names, product designs, logotypes, and other marketing tools (Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2004). Co-branding therefore offers businesses a portal through which to provide the consumer with indices of quality and images as successful brands (Chang, 2009). According to Aaker et al. (2004), this has helped companies, destinations, and countries increase sales revenue, enter and largely influence the image a consumer has of a product, and ultimately generate consumer confidence. Furthermore, as Palmer and Bejou (1995) argued, concerted efforts to establish higher levels of awareness or visibility of destinations in a highly competitive market are likely to provide a competitive edge while others acknowledged that autonomous destination marketing and promotional efforts through individual stakeholders within a destination are not beneficial in generating an integral or holistic image and therefore do not allow a destination to prosper on a long-term basis (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Wang & Xiang, 2007).

To assess the potential for co-branding in the Baltic States, we collected data through semi-structured interviews with actual as well as potential tourists, including open-ended questions based on a review of secondary literature and the aims of this study, using a non-probability purposive sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2007). Following a pilot test, the total sample size was 24 (12 actual tourists to all three countries and 12 potential tourists to all three countries); interviews ranged from 1 to 6 hours in duration; the data collection was completed at each respondent's home during an 8-week period. Due to the international scope of the present research and the execution of the interviews in Germany with German-speaking travelers, the source questionnaire and associated instructions were translated into German by the lead author, who is a native speaker, in order to formulate target questions. Subsequently the target questions were back-translated (Saunders et al., 2007) by a certified English native translator into the new source questionnaire. Finally, we adhered to the conceptual framework for the data display and the multi-level data coding involved throughout the process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The findings illustrate that actual and potential tourists perceive the term 'Baltic States' as a geopolitical term that nevertheless resonates, but to a lesser extent, in the context of

tourism. The weaker association with tourism may be in part because the term does not convey any emotions and because it provides no tourist-relevant information and therefore fails to create expectations regarding the destination experience. The results based on data collected from both groups in the sample suggested that the individual Baltic States are not well represented in the countries' marketing efforts, leading to undesirably unclear image perceptions among tourists. Co-branding as a marketing strategy that could address these aspects was seen as beneficial among actual and potential tourists insofar as it could increase the visibility of the individual states but also the competitiveness of the entire region on the international tourism market. The influence a co-branding strategy might have on the individual countries' images was seen as positive as long as the aim of cobranding was not to assimilate the destinations but rather to emphasize their similarities and differences to create awareness, visibility, and interest among tourists. Finally, participants see the strength of the three Baltic States (in terms of co-branding and marketability) as residing in a common appearance on the global tourism market. Destination marketers for the region will have to portray or brand the individual destinations in the minds of consumers as one region to which tourists are able to relate, enabling them to evaluate the countries favourably and link them with positive associations —ultimately leading to greater tourism in the region and enhanced tourist perceptions of the region.

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