

# The Perceived Image of Helsinki as a Tourist Destination in The Netherlands

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<p>The aim of the thesis is to research the perceived image of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands. Therefore, the research question ‘how is the image of Helsinki as a tourist destination perceived in the Netherlands?’ will be examined. First, different processes and the AIDA model will explain the tourist’s buying behaviour. Next, a definition of the destination image is created and its formation will be elaborated. Destination branding will be, inter alia, explained by means of the destination brand benefit pyramid. In addition, Helsinki as a tourist destination and its relation with the Netherlands will be explained to understand the current tourism situation in Helsinki, related to Dutch visitors.</p> <p>A positive destination image is essential for a certain place to be able to attract a sufficient amount of tourists. The images and expectations tourists have about a certain destination have been shown to be one of the key factors when selecting a destination for leisure purposes. The overall image one has from a particular region eventually might be favourable or unfavourable in terms of choosing a travel destination.</p> <p>When defining the destination image of Helsinki as a tourist destination in contrast to its reality, the characteristics need to be elaborated. Helsinki exists for one-third of green areas and the sea is present at many places. Helsinki has many design aspects, as well as museums, architecture, history, culture and a booming restaurant scene. However, is the Dutch population aware of everything Helsinki has to offer? How do they perceive the city as a tourist destination? And did they even obtain knowledge about Helsinki as a tourist destination?</p> <p>A quantitative method has been used in order to conduct the destination image research. A questionnaire, consisting of sixteen questions, was conducted among the Dutch population. The questionnaire consisted of open- and closed-ended questions, and it contained classification, attitude and opinion, and behaviour questions. As a result, a variety of data could be collected. The questionnaire results gave the researcher the possibility to look at various aspects, including the age, the differences between people with knowledge of Helsinki and people who do not know anything about Helsinki, destination images in winter and summer season, and people who have visited Helsinki and people who did not visit Helsinki.</p> <p>Overall, the Dutch population sample image Helsinki as a cold and snowy destination with many nature areas. Although the Helsinki Cathedral and the harbour are well imaged in their mind, there is concluded that Helsinki does not offer sufficient touristic sights and activities. In addition, Helsinki is seen as an expensive Nordic place and less popular than other Nordic capital cities. Helsinki as a tourist destination should be better known in the Netherlands and thus, better promoted. Important is to create a positive word-of-mouth, since the Dutch citizens’ friends and family that have visited Helsinki are of great influence for shaping their destination image. Word-of-mouth and social media are useful marketing tools that could help increase the awareness of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands. In this way, Helsinki’s uniqueness, in comparison to the other Nordic capital cities, could be promoted.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Destination Image   Helsinki   Tourist Destination   Dutch Population   Awareness	

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# 1 Introduction

In order for a city to attract many tourists, a positive destination image should be created. The total tourism market in Helsinki is continuously increasing. However, the yearly visitors from the Netherlands decreased in the last decennia. How does it come that Helsinki does attract less Dutch tourists? Is it related to their destination image about Helsinki or is it related to something different? There are mainly business people among the Dutch visitors in Helsinki and not many coming for leisure purposes. Therefore, a research will be done to the perceived image of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands. During the thesis process, the reason for the lack of popularity of Helsinki for Dutch tourists and strategies for increasing the awareness of Helsinki as a tourist destination will be examined.

Throughout the research, there will be focused on the tourist's buying behaviour, the destination image and destination branding in general, the formation of the destination image and Helsinki as a tourist destination including its tourism relation with the Netherlands.

## 1.1 Background of the Topic

Destination image and destination branding are important for a city in order to attract many tourists. The images tourists have about certain destinations have been shown to be of high importance when selecting a destination for leisure purposes (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, 868). The image and expectations individuals and groups have about a certain destination is one of the key factors for their decision of travelling to that particular place. Having a positive destination image is essential for a place to be able to attract tourists. (Chon 1990, 2; Marshalls 2008, 6.) In addition, destination branding as a powerful marketing tool may be used to let travellers feel emotionally attached to a certain place. This could only happen after a person created its destination image. When destination branding occurs in peoples' minds, they will be more motivated to travel to a certain place. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60; Ekinici 2003, 22.) Besides, it is of high importance for a city, country or place to understand the buying behaviour of tourists. A person's travel decision is mainly based on their personality and the destinations that have been exposed to them. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60-61.)

## **1.2 Research Question**

Prior to the actual research part of the thesis, desk research was applied. In this way, the author could understand the current tourism situation in Helsinki. Various aspects arose during the research of the topic and a research question and sub-questions were created.

The main question that will be researched is: How is the image of Helsinki as a tourist destination perceived in the Netherlands? This research question can be further broken down in several sub-questions:

1. What images and characteristics has the Dutch population in mind about Helsinki as a tourist destination?
2. To what extent does Helsinki meet the travel requirements of the Dutch population?
3. How could Helsinki communicate itself the most effective as a tourist destination in the Netherlands?
4. How could Helsinki be more appealing as a destination for Dutch tourists?

The aim of the thesis is to answer the main research question. Finding answers for the previously mentioned sub-questions will help to reach the aim. Several methods, such as a thorough literature review and a quantitative research including a conducted survey, will make sure that the questions eventually could be answered.

## **1.3 Thesis Structure**

The topic and the theme of the thesis are discussed in the introduction. This chapter elaborates on the reason for the chosen topic, background information is given, and the research question and its sub-questions are displayed.

A thorough literature review will be done in the theoretical framework, which will be the second chapter. An elaborated explanation of the tourist's buying behaviour, the destination image including its formation and the destination branding will be explained. Additionally, aspects as the characteristics of Helsinki as a tourist destination, the destination image of Helsinki, the tourism development in Helsinki, tourism statistics of the Netherlands, the current interests of Dutch travellers and a SWOT-analysis of Helsinki will be examined and created. Various models will be helpful to support the found theory.

Chapter 3, which contains the methodology of the research, will elaborate on how the research has been conducted. The reason for the chosen quantitative research method will be explained including a detailed description of the method itself. In addition, an explana-

tion will be provided of the questionnaire design and it introduces the way the survey was conducted. The analysing methods for the conducted survey have been included in this chapter as well.

In the findings section, which is chapter 4, the collected data will be researched. Graphs and diagrams will be used to make the outcome visual.

In the last chapter, which contains the discussion and conclusion, the theoretical framework will be combined to the results of the research. The four sub-questions will be answered, recommendations will be given and a final answer and conclusion on the main research question will be made. This last chapter will conclude with an explanation of the trustworthiness of the research, suggestions for development or further work and an evaluation of the thesis process including the author's own learning.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

Tourism is an economic and social phenomenon. It is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide and thus, of high importance for the incoming finances of a country (Marshalls 2008, 15). Worldwide, tourism takes care of 10% of the gross domestic product, one out of eleven jobs are in the tourism industry and it takes care of 1.4 trillion euros in exports, which is 7% of the total world's exports. (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2016.) These numbers give an indication how important tourism is nowadays. If a country is not competing in the tourism industry, it might lag behind financially. For most countries, tourism has been identified as one of the main economic drivers in the past years (Marshalls 2008, 15). Figure 1 shows the growth of tourism worldwide from 1995 to 2015. In 2015, 1.2 billion people were travelling to countries abroad for a touristic purpose, which is more than doubled in comparison to the number of travellers in 1995. As can be seen, there was a decline in the crisis period in 2008. However, after the crisis, the tourism industry made a rapid growth. (Cripps 2016.)

### International Tourist Arrivals: 1995-2015

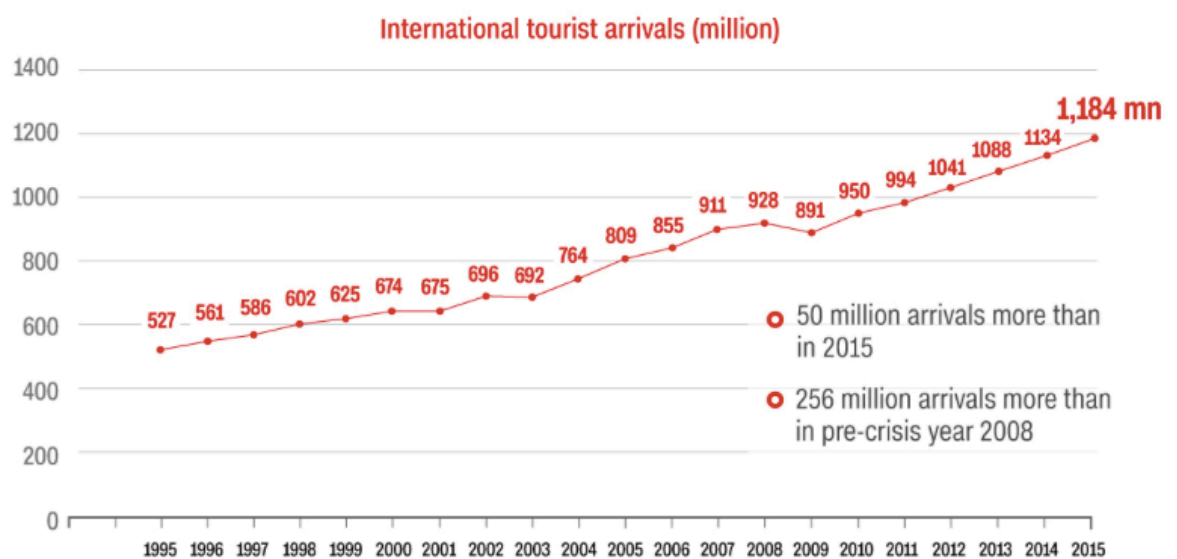


Figure 1 The Growth of Tourism (Cripps 2016)

### 2.1 Tourist's Buying Behaviour

The decision of a person to travel to a specific destination is linked to the destination image the person has about that area. In addition, the tourists who are buying are making lifestyle statements, since they are buying into an emotional relationship. The travel decisions they are making give an indication about their personal lifestyle and which specific destinations emotionally appeal to them. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60-61.) Tourists are



not randomly choosing a destination. On the contrary, the process for tourists to decide to travel to a specific destination has different stages. The final decision is based on two facts. On one hand, the expectation the person has or in other words, his or her perceived destination image of a certain place, and on the other hand, purchasing decisions that eventually would have been out of reach. For instance, the destination's location could have been too far. (Chon 1990, 3; Marshalls 2008, 18.) According to Berkman and Gilson (1986), a potential customer goes through four stages in making the final decision to purchase. The fifth stage will be a post-purchase evaluation. They explain the process as follows:

1. The need of recognition: the reason of buying has to do with the biological or psychological needs, wants or desires of a person to a certain product or service.
2. The information search: if the need recognition turns out positive, the buyer will search for more information regarding the product or service.
3. Evaluation of alternatives: the buyer will search for more alternatives in relation to the product or service.
4. Choice of product or service: the buyer will make his decision for a particular product or service.
5. Post-purchase evaluation: the buyer will evaluate the product or service after purchasing.

(Chon 1990, 3.)

While the five stages of Berkman and Gilson give a good basis of the process, it is still more or less based on the purchasing process in general. Clawson and Ketch (1966) have made a model especially for a recreational purpose, which explains the behaviour of a specific traveller before, during and after the purchase of the trip. The travel behaviour of an individual includes five stages as well:

1. Anticipation: the traveller is thinking about the trip and will make a planning.
2. Travel to the site: the traveller is going to its travel destination.
3. On-site behaviour: it contains the behaviour of the traveller at the destination area.
4. Return travel: the traveller will return home from his or her travel destination.
5. Recollection: the traveller will recall and reflect on his or her trip and memories will be created.

(Chon 1990, 3.)

Summing up, the purchasing behaviour of the traveller has three stages, namely pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. In the pre-purchase stage the traveller will eliminate destinations that are out of reach and will make decisions based on the destination image he or she has about a certain destination. The purchase stage includes the purchase of the trip and travelling to the destination itself. Lastly, during the post-purchase stage the traveller will make a final evaluation about the trip and the destination, and he or she will create a new destination image about the destination in question. This final desti-

nation image, which is based on satisfied or dissatisfied experiences, will be used in the next purchasing decisions. At this final stage, word-of-mouth advertising will occur as well, since tourists share their experiences with others. To illustrate, travellers who turn back from their trip satisfied, often collect souvenirs, which will be showed to their friends and relatives. Due to this, a better destination image among them will be created.

However, if the tourist would never have been exposed to the existence of the destination, the previous explained theory could not have been existed. Therefore, it is the task of the country, city or tourist organisations to expose a certain tourist destination to others. The AIDA model is a four-phase model that explains in four steps the process of making a specific target group aware of the product or in this case, the destination, and leading them to actually come to the destination. The AIDA model, which is showed in Figure 2, stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. (Marketing Portaal 2017; Marshalls 2008, 17.)

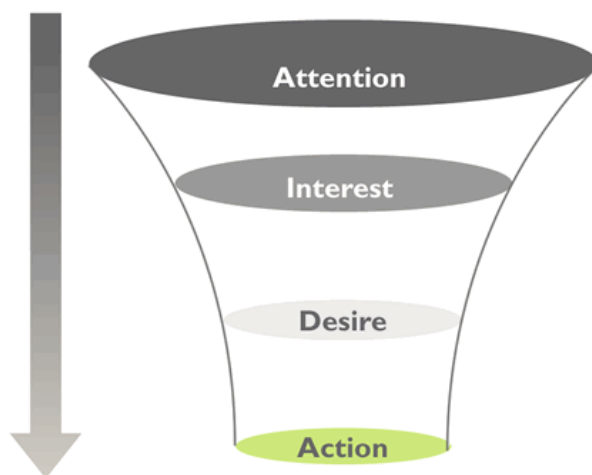


Figure 2 The AIDA Model (Strong 1925, 75-86)

The model will be explained through a traveller's point of view. The first phase of the AIDA model is attention, which in terms of travelling means that a country needs to bring a certain destination to the tourist's mind. The attention needs to be aroused to the right target group. After the tourist has his or her attention to a certain destination, the second phase will follow, which contains the interest. In this phase, the tourist will be made aware of the specific destination in order to be able to create a certain destination image. Thirdly, the interest of the tourist needs to become his or her desire to actually go to a certain destination. The person in question needs to have the feeling that he or she really needs to go to that place. Finally, the tourist will engage in purchase activity, which is the ultimate aim of the message. (Marketing Portaal 2017; Marshalls 2008, 17.)

To emphasize, a country or city needs to have a positive destination image to be able to attract tourists. The destination image foreigners have is of utmost importance to welcome enough tourists to a certain place. When a destination image could be analysed, the tourist behaviour could be better understood (Beerli & Martín 2004, 657). Therefore, the definition, process and formation of the destination image will be further elaborated in chapter 2.2 Destination Image.

## **2.2 Destination Image**

Destination images have been shown to be of high importance for tourists when selecting a destination for leisure purposes (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, 868). The image and expectations individuals and groups have about a certain destination is one of the key factors for their decision of travelling to that particular place (Chon 1990, 2; Marshalls 2008, 6). The image they have in mind about a certain destination can be the result of positive or negative experiences and orientation, depending on the information the individual or group has received (Marshalls 2008, 12). Moreover, each tourist destination needs to keep in mind that having a positive destination image is essential for that place to attract tourists to a specific area. It creates a competitive advantage. (Chon 1990, 2; Marshalls 2008, 6.)

### **2.2.1 Destination Image Definition**

Several theorists gave an explanation about the term destination image. Crompton (1979) described destination image as “the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination”. As one can see, this is only referred to one person, while a group can have a shared destination image as well. Therefore, some give more guidance to the definition made by Lawson & Bovy-Baud (1977), since this definition contains a more detailed explanation; “the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place”. As can be noticed, this definition focuses on both groups and individuals. (Jenkins, 1999, 1; Goodall & Ashworth 2013, 134.) While several definitions have emerged, the overall thought of each definition contains the impressions of a place or the perceptions of an area (Echtner & Ritchie 1991, 6), which further will be taken into account in the study. The destination image of a country includes their history, geography, art, music, citizens and their attributes (Marshalls 2008, 21). Mostly, the image consists of subjective knowledge of a certain destination. For instance, a certain destination can be expensive or cheap, warm or cold and developed or undeveloped. Since these images are for most of the people subjective, it may differ from the image of another individual or group. (Ekinci 2003, 22.)

### 2.2.2 Destination Image Formation

Images of individuals or groups are a part of their decision-making processes and they will influence the choices they make. A destination image can have to do with expenditure, travel, excitement, hedonism, relaxation and social interaction as well as the ones related to a specific place, such as climate, landscape, culture, activities and facilities. The overall image one has from a particular region eventually might be favourable or unfavourable in terms of choosing a travel destination. (Goodall & Ashworth 2013, 134.) A strong, unique destination image would help to increase the favourability of a destination (Qu, Kim & Im 2011, 468). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand which factors influence an individual's or group's destination image to be able to use the image to influence someone's behaviour (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, 868-869).

To create a better understanding about the destination image, the destination image formation will be further elaborated. As stated by Qu et al. (2011, 465) and Pike (2016, 203), a destination image is a composition of a cognitive and an affective evaluation. Both of these together create the destination image a person has with a specific area or country. The cognitive evaluations are paid to someone's attention by two underlying factors, namely the symbolic stimuli, which include the area or country's characteristics and its promotional efforts, and the social stimuli. The latter can be seen as the word-of-mouth from friends and relatives. The cognitive image indicates the beliefs and knowledge a person has from a destination, while the affective image indicates an individual's feeling about a destination. (Qu et al. 2011, 467; Pike 2016, 203-204; Rajesh 2013, 68.) Along with this, Beerli & Martín (2004) point out that a good source of information influences the destination image of potential tourists indirectly as well. (Marshalls 2008, 22.)

According to a study of Marshalls (2008, 24-27), six factors have a direct influence on a person's image of a country. The first factor includes an individual's evaluation of the certain destination. A country image for a group or for individuals is created from the stereotypes they have about that certain area. These stereotypes will continue developing along the way and it will be expanded when more knowledge or images from the specific country will come to the person's mind. Although this might be true, an image creation is more an individual's process, causing it differently than stereotypes. (Marshalls 2008, 24-27.) On this basis it may be inferred that besides everything the destination has to offer, the tourists' characteristics play a major role in the formation of a destination image as well (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, 868-869). These characteristics could be seen from a psychological and a social point of view, including one's personal motivations, values and personality and a person's social factors, including his or her background, education and age.

Besides these personal factors, the geographical location, climate and culture, distance decay, travel intermediaries and stimulus factors are influencing the destination image. The geographical location is important when a certain country will be discussed. It involves the accessibility of the country including the travelling costs. (Marshalls 2008, 24-27.) Marshalls (2008, 25) found that people are not preferably considering countries to travel to, which are difficult to reach due to their location. In addition, the country image depends on tourist values. To illustrate, when a tourist is looking for a beach holiday and a certain country cannot offer that value, then the country image might consciously or unconsciously become more negative for that person. Moreover, the geopolitical atmosphere will be taken into account. To illustrate, for a long period the political relation between the United States and Cuba was far from good. However, Obama reinstated legal travel to Cuba in 2011, which resulted in a travellers' boom. More than three million people have visited Cuba in 2015, which included a 77% increase of American travellers compared to the past 50 years. (Miller Bouchet 2016.) This is an example of how Cuba's politics are a key factor for the tourism industry. Due to their political relation with the United States, the island was hard to access for U.S. residents. Eventually, this contributes to a different country image for them in comparison to residents from other countries that do have a better political relation with the country in question.

Equally, the climate and culture of a country are of high importance for the destination image formation. A study has shown that people living in places with cold climates tend to have holidays to warmer areas. Moreover, people who grew up in bigger cities do not tend to have adventurous holidays. Their needs and desires are one of the key factors in choosing a tourist destination. (Marshalls 2008, 25.)

In addition, in a study of Marshalls (2008, 26), Gallarza, Saura & Garca (2002) found that the distance of the tourist destination in comparison to one's home country plays an important role in decision-making and destination image formation. The size of the country and the international economic and political power influence the distance-decay effects as well (Marshalls 2008, 26).

Furthermore, travel intermediaries are the ones selling a destination to the customers by meeting face-to-face. They have a strong factor in influencing the travellers' destination images and decisions. The way the travel intermediaries want to sell a certain destination to potential customers eventually will be the destination image the potential customers will have in mind. Studies have shown that many travellers rely highly on this information provided to them. As well as the growth of the information technology, which nowadays plays an important role. (Marshalls 2008, 26-27.)

Lastly, each potential traveller will be exposed to other stimulus factors. Most of the travellers will have an enormous amount of various information sources, which will contribute to their destination image formation. This can turn out positive, although information sources that provide information about a country's war, hunger or crime will give a worse destination image for many. (Marshalls 2008, 27.) For instance, Colombia has been a country of conflicts and drug cartels for decades. During this time, only a few tourists visited the country, since the country was labelled as unsafe. Nowadays, Colombia is facing the trend of declining violence. The criminality has largely disappeared, Colombia is facing their most peaceful years in decades, the capital city has rejuvenated and the resilient culture livens up. Since potential tourists are now exposed to the beauty Colombia has to offer instead of hearing unsafe stories from information sources, the yearly amount of tourist visitors in Colombia is growing. (Calderon 2015; Pachico 2015.) This example gives an indication how information sources can turn one's destination image both positive and negative.

The six key factors that have been discussed are of utmost importance in the formation of the destination image by people for each country, city or area, since a destination's image has influence on the economic, cultural and political wellbeing (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 28). Each individual or group might give more guidance to one factor instead of the other, since everyone develops its image by being selective on how to interpret information and about which information should be retained in their memory (Pike 2016, 203). Nevertheless, each factor will slightly remain of influence.

In addition, in the last couple of years, the price in choosing a destination by tourists is not their highest decision factor anymore. Nowadays, people are more or less travelling to a certain destination, since they feel emotionally attracted to that place. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 61; Achar, So, Agrawal & Duhacheck 2016, 166-168.) Therefore, besides the destination image, a place's destination branding is of utmost importance, since the image that will be created in the tourist's mind is essential to the eventual success of the destination in question (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 61). This will be further elaborated in chapter 2.3 Destination Branding.

### **2.3 Destination Branding**

Destination branding is one of the most powerful marketing tools for modern destination marketers. It reaches tourists who are looking for lifestyle fulfilment and experiences instead of the traditional and tangible aspects a destination has to offer, such as a city's touristic sights, accommodations and activity opportunities. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60;

Murphy, Benckendorff & Moscardo 2007, 45.) The process of destination branding starts when a person's destination image formation contains a strong emotional attachment. The emotional attachment can differ for each person or group and contains aspects such as fun and excitement. In other words, destination branding is the emotional part of the destination image. It is true that destinations in general do have a name. However, only the branded destinations have an emotional link with their visitors as well. (Ekinci 2003, 22.) Ekinci (2003, 22) claims that when creating a favourable destination image, destination branding should be applied secondly. To demonstrate, a destination can be compared to products. If companies do not brand their products, customers will not be motivated to purchase the product. The same applies for a destination. If, for instance, countries or cities are not branding their tourist destination, potential travellers might not get triggered to visit that place. (Ekinci 2003, 22; Blain, Levy & Ritchie 2005, 328.) On the contrary, when destination branding takes place, uniqueness and thus, a competitive advantage could be created (Ashworth 2009, 9).

In order to make the destination branding of a certain destination successful, the travellers' emotional and basic needs need to be fulfilled. Nowadays, giving a destination its own personality builds a stronger and successful destination brand and it creates a unique identity for the destination. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60; Ekinci & Hosany 2006, 127; Murphy et al. 2007, 46.) Aaker (1997, 347) defines brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand". Therefore, human personality characteristics can be applied in terms of destination branding (Ekinci 2003, 22; Murphy et al. 2007, 46). When branding a destination, the destination should be seen as a human being with both a head and a heart. The head will refer to the logical components and rational values of the brand, while the heart will refer to the emotional characteristics, benefits and values. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 70.) To illustrate, a certain destination can brand itself as friendly, unique and family-oriented (Ekinci 2003, 22). These characteristics will attract several tourists, since they feel associated with them. Marketing goods have been shown that it is successful for them as well. However, the characteristics should help to build an engaging or ambitious brand and thus, develop a rich and relevant brand personality. (Morgan & Pritchard 2002, 70.) To give some examples, Apple stands for innovative (Wasik 2016), Coca-Cola is a traditional brand (Ekinci 2003, 23) and Disney is presented as fun (Easterling 2006, 1-4). Again, the same is easily applicable to tourist destinations. For instance, Las Vegas is exciting and entertaining, Paris is presented as romantic and New York is well known as the city that never sleeps. (Ekinci 2003, 23.) In addition, islands are branding themselves as well. For example, 'Aruba, One Happy Island' and 'Saint Martin, The Friendly Island' are both examples that give an indication about the atmosphere at the island. On the whole, these examples indicate how tourists might

choose a certain destination based on the human personality characteristics and thus, the characteristics they might feel attracted to. In fact, the most powerful brands are the ones with the richest personality characteristics (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 70).

The destination brand benefit pyramid, which is shown in Figure 3, might be essential to truly know how tourists benefit from a specific destination. This pyramid refers to the point where the tourists' wants and the benefits and features of the destination merge. The challenge of each country or city is to develop a proposition, which makes the destination a rich, modern relevant, and appealing brand. (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 70-71.)

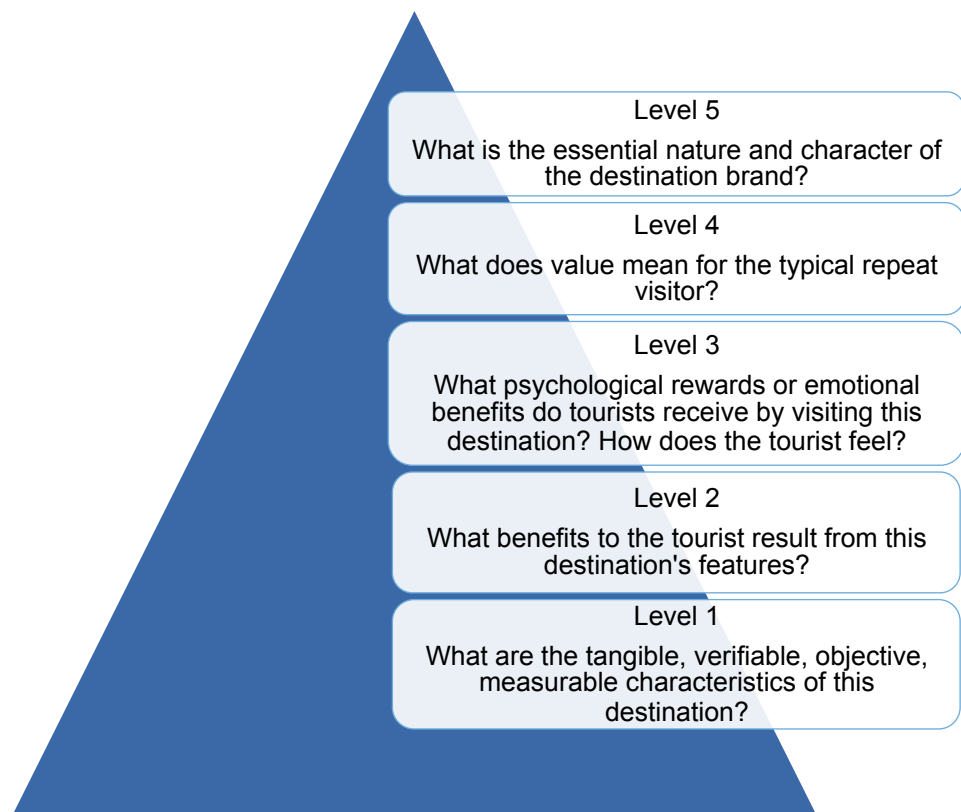


Figure 3 The Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 71)

As shown in Figure 3, the destination brand benefit pyramid has five stages. The first level contains the destination's main assets, namely its characteristics that are tangible, verifiable, objective and measurable. The second level illustrates the tourist's emotional benefits from the destination. The third level is about the personality of the brand itself and its main personality traits. The fourth level includes a positioning statement and the destination's strongest competitive features. It explains why tourists will return to a specific destination instead of visiting another. Finally, the fifth and last level can be seen as the destination's DNA. It explains the essence of the destination brand.



In the study of Ekinci (2003, 23), Yoon, Ekinci and Oppewal (2002) found that brands need to have three personality features in order to be seen as a personality, which is of high importance for level three of the destination brand benefit pyramid. The three features include the behaviour, the interaction with the environment and the consistency of traits. To be able to be a successful tourist destination, a country should distinguish its tourist destinations from others. Besides, communication techniques and product development tactics should be applied when branding a tourist destination, and thus, building a personality. (Ekinci 2003, 23.)

## **2.4 Helsinki as a Tourist Destination and its Relation with the Netherlands**

To be able to understand the tourism in Helsinki by Dutch visitors, an overall view of Helsinki as a tourist destination will be given in this chapter. Eventually, this will lead to a better understanding of the destination image of Helsinki by Dutch tourists. This chapter will contain the key facts and characteristics of Helsinki as a tourist destination, the destination image of Helsinki will be elaborated, the tourism development in Helsinki will be displayed, and the perception by Dutch tourists about the city will be included as well. The chapter will end with a SWOT-analysis of Helsinki as a tourist destination and a satisfaction measuring method for tourists will be explained.

### **2.4.1 Characteristics of Helsinki as a Tourist Destination**

Helsinki is located in southern Finland and it is the capital city of the country. Since Helsinki is situated in a Nordic country, the city faces very different times in winter and summer. The city covers an area of 214 square kilometres, has over 600.000 residents, more than 300 islands, borders the Finnish Gulf and one-third of the city exists of green areas, such as parks, forests, lakes, beaches and islands. (Helsinki 2017a; Visit Finland 2017a.) The sea is present almost everywhere in Helsinki. In the winter period, the sea might become ice and there can be snow as of November until May, while in spring and summer periods, the area turns into public parks where people of any age come together for nature-based activities. (Toivonen, Toivonen & Hagelstam 2008, 8; Visit Finland 2017b.) Some characteristics of Helsinki are its design aspects, museums, architecture, high technology, booming restaurant scene, wide variety of bars, culture and the shopping part. The Art Nouveau architecture Helsinki offers was due to the blend of the Classicism, the Functionalism period and the Finnish National Romantic movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Visit Finland 2017a.) Helsinki contains influences from the East and from the West, since their birth was due to Swedish ambitions and their growth came from Russia (Toivo-

nen & al. 2008, 12). As a result, Helsinki has an interesting variety of architecture, since the city contains a blend of old and modern buildings (Swallow 2008, 199). Currently, the area around Helsinki has two national parks and the city contains an UNESCO World Heritage as well (Visit Finland 2017a). Some of the most favourite touristic places, activities and events in and around Helsinki will be explained in more detail.

- Senate Square: this is the square including the Lutheran Church and it is an elegant reminder of the Russian period. The Senate Square is one of the main touristic sights Helsinki has to offer and it is used as a landmark as well. The cathedral was built this high, since it reminded them to the supremacy of God. The square itself is one of the largest in Europe and it is used for many events. (Symington & Le Nevez 2015, 45; Bird 2004, 109; Toivonen & al. 2008, 9.) The Library of the University of Helsinki can be found on the opposite side of the square (Molarius 1993, 46).
- Uspenski Cathedral is the orthodox cathedral of Helsinki (Symington & Le Nevez 2015, 45). It is the largest cathedral in Western Europe (Bird 2004, 113).
- Suomenlinna is an UNESCO World Heritage and is also known as ‘the fortress of Finland’. Suomenlinna is an island and it is a twenty-minute ferry ride from Helsinki’s market square. Suomenlinna was originally built by Sweden in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to protect them from a Russian invasion and therefore, the Swedish vestiges are found here as well. Additionally, the island contains a museum, which covers the history of the fortress. Old fortifications and cannons can be found at Suomenlinna. Moreover, it is a place for people of any age and it can be visited all year round. (Symington & Le Nevez 2015, 44-45; Bird 2004, 103; Toivonen & al. 2008, 8-9.)
- Market Square and market halls: the market place at the harbour shows the lively and vibrant city life. It is the place where cruises and ferries arrive and depart and where many souvenir and market stands are located. Smoked fish is sold straight from the boats, which are docked at the harbour and many fresh fruit and vegetables can be found here as well. The Old Market Hall is an indoor extension from the Market Square and even more market halls can be found in the Helsinki area. (Bird 2004, 116-118; Toivonen et al. 2008, 38.)
- Museums: Helsinki has many museums, including the National Museum, the City of Helsinki Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. The spire of the National Museum is a Helsinki landmark. (Bird 2004, 119-121; Swallow 2008, 200.)
- Helsinki Railway Station: the Helsinki Railway Station has a National Romantic style and was completed in 1919. It is one of the most significant railway stations in the history of the European architecture. (Visit Finland 2017c; Molarius 1993, 52).
- Design District: the Design District in Helsinki is located in the city centre and it covers the top-class Finnish design products. The area is filled with design and antique shops, fashion stores, museums, art galleries, restaurants and showrooms. The Design District is important for Helsinki, since it gives reputation to Helsinki as ‘the city of design’. (Design District Helsinki 2017.)

- Helsinki Design Week: the Helsinki Design Week is the largest design festival in the Nordic countries held in September each year since 2005. The event is filled with design markets, showrooms, open studios and architecture. Locals and internationals visit this popular event. (Helsinki Design Week 2017.)
- Kallio: this area can be found in the Eastern part of Helsinki. The vibrant area is filled with cheap places such as cafés, bars and boutiques. During summer, several events are organised outside and parks, such as the Bear Park, turn into one of the central meeting places. (Visit Finland 2017d.)
- Nuuksio and Sipoonkorpi: Finland has 39 national parks of which Nuuksio and Sipoonkorpi are located in the Helsinki region (National Parks 2017). These national parks can be visited for day trips from Helsinki.
- Porvoo: this city is an hour drive from Helsinki and it is most famous for its old town. Many manors, museums, churches and chapels can be found in this place. (Visit Finland 2017a.)
- Music events: each year Helsinki offers several music festivals of which Tuska Metal Festival and Flow Festival are some of them. Both of the events are held in the summer period and attract tens of thousands of guests. Tuska Metal Festival represents the metal culture of Finland. Flow Festival offers different kind of music, including old school legends and new artists. This makes it an attractive festival for different kind of people. (Tuska 2017; Flow Festival 2017.)
- Helsinki organises special Sauna Days annually. This means that companies and individuals can open their sauna for visitors for free. In this way, the Finnish sauna culture can be enlivened and in addition, tourists can be exposed to Helsinki's offer of saunas. (Helsinki Sauna Day 2017.)
- Restaurant Day is well known worldwide and it is held almost once every three months in Helsinki. On these days, pop-up restaurants can be opened by anyone and at any place. Moreover, every third Saturday in May, a food carnival is held to celebrate the existence of Restaurant Day. (Visit Finland 2017e; Helsinki 2016a.)
- Nowadays, the live-like-a-local concept is growing and cities worldwide are adapting this trend. The same applies for Helsinki. Several websites are made, in order that travellers will be able to live like a local when visiting the city. Locals of Helsinki are posting tips for local tours, activities, sights, restaurants, cafes, bars and shops. Moreover, the websites are established with a platform where travellers can ask question to the locals of Helsinki. (Like a Local 2017; Spotted by Locals 2017; Helsinki 2017b; Day with a Local 2017.)

These touristic places, activities and events might give an overview of Helsinki. Moreover, it might have an influence on how people perceive Helsinki as a tourist destination. This will be further elaborated in chapter 2.4.2 Destination Image of Helsinki.

## 2.4.2 Destination Image and Branding of Helsinki

Besides the main touristic sights and events, the destination image of Helsinki itself needs to be explained as well. As already explained in chapter 2.2 Destination Image, a destination image differs for each individual or group. Therefore, this subchapter will reveal some insights that might have an effect on the individuals' or groups' destination image of Helsinki.

Many capital cities are used as the visiting tourist card of their country, as well as Helsinki used to do. However, in recent years, city branders are more or less highlighting the Finnish nature and values in terms of welfare state, which are representing Finland as a country rather than Helsinki as a city itself. This reduces the destination image potential tourists might create about Helsinki. Moreover, the Senate Square of Helsinki, including its Cathedral, is often used as the main attraction in promotion tools. (Dinnie 2011, 33.) This is important, since visual symbols tend to be great tools in terms of marketing a place (Marshall 2008, 39). However, Helsinki has much more to offer as illustrated in chapter 2.4.1 Characteristics of Helsinki as a Tourist Destination. This might contribute to the fact that for many potential tourists it might be hard to know what to expect when visiting the city, since only a few characteristics are visualised to them. Thus, the destination image might still remain vague and should be clarified. (Dinnie 2011, 33.) Nevertheless, Helsinki has many architectural landmarks and their design district, which can be seen as their signature district. As well as their annual events, which creates a wider recognition. (Ashworth 2009, 9.)

Annual events, such as the Helsinki Design Week, Tuska Metal Festival, Flow Festival and Sauna Day, may be used as a branding tool as well, since it creates a clear image of Helsinki as 'the city of design' and the music and culture linked to the city's atmosphere. The events could be used as well to create a certain image for the city. (Gerritsen & Van Olderen 2014, 4-5.) Moreover, it can motivate people to visit the place, since they might feel attracted to these styles. Besides, it stimulates more travellers to come for cultural purposes as well, which is also used in other cities. To illustrate, before Cannes organised its yearly returning Film Festival, the city was not well known among tourists. The city has many things to offer as a tourist destination, however, it is their Film Festival that brought global recognition in being a tourist destination. An example as Cannes can be seen as one of the strongest cities in terms of branding and promoting their destination. (Masjutina 2016.) To emphasize, if Helsinki wants to build a stronger destination image and destination brand for its tourists, the city should start with building images and a brand personality (Dinnie 2011, 35; Murphy et al. 2007, 46). Currently, Helsinki is described as "the White

Capital of the Baltic”, “the Daughter of the Baltic Sea” and “the City between East and West” (Snyder 2007, 91; Swallow 2008, 199). However, these are not descriptions of which tourists can feel emotionally attached to (Ekinici 2003, 22). In addition, as explained, Helsinki built the image of the Senate Square for the coming tourists already, which is one of the main sights the city has to offer. This worked out well for the Eiffel Tower in Paris. When tourists are arriving in the city they are visiting, they are more or less seeking for the touristic sights they have pictured in their memory before arrival. This is the main activity of tourists visiting a city and as a matter of fact, it should be the case for Helsinki as well. (Dinnie 2011, 34.) Helsinki could create new images as well and thus, improve the destination image for tourists.

The City of Helsinki (2013) states the vision of Helsinki as “a community for all its residents and a capital with good services, open decision-making processes and flourishing science, art and creativity scenes”. Helsinki’s values are resident orientation, ecological approach, fairness and equality, economy, safety, involvement and participation, and enterprise-friendliness (City of Helsinki 2013). Some of these values, which might be unique for a capital city, can be used for destination branding as well. Helsinki’s values are turning out positive in studies of many researches. One of Helsinki’s values is to have an ecological approach. According to McKie (2016), who did a ranking regarding the cities that act best worldwide in terms of sustainability, Helsinki is on the ninth place. Moreover, in terms of safety, which is another value Helsinki is aiming for, the city ranked as second safest city in the world (Hanafi 2016). Besides, the City of Helsinki offers resident-oriented high-quality services in an efficient and financially responsible way. This indicates that the City of Helsinki is living up its values and that the needs of Helsinki residents are being understood and foreseen. (City of Helsinki 2013.)

### **2.4.3 The Tourism Development in Helsinki**

The tourism in Helsinki is generally seen increasing in the last years. In 2015, Helsinki was already facing its best year in terms of tourism. When looking at the overnights in Helsinki per month in the years 2013-2016, it even increased each year. Only the summer period of 2015 turned out higher than in 2016. (Helsinki 2015; Helsinki 2016b.) This can be seen in Figure 4. It indicates that Helsinki’s tourism is making a progression.

## Bednights in Helsinki per month

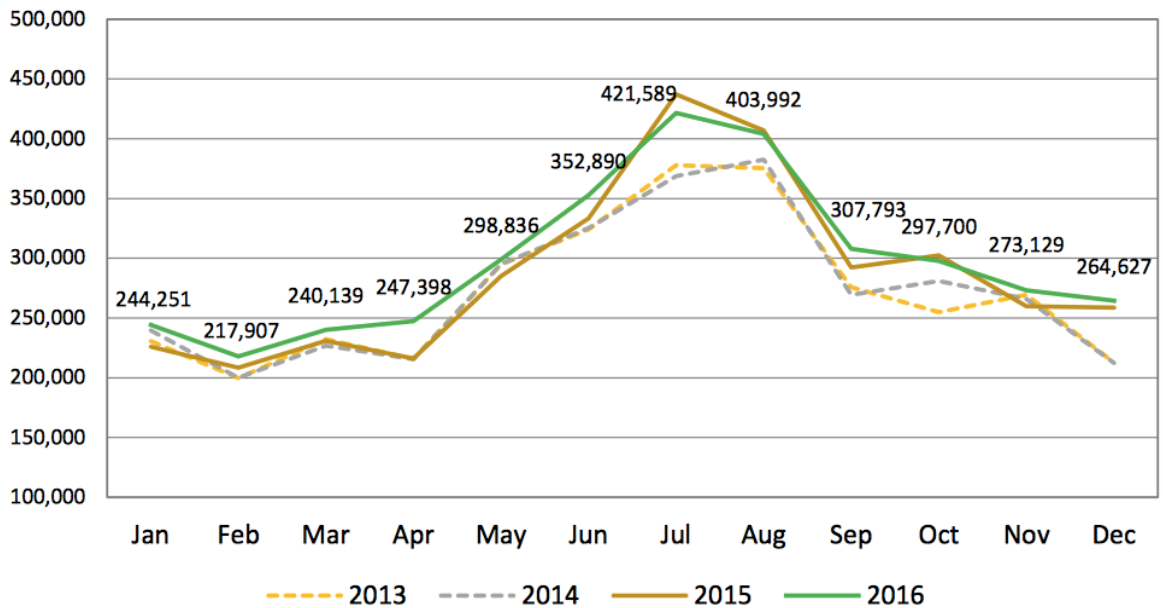


Figure 4 Bednights in Helsinki per Month (Helsinki 2016b)

A study by the City of Helsinki (2015) shows that the number of visitors by airplane and international cruises both increased in 2015. This might be the reason for the increase of the accommodation capacity in Helsinki as well. Moreover, the total number of leisure travellers increased by 2% in 2015. (Helsinki 2015.)

### 2.5 Touristic Relations between Finland and the Netherlands

In order to figure out how Dutch people perceive Helsinki as a tourist destination, the relation between Helsinki and Finland in general and the Netherlands will be further elaborated in this subchapter. Moreover, the profile of Dutch tourists in Finland will be displayed by means of statistics. In addition, trends in the Dutch tourism industry and aspects Dutch travellers are looking for when booking a tourist destination are examined and related to Helsinki's offers.

#### 2.5.1 Tourism Statistics of the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a country with 17.1 million inhabitants (CBS 2017). In 2016, the Dutch population went on a holiday for 35.5 million times. It is true that in percentage terms less Dutch citizens are crossing the borders for a holiday nowadays, since they are going more often on holiday in the Netherlands itself. Nevertheless, still 17.9 million holidays are held abroad and thus, it might be an important target group for tourism in Helsinki. (NOS 2017; Nbt-c-Nipo Research 2017.) Moreover, the Dutch tourists who came to Finland in

2015 were the fifth biggest spenders compared to all nationalities worldwide per trip (Oksanen 2016).

Finland and the Netherlands have an excellent relationship in terms of politics, economics and culture. The Netherlands is the second biggest foreign investor in Finland and the fourth biggest trading partner of Finland. (Government of the Netherlands 2017.) However, the leisure tourism statistics from Dutch tourists in Finland show different during the past years. This might be true, since the Helsinki international leisure marketing department is currently not marketing in the Netherlands. Their current target markets are China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and Russia, and because of this, there will not actively be focused on the Dutch market. (Mänty 5 April 2017.) The following figures will give an insight in the Dutch tourist profile and their tourism statistics.

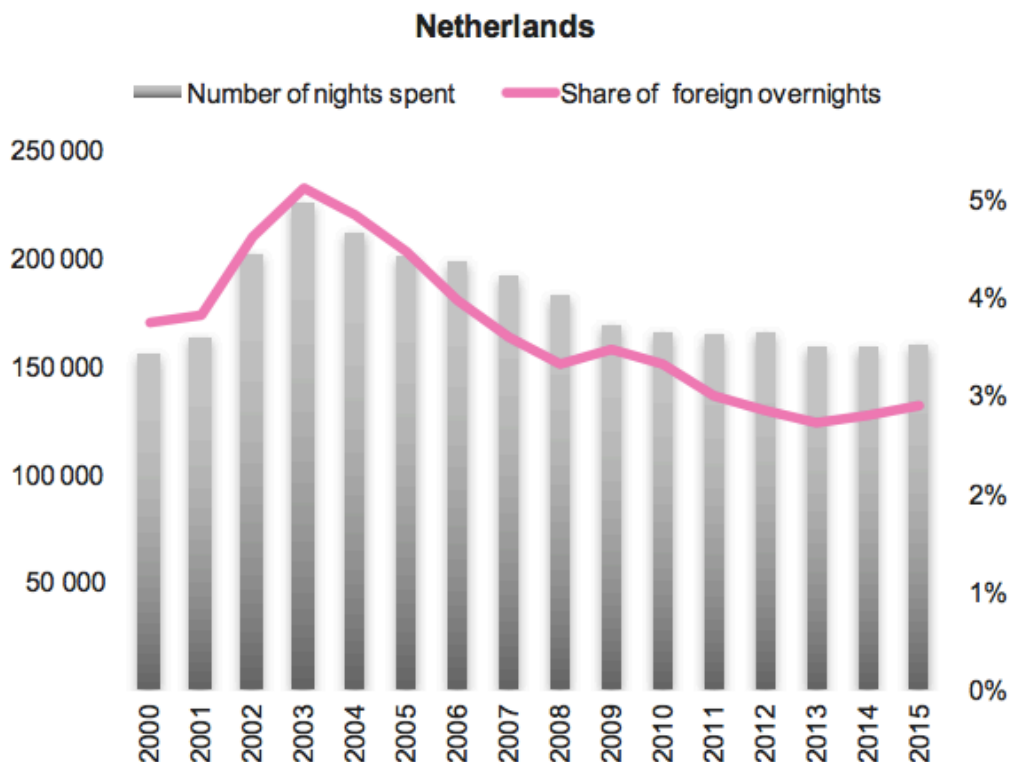


Figure 5 Registered Overnights by the Dutch Population in Finland (Oksanen 2016)

As can be seen in Figure 5, the number of nights spent in Helsinki by the Dutch population has extremely decreased since 2003. Moreover, in 2015, Finland had 95,000 visitors in total from the Netherlands. (Oksanen 2016; Visit Finland 2017f.)

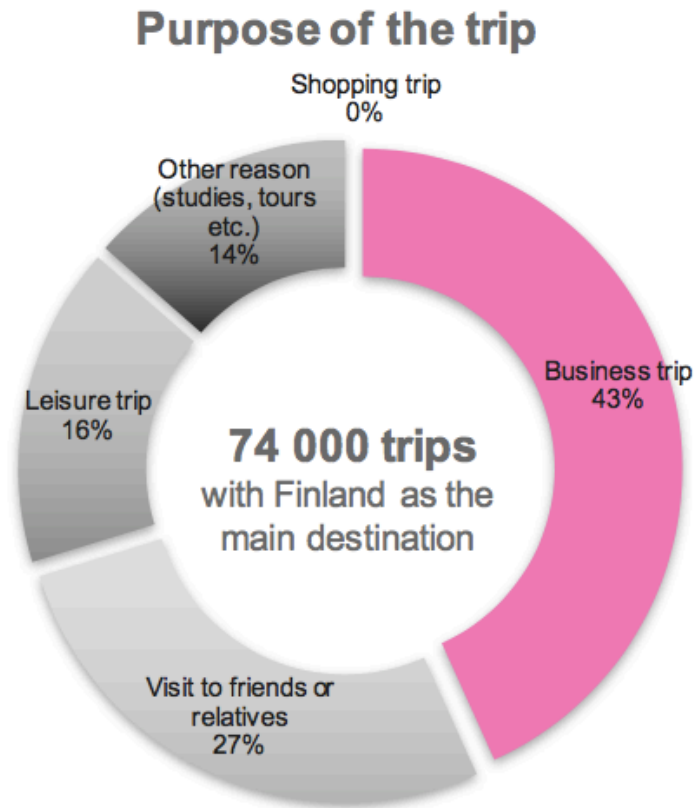


Figure 6 Dutch' Purpose of Trips to Finland (Oksanen 2016)

While this is true, only 16% of the Dutch visitors came for leisure purposes, which can be seen in Figure 6. Almost half of the visitors came for business and a quarter visited friends or relatives. As a matter of fact, 95,000 visitors might be a big amount and to reflect, it is more than 2014. On the contrary, Finland was facing a range of years in which the amount of Dutch visitors in Finland was continuously declining. As a result, Finland still has not more Dutch visitors nowadays than the country already faced in 2009. (Oksanen 2016; Visit Finland 2017f.)

Moreover, Dutch tourists visited Finland the most in summer periods rather than winter periods until 2010, which can be seen in Figure 7. As of 2010, the Finnish winter season became more popular than the summer season among the Dutch population. In addition, Dutch visitors are mostly interested in the Finnish sauna and Finnish cultural attractions. Likewise, one third of the Dutch visitors are interested in summer activities on land and on the water. While this is true, only one tenth of the interested visitors are experiencing those activities while in Finland. (Oksanen 2016.)



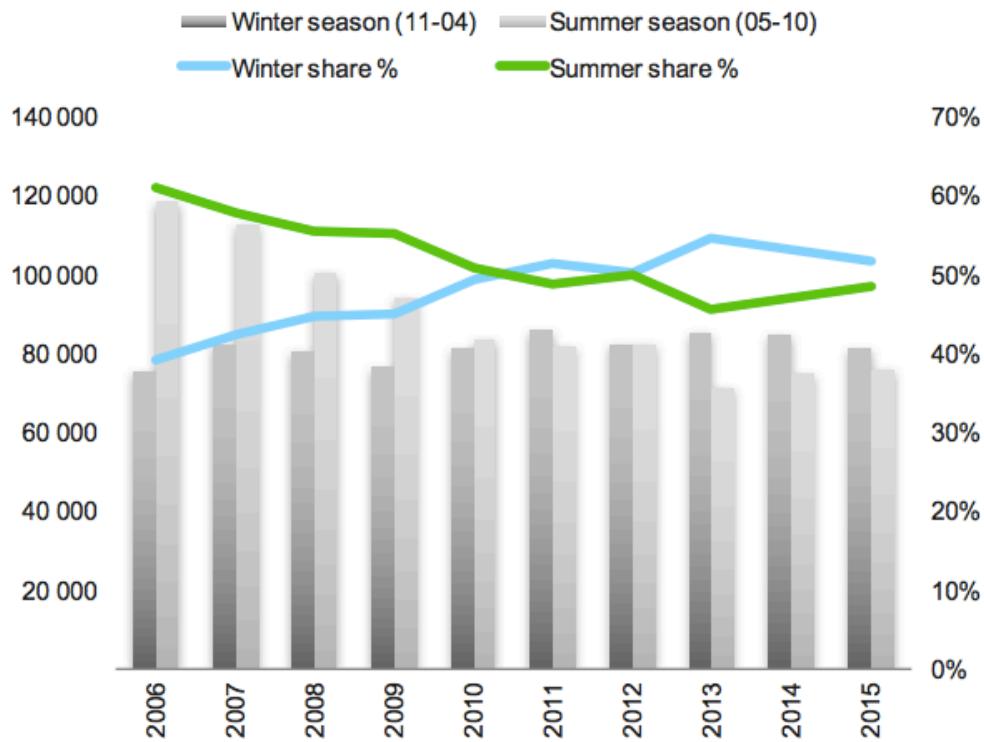


Figure 7 Overnights by the Dutch Population in Winter and Summer Season in Finland (Oksanen 2016)

When looking at Figure 4, which indicates the total bed nights in Helsinki per month, 2015 and 2016 have more bed nights sold in summer than in the years before. However, Figure 4 is about all the visitors in Helsinki and Figure 7 is only about Dutch visitors in whole Finland. This might indicate that Dutch visitors are more traveling in other parts of Finland than Helsinki when its winter and they visit Helsinki more in summer season.

### 2.5.2 Interests of Dutch Travellers

As already explained, Dutch people are going more often on a holiday. However, visits for leisure purposes to Helsinki are lacking behind. The Tourism Fair is held in the Netherlands each year and holiday trends will be exposed during this event. For the year of 2017, Finland is number three of the ranking list of countries that are interesting to visit, since the country is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In addition, blogs and social media became of great influence for the travel choices of the Dutch population. (Marrewijk 2017; Van Joolen 2017.) The main aspects and trends, which the Dutch population are looking for in a tourist destination, will be elaborated in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1 Main Travel Requirements of the Dutch Population based on Personal Enrichment (Federation of WWOOF Organisations 2016; Federation of WWOOF Organisations 2017; Carmichael 2016; National Parks 2017)

	<b>Main travel requirements and trends of the Dutch population</b>	<b>Characteristics of Helsinki</b>
<b>Nature-based</b>	A destination surrounded by nature where the traveller has time to come to oneself.	One-third of the city exists of green areas.
<b>Safety</b>	The safety in a country became an important aspect for the Dutch population in choosing a travel destination.	Helsinki ranked as second safest city in the world.
<b>Karma-holidays, people help the world around them and will culturally and educationally be enriched</b>	For instance, WWOOFing, at which Dutch volunteers are working at organic farms in exchange for food and lodging. Moreover, champing, also known as church camping, became popular. Dutch travellers are staying in vacant churches and the incomes will be invested in the restoration of other churches.	A WWOOF cannot be found in Helsinki itself. However, there are some in the southern area of Finland. Champing cannot be found in Helsinki.
<b>People Planet Purpose and charity work</b>	Instead of People Planet Profit, the Dutch population is nowadays more and more choosing for People Planet Purpose, in which Purpose stands for personal enrichment and contributing to the quality of life of the local population. Voluntary work or activities with locals became more popular.	Finland is in the top 10 of the most developed countries of 2016. This indicates as well that there is not a lot voluntary work to do for the Dutch population.
<b>Escape holidays and solo holidays</b>	The minds of people will become calm and relaxed during this kind of holiday. Dutch people are going together or alone to quiet places or into the nature.	Helsinki itself has many nature areas. The city is surrounded by water and has many parks and islands. Moreover, there are two national parks in the Helsinki area.

Comparing the Dutch travel requirements and trends of Table 1 to the characteristics of Helsinki, it can be stated that Helsinki is a good destination in terms of nature-based holidays for the Dutch population, since Helsinki has many nature areas. This aspect meets the escape holiday trend as well. In addition, Helsinki meets the safety requirements of the Dutch population. Helsinki is not the best place for People Planet Purpose traveling, since the country is already well developed. However, the city is improving in karma-holidays, which can already be found in the area around Helsinki. On the whole, because of the many nature areas Helsinki offers, the city does provide places for the traveller to become more self-enriched and relaxed in nature areas.

Table 2 Main Travel Requirements of the Dutch Population based on Type of Holiday and Accommodation (City of Helsinki 2017; Port of Helsinki 2017; WorldWide Campers 2014; Helsinki voor beginners 2017; Low-cost airlines 2017; Zoover 2016; Flow Festival 2017)

	<b>Main travel requirements and trends of the Dutch population</b>	<b>Characteristics of Helsinki</b>
<b>Camping</b>	The demand for staying at a camping increased with 30%. The increase mainly occurred for luxury camping in order that the traveller is essentially relieved.	One of Helsinki's islands offers a five-star camping.
<b>Cruises</b>	More and more Dutch people are going on a cruise. The river cruise is increasing in popularity.	Many cruises pass by Helsinki. These cruises include trips to and from Stockholm, Tallinn and Saint Petersburg.
<b>Camper road trip</b>	This is becoming more popular among the Dutch population. In their eyes, it stands for a blend of freedom and nature experiences.	Finland has the Everyman's Right, which means that a camper can be parked almost everywhere for 24 hours. This makes a camper road trip attractive. Besides, a camper can be rented easily in Helsinki.
<b>Unique experiences</b>	The Dutch traveller is looking for unique city trips. These include cities, which are not well known among the Dutch population yet.	Helsinki is not the most obvious destination for a city trip for Dutch citizens. Therefore, it might be a unique experience for the Dutch traveller.
<b>City trips</b>	A city trip is mainly a holiday next to the main summer holiday for most Dutch people. Cheap flight tickets have an important role in the interest of city trips, mainly for the millennials.	Transavia and Norwegian are currently the only low-cost airline company flying from the Netherlands to Helsinki.
<b>Festival holiday</b>	More and more youth and adults are visiting international festivals and making a holiday out of it. A festival, such as Sziget in Hungary, is famous among the Dutch population.	Flow Festival is held in Helsinki each year. However, this festival does not have a camping or cheap accommodation. This will make it more unattractive for the Dutch youth, since they are looking for cheap travel options.

Comparing the Dutch travel requirements and trends of Table 2 to the characteristics of Helsinki, it can be stated that Helsinki does live up to accommodation and travel types, in terms of cruises and a camper road trip. However, the city could offer more festivals with camping facilities focused on the international public, in order to attract more Dutch travellers. The new operation from the Transavia and Norwegian airlines are a great benefit for Helsinki's tourism. These new low-cost capacities will drive a positive development for Helsinki on the Dutch market. (Oksanen 7 April 2017.)

### 2.5.3 SWOT-Analysis Helsinki

To give an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Helsinki as a tourist destination when taking the Netherlands and the Dutch population into consideration, a SWOT-analysis have been made. A compact overview can be found in Figure 8, which will be followed by a detailed explanation.

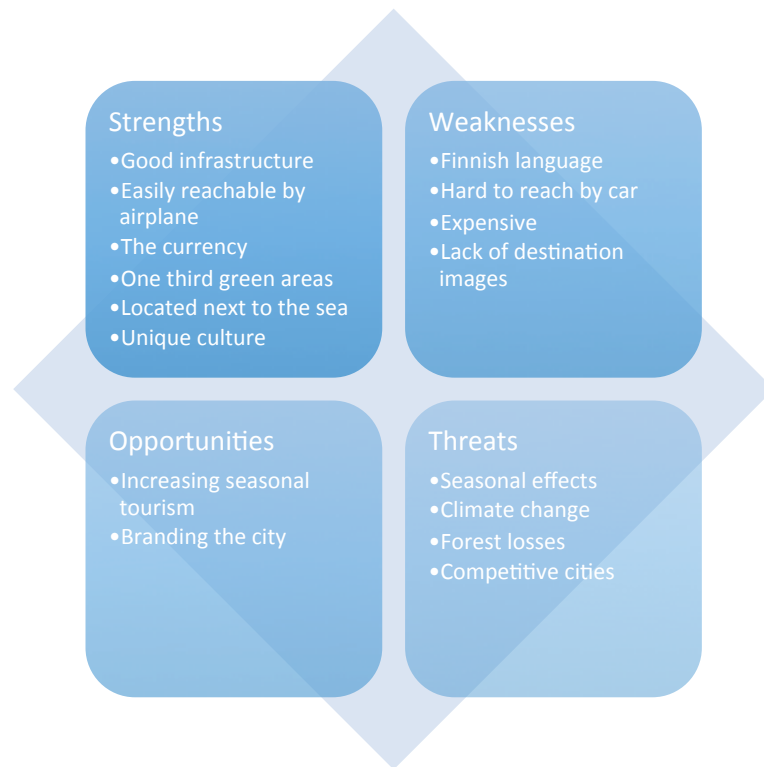


Figure 8 SWOT-Analysis Helsinki

Helsinki has many strength-factors as a tourist destination for Dutch tourists. The city has a good infrastructure, which makes it easier for tourists to travel around in the city itself (Kudu 2016; Toivonen et al. 2008, 11). In addition, Helsinki is easily reachable by airplane from the Netherlands (KLM 2017). Moreover, Finland is part of the European Monetary Union and thus, has the Euro (European Union 2017), which makes it easier for Dutch tourists to purchase products and services while in Helsinki. Furthermore, one third of the city is covered with green areas and it is located next to the sea as well (Helsinki 2017a). It might be beneficial for a certain percentage of the tourists to combine a city trip holiday with activities in nature. Lastly, Finland as well as Helsinki has a unique culture due to a blend between the East and the West. This can be seen in the architecture, culinary culture, events, traditions and the Finnish lifestyle. (Helsinki 2017c.)

On the contrary, Helsinki is facing some weaknesses. Firstly, the Finnish language might be a barrier for some of its tourists, since the language does not have any relation to

Germanic or Latin languages (Merritt 2011). Secondly, Helsinki is hard to reach by car from the Netherlands, since it is a long distance and it contains some ferries (Wereldreizigersclub 2017). Lastly, hotels, food and drinks will basically be quite expensive (PriceofTravel 2017a), which might prevent some potential tourists for visiting the city. In addition, Helsinki has a lack of destination images. The Senate Square, including its Cathedral, is well pictured in advertisements. However, as explained earlier, this is not enough for tourists to create an overall image of the city. (Dinnie 2011, 34.)

Helsinki has some opportunities as well. As can be seen in Figure 8, Helsinki as a tourist destination for Dutch visitors is facing fluctuations in the Dutch overnights in winter and summer seasons. Nowadays, more Dutch tourists are visiting Finland in the winter season and less in the summer season. (Oksanen 2016.) This might be an opportunity for Helsinki to re-promote their city as a summer destination and thus, attract more visitors. Moreover, it will be a great opportunity for Helsinki to re-brand their city. The city might be able to reveal new touristic sights or areas to use for branding their city.

A large threat for Helsinki might be the seasonal effects in Northern Europe. The winters can be too strong with very low temperatures (Finnish Meteorological Institute 2017), while the summers are mostly dealing with a large amount of mosquitoes (Moilanen 2014). Moreover, the world climate change could be a threat for Helsinki as well. Currently, Helsinki's winter is exceptional due to much snow. However, when the temperatures will rise, the very low temperatures will become rarer. (Räsänen & Eklund 2011.) In addition, the sea level of the Baltic Sea will rise (Johansson, Kahma & Pellika 2012). Northern-European forests are damaging because of large-scale windstorms as well (Gregow, Laaksonen & Alper 2017). This could be a threat for Helsinki as a tourist destination when it occurs in the Helsinki region as well, since the area exists of many green areas including two national parks in the neighbourhood. Another threat, which Helsinki has to deal with, is the threat of its competitors. Helsinki is a city in a Nordic country and the other Nordic capital cities have many similarities with Helsinki. The other Nordic countries, which might be of competition due to its publicity, are Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland. Their capital cities Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Reykjavik are competitors for Helsinki, since they are all capital cities located in the northern region containing similar characteristics. Each place is competing with its nature, wilderness, pure water and fresh air and therefore, travellers might choose one above the other. (Nordic Co-operation 2017.) Due to this, Helsinki might attract fewer customers. In Table 3, a competitive set is created for these cities. The cities will be compared to each other based on Dutch tourism in these cities, and similarities and differences will be displayed. All flight prices are per person and the cheapest flight prices in September 2017 for each destination are chosen.

This month was chosen, since according to a research of Skyscanner (2017), the prices in September are on average after the months with the highest flight prices and before the months with the lowest flight prices. Moreover, the price ratio is based on the Europe Backpacker Index for 2017, which is ranked by the website PriceofTravel (2017b) each year. The Backpacker Index is a list of 56 European cities by price. It includes one night in the cheapest hostel on a good location, two tickets for public transportation, the entrance for one famous touristic sight, three budget meals per day and three local beers or wines. The index is just a guideline for travelling for a day in the city, since prices are variable due to different choices of different travellers. (PriceofTravel 2017b.) In addition, a comparison between the cities based on currency, average temperature in the warmest and in the coldest month, and the average rain days per year will be displayed.

Table 3 Competitors of Helsinki (Transavia 2017; Norwegian 2017a; Norwegian 2017b; Norwegian 2017c; WOW air 2017; Google Maps 2017a; Google Maps 2017b; Google Maps 2017c; Google Maps 2017d; Google Maps 2017e; Holiday Weather 2017a; Holiday Weather 2017b; Holiday Weather 2017c; Holiday Weather 2017d; Holiday Weather 2017e.)

	Helsinki	Copenhagen	Oslo	Stockholm	Reykjavik
<b>Direct Distance Flight from Amsterdam – Schiphol</b>	2h25	1h20	1h45	2h00	3h15
<b>Price Return Flight in September 2017</b>	€82,- with Transavia	€61,50 with Norwegian	€64,80 with Norwegian	€84,60 with Norwegian	€212,98 with WOW air
<b>Distance Car Ride</b>	1.914 km and 28h	791 km and 8h49	1.267 km and 14h32	1.435 km and 15h43	3.212 km and 88h
<b>Daily Price Ratio</b>	Place 46: €72,58	Place 48: €78,33	Place 52: €84,30	Place 51: €81,86	Place 55: €93,35
<b>Currency</b>	Euro	Danish krone	Norwegian krone	Swedish krona	Icelandic krone
<b>Average Temperature Warmest Month</b>	17°C in July	17°C in July and August	18°C in July	18°C in July	11°C in July and August
<b>Average Temperature Coldest Month</b>	-6°C in February	0°C in January	-3°C in January, February and December	-3°C in January and February	0°C in January, February and March
<b>Average Rain Days per Year</b>	183 rain days	195 rain days	165 rain days	173 rain days	240 rain days

Taken all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats into account, a certain individual or group might create its decision of visiting Helsinki or not. However, each indi-

vidual and group might give more guidance to a certain aspect than another individual or group.

#### **2.5.4 Net Promoter Score**

Measuring the customer satisfaction might take lots of time and costs lots of money. Only one question should be asked to travellers, which is: “how likely is it that you would recommend Helsinki as a tourist destination to your friends and family?” The travellers are able to give a score from 0 to 10, in which 0 is labelled as ‘very unlikely’ and 10 is labelled as ‘very likely’ (Reichheld 2003, 1). To give these grades a meaning, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) will be applied. The NPS is a method, which in this case can be used to measure the loyalty of the people who have visited Helsinki (Alles over marktonderzoek 2015). The travellers who grade will be divided into three groups:

- Detractors: includes everyone who gave a score of 6 or below. These persons are most likely unsatisfied about Helsinki as a tourist destination and it is likely that they will spread a negative word-of-mouth about the city to family and friends.
- Passives: includes everyone who gave a score of 7 or 8. These persons are satisfied about Helsinki as a tourist destination. However, they will mainly neither spread a positive nor a negative word-of-mouth.
- Promoters: includes everyone who gave a score of 9 or 10. These persons are very satisfied and enthusiastic about Helsinki as a tourist destination and it is likely that they will spread a positive word-of-mouth about the city to family and friends.

(Alles over marktonderzoek 2015; Reichheld 2003, 1.)

The NPS is the difference between the percentage of promoters and the percentage of detractors (Reichheld 2003, 1). When the NPS is above zero, more visitors are satisfied than unsatisfied. On the other hand, when the NPS is below zero, more visitors are unsatisfied than satisfied. (Alles over marktonderzoek 2015.) If a city, such as Helsinki, wants to grow in terms of tourism, the city should have more promoters and fewer detractors. Promoters are a city’s loyal visitors and basically, the marketing department of the city. (Reichheld 2003, 1-6.) The Net Promoter Score will be calculated in chapter 4, which exists of the findings of the research.

In chapter 4, the findings will be shown of the research to the perceived image of Helsinki among the Dutch population. Dutch travellers will be questioned about their destination image of Helsinki. Based on these answers, a new plan of increasing the awareness of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands might be created. Chapter 3 supports the research decisions of chapter 4.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter will contain the appropriate research methods for the research in question. The aim of the research is to create an answer on the research problem, which means that the perceived destination image of Helsinki in the Netherlands needs to be established. By means of this research, sufficient information will be gained in order to be able to answer the main research question including its sub-questions. The different methods will be explained and it will be clarified why exactly these methods are the most appropriate ones for this research. Moreover, the key steps in designing the questionnaire including its background information will be discussed. Lastly, the analysing methods of the results will be explained.

#### **3.1 Research Methods**

Research can be divided into two approaches, namely a quantitative and a qualitative approach. According to a study of Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, 8), Henderson (1990) found that the differences between quantitative and qualitative research are seen in the design, data, setting, relationship with the theory and with the process and procedure. There are differences in their design, since a quantitative research contains a design that is made before doing the empirical research and a qualitative research contains a design, which emerge along the way. Moreover, the data collection differs, since quantitative research mainly has numbers as an outcome, while the outcome for qualitative research will mainly contain words. Furthermore, quantitative research has an impersonal, controlled and manipulative setting, while qualitative research contains a natural, interactive and personal setting. In addition, quantitative research confirms the theory, which is done prior to the research. On the contrary, qualitative research is mostly done to develop the theory. Lastly, quantitative research has a more rational process and procedure, while the process and procedure of qualitative research is more intuitive. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 8.) Besides these differences, Pajakkala (6 September 2016) concluded that one would have a lot of respondents with quantitative research and a few respondents with qualitative research.

When taking this into consideration, there can be concluded that quantitative research might be more applicable to this research than qualitative research. The research, which will be done to the perceived destination image of Helsinki in the Netherlands, is about the destination image every Dutch citizen has about Helsinki. Therefore, as many Dutch respondents as possible should be reached (Johns & Lee-Ross 1998, 76). For this reason, quantitative research is chosen, since it will be more likely to reach a higher amount of



respondents with quantitative research than with qualitative research. In addition, figures contained from quantitative research will be convenient to back up the theoretical background. Many statistics can be derived from the quantitative research approach. (Morris 2003, 465.)

A questionnaire survey will be used in the quantitative research in order to get quantitative information about the perceived destination image of Helsinki in the Netherlands. This type of quantitative research would be the most productive tool for this research, since it represents the general view of the whole Dutch population. Moreover, a survey is a fast tool to conduct a lot of quantitative data and it will provide accurate information. (Stopher 2012, 65-66; Veal 2011, 126-127.) The questionnaire survey does not involve the whole Dutch population, however, only a sample of the Dutch population will be studied. The sample can be of any size, although, it has to be lower than 100 per cent of the target group and it will include at least 100 respondents. In this research, a small sample can be representative for the whole Dutch population. (Stopher 2012, 8.) The sample for the survey needs to be representative. This is also the reason why Dutch citizens younger than fifteen years old will not be taken into account in the survey. Respondents, who are representing the Dutch population and thus, are part of the sample, need to have equal characteristics to the entire population. It is generally believed that the older the person, the more knowledge he or she has. Therefore, the youngest age limit will be people from at least fifteen years old. Moreover, the survey will be sent to citizens from each age, since it will make the research more reliable when any age will be included in the research process. This will give the respondents the same characteristics as the entire Dutch population. (Stopher 2012, 68.)

The type of questionnaire survey that will be used is a respondent-completion, since it will be an online research. This means that the respondents will fill out the questionnaire themselves instead of conducting the interview by the interviewer. (Pajakkala 6 September 2016.) The survey will contain a random sample, since all Dutch citizens will be able to fill in the survey (Morris 2003, 48).

### **3.2 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire will consist of sixteen questions. The questionnaire will be kept short, since then it will be more likely to receive many completed surveys and that the respondents will pay more attention to the survey (Harrison 2007). The questionnaire will consist of open-ended and closed-ended questions. There will be more closed-ended questions, since respondents are more likely to skip an open-ended question instead of a closed-

ended question (Harrison 2007). Most open-ended questions follow a closed-ended question, in order to obtain more in-depth understanding of the answer in the previous question. Moreover, the original questionnaire survey has been made in English. However, the survey has been translated into and has been conducted in the Dutch language, in order to assure that each respondent understands the questions correctly.

In order to make sure that the questions are understood correctly for every respondent, technical terms and jargon will be avoided. The questions will be formulated clear and precise to assure that everyone will have a similar understanding of each question. Moreover, the questions will be made as specific as possible in order to prevent obtaining incorrect responses.

The questionnaire will start off with an introduction. In this way, information regarding the topic of the survey will be provided to the respondents. A title will be appointed to each section in the questionnaire, in order that each respondent knows what the section is about. The questionnaire is divided in three parts, which are placed in logical order. The survey handles the three different types of questions, which can be included in a survey: classification questions, attitude and opinion questions, and behaviour questions. The classification questions are necessary, since then the researcher will be able to classify the respondents in demographic groupings. The attitude and opinion questions do not have a right or wrong answer. For these questions, the respondents will be asked about the strength of their agreement or disagreement to statements. The attitude and opinion questions will include a Likert scale question as well. The behaviour questions will contain questions about the respondents' experiences and their travel behaviour in the past, present and future. The goal of the classification and behaviour questions is to have the respondent filled these in truthfully and accurately. The goal of the attitude and opinion questions is to have the respondent filled in his or her feelings regarding the issues of concern as accurate as possible. (Stopher 2012, 137-138; Veal 2011, 291-298.) The different question types are chosen in order to collect a variety of data. In addition, all the questions, which can be found in the survey, are specifically designed for this research. Due to this, each question and its answers will be a contribution to the research.

The first part consists of demographic questions, which will give an insight of the background information of the respondents. These questions are asked first, since they are usually the easiest to answer for the respondents. The general questions determine their gender, age and occupation. Their occupation will be asked, since for instance, travel decisions of students might be different than travel decisions of someone who is employed or retired.

The second part is about the travel experiences of the respondents in general. It is highly useful for the researcher to know if the respondents are used to traveling and how often they usually travel on a yearly basis. Additionally, the respondents will be asked in which area they mainly travel. As a result, the researcher will know if there is sufficient interest in travel destinations in Europe.

The third and last part will contain questions about the knowledge of the respondents about Helsinki, and their image of Helsinki as a tourist destination. It is important for the reliability of the survey to know if the respondents have ever heard of Helsinki as a tourist destination. If it turns out that there are respondents who are not able to shape their image about Helsinki as a tourist destination, since they have not heard about Helsinki before, these respondents could be taken separately when discussing the findings. Moreover, the respondents will be asked what kind of images or characteristics will come up in their mind when thinking about Helsinki as a tourist destination. Besides, the respondents will be asked what kind of atmosphere in Helsinki they have in mind both in winter and in summer season. This difference might create a more clear destination image of Helsinki from the Dutch population. The level of awareness the Dutch traveller has about Helsinki is covered in the questionnaire as well. In addition, statements about Helsinki, of which the respondent needs to answer on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, will be included. To give some examples, the respondent will be asked for his or her opinion about the historical sites, offers of activities and safety of Helsinki. The statements will consist of a question with a bipolar Likert four-point format. This format has been chosen, since it will give an insight in the awareness of the Dutch population about Helsinki. In this type of question, there will be one extreme answer with a highly positive value and there will be one extreme value with a highly negative value. (DoInicar & Grun 2013, 7.) Lastly, the survey will focus on Helsinki as a preference for Dutch tourists to choose as a tourist destination. Therefore, the respondent will be asked if he or she would like to visit Helsinki in the future. Besides, the respondent will be asked if he or she might have more preference to another Nordic capital city or that he or she will preferable choose for Helsinki. His or her reason will be elaborated in this part, as well as suggestions and/or improvement points for Helsinki as a tourist destination.

An online questionnaire was created in Webropol, which is an online survey tool including an analysis functionality (Webropol 2017). At first, a pilot test was conducted. The questionnaire draft was sent to five persons, who eventually, provided feedback about the content and clarity of the questions. Three of the five persons already have visited Helsinki and the other two persons have not been in Helsinki before. This was decided by the researcher to be sure that everyone would understand the content of the questions. After

receiving the feedback, the researcher updated the questionnaire. To demonstrate, some words were translated to Dutch in a manner that made it unclear for some. Moreover, one pilot tester indicated that much information for the research could be provided if, at question 14, there would be asked why people who already visited Helsinki do not want to visit Helsinki again. The question was expanded with asking an explanation from the respondents. Afterwards, the updated questionnaire was sent to friends and family of the researcher. Moreover, it was posted on social media, which mainly contained respondents from Dutch Facebook pages and LinkedIn. The researcher had asked several Dutch persons with different demographic backgrounds to share the link of the questionnaire on their social media page. Due to this, many people with different backgrounds could be reached and it would give a more reliable overview of the overall destination image of Helsinki in the Netherlands. The full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.3 Analysing Methods**

In order to handle the quantitative data in a responsible way, an analysis method was created. A coding system will be elaborated in the 'Findings' section, which can be found in chapter four. The closed-ended questions can be analysed easily, since few answers could be chosen. However, coding the open-ended questions requires a lot of attention and should be done precisely. Otherwise, the results could be turned out meaningless. Each response requires coding and thus, cannot be left out. However, this is not the case for blanks, which were filled in as answers. Blanks are never used as a legitimate code in any field of a survey. (Stopher 2012, 401-403; Veal 2011, 303-304.) This is also one of the reasons why every question, except for question sixteen, was marked as mandatory. The open-ended questions will be analysed by data categorising. This means that all the collected data of a single question will be assigned to a category and eventually, summarised. The outcome of both open- and closed-ended questions will be analysed and visualised in graphs by means of Microsoft Excel. The researcher is aware that large figures are usually displayed in the Appendices. However, as the reader's convenience is taken into account, these figures will be presented in the Findings chapter.

Chapter four will contain the evaluation of the quantitative data that is collected during the questionnaire survey. Eventually, the collected data will be compared to the theory gained in the theoretical framework in chapter five.

## 4 Findings

The research was conducted over a ten-day period, from March 13, 2017 to March 22, 2017. In total, 145 Dutch people responded to the online survey. The questions have been divided into general questions, travel experience questions and questions about the Dutch perception of Helsinki as a tourist destination. In this chapter, the results will be displayed and analysed. Due to rounding, it might be possible in this chapter that the total of percentages between groups will not exactly be 100%.

### 4.1 General Questions

In the general questions section, the gender, the age and the occupation of the respondents were asked. Figure 9 and 10 will give an overview of the demographics of the respondents. In this research, 70% of the respondents were female and 30% of the respondents were male.

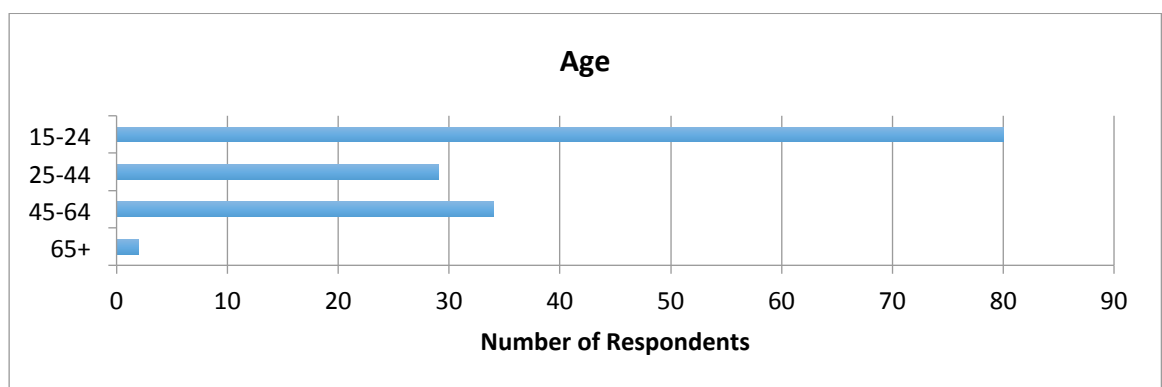


Figure 9 The Age of the Respondents (N=145)

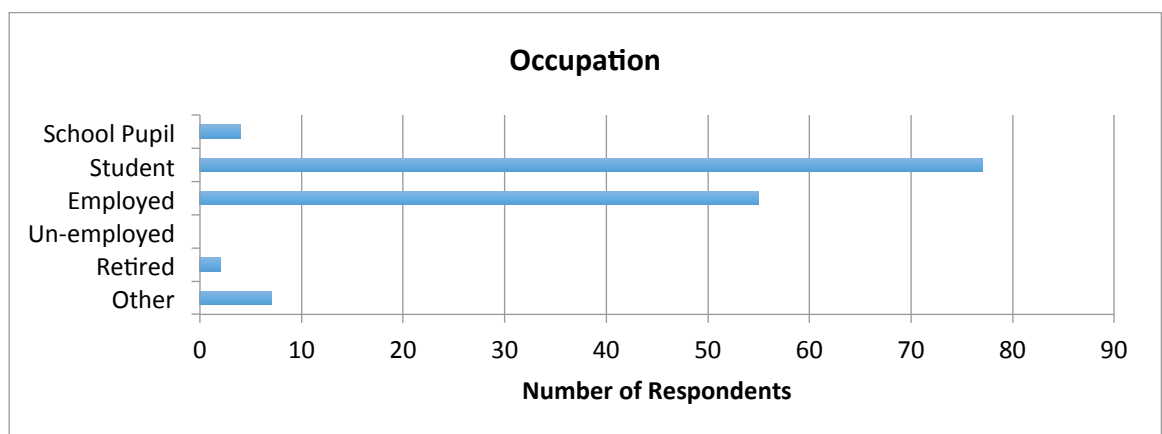


Figure 10 The Occupation of the Respondents (N=145)

According to Figure 9, the average age scale was between 15 and 24 years old. Most respondents were of this age as well. Figure 10 shows that the respondents were mostly students or employed. In total, 57% is still studying and 43% is employed, an entrepreneur, a housewife, a volunteer or retired.

## 4.2 Travel Experiences

This subchapter will contain information of the travel experiences of the respondents. The yearly travel frequency was questioned including their mainly destination. Figure 11 will give an overview of the travel experiences of the respondents.

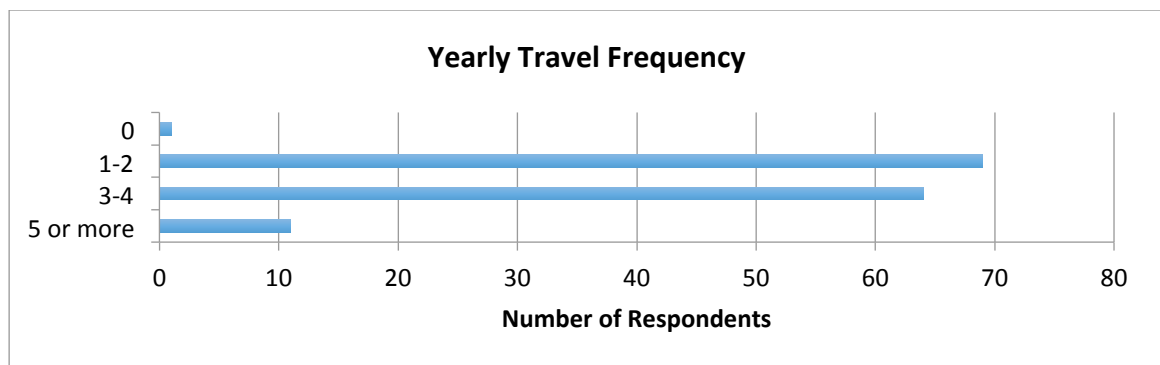


Figure 11 Yearly Travel Frequency (N=145)

According to Figure 11, most respondents are travelling one to four times per year. Namely, 48% is traveling one to two times per year and 44% is traveling three to four times per year. As can be concluded from the research, the travel destinations of the respondents are mainly in Europe, which contains 87,5% of the respondents. Only 5,5% of the respondents mainly has his or her travel destination in the Netherlands and 7% is mainly traveling outside Europe.

## 4.3 The Recommendation of Helsinki as a Tourist Destination

This subchapter contains the elaboration of answers of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Most respondents, which are 66%, have not been in Helsinki. The other 34% have visited the city already. No one of the respondents has planned a visit to Helsinki yet. For the results that can be seen in Figure 12, only respondents who have been in Helsinki were taken into account. This was a total of 49 respondents. The respondents were asked how likely it is that they would recommend Helsinki as a tourist destination to their family and friends.

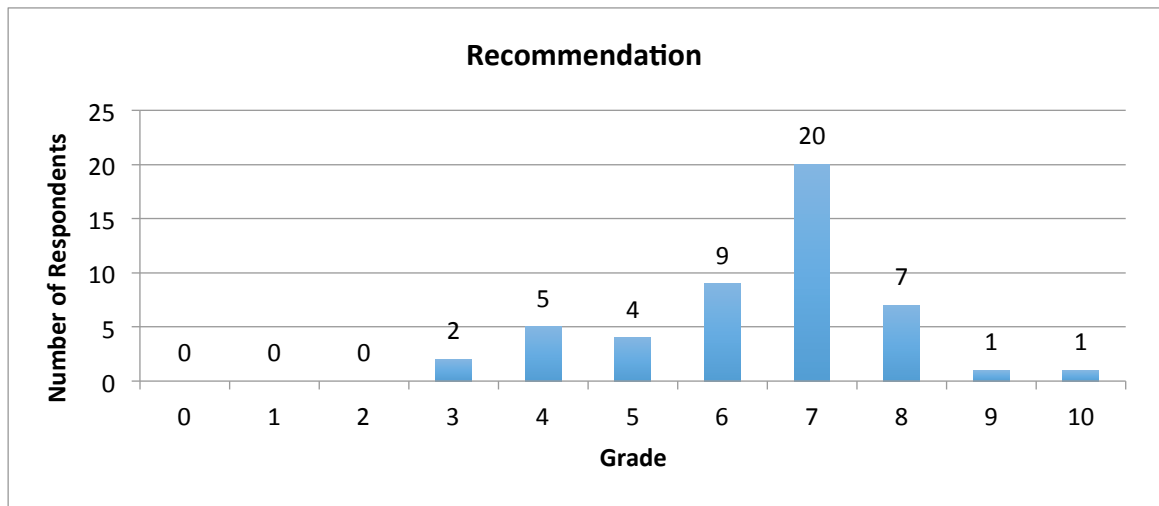


Figure 12 The Likelihood of Recommending Helsinki as a Tourist Destination to Family and Friends (N=49)

The respondents of the graph in Figure 12 can be divided into the three groups of detractors, passives and promoters. In this case, 41% are detractors and 4% are promoters, which will lead to an NPS of:  $4\% - 41\% = -37$ .

In this situation, the NPS is far below zero. This means that overall, visitors are unsatisfied about Helsinki as a tourist destination. This score provides valuable insights and a follow-up question was implemented in the questionnaire to provoke reasons for the selected score. In this way, the status of Helsinki as a tourist destination for the Dutch population can be understood. When willing to create a better destination image for Helsinki, the word-of-mouth of visitors to their friends and family should come to light.

According to the Likert scale, there are more detractors in the Netherlands for Helsinki as a tourist destination than promoters. There were also many passives, who have both satisfying and unsatisfying memories of Helsinki, which led them to neither being a detractor nor a promoter. Each of the respondents had their own reason for their given score. Their reasons are divided into three categories: the positive characteristics of Helsinki for recommending the city as a tourist destination, the negative characteristics of Helsinki for not recommending the city as a tourist destination and reasons why the respondents would preferably recommend a city other than Helsinki to their family and friends.

Positive characteristics of Helsinki as a tourist destination were shared by 76% of the respondents who have visited Helsinki. These respondents are stating that Helsinki is a diverse city in terms of nature and culture. The fact that Helsinki is surrounded by nature, such as parks, islands and the sea, is a satisfying feature for the respondents. Moreover,

the respondents described the city as beautiful, wonderful, interesting, exceptional, international, safe and relaxed. In their opinion, Helsinki is a well-organised city and all the sights are within walking distance, which makes it easy to get anywhere. Besides, there are sufficient sights outside the city centre, such as taking the boat to Suomenlinna or visiting other places by public transport, such as Espoo or Porvoo. They would mainly recommend the city, since it will be different than other city trips and Helsinki has a wonderful nature including sufficient nature-based activities. Helsinki as a tourist destination is not an obvious choice, which makes it an interesting city trip. The Nordic and Scandinavian culture makes Helsinki exceptional and impressive. Moreover, these respondents state that the population of Helsinki is friendly and accommodating.

Negative characteristics of Helsinki as a tourist destination were shared by 59% of the respondents who have visited Helsinki. These respondents are stating that there are not many interesting and exceptional touristic sights. In the opinion of these respondents, there is not a lot to do in Helsinki, which makes them bored quickly. These respondents described Helsinki mainly as small and expensive, but as well as gloomy, gritty, unpleasant, too modern, not really touristic, not spectacular and not fascinating. They argue that the climate is not appealing and unstable, and that the population seems depressive. According to these respondents, you really need to know the city better to know the nice spots Helsinki has to offer and to appreciate the city. In their eyes, Helsinki does not offer the Dutch requirements of a sunny or cultural tourist destination.

The last reason of the given score of the respondents is due to their preferences to other places. 27% of the respondents who have visited Helsinki do not recommend Helsinki as a tourist destination to their family and friends, since in their opinion, there are better places or cities, which they preferably recommend to them. They stated that Helsinki would only be a nice destination if it would be combined with other places in Finland. They argue that Helsinki owes its popularity to its nature. However, this can be found better elsewhere in Finland. According to these respondents, there are nicer other European cities and Helsinki is not very exceptional for a European city. For instance, Helsinki is not as vibrant as Paris or Rome, or not as idyllic or pleasant as Tallinn and Stockholm. In addition, the city is very expensive compared to other European cities.

Overall, the main reason why the respondents would recommend Helsinki as a tourist destination to friends and family is because of its beautiful nature and sufficient offer of nature-based activities. However, they will not recommend the city, since in their opinion, the city is expensive and it does not offer many interesting and exceptional touristic sights.



Moreover, Helsinki has its own uniqueness due to its culture and nature, but the city is not as exceptional as other European cities.

#### 4.4 Image and Characteristics of Helsinki as a Tourist Destination

This subchapter contains the findings and analysis of the perceived image of the Dutch population of Helsinki as a tourist destination. Figure 13-22 will show the statistics.

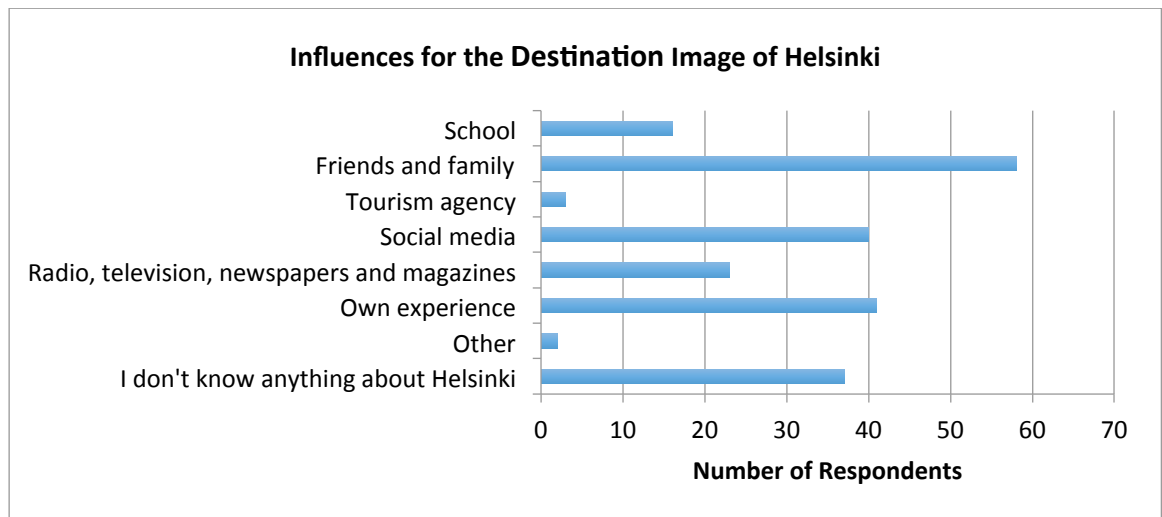


Figure 13 Influences for the Destination Image of Helsinki (N=145)

As can be seen in Figure 13, friends and family influenced the destination image of Helsinki for many respondents. This was namely for 40% of the respondents. In addition, social media and their own experience with both 28% contributed largely for shaping a destination image of Helsinki. On the other hand, 26% indicated that they do not know anything about Helsinki. Therefore, in the upcoming analyses, this group will be taken separate. In this way, an overview can be given of the destination image of Helsinki as a tourist destination of both people with knowledge of Helsinki and people who do not know anything about Helsinki. These people will be further referred as knowledgeable respondents and non-knowledgeable respondents. The images and characteristics that came to the respondents' minds are shown in Figure 14-21. The image will first be displayed per category. The frequency is given of how many times the specific image or characteristic is mentioned. Afterwards, the graph is divided into the knowledgeable respondents and the non-knowledgeable respondents and the percentage of the group that mentioned the image or characteristic is given. The given images and characteristics were divided in the categories of climate, landscape, touristic sights and activities, and practical issues. Finally, a summary of given characteristics of the city will be provided.

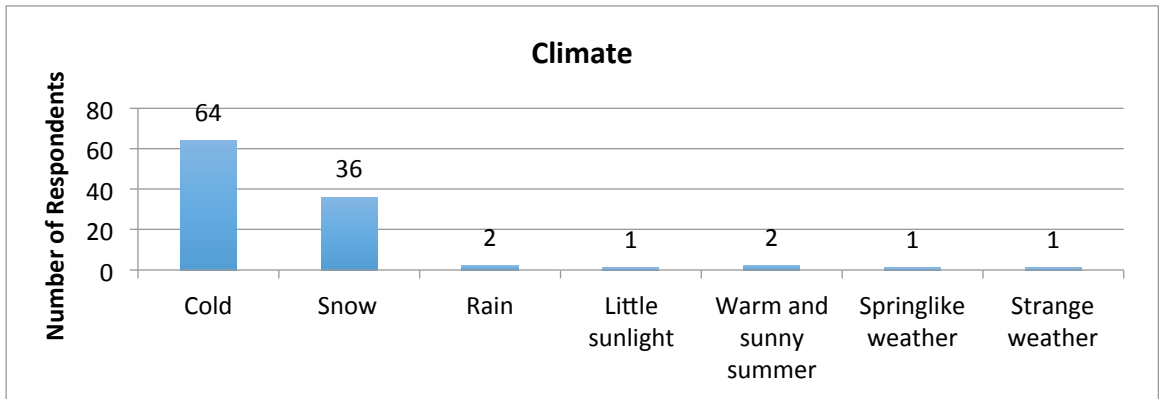


Figure 14 Climate Image (N=77)

Figure 14 shows that ‘cold’ and ‘snow’ are the main climate images that come to the respondent’s minds. In Figure 15, the knowledgeable respondents and the non-knowledgeable respondents will be split up. The differences and similarities will be displayed.

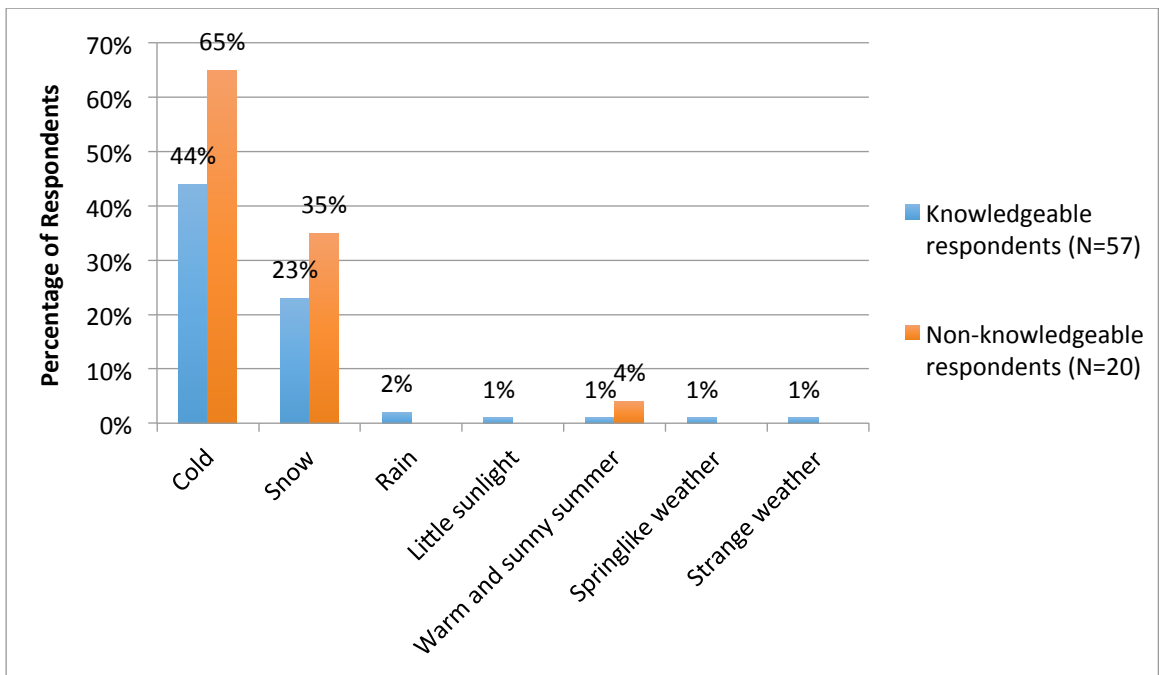


Figure 15 Climate Image by Knowledgeable and Non-Knowledgeable Respondents (N=77)

Even though the percentages are high for the knowledgeable respondents as well, it is noteworthy that the cold and snowy image of Helsinki of the non-knowledgeable respondents is much higher. This can be seen in Figure 15. Another fact is that almost no one of the respondents came up with the image of ‘rainy’ or ‘sunny’.

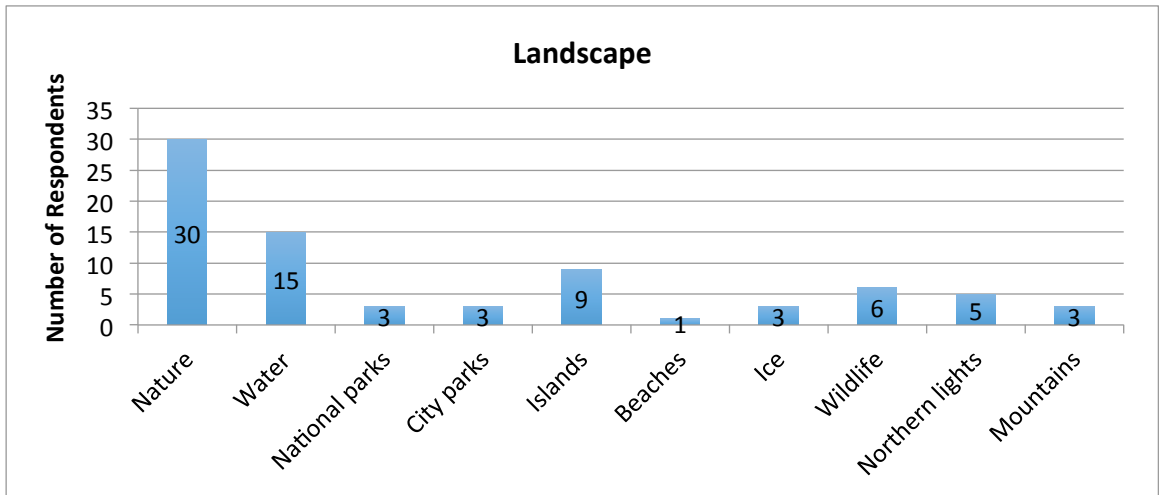


Figure 16 Landscape Image (N=58)

Figure 16 and 17 show the image and characteristics of the landscape in Helsinki that came in the minds of the respondents. Many respondents mentioned ‘nature’ in general and ‘water’ when thinking about Helsinki as a tourist destination. They stated that there was a lot of nature in and around Helsinki and they described the nature as beautiful, green, special and extensive. The water aspect they mentioned was mainly in the form of lakes and the sea.

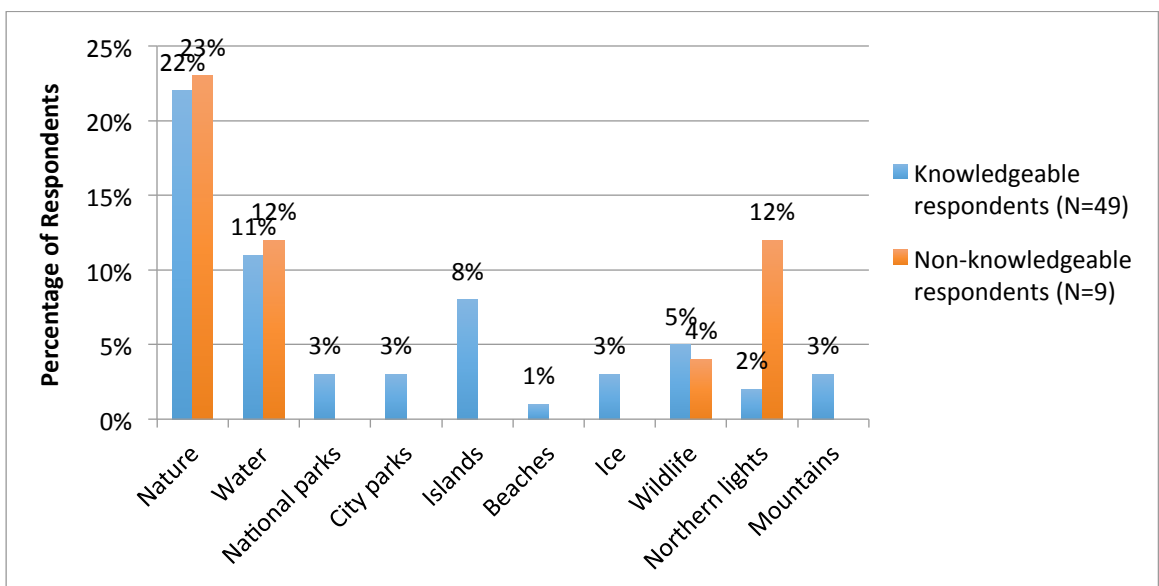


Figure 17 Landscape Image by Knowledgeable and Non-Knowledgeable Respondents (N=58)

As can be seen in Figure 17, for both the knowledgeable respondents and the non-knowledgeable respondents, the image of nature came up for around a quarter of the respondents and the image of water came up for around one-tenth of the respondents. Remarkable is that one-tenth of the non-knowledgeable respondents link the northern lights

to Helsinki as a tourist destination, while only 2% of the knowledgeable respondents share this image. It is striking as well that only the knowledgeable respondents shared the most specific landscape images and characteristics. These included national parks, city parks, islands, beaches, ice and mountains.

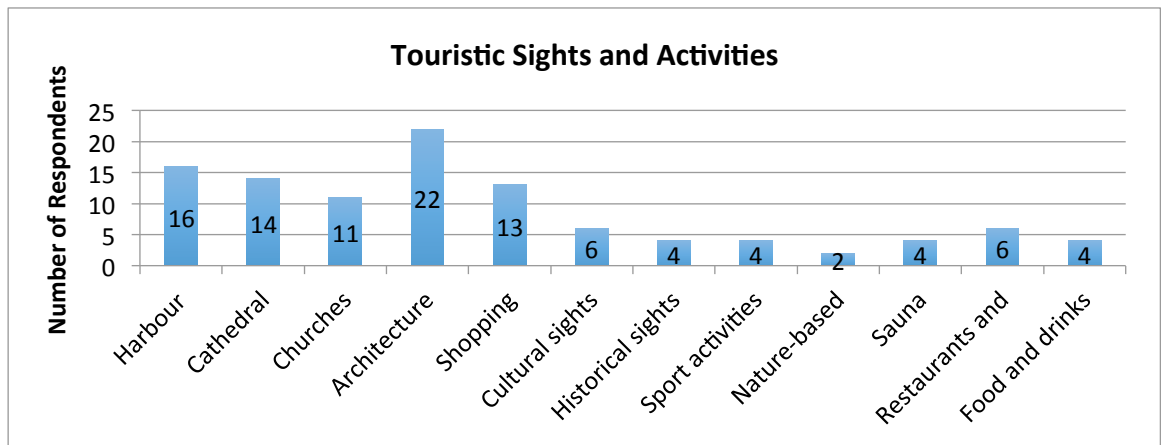


Figure 18 Touristic Sights and Activities Image (N=58)

The images and characteristics of touristic sights and activities in Helsinki that came up in the minds of the respondents are shown in Figure 18. There are many differences between the knowledgeable respondents and the non-knowledgeable respondents. These differences are displayed in Figure 19.

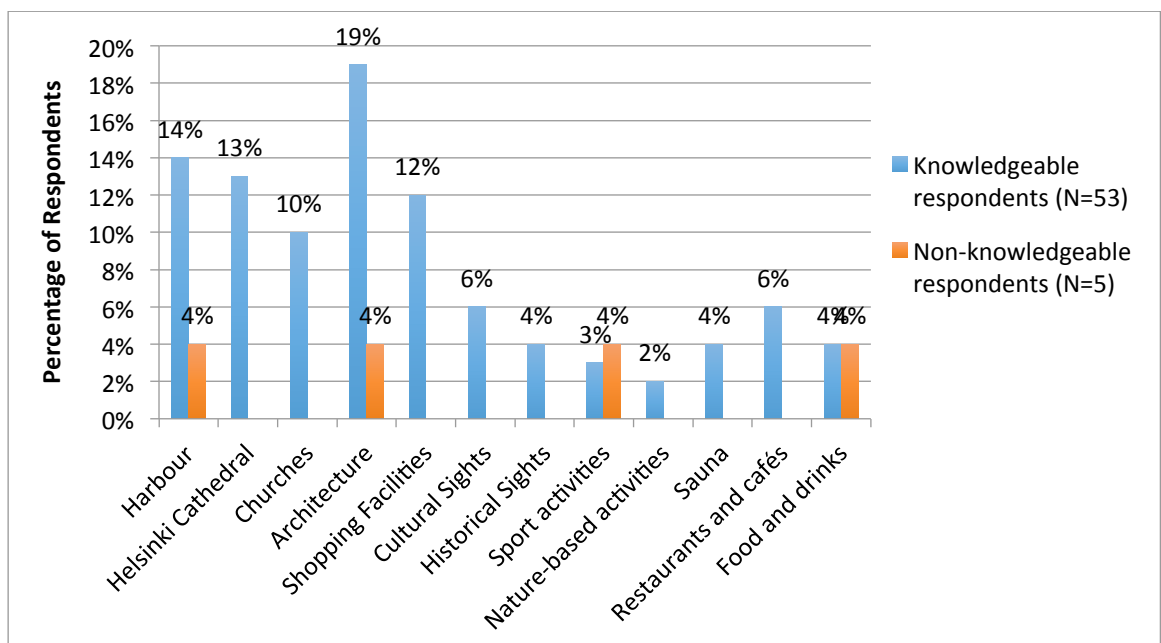


Figure 19 Touristic Sights and Activities Image by Knowledgeable and Non-Knowledgeable Respondents (N=58)

As can be seen in Figure 19, the knowledgeable respondents have a good image of the harbour, the Helsinki Cathedral, churches, architecture and shopping facilities in terms of touristic sights. It is striking that only a few non-knowledgeable respondents thought about touristic sights and activities. To emphasize, just 4% of the non-knowledgeable respondents came up with the image of the harbour and with architecture characteristics. The knowledgeable respondents described Helsinki as a port city. Additionally, the Helsinki Cathedral was mentioned the most of the churches, followed by the Uspenski Cathedral and the Rock Church. The architecture aspect contains the squares, including the Market Square, and the buildings, which were described as beautiful, old, big and grey. The shopping facilities became an image due to Helsinki's shopping malls, Design District, food market and market halls. The cultural sights contain museums and the Olympic Stadium. The historical sights contain Suomenlinna and the central station. Moreover, the sport activities include skiing, ice hockey and husky tours and the nature-based activities include spending time at a cottage and hiking. It was noticeable that the 6% of image for Helsinki's restaurants and cafés was mainly due to Café Regatta. The knowledgeable respondents described the other cafés as cosy, modern and hip and they related these to the Design District. In terms of food and drinks, the respondents thought about fish and liquor.

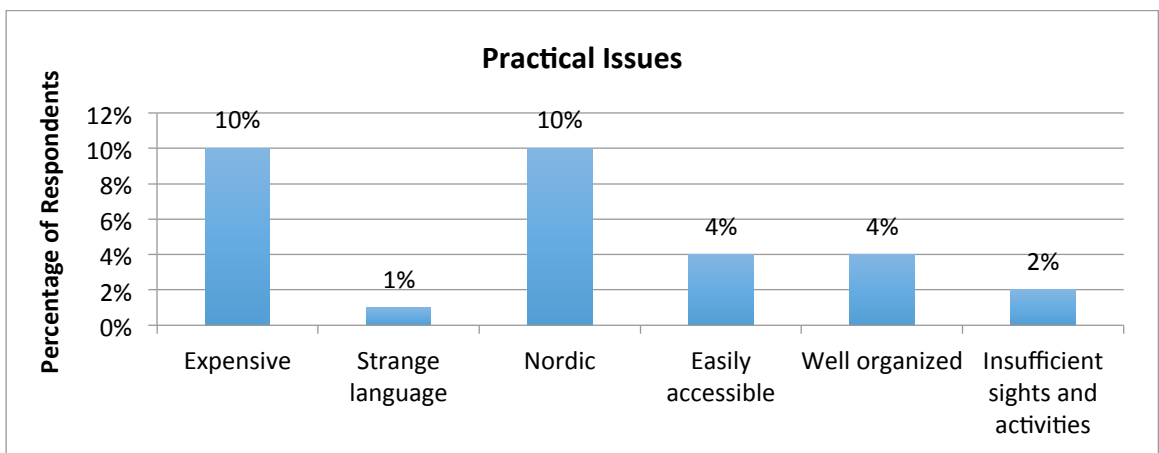


Figure 20 Practical Issues Image (N=29)

In Figure 20, there is not made a distinction between the respondents, since it is about practical issues, which in the eyes of the Dutch population might be displayed as facts instead of opinions. As can be seen, 10% of the respondents stated that Helsinki is an expensive tourist destination. For 10% of the respondents it came to their mind that Helsinki is situated in the Nordic region. Moreover, 4% state that sights in and outside Helsinki are easily accessible by foot or by public transportation. 4% stated as well that the city is well organised, which makes it easy to go from one place to another. For 2% of the respondents, the image appeared of insufficient sights and activities in the Helsinki region.

The respondents gave an explanation of the city's characteristics as well. These characteristics were both positive and negative. Images of the city, which derived from the context that may be defined as positive, are cosy, beautiful, nice, atmospheric, charming, clean, vibrant, interesting, safe, colourful, a rich culture and full of history. Images of the city, which derived from the context that may be defined as negative, are grey, dark, boring, busy and characterless. Images of the city, which could not be defined as positive or negative due to no derivation of the context, are small, big, modern, old, wintry, quiet, stately and unknown.

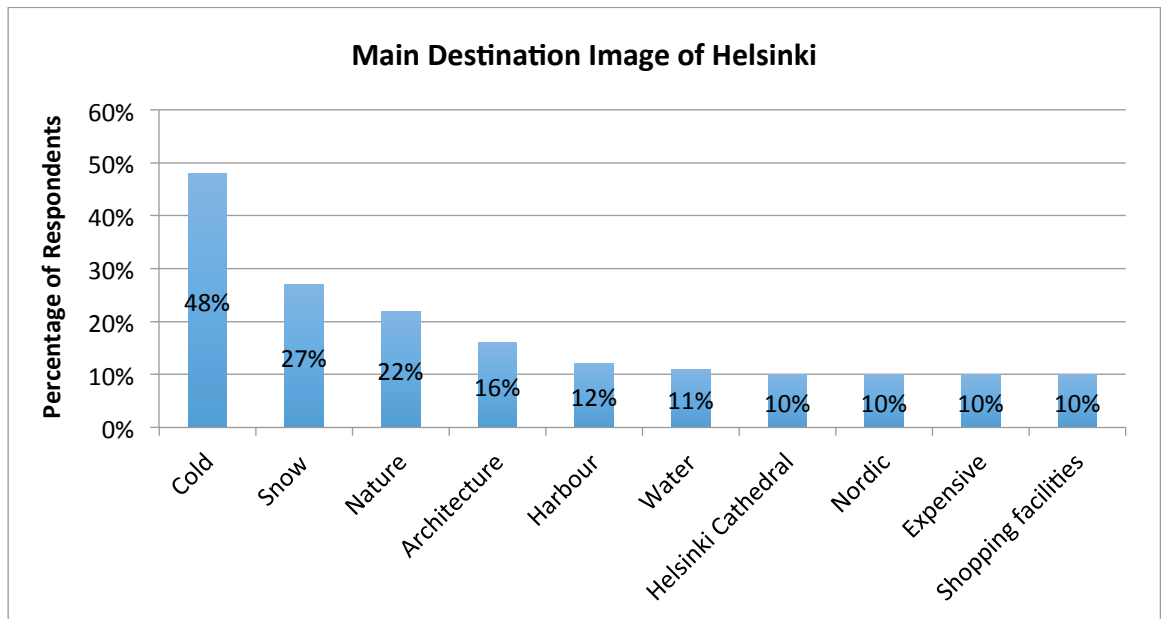


Figure 21 Main Destination Image of Helsinki of the Respondents (N=145)

Figure 21 shows the ten most mentioned images and characteristics that came up in the mind of the respondents. Almost half of the respondents imaged that Helsinki is a cold tourist destination. A quarter imaged Helsinki with snow and a lot of nature. In addition, Helsinki's architecture came to the mind of 16% of the respondents. The Helsinki Cathedral is the most mentioned touristic sight, one-tenth of the respondents thought about this building.

Afterwards, the respondents were asked what kind of atmosphere they expect when having a holiday in summer and when having a holiday in winter in Helsinki. 28 characteristics were displayed of which the respondents could choose a maximum of ten. The outcome is shown in Figure 22.

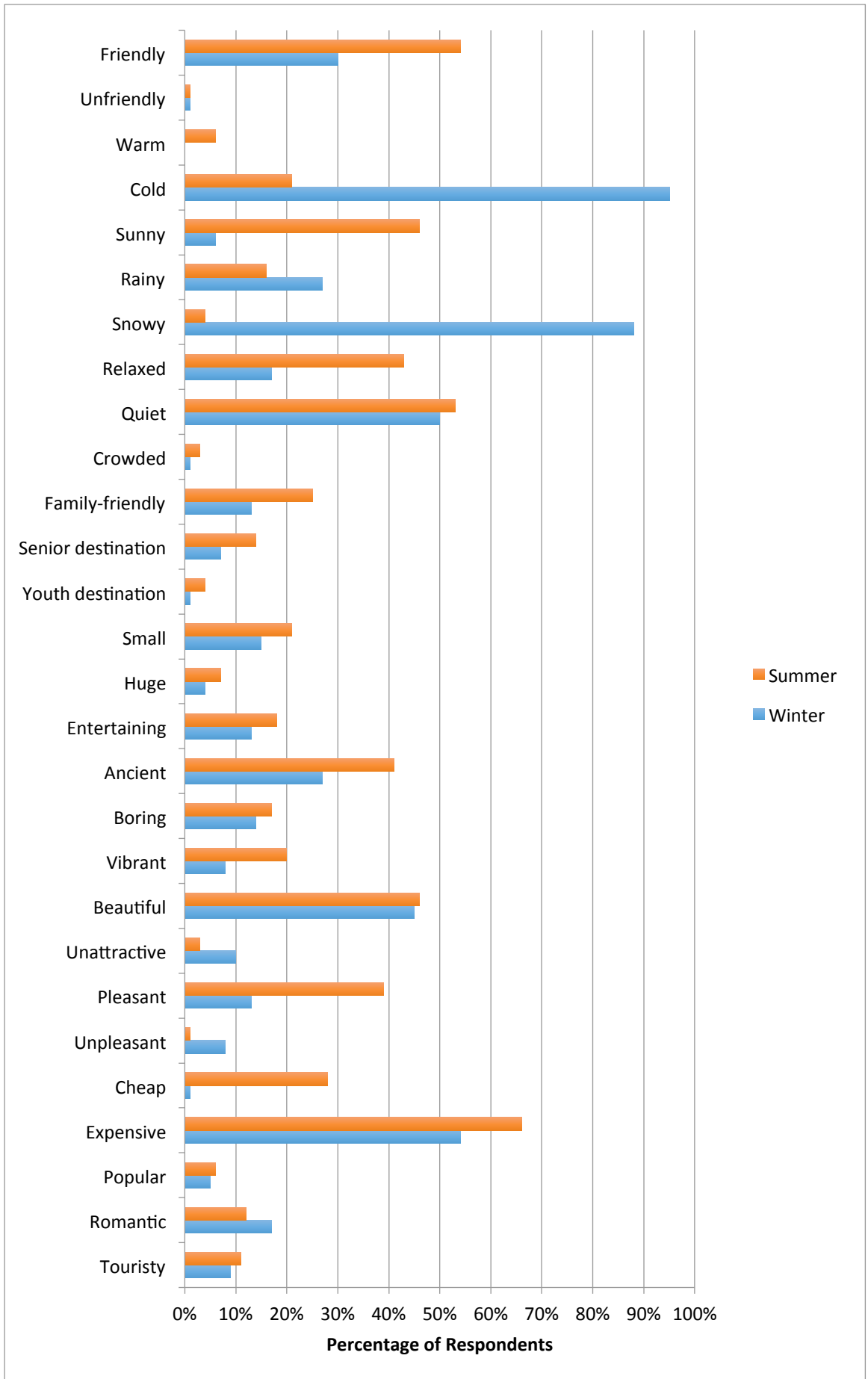


Figure 22 Helsinki's Image in Summer and Winter by the Respondents (N=145)

Differences and similarities during summer and winter can be seen in the graph in Figure 22. Some characteristics stand out from others. To illustrate, the respondents imagine a winter holiday in Helsinki mainly as cold and snowy and a summer holiday as friendly, sunny and relaxed. Both in summer and in winter, around than half of the respondents expect Helsinki as a quiet and above all, an expensive destination. More than 40% of the respondents image Helsinki as a beautiful destination, both in summer and in winter. As can be seen, more than 20% of the respondents still image Helsinki as a cold destination in summer. Quite remarkable as well is that the respondents image Helsinki friendlier, more family-friendly, more relaxed, more ancient, more pleasant and more vibrant in summer season than in winter season. Moreover, the respondents image Helsinki more romantic in winter than in summer. In addition, the respondents could add a characteristic to this list themselves. They expected a holiday in winter as well as a 'dark' destination, since they imagine this period with little daylight. Besides, almost all the respondents image Helsinki both in summer and in winter not as unfriendly and crowded. They would not image Helsinki as a youth destination as well. However, around 10% of the respondents stated that Helsinki is a senior destination.

#### **4.5 Statements About Helsinki**

This subchapter contains the analysis of the given answers on twenty statements about Helsinki. The respondents could indicate if they totally disagree, disagree, agree or totally agree with the given statements. The respondents were not able to choose for 'I do not know', since it is about the image they have in mind and therefore, the answer cannot be right or wrong. The main idea of this research part is that it could be understand what the Dutch population think of Helsinki's offers as a tourist destination.

The outcome is divided into two sections: respondents who have visited Helsinki and respondents who have not been in Helsinki. In this way, the destination image could be compared between people who could have experienced Helsinki already and people whose answers are based on imagination and outside influences. The respondents will be further referred as 'visitors' and 'non-visitors', based on if they have or have not visited Helsinki. The outcome of the statements is divided in four graphs, which are categorised. The figures are displayed in Figure 23-27.



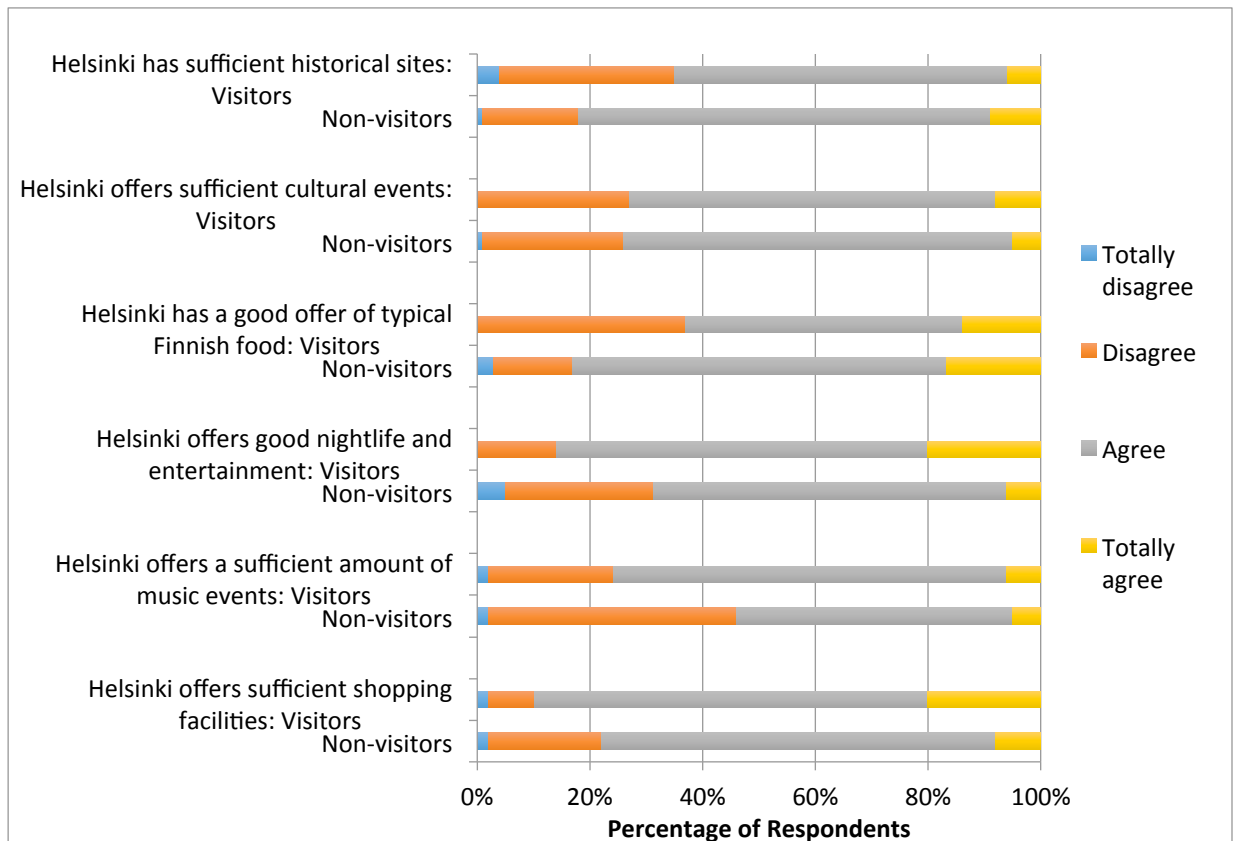


Figure 23 The Respondents' Opinion About Statements of Helsinki's Touristic Offers (N=145)

According to Figure 23, most of the visitors and the non-visitors state that Helsinki has sufficient historical sights. However, more than one-third of the visitors disagree with this statement. Only a quarter of the respondents disagree with the statement that Helsinki offers sufficient cultural events. Both the visitors and the non-visitors have slightly the same image about this statement. 84% of the non-visitors agree with the statement “Helsinki has a good offer of typical Finnish food”. However, the visitors, the ones who might have experienced the typical Finnish food, think different, since one-third of the visitors disagreed with the statement. Most respondents agreed with the statement “Helsinki offers good nightlife and entertainment”. 85% of the visitors compared to 68% of the non-visitors agreed with this statement, this might be due to the fact that the visitors have experienced the nightlife and entertainment in Helsinki already. Almost one-third of the non-visitors disagreed with the statement. In total, three-quarter of the visitors agree with the statement “Helsinki offers a sufficient amount of music events”. On the contrary, around half of the non-visitors disagreed with the statement. This might indicate that the image of music events in Helsinki is still remaining vague for the Dutch population, since there is a striking difference between visitors and non-visitors. More than three-quarter of the respondents agreed with the statement “Helsinki offers sufficient shopping facilities”. On the

contrary, still 22% of the non-visitors disagreed with this statement. To conclude, both visitors and non-visitors agree that Helsinki has a sufficient amount of touristic offers.

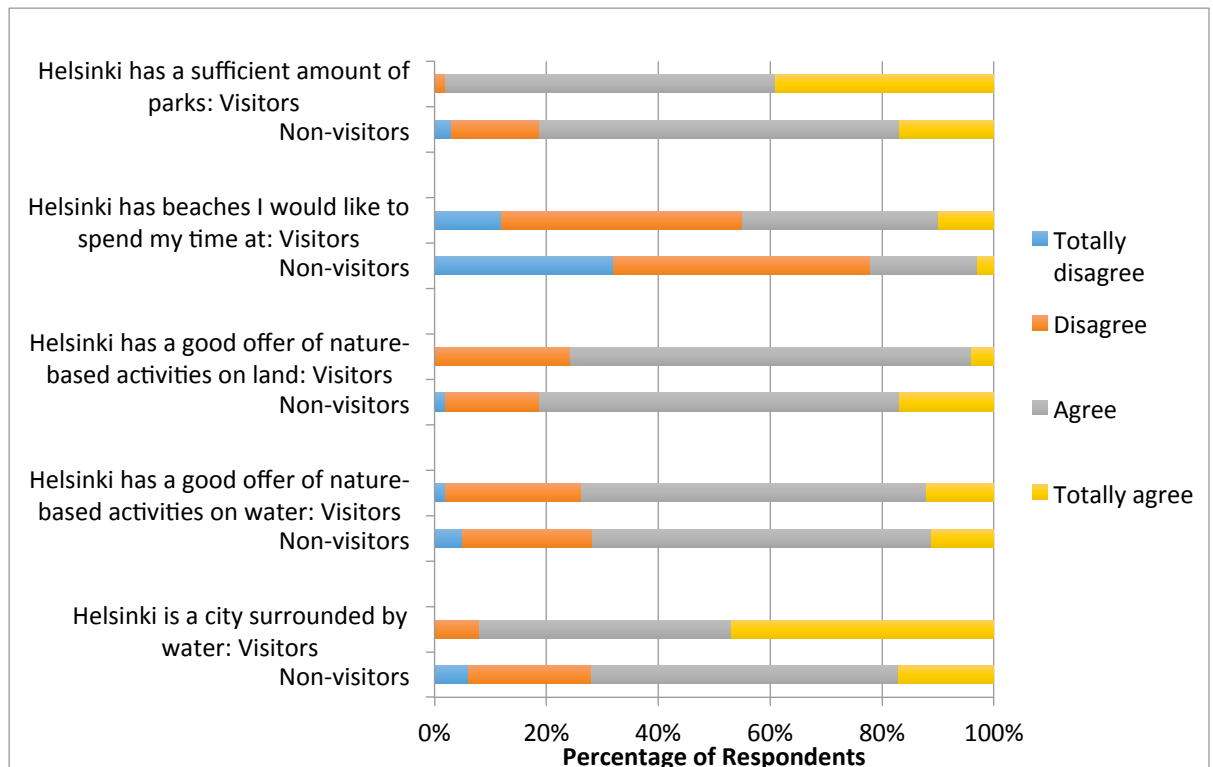


Figure 24 The Respondents' Opinion About Statements of Helsinki's Nature Offers (N=145)

As can be seen in Figure 24, the majority of the respondents agree with the statement “Helsinki has a sufficient amount of parks”. However, almost two-fifth of the non-visitors disagreed with this statement. Since this only counts for 2% of the visitors, it might indicate that non-visitors do not have a clear image of parks in Helsinki, while the visitors already experienced this. As can be noticed for the statement “Helsinki has beaches I would like to spend my time at”, the majority, 102 out of 145, disagreed with this statement. Remarkable is that almost half of the visitors did agree with the statements and thus, might have experienced beaches in Helsinki they liked. Additionally, both visitors and non-visitors agreed that Helsinki has a good offer of nature-based activities on land and on water. While this is true, the respondents think that there could still be more nature-based activities in Helsinki provided on water than on land. More than 90% of the visitors might have experienced the water around Helsinki, which led them to agree with the statement “Helsinki is a city surrounded by water”. Besides, still a quarter of the non-visitors disagreed with the statement, which could mean that non-visitors are not well exposed to the water around Helsinki. In brief, the majority of the respondents agree that Helsinki has a sufficient amount of nature offers. Helsinki’s beaches offerings are the only

nature part that the respondents disagreed with. They or might think that there is an insufficient amount of beaches in Helsinki, or they do not like the beaches that Helsinki offers.

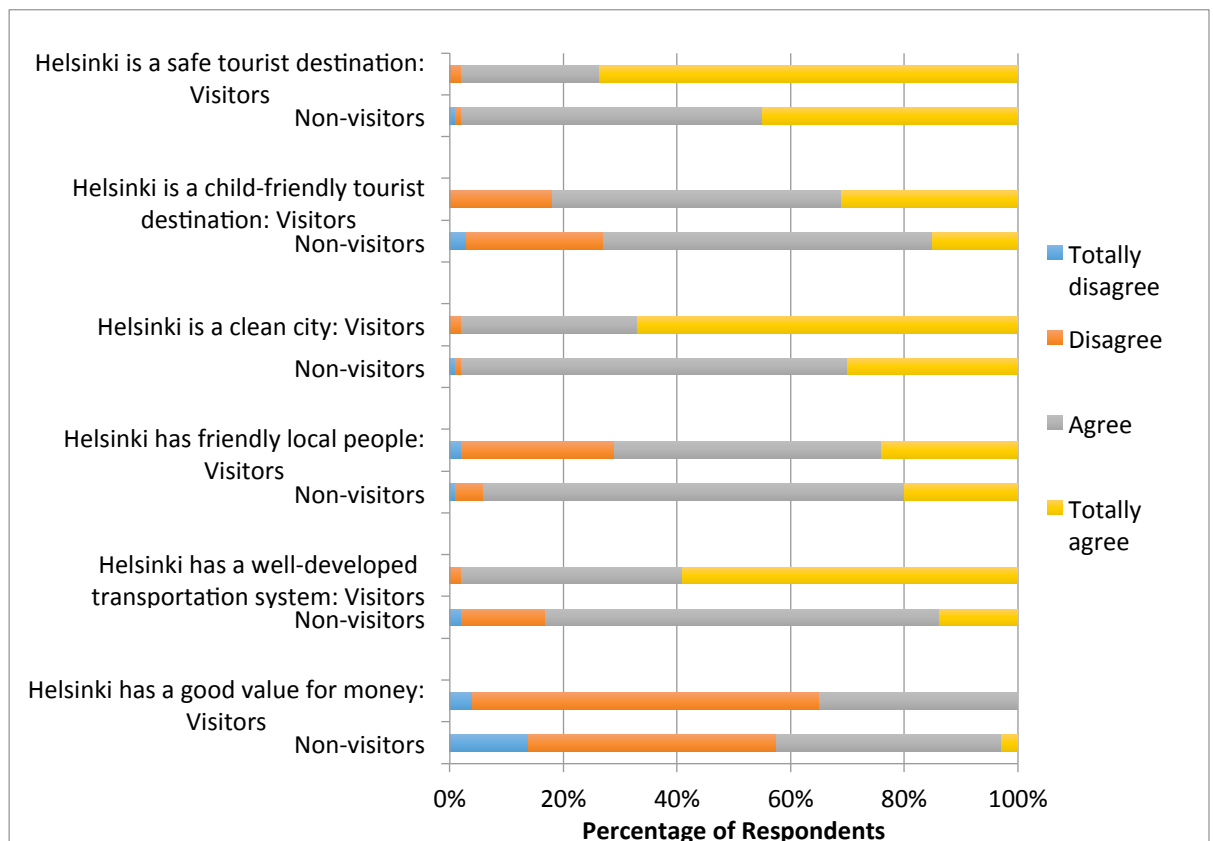


Figure 25 The Respondents' Opinion About Statements of the Convenience for Helsinki's Tourists (N=145)

According to Figure 25, Helsinki is a convenient tourist city for the Dutch population. Only the majority of the respondents disagreed on the statement “Helsinki has a good value for money”. The visitors might have experienced too expensive prices during their stay in Helsinki, since 65% disagreed with the statement. 58% of the non-visitors disagreed as well. This might indicate that there is an image among the Dutch population that Helsinki does not have a good value for money. Moreover, 98% of the respondents agreed that Helsinki is a safe and clean tourist destination. The 98% included a higher percentage of visitors than non-visitors. Furthermore, it is striking that three-third of the visitors totally agreed with the statement regarding safety in Helsinki and thus, it can be said that this group might have experienced the safety in Helsinki. More than two-third of the respondents agree with the statement that Helsinki is a child-friendly tourist destination as well. Around a quarter of the non-visitors and two-fifth of the visitors disagree with this statement. The majority of the respondents agree with the statement “Helsinki has friendly local people”. Remarkable is that more than a quarter of the visitors disagreed with this statement that Helsinki has friendly local people. This might lead to the fact that this group

have experienced the friendliness and unfriendliness of Helsinki's citizens and might concluded differently. In summary, besides the good value for money Helsinki offers, the city is a convenient tourist destination for the Dutch population.

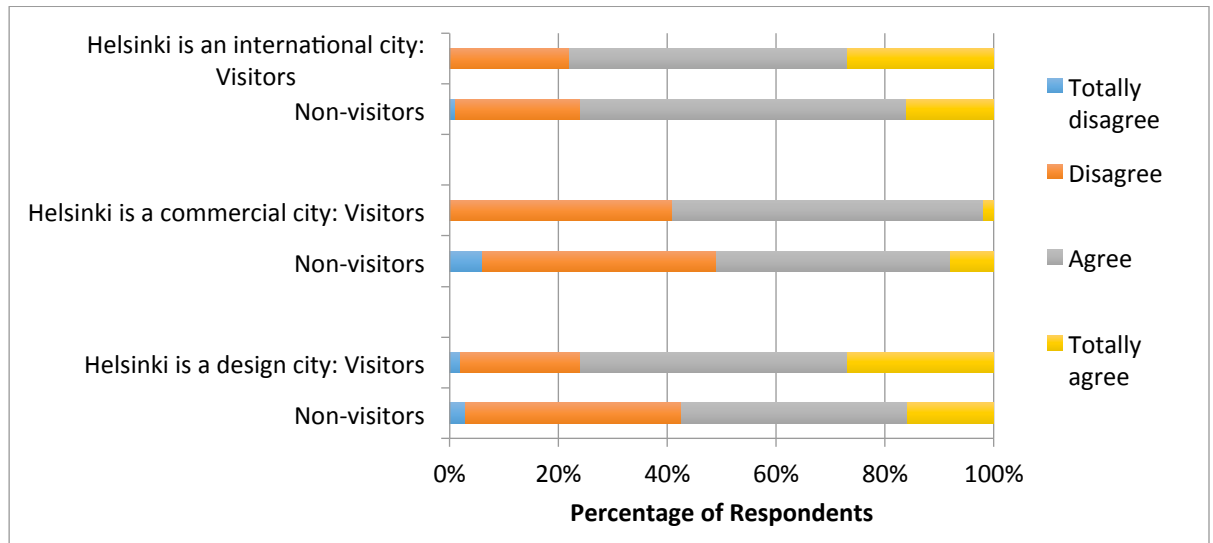


Figure 26 The Respondents' Opinion About Statements of Helsinki's Characteristics (N=145)

Figure 26 shows the opinions of the respondents about statements of Helsinki's characteristics. More than three-quarter of the respondents agree with the statement "Helsinki is an international city". Around half of the respondents disagree with the statement "Helsinki is a commercial city", while the other half of the respondents agree with the statement. With reference to this figure, it might be stated that Helsinki is neither a commercial city nor is not a commercial city. It is not clear to the non-visitors if Helsinki is a design city, since almost half of the non-visitors disagreed with the statement and the other half agreed with the statement. On the contrary, more than three-quarter of the visitors agreed with the statement.

Figure 27 shows the five statements, which the respondents agreed to the most. As can be seen, 98% of the respondents agree that Helsinki is a safe tourist destination and a clean city. 87% of the respondents agree that Helsinki has a sufficient amount of parks. Remarkable is that visitors agreed this with 98%, while non-visitors only agreed with 81%. 88% of the respondents agree that Helsinki has friendly local people. The visitors agree less than the non-visitors to this statement, since they might have experienced different during their stay in Helsinki. Lastly, 90% of the respondents agree that Helsinki has a well-developed transportation system. 98% of the visitors might have experienced this and thus, agree to the statement.

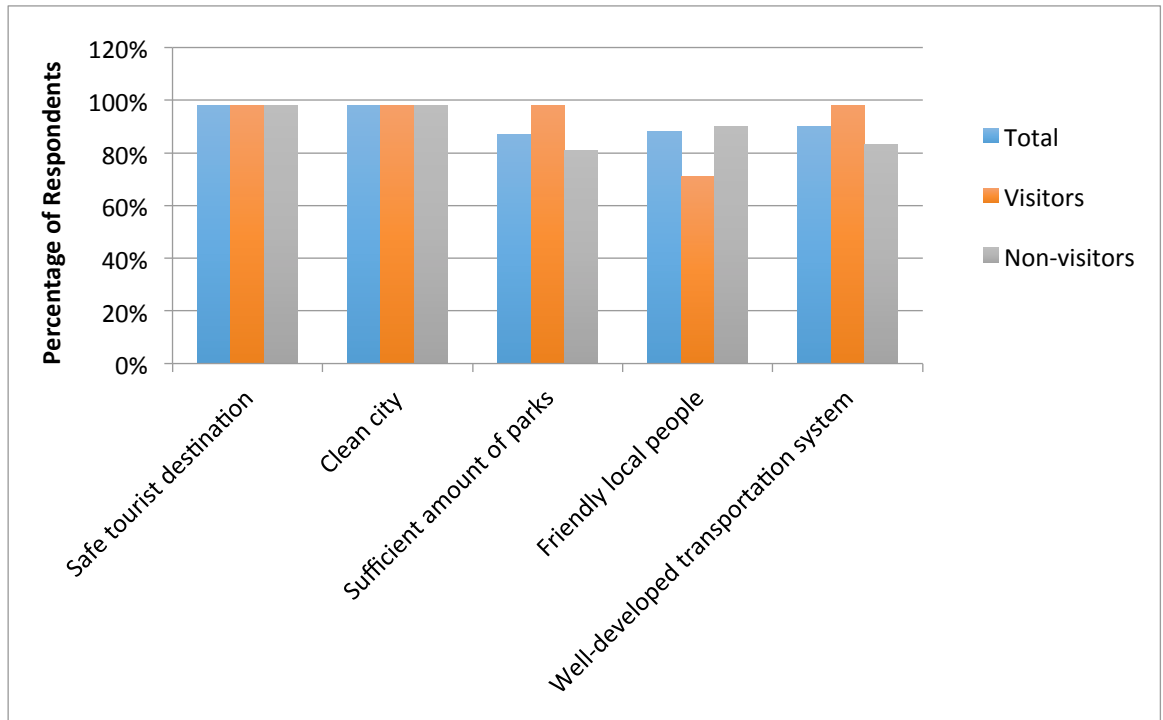


Figure 27 Percentage of Agreement of Statements by Visitors and Non-Visitors

The majority of the respondents disagreed to the statements “Helsinki has beaches I would like to spend my time at” and “Helsinki has a good value for money”. In total, 70% of the respondents disagreed to the fact that Helsinki has beaches to spend their time at. Although, 55% of the visitors disagreed, which is near the half of the visitors, the non-visitors disagreed with 78%. It might be concluded that the experience is different than the imagination for this image of Helsinki. Additionally, the majority of the respondents, namely 61%, disagreed as well to the fact that Helsinki has a good value for money. This was both more or less equally disagreed by the visitors and the non-visitors. It might be concluded that the Dutch population have the image that Helsinki does not offer a good value for money.

#### 4.6 Interest in Helsinki as a Tourist Destination

The respondents were asked if they would consider visiting Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future. Figure 28 and 29 shows the outcome. Figure 30-33 shows the reasons for the respondents’ answers.

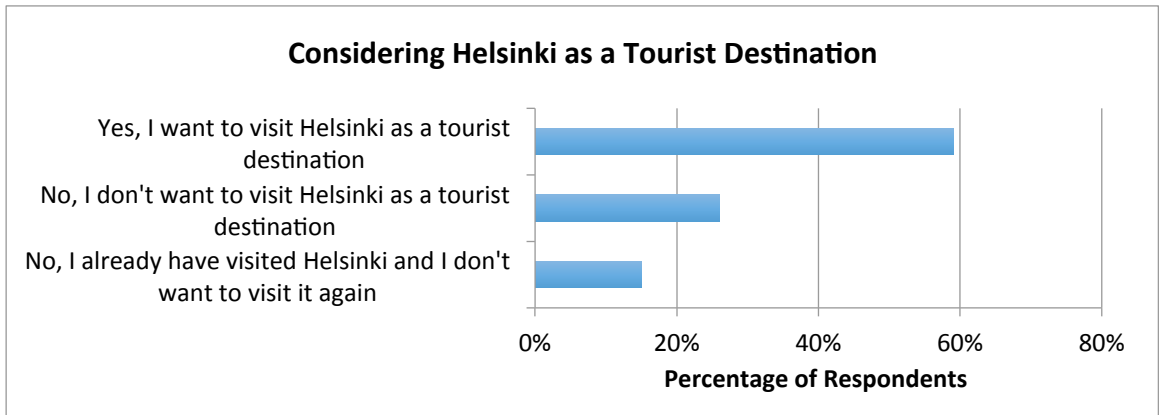


Figure 28 The Percentage of Respondents Considering Helsinki as a Tourist Destination in the Future (N=145)

As can be seen in Figure 28, more than half of the respondents want to visit Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future. This might indicate that Helsinki as a tourist destination is a potential for the Dutch population.

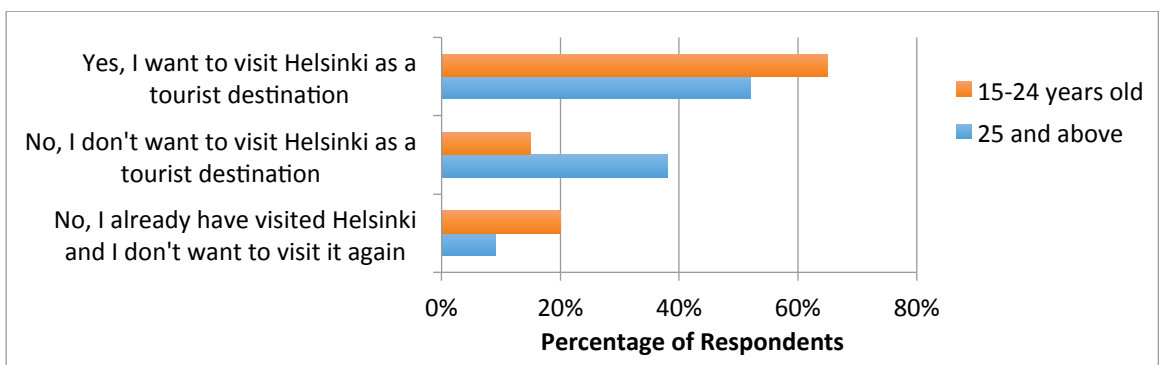


Figure 29 Respondents Considering Helsinki as a Tourist Destination by Age (N=145)

When looking to the statistics more in depth, Figure 29 indicates that Helsinki as a tourist destination is a good potential for the age group 15-24 years old. 20% of this group have already visited Helsinki and only 15% of this group is not interested in visiting Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future. The scores provide valuable insights and a follow-up question was implemented in the questionnaire to provoke reasons for the selected score. In this way, the reasons, why a Dutch person would or would not visit Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future, can be understood.



Figure 30 The Respondents' Reasons for Visiting Helsinki as a Tourist Destination in the Future (N=86)

There are 86 respondents interested in visiting Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future, which is 59%. As can be seen in Figure 30, almost half of these respondents are curious to and interested in the city itself or its nature. They stated that in their eyes, Helsinki seems like a nice and beautiful city with wonderful nature. Some of them have already been in Helsinki and they are curious to the changes Helsinki will have faced after some years. 14% of the respondents want to visit Helsinki to visit friends and family in the neighbourhood. 12% are curious to Helsinki as a tourist destination, since it will be a totally different experience in their eyes than their usual European city trips. 9% just wanted to visit Helsinki, because they want to have the Nordic experience and will continue their trip to other parts of Finland after visiting Helsinki. 7% of the respondents only wanted to visit Helsinki, since they would like to visit every capital city in Europe and they have not been in Helsinki yet. This group might get triggered easily to visit Helsinki. Moreover, 5% of the respondents indicated that they would like to visit Helsinki in winter for the winter experience and 3% would like to visit Helsinki in summer for the summer experience.

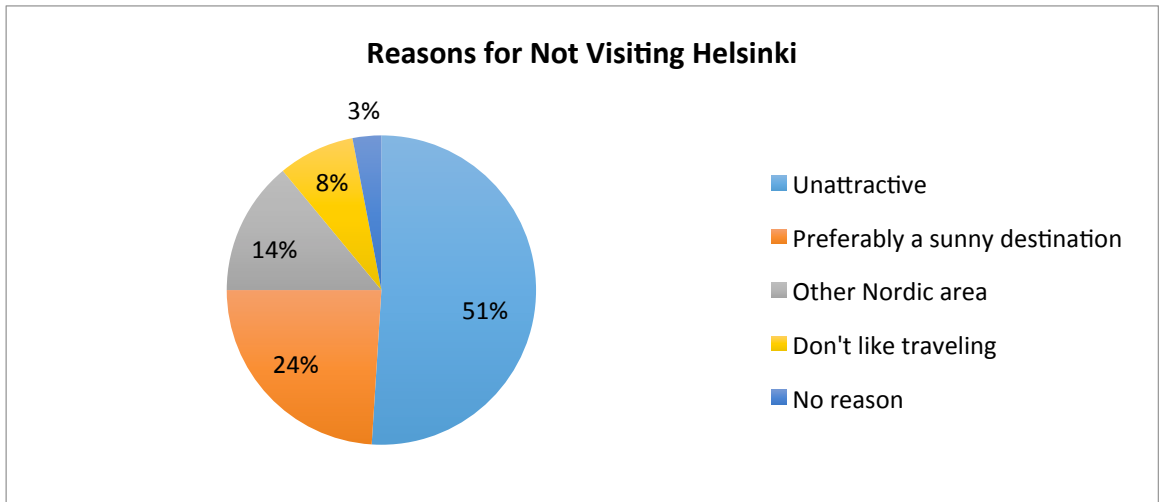


Figure 31 The Respondents' Reasons for Not Visiting Helsinki as a Tourist Destination in the Future (N=37)

There were 37 respondents, which contain 26% of the total, who do not want to visit Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future. As can be seen in Figure 31, more than half of these respondents do not want to visit Helsinki, since the city seems unattractive in their eyes. This is a group that can be persuaded, when the attractive aspects of Helsinki will be exposed to them. Almost a quarter of these respondents do not want to visit Helsinki, since they prefer a sunny destination, for instance, the Mediterranean countries. It is hard to persuade this group, since they have their own preferences. However, this group could be exposed with the summer experience Helsinki has. 14% of the group stated that they preferably want to visit another Nordic city or area instead of Helsinki. 8% of these respondents stated that they do not like traveling at all. This group is hard to attract.

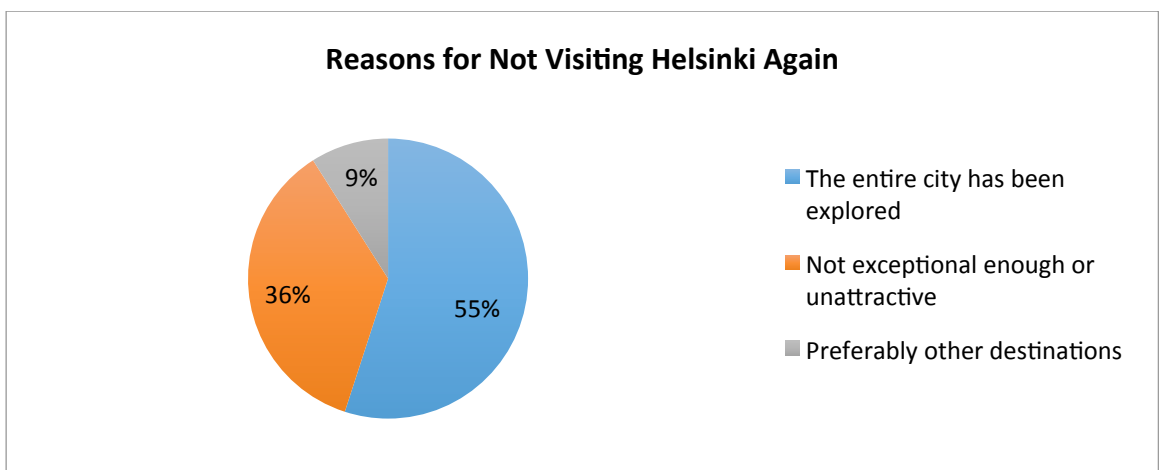


Figure 32 The Respondents' Reasons for Not Visiting Helsinki as a Tourist Destination Again (N=22)



There were 22 respondents who do not want to visit Helsinki as a tourist destination, since they already have been there. This is 15% of the respondents. As can be seen in Figure 32, more than half of the respondents do not want to visit Helsinki again, since they have explored the entire city already. In their opinion, there are not enough new things to see to visit the city again. 36% of these respondents did not find Helsinki exceptional or attractive enough to visit the city again. 9% of these respondents prefer other destinations, since they have already been in Helsinki.

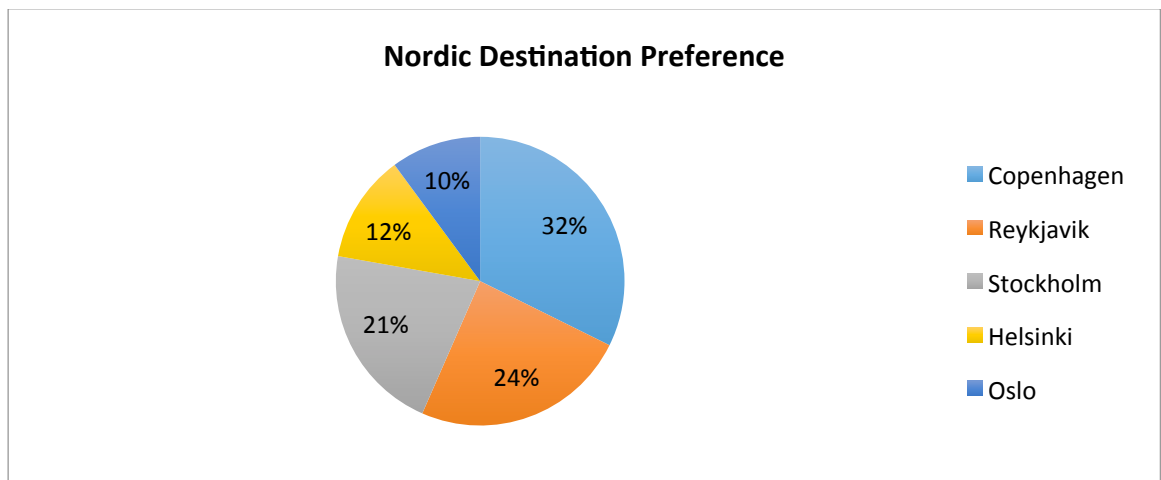


Figure 33 The Respondents' Nordic Destination Preference (N=145)

As can be seen in Figure 33, almost one-third of the respondents would rather visit Copenhagen than Helsinki. Almost a quarter would choose for Reykjavik, 21% for Stockholm and 10% for Oslo, which is the least favourite Nordic city in this research. 12% of the respondents would rather visit Helsinki than the other Nordic capital cities.

The reason of most of the respondents, who preferably visit Copenhagen, chose for Copenhagen, since the city is better known than Helsinki. They have heard more stories and received more information about this destination. In their eyes, there is more to do and to see in Copenhagen, the city is more modern and cultural, and the city focuses more on youth. The 24% of the respondents, who rather want to visit Reykjavik, mainly want to visit Reykjavik because of the country. They find Iceland more exceptional than the other destinations, because of its volcanoes and geysers. Moreover, there is more chance of seeing the northern lights as well, which the respondents find attractive. Stockholm owes his 21% of preference to the positive word-of-mouth. These respondents state that Stockholm is a more vibrant city than Helsinki with more touristic sights. The 10% of the respondents, who have chosen for Oslo, mainly chose for Oslo because of the nature outside the city. They are more interested in Norway than the city itself, since they have the image that Norway is a wonderful country. Most respondents, who would rather visit Helsinki, would

visit Helsinki because they have not been to this city yet or they have lived in Helsinki and created positive memories. The summer possibilities, due to its nature, have an important role in the preference as well.

#### **4.7 Suggestions and Improvement Points for Helsinki as a Tourist Destination**

At last, the respondents were asked if they have suggestions or improvement points to develop Helsinki into a better tourist destination. In total, 65 respondents of the survey provided the list of suggestions and improvement points. All the suggestions and improvement points are categorised, and eventually summarised.

The main suggestion, which was represented by almost all the respondents, is that Helsinki should improve in their destination marketing in the Netherlands. Helsinki is an infamous and unpopular destination for many Dutch travellers and they are unaware of the things Helsinki has to offer as a tourist destination. The hidden beauty of Helsinki's nature could be promoted more, as well as the possible activities in terms of sports and nature. According to the respondents, places where Helsinki might market their destination are social media, popular magazines, travel television programs, travel agencies and the ANWB, which is the Royal Dutch Tourist Federation. Besides promoting more, there should be advertised in different ways, according to the respondents. Not only Helsinki should be promoted, but the rest of the country should be taken into account as well. Namely, Helsinki can serve as one of the destinations for a trip around Finland. Other suggestions were that tourist destination pictures of Helsinki could be posted at articles about Helsinki in Dutch newspapers and magazines. For instance, these pictures could be matched to articles Finland is good at, such as the well-developed educational system in Finland. Moreover, the respondents suggested that Helsinki could be better linked to historical events, which could be used as a promotion tool.

There were unchangeable suggestions as well, such as the weather. However, the summer weather conditions could be promoted more to create a sunnier image in case the potential travellers are looking for sunnier travel destinations. To make travelling in winter periods in Helsinki more pleasant, the respondents came up with the idea of creating more places for relaxing purposes while walking around the city. For instance, food halls with cheaper drink and eat options than the current market halls could be provided. Eventually, this could be a meeting place for locals and tourists.

As suggested by the respondents, Helsinki should be more attractive for youth. For instance, organising big events and festivals will attract more youth and eventually, it will

create more publicity for the city itself. To illustrate, Budapest hosts the Sziget Festival in their city centre each year. The festival is well known among European youth and it created more publicity for Budapest itself as well. Helsinki should promote more youth activities, to turn the city into a youth destination, such as Berlin and Prague.

Besides organising events for the youth, Helsinki should organise and/or highlight more events, as stated by the respondents. Helsinki fades away among the bigger European cities that do have better known events. The famous and popular characteristics and aspects of Helsinki's events should be highlighted and advertised internationally. Moreover, when this happens, Helsinki might have more returning travellers, especially for the events. The respondents stated that the touristic sights can be seen during one city trip, which makes it not worth a while to visit the city for a second time. When big and popular events would be organised and well promoted, a visit to the city of Helsinki might remain renewed.

In addition, the respondents stated that packages or discounts make a city trip more attractive for the Dutch population. An all-inclusive holiday could be created. This includes the flight, transfers from the airport to the hotel and vice versa, and the hotel stay for a weekend. Moreover, respondents suggested an offer based on architecture and design. This might include tickets for museums, guided tours and concerts. Nature-based packages could be created, which is based on sports and nature activities. Additionally, cheap ticket options for flights and hotels could be provided on websites and Facebook pages, such as TravelBird, TicketSpy and PaperFlies. The Dutch population will get more triggered when discounts or cheap travel options are provided to them. Cheaper flight tickets in general could be an option to trigger more Dutch travellers to Helsinki. As a suggestion made by the respondents, airline companies, such as RyanAir, should fly to Helsinki as well, since this company offers generally seen cheaper tickets. Furthermore, the respondents argued that taxes on alcohol should be lowered. In their opinion, when prices for alcoholic drinks will drop down, Helsinki will attract more youth.

The respondents provided some small suggestions and improvement points as well. They indicated that it would be useful to implement special public transport cards for tourists. In addition, when there is a day without sun in Helsinki, the respondents stated that the city looks immediately grey and unpleasant. In their opinion, when the city would be more colourful or more decorated, the city might seem more attractive on rainy days as well. Moreover, the respondents are looking for more trendy restaurants and hotels. Besides these suggestions, the respondents argued that more traffic signs, menus and websites should be provided in English, in order to attract more Dutch travellers. It should be men-

tioned as well that the Finnish language does not have to be a barrier, since most Finnish people speak English.

Some of the suggestions made could be of high value for Helsinki in the future. For instance, creating cheaper food halls as a meeting place could become very significant for the city. This could be a place where tourists and locals could come together both in summer and in winter. In addition, the international festival offering could be used to follow the current trends.

These suggestions and improvement points were made by the respondents, since in their opinion, they will eventually create a better image of the city for the Dutch population. The next chapter 'Discussion and Recommendations' will provide the coherence between the theoretical framework and the findings.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to define the perceived image of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands. Chapter 2 and 4 contained the literature review and the outcomes of the conducted survey. This chapter will give an answer on the research question: How is the image of Helsinki as a tourist destination perceived in the Netherlands? The final answer will be created after the analysis of the following sub-questions:

- What images and characteristics has the Dutch population in mind about Helsinki as a tourist destination?
- To what extent does Helsinki meet the travel requirements of the Dutch population?
- How could Helsinki communicate itself the most effective as a tourist destination in the Netherlands?
- How could Helsinki be more appealing as a destination for Dutch tourists?

These questions can be answered after a thorough literature review and surveying a sample of the Dutch population.

### 5.1 Discussion

In this subchapter, the sub-questions will be discussed by using the findings and the relevant literature that is written regarding these subjects.

#### 1. *What images and characteristics has the Dutch population in mind about Helsinki as a tourist destination?*

As stated in the literature review, a destination image is constituted of the history, geography, art, music, citizens and attributes of a certain place (Marshalls 2008, 21). The findings show that the main images the Dutch population thinks about when thinking about Helsinki as a tourist destination consist of these factors as well. In their mind, Helsinki turned out to be a cold and snowy destination. According to their imagination or experiences, Helsinki has much nature including many water areas, such as the sea and lakes. Moreover, the Helsinki Cathedral, the harbour, many shopping facilities and architecture in general are part of the Dutch' destination image of Helsinki. On the contrary, in their opinion, Helsinki has only few touristic sights and activities. Lastly, they see Helsinki as a Nordic place, which is expensive, including a negative price-quality ratio.

*Refutation and confirmation.* According to the findings, 48% of the Dutch population sample, which is nearly half of the group, has a cold weather image and 27% have a snowy weather image of Helsinki in mind. Even though the average temperature in July is still

17°C and snow is only present half of the year (Holiday Weather 2017a; Visit Finland 2017b). Their image about Helsinki's nature and water areas can be confirmed, since one third of the city exists of green areas (Helsinki 2017a; Visit Finland 2017a). The fact that the Helsinki Cathedral was mentioned by 10% of the Dutch population sample is not quite conspicuous, since according to a study of Dinnie (2011, 33), this sight is commonly used as Helsinki's promotion tool. In addition, 10% of the Dutch population sample marks Helsinki as an expensive tourist destination. Therefore, it was quite remarkable in fact that 88% of the Dutch population sample would rather choose for another Nordic capital city as a tourist destination than Helsinki. As a matter of fact, in a study of PriceofTravel (2017b), it turned out that Helsinki has the cheapest daily price ratio for travellers of all Nordic capital cities.

2. *To what extent does Helsinki meet the travel requirements of the Dutch population?*

According to the literature review, there are many travel requirements and trends among the Dutch population coming up nowadays. Helsinki as a tourist destination does meet the travel requirements of the Dutch population in terms of nature-based holidays, where the traveller has time to come to oneself. (Van Joolen 2017.) Helsinki itself has many nature areas, since the city is surrounded by water, it has many parks and islands, and there are two national parks in the Helsinki area (Helsinki 2017a; National Parks 2017). Dutch travellers are looking for safe travel destinations as well, which makes Helsinki a good choice (Van Joolen 2017; Hanafi 2016). On the other hand, the Dutch population is seeking for People Planet Purpose traveling, in which they are aiming for personal enrichment and a contribution to the quality of life of the local population (Van Marrewijk 2017). However, Finland is already a well-developed country, which makes it hard for Dutch travellers to fulfil these needs in a Finnish area. Moreover, the Dutch youth often goes on a holiday to international cities when a famous festival is happening (Van Marrewijk 2017). In order to attract more Dutch youth, Helsinki could offer more festivals with camping facilities focusing on international youth.

*Perception of the Dutch population.* The findings show that 87% of the Dutch population sample agreed to the statement that Helsinki has a sufficient amount of parks, 79% agreed that Helsinki is a city surrounded by water and 98% agreed that Helsinki is a safe tourist destination. The evidence seems to indicate that the Dutch population might be aware that Helsinki meets their travel requirements based on nature offers and safety. Moreover, 61% of the Dutch population sample agreed to the statement that Helsinki offers a sufficient amount of music events. While this is true, suggestions were made that Helsinki should be more attractive for youth. They suggested that Helsinki could meet

their travel requirements, when the city organises big international events and festivals. In addition, having travel discounts or purchasing travel packages is not a current trend. However, it could be concluded from the findings that these options are of high interest for Dutch travellers.

*3. How could Helsinki communicate itself the most effective as a tourist destination in the Netherlands?*

The findings show that 40% of the Dutch population sample created their image of Helsinki by hearing stories from families and friends. Thus, it could be concluded that a positive word-of-mouth is of utmost importance. The Net Promoter Score was quite low and therefore, Helsinki should need more promoters. To emphasize, both the detractors and the promoters are spreading word-of-mouth, which in this case is rather negative than positive. The promoters function as the marketing department of Helsinki and therefore, Helsinki's aim needs to be to get more promoters and fewer detractors. (Reichheld 2003, 1-6.)

Equally important, 28% of the Dutch population sample created their image of Helsinki through social media. According to the Tourism Fair of 2017 in the Netherlands, blogs and social media became of great influence for the travel choices of the Dutch population (Marrewijk 2017). In addition, the findings demonstrate that the Dutch population should be exposed to more advertisement of Helsinki as a tourist destination. According to the AIDA model, this is the first step in persuading travellers to visit the city. The Dutch population sample indicated that in general, Helsinki is an infamous destination in the Netherlands and unpopular, due to their unfamiliarity to the city. Besides, many of them were unaware of everything Helsinki has to offer as a tourist destination. Since more than a quarter of the Dutch population sample indicated that social media increased their image of Helsinki, it may be concluded that it will be a great marketing tool to communicate to the Dutch population and to increase their awareness. Moreover, not everyone's destination image is based on experiences and therefore, wrong destination images should be disproved by using the right marketing tools. If Helsinki succeeds to reveal a positive destination image to the Dutch population, the city creates itself a competitive advantage towards the other Nordic capital cities (Chon 1990, 2; Marshalls 2008, 6).

*4. How could Helsinki be more appealing as a destination for Dutch tourists?*

According to the answer on the first sub-question, the Dutch population sample had negative images in mind that could be disproved to them in order to make Helsinki more attractive as a tourist destination. Many of them have Helsinki in mind as a cold and snowy

place, which as can be concluded from the findings, is one of the reasons why Dutch travellers will not choose for visiting Helsinki. While this is true, Helsinki should be promoted to this group as a summer destination in order to refute their winter image of the city. Moreover, Helsinki is only the preferred Nordic capital city for a visit of 12% of the Dutch population sample. Therefore, Helsinki should distinguish itself from the other cities by advertising their uniqueness (Ekinici 2003, 23). It is stated by Qu et al. (2011, 468) that a strong, unique destination image would help to increase the favourability of a destination. In addition, Helsinki should make sure that the city as a tourist destination and their main touristic sights and activities are better known, since in this case, unfamiliarity is equal to unpopularity. Besides, it is important for each generation to be aware of things to do in the city. To illustrate and as already explained for the second sub-question, Helsinki could organise more big events and festivals, which are similar but unique as other popular international European dance festivals. In this way, the Dutch youth may be attracted to Helsinki for a festival city trip.

## **5.2 Recommendations and Conclusion**

This subchapter will give the final answer to the research question: How is the image of Helsinki as a tourist destination perceived in the Netherlands? In conclusion, the Dutch population sample image Helsinki as a cold and snowy destination with many nature areas. Although the Helsinki Cathedral and the harbour are well imaged in their mind, there is concluded that Helsinki does not offer sufficient touristic sights and activities. In addition, Helsinki is seen as an expensive Nordic city and less popular than other Nordic capital cities.

Overall, Helsinki as a tourist destination should be better known in the Netherlands and thus, be better promoted. A challenging factor is to create a positive word-of-mouth, since the Dutch citizens' friends and family that have visited Helsinki are of great influence for shaping their destination image. Social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, is another tool, which is a useful and easier way to market Helsinki to Dutch travellers. These marketing tools could help to increase the awareness of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands and to promote its uniqueness in comparison to the other Nordic capital cities.

Several tourist information and marketing offices, such as Visit Helsinki and Visit Finland, could fulfil this marketing task. Together with the help of the City of Helsinki, many people can be reached. In addition, the other tourist-related service providers in Helsinki could contribute to the marketing. To illustrate, restaurants and hotels could promote their ser-



vice and product offerings and tour guides could promote its guided tours on Dutch social media as well. The marketing could be done for only the Helsinki area or for the entire country with Helsinki functioning as one of the main stops during a round trip.

### **5.3 Justification, Reliability, Validity and Limitations**

This research was done in order to find out how the Dutch population perceive Helsinki as a tourist destination. Although every research has its limitations, it should be as valid and reliable as possible. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the justification, reliability, validity and the limitations of the research. First, the terms reliability and validity will be defined. Next, the justification, reliability, validity and limitations of the research in question will be elaborated.

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept (Bryman & Bell 2011, 158). In terms of a questionnaire, the questions, which are included, should obtain the same answer from a person each time it is asked. This means that the outcome of a test should be stable when the same sample is participating in a research on two different moments. (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 28; Bryman & Bell 2011, 158.) A reliable question needs to be simple and clearly formulated in order to gain the same answer at different times (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000, 28).

An error can exist in the survey, since the sample can never represent the entire Dutch population. The higher the sample will be, the less error there will be in the research. Besides, there can be a big error of nonresponse, since there are usually people who are reached, but not willing to fill in the survey. (Stopher 2012, 71-78.)

Validity refers to whether or not a measure of a concept really measures that concept (Bryman & Bell 2011, 159). It concerns the accuracy of the measurement and it can be divided into different parts. The content validity is important, which is related to the researcher's ability to create questions that reflect the subject in question. It emphasizes to the fact that key subjects will be included in the survey as well. Moreover, internal validity focuses on the fact that the questions need to be created in a certain way in order to be able to receive the outcome that is related to the research. Lastly, the external validity refers to the extent in which the results can be generalized to the target group of the survey, which in this case is the Dutch population. (Mora 2011.)

To increase the reliability, the questionnaire was created in Dutch. In this case, every respondent could understand the questions. A pilot test has been done, in order to be sure

that all the questions were understood properly and were simple and clearly formulated before publishing the survey.

In terms of validity, the researcher created questions that reflected the subject in question. Key subjects were included, in order to be able to gain final answers on the sub-questions and the main research question. In addition, the questions were created in a certain way in order to be able to receive the outcome related to the research. Each question, except for the general questions, was related to a part of the theoretical framework.

A quantitative research method has been used in order to reach as many Dutch people as possible. The questionnaire was sent to friends and family of the researcher and it was shared on social media. Many respondents could be reached. The researcher asked several people, living in different areas in the Netherlands, to share the link of the questionnaire on their social media page. As a result, people living everywhere in the Netherlands could be reached, which increased the reliability for the Dutch perception.

The research has a variety of limitations. First, the contained data becomes less reliable, due to the fact that the sample mainly contained people from 15-24 years old, since these are the most active on social media. Therefore, the survey outcome gives less insight of how the older people perceive Helsinki as a tourist destination and the contained data cannot generalise the whole Dutch population.

Besides, the sample size could be a limitation. The research contained 145 respondents, which is only a small percentage of the Dutch population. Ekinci (2003, 22) stated that destination images are for most of the people subjective and therefore, differ for each individual or group. Since in this case, some of the images were subjective as well, it is not known to what extent the whole Dutch population shares the given opinions and images. It could be said that this research does not represent the whole Dutch population, since it is based on a sample.

Another limitation is that there was a big error of nonresponse. Many people were reached and opened the questionnaire, however, they were not willing to fill in the survey. It can be stated that the researcher did not receive as much response as possible, since a wider range was reached than the amount of respondents.

#### **5.4 Evaluation**

The aim of the thesis was to research the perceived image of Helsinki as a tourist destination in the Netherlands. If Helsinki wants to attract more Dutch leisure people, the market-

ing office of several tourist companies could use this information. Companies, such as Visit Helsinki and Visit Finland could use the outcome of the research to create a marketing plan for the Dutch market. In addition, many service providers in Helsinki, such as hotels, cafés and restaurants, could use this data to attract more Dutch tourists to their venues. Further research could be done to different ways of marketing to the Dutch population. Moreover, research could be done to what different age groups prefer in a tourist destination and how Helsinki could distinguish itself best from other Nordic capital cities, in order to create a competitive advantage.

The author gained much knowledge during the thesis process. First, the author gained knowledge about the theoretical part of writing a thesis. To illustrate, the author is able to create a research question including sub-questions and the author is able to follow a thesis process regarding the set guidelines. Next, the author is able to find and analyse reliable sources for an academic research. Due to this, the author could write a literature review by means of the found sources and her own acquired knowledge. Additionally, the author learned to create and conduct a survey independently and eventually, analyse its outcomes responsibly by descriptions and creating graphs with the known statistics. The author learned to combine the results from a literature review with the results of a quantitative research as well. As a result, the author was able to answer the research question including its sub-questions. Moreover, the author understands that on one hand, a research should be valid and reliable, and on the other hand, there are limitations to every research and these should be taken into account. The author became aware that time management is of high importance when willing to finish the thesis process in time. Therefore, the author learned to work with time as efficient as possible. As a result, all the deadlines were reached in time.

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## Appendix

### Appendix I – Survey

#### Introduction

Thank you for your participation in this research. This survey is about your perceived image of Helsinki as a tourist destination. I would like to get this information from you, since I am using it for my thesis at Haaga-Helia, Helsinki. All your answers in this survey are right, since it is about your own perception and opinion. The survey contains 16 questions and it will take around 5-10 minutes. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept confidentially and they are only used for educational purposes.

#### General questions

1. What is your gender?
  - a. *Male*
  - b. *Female*
  
2. What is your age?
  - a. *15-24*
  - b. *25-44*
  - c. *45-64*
  - d. *65+*
  
3. What is your occupation?
  - a. *School pupil*
  - b. *Student*
  - c. *Employed*
  - d. *Un-employed*
  - e. *Retired*
  - f. *Other, namely...*

**The following questions will be about your travel experiences.**

4. How many times per year do you travel?
  - a. *0*
  - b. *1-2*
  - c. *3-4*
  - d. *5 or more*
  
5. Where are your travel destinations mainly?
  - a. *In the Netherlands*
  - b. *In Europe*
  - c. *Outside Europe*

**The following questions will be about Helsinki as a tourist destination.**

6. Have you visited Helsinki?
- a. *Yes, I have visited Helsinki.*
  - b. *No, I never visited Helsinki.*
  - c. *No, but I have planned a visit to Helsinki.*

If you have answered 'No' on the previous question, you can skip question 7 and 8.

7. How likely is it that you would recommend Helsinki as a tourist destination to family and friends?

*Not likely*                      1    10    *Very likely*

8. Describe why you have chosen for the grade in question 7.

*Open question*

9. What images or characteristics come to your mind when thinking about Helsinki as a tourist destination?

*Open question*

10. Did any of the following have influence on shaping your image about Helsinki?  
More answers can be chosen.

- a. *School*
- b. *Friends and family*
- c. *Tourism agency*
- d. *Social media*
- e. *Radio, television, newspapers and magazines*
- f. *Own experience*
- g. *Other, namely...*
- h. *I don't know anything about Helsinki*



11. What kind of atmosphere do you expect when visiting Helsinki for a holiday in summer? Choose a maximum of 10 descriptions of which you think fits Helsinki best.

	Friendly		Entertaining
	Unfriendly		Ancient
	Warm		Boring
	Cold		Vibrant
	Sunny		Beautiful
	Rainy		Unattractive
	Snowy		Pleasant
	Relaxed		Unpleasant
	Quiet		Cheap
	Crowded		Expensive
	Family-friendly		Popular
	Senior destination		Romantic
	Youth destination		Touristy
	Small		
	Huge		Other, namely...

12. What kind of atmosphere do you expect when visiting Helsinki for a holiday in winter? Choose a maximum of 10 descriptions of which you think fits Helsinki best.

	Friendly		Entertaining
	Unfriendly		Ancient
	Warm		Boring
	Cold		Vibrant
	Sunny		Beautiful
	Rainy		Unattractive
	Snowy		Pleasant
	Relaxed		Unpleasant
	Quiet		Cheap
	Crowded		Expensive
	Family-friendly		Popular
	Senior destination		Romantic
	Youth destination		Touristy
	Small		
	Huge		Other, namely...

13. This question contains statements about Helsinki. You can choose from the following answers: totally disagree – disagree – agree – totally agree. The answers are based on your perception of Helsinki, so it cannot be wrong.

	1	2	3	4
Helsinki has a sufficient amount of historical sites				
Helsinki offers a sufficient amount of cultural events				
Helsinki is a safe tourist destination				
Helsinki is a child-friendly tourist destination				
Helsinki is a clean city				
Helsinki has sufficient parks				
Helsinki has beaches I would like to spend my time at				
Helsinki has a good offer of nature-based activities on land				
Helsinki has a good offer of nature-based activities on water				
Helsinki has friendly local people				
Helsinki is an international city				
Helsinki is a commercial city				
Helsinki is a city surrounded by water				
Helsinki has a good offer of typical Finnish food				
Helsinki has a well-developed transportation system				
Helsinki offers good nightlife and entertainment				
Helsinki offers a sufficient amount of music events				
Helsinki is a design city				
Helsinki offers a sufficient amount of shopping facilities				
Helsinki has a good value for money				

14. Would you consider visiting Helsinki as a tourist destination in the future?
- Yes, I want to visit Helsinki as a tourist destination, because...*
  - No, I don't want to visit Helsinki as a tourist destination, because...*
  - No, I already have visited Helsinki and I don't want to visit it again, because...*
15. Which Nordic capital city would you choose rather than Helsinki?
- Copenhagen, because...*
  - Oslo, because...*
  - Stockholm, because...*
  - Reykjavik, because...*
  - None, I would choose for Helsinki, because...*

16. Which suggestions or improvement points do you have to develop Helsinki as a tourist destination?

*Open question*