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Destination Image: what are foreigners' perceptions of Nordic countries?
- a qualitative analysis using Leximancer

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**Destination Image: what are foreigners' perceptions of Nordic countries?
a qualitative analysis using Leximancer**

BACHELOR ASSIGNMENT



**Universitetet
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1. PREFACE

Our time as students at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management at the University of Stavanger has eventually come to an end. In that connection we submit our final bachelor thesis. Overall, it has been three exciting and challenging years. Our motivation for the topic derives from different subjects we have completed during our bachelor's degree in Hotel Management. The theme we have chosen is essentially tourism-related, although it goes hand in hand with hotel subjects. We especially gained interest in branding, social media, and the art of using resources when we studied the elective courses of *Introduction to Hotel Management*, *Technology and The Tourism Industry* and *Strategic Hotel Management*. On these grounds we wanted to investigate what image foreigners have of Nordic countries as destinations. The limited amount of research on the destination image topic of Nordic countries explains our interest in writing about these countries in particular.

First, we would like to thank our advisor Huseyin Arasli for guidance, direction, and advice throughout this process. Thank you for being available through both email and phone. Thank you to Mehmet Saydam, who with his knowledge about the Leximancer program has been of great importance to the data collection. We would further like to thank Lukasz Derdowski who has been our lecturer in *Social Science Method*, an area of knowledge valuable for our research and its structure. Finally, we would like to thank the study program managers for Hotel- and Tourism Management Åsa Helen Grahm and Heidi Victoria Skeiseid.

We also would like to thank our fellow students and other lecturers who have helped us to develop a more objective and reflective approach to various phenomena. The bachelor degree has given us a lot of knowledge and experience, and we are thus proud to present our thesis as a result of three educational years.

2. ABSTRACT

The concept of 'Destination Image' is essentially related to the thoughts, notions, and perceptions a person has of a place. The phenomenon is an important attribute for destinations in terms of their nation brand and visitor image, and the topic has thus become a prominent field of study. However, there is a lack of literature focusing on the destination image of Nordic countries. To contribute to the apparent gap in research, this study aims to determine foreigners' image of Nordic countries – being Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. The study examines the main themes and concepts of online reviews about Nordic countries shared by travelers. Leximancer 4.5 software was used to identify the co-occurrence of these objectives in online narratives from a total of 1500 reviews on TripAdvisor. Our findings and discussions are also based on literature in terms of how the Nordic countries market themselves as destinations, in addition to former destination images studies. The findings of our study could hopefully provide Nordic countries with valuable insight to achieve success and competitive advantage in the marketplace. On the grounds of the latter information our issue statement reads as follows:

“What is foreigners' image of the Nordic countries as destinations?”

To examine the 1500 reviews of the Nordic countries shared by travelers on TripAdvisor, the study used a qualitative content analysis. A convenience sampling technique was utilized with the intention of selecting the most describing and rich-in-content reviews. Prior to applying the Leximancer program, the data collected was kept in an Excel database. The following presents the themes revealed by content analyses for each country. Norway: place, guide, interesting, hike, shops, camping and ferry. Sweden: place, tour, history, park, beach, town, and cathedral. Denmark: place, tour, history, view, beach, activities, and animals. Finland: place, ski, food, tour, activities, animals, museum and island. Iceland: tour, glacier, beach, people, hiking, city, museum, tourists and night.

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5. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered to be one of the most diverse and largest industries in the world. In fact, it is across the globe relied on as a primary source for generating revenue, and thus seen as a vast opportunity for increasing employment, infrastructure development and private sector growth (World Tourism Organization, 1997, p. 3). Representing one of the fastest growing economies in the world does not simply imply increased economic growth, but suggests a greater demand of variety and diverse experiences from travelers in choice of destination (Øian et al. 2018; World Tourism Organization, 1997). To achieve effective marketing of a tourism destination, it is imperative to recognize the image that tourists possess of the destination, as well as to identify its strengths and weaknesses (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015, p. 188). Notably since what differentiates one destination from another, is the key to success and real competitive advantage in the marketplace (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019, p. 3). Eventually, this has resulted in destinations being more attentive to their nation brand, in addition to their visitor image - what are travelers' perceptions of this particular destination? (Tseng, Wu, Morrison, Zhang & Chen, 2015, p. 348).

Considering the importance of the image in creating success of a specific tourism destination, and the fact that scholars have found that tourists' perceptions is closely linked with visit intentions, the concept of what we call "destination image" has become one of the most explored fields in tourism research (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Tseng et al., 2015). The scope of current studies approaches the topic from different viewpoints, while also focusing on various destinations (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019, p. 2446). However, there is a lack of literature focusing on the destination image of Nordic countries in particular. The term "Nordic" represents the countries of northern Europe, being Norway, Sweden, Denmark,

Finland and Iceland, along with Greenland, Faroe Islands and the Åland islands as associated territories (Hall, Muller & Saarinen, 2008, p. 2). Nordic countries have in recent years encountered an increasingly rapid growth in influx of tourists, although the number of visitors still have been modest in comparison to most other European countries (Hjalager et al. 2008; Øian et al. 2018). The Nordic region is known for its natural beauty, and while nature-based tourism is considered to be a flourishing trend in the industry, this has long dominated in Northern countries (Øian et al. 2018: 13). Subsequently, relative growth has in some cases, such as for Iceland and Norway, been quite remarkable (Hjalager et al. 2008: 11). As a matter of fact, their abundant iconic nature attractions differs from the other Nordic countries, which in turn has implied a greater number of visitors to geographically concentrated areas. On the other hand, Sweden and Finland have had a more even development of tourism (Øian et al. 2018: 18). To contribute to the current gap in research literature, this study assesses the image of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland in how foreigners perceive these countries as destinations. Our two definitive objectives is to:

1. Identify the most prominent themes amongst travelers' reviews on TripAdvisor
2. Determine the main concepts conveyed through the online reviews about Nordic countries

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

6.1. Destination image

The competition between destinations is both large and intense. It is therefore important for destinations to cause a differentiated destination image in order to stand out in the competitive global market (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 37). Destination image plays an important role when trying to understand the behaviour of travelers and developing marketing strategies (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 38). According to Crompton (1979) destination image is the “sum of beliefs,

ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination” (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 41). Angela Phelps (1986) defined destination image as an individual’s perception or impressions of a place (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 41). These definitions focus on the perceptual and cognitive part of the destination image, and not the affective part. The perceptual and cognitive part is what you know about a destination's objective attributes, and the affective what you feel about it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 870). These two components form the overall destination image. According to the “*Path Model of the Determinants of Tourism Destination Image Before Actual Visitation*” there are many factors that can impact the overall perception. *The General framework of destination formation* model shows that personal factors and stimulus factors are two forces that have a major impact on destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 870). Personal factors are psychological and social factors. Stimulus factors are information sources, previous experience and distribution (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 870). The correlation between destination image and tourist satisfaction has been found through a review of tourist literature. There are a number of studies which show that tourist satisfaction is a critical factor and when the destination picture is positive, the greater satisfaction (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019, p. 2445).

6.2. The image formation process

Previous research has emphasized the value of understanding the forces by which image development is shaped; what factors affect the formation of an individual’s image of a particular destination? (Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini & Manzari, 2012, p. 134). The development of image has a multidimensional nature - which is to say that its formation in fact is caused by a multitude of factors. Accordingly, destination image can be derived from exposure to information resources (Hamidzadeh, Cheh, Moghadam & Salimipour, 2016, p. 109).

Marketing of tourism destinations that encompasses the image formation process, is reliant on available information resources. This is due to the fact that the information assets often affect consumers decision-making (Hamidizadeh et al., 2016, p. 109). For example, a study from 2012 found that tourists' information sources have a substantial impact on destination choice intention (Jalilvand et al., 2012, p. 134). Thus, academics and practitioners have progressively recognized the importance of the Internet in relation to the image formation process (Hidalgo Alcázar, Sicilia Pinero & Ruiz de Maya, 2014, p. 158). The Internet has in recent decades played a key role in how tourism-related information is distributed, in addition to the way people both plan for and consume travel (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015, p. 188). Virtual interactions among travelers have become increasingly prevalent, precisely because electronic media easily facilitates search for potential destinations, lodging and leisure activities (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014; Jalilvand et al., 2012). With direct access to a wealth of valuable information, potential travelers can now purchase goods online without having to rely on travel agencies. Eventually research has affirmed that online browsing is dominant when it comes to both the affective and cognitive dimensions of the image formation process (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014, p. 158).

In line with these technological advantages, several tourism scholars have pointed out the important performance of what we call electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Jalilvand et al., 2012; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). In a study on travel blogs as a destination image formation agent in China, the general concept of eWOM is suggested as "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" (Tseng et al., 2015, p. 349). While there exists a considerable amount of new electronic media that expedite WOM, complaint sites, bulletin boards and discussion groups have especially gained importance (Jalilvand, 2016, p. 152).

Jalilvand et al. (2012) found that one-third of tourists visited an online community or message forum prior to online travel purchase, on the grounds that they considered online reviews to be significantly helpful in the decision-making process. In addition, previous studies have shown that 74% of travelers benefit from user-generated content (UGC) as information sources when planning for vacation getaways (Jalilvand et al., 2012, p. 135). UGC encompasses information that is both created and used by consumers online, with the purpose of educating potential buyers and exchange knowledge concerning different products and services (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014, p. 159). As eWOM is considered a powerful tool of communication decisions and promotion, it is proven to be one of the most predominant and persuasive information resources in forming a destination image (Ishida et al., 2016, p. 1).

A hallmark for the hospitality and tourism industry is that products offered are intangible. Unlike other retail products, this means that quality is often unknown before purchase or consumption, which carries a high degree of uncertainty (Ishida et al., 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2012). In light of the experiential nature of these products, eWOM and, more specifically, online reviews reduce this ambivalence in addition to perceived riskiness (Ishida et al., 2016, p. 2). Accordingly, it is relied on by potential travelers in forming images (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014, p. 159). The latter description is especially relevant for choice of destination, seeing that eWOM conveys advice and insight from travelers that in fact already have visited the destination at issue (Ishida et al., 2016, p. 2). For this reason, online reviews are often perceived to be more reliable, trust-worthy and up-to-date than consultation from professionals or travel service providers themselves. This also explains why each year hundreds of millions of prospective visitors turn to online reviews (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014, p. 158).

“The main attribute of media is its presence in everywhere” (Hamidizadeh et al., 2016, p. 110). Therefore, negative eWOM can, on an equal footing as positive experiences, be quite inevitable. Also, travelers with poor experiences are much more likely to publish online reviews in comparison to those with positive experiences (Olsen & Blumenfeld, 2016, p. 3). Previous research found that negative eWOM has an overwhelming effect on a destination’s image, seeing that unflattering content from dissatisfied travelers easily circulates online (Jalilvand, 2016, p. 153). When tourists trust media sources, it is likely for the information presented to have a compelling effect on their opinions and attitude towards the destination (Hidalgo Alcázar et al., 2014, p. 159). Ultimately we see that the Internet provides important information sources for travelers in forming destination images, while also being a crucial reference in relation to travel decisions. As tourism in Nordic countries continues to increase, eWOM and UGC could potentially be a powerful destination image agent (Tseng et al., 2015, p. 350).

6.3. Norway

6.3.1. Tourism in Norway

Norway is a fairly new holiday destination and has not yet reached the highest position when it comes to United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) tourist arrival lists, which is conducted every year. In 2014 Norway was represented on the list which showed the fifty most visited countries, but came on the 44th place on a list regarding Tourism Receipts the same year (Klimova, 2015, p. 6). In recent decades the number of foreign tourists has increased in Norway, which has had a positive effect on the Norwegian economy. In 2008, tourist expenditure amounted to 31 billion NOK. In 2018, it had increased to 55 billion NOK, a corresponding growth of 4 percent (Innovation Norway, 2019, p.11).

6.3.2. Norway as a destination

Every country which positions itself as a tourism destination has a destination brand and brand strategies. According to Klimova (2015), Visit Norway identifies four main attractions that

Norway`s travel brand is built up on:

- 1) “Spectacular fjords, coast and natural phenomena;
- 2) Fresh seafood and coastal specialties;
- 3) Nature based activities
- 4) Thriving coastal culture (fishing, seafaring)”.

(Klimova, 2015, p. 6).

Norway is an elongated and scenic country, with dramatic waterfalls, crystal clear fjords and majestic mountains. In total, there are over 1000 fjords in Norway, including the Geriangerfjord and the Nærøyfjord, which have been placed on UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage List (Visit Norway, 2021a). In light of the latter information, Norway's most popular outdoor activities are amongst others hiking, skiing, biking, fishing and paddling (Visit Norway, 2021b). The Pulpit Rock, overlooking the famous Lysefjord, is in fact one of Norway`s most famous mountain hikes visited by more than 300 000 hikers each year (Visit Norway, 2021c).

Road trips are also considered as a fairly popular activity in terms of experiencing the country`s natural phenomenons. The country has 18 scenic roads which represent Norway's natural highlights combining nature, design, and architecture (Visit Norway, 2021d). In other words, Norway's position when it comes to nature-based tourism is strong. According to Innovation Norway foreigners have a desire to explore both the country's nature and culture when visiting the country (Innovation Norway, 2019, p. 45). Research also reports that among tourists

vacationing in Norway, few of them travel with children and only 13 percent have kids under 18 years old (Innovation Norway, 2019, p. 27).

With reference to Visit Norway`s website, the following present the top ten places to visit in Norway: Oslo, Tromsø and the land of the Northern lights, Lofoten and Nordland, Bergen, the Geirangerfjord, Stavanger, Trondheim, Kristiansand, the mountains and valleys of Eastern Norway and the Svalbard's Island (Visit Norway, 2021e). Oslo is the capital of Norway, and is in fact one of the fastest growing cities in Europe (Visit Norway, 2021f). There are a number of points-of-interests in Oslo, such as the famous Vigeland Sculpture Park. Both the park itself and its 214 sculptures are designed and made by the sculptor Gustav Vigeland. The park, which is open all year and free of entry, has over 1 million visitors each year (Visit Norway, 2021g)

During the last few years there has been a formidable change in the food and drink culture in Norway. Focus on local and organic food is described as a culinary revolution, and several Norwegian chefs have become quite famous abroad. In fact, some of them have even won the international cooking competition *Bocuse d'Or* numerous times. Before 2016 Norway had none Michelin restaurants. In 2021 there are currently 12 (Visit Norway, 2021h).

6.3.3. Current Destination Image studies of Norway

There are not many studies on the concept of Norway`s destination image, but one in particular focuses on Norway as a ski destination. The study`s results identifies six main activities that tourists associate Norway with during the winter season: alpine skiing, crosscountry skiing, general destination criteria, children, friendliness and snow (Andersen, Øian, Aas & Tangeland, 2018, p. 2). Another study is researching the differences in Northern Norway`s destination image related to culture and travel distance among foreigners. The study conducts a self-

administered survey with an organized questionnaire on the most seeking Arctic destination in Northern Norway, namely the North Cape (Jensen, Chen & Korneliussen, 2015, p. 1). Results report that Scandinavians associate North of Norway with the Sami people, while Germans associate the country with midnight sun and reindeers. Latin people on the other hand view Northern Norway as a winter destination including cross country skiing and other snow activities. Finally the Japanese associate Northern Norway with the North Pole (Jensen, Chen & Korneliussen, 2015, p. 11). In summary the study found a significant correlation between cultural groups and their destination image of Northern Norway (Jensen, Chen & Korneliussen, 2015, p. 15).

A study conducted at the University of Wurzburg in Germany interviewed 758 students to determine the Images of the North among young Germans. In this case the context of the “North” contained the countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Different aspects was considered, the first being experiences with and in Northern Europe and the second which was associations students had with these four countries. Among the students who had already visited Norway, the typical associations were fjords, glaciers and maritime activity. Associations of those who had not been to Norway were cold, snow, Norwegian sweater and monarchy. Overall, the results of the study reports that students perceived Norway as an attractive tourist destination with great nature and cold climate. In addition, they had an image of Norway being a rich country in terms of oil and fish, as well as perceiving it as an expensive destination. The most frequent associations were: fjords (37%), Oslo (21%), coldness (19%), snow (9%) and oil (9%). Further associations were moose (7%), Norwegian sweater (6%), fish (6%), expensive (6%) (Schroödl, 2009, p. 68).

6.4. Sweden

6.4.1. Tourism in Sweden

According to the World Tourism Organization international tourism highlights report in 2019, International tourist arrivals in Sweden in 2017 was 7054 (World Tourism organization, 2019). In 2018, the value generated through tourism related expenditure was 337 billion sek which added 2,6% to Sweden's GDP and 6,4 % of Swedens total exports (OECD Tourism trends and policies, 2020).

6.4.2. Sweden as a destination

Traveling to Sweden is like traveling on a magical holiday with majestic palaces, beautiful and varied nature, vibrant cities, the northern lights and the midnight sun. In Sweden, there are also about 100,000 lakes and archipelagos (Tripadvisor, 2021). Sweden has 15 properties inscribed on the Unesco world heritage list and is therefore on the top 20 list (UNESCO, 2021). The *high coast* is on the UNESCO World Heritage site and is according to visit Sweden a popular tourist destination (Visit Sweden, 2020a). Sweden's untouched nature is the habitat for wild animals like lynx, bears, reindeer, moose and different kinds of birds (Visit Sweden, 2021a). It is possible to book wildlife safaris where guides bring you places where it is possible to spot wild animals in their natural habitat. Guided boat tours let you explore the swedish archipelago with 30000 islands and skerries. This is the perfect place for natural experiences with activities like kayaking, fishing, hiking and biking. Swedish Lappland has a lot of exciting activities and guided tours where you can explore the northern light and go on dogsled safari. Learn about Sami culture, and experience the midnight sun or the northern lights (Visit Sweden, 2021b). During winter, it is almost possible to ski anywhere in Sweden and one of the largest ski resorts in northern Europe is located in central Sweden (Visit Sweden, 2020b).

Despite the Nordic charm, Sweden can offer a vibrant urban city life with *fashion, design, food, history, traditions and lifestyle* (Visit Sweden, 2021c). In 2017 Visit Sweden did a collaboration with regions in Sweden to start a food export program with the goal to strengthen Sweden's image as a meal destination and attract tourists because of the food. The goal is that this program will make food tourism the main reason to travel to Sweden (Visit Sweden, 2021d). Sweden's most progressive cuisine is featured in Malmö. Stockholm does not only offer great variation with history and urban adventures, but with a short boat ride you can enjoy the ocean and explore the archipelago. In the heart of Stockholm, the city park called *Royal Djurgården* is a place where you can find parkland, forest, canals and harbour sides (Visit Sweden, 2020c). This is also where you can find various museums, like ABBA museum, Vasa museum and the Skansen open-air historical museum. There is also a Zoo here where it is possible to see nordic wildlife, but also exotic animals from Africa. South of Sweden, the city of Gothenburg offers outdoor adventures, amazing views and in the surrounding archipelago the seafood is amazing (Tripadvisor, 2021).

According to visit Sweden, *Reputation Institute's Country Rep Trak 2018* says Sweden is first of 55 countries and when international travellers are asked what they most associate with Sweden, the reply is a *beautiful country, unspoilt nature, accessible to all, openness, freedom and sustainability* (Visit Sweden, 2021c). According to the survey Sweden is ahead of neighboring Scandinavian countries on the association scale when asked about words like *“modern, forward-thinking and progressive”*. Also *new technology and innovation, literature and film, music and fashion* (Visit Sweden, 2021c).

6.4.3. Current Destination Image studies of Sweden

With reference to the literature section of Norway in the current study, the research conducted in Germany found that typical associations of people who had been to Sweden was “idyllic nature”, cultural land estates, Stockholm and Hennes & Mauritz. The most frequently mentioned associations in the group that had never been to Sweden were IKEA, Swedes, blondes and Astrid Lindgren. Overall, tourists mostly associated Sweden with nature, lakes, and moose, alongside IKEA, Astrid Lindgren and the kingdom of the good looking blondes. The most frequent associations were: IKEA (54%), Stockholm (20%), Moose (16%), Astrid Lindgren (15%) and blond hair (14%). Further associations were: Lakes (8%), blondinen (7%), cold (7%), Abba (6%), H&M (6%) (Schroödl, 2009, p. 55).

6.5. Denmark

6.5.1. Tourism in Denmark

Empirical evidence shows that the tourism industry in Denmark is growing. Statistics in fact indicate that there were over 56.1 million overnight stays in 2019, including both international- and domestic tourism. The Germans represents the biggest tourist group. In 2018, 3.5 million of visitors in Denmark were German travelers. On the top five list of the country's visitors foreigners from Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America is also represented (Statista, 2020).

6.5.2. Denmark as a destination

Denmark is the perfect tourist destination for families and has a variety of different attractions - including many amusement parks which appeal to people of all ages. The Lion Zoo, Legoland in Billund and the Carnival in Copenhagen are some of the most popular family activities (Visit Denmark, 2021a; Visit Denmark, 2021b). Denmark is also known for its popular holiday

houses. The country actually broke records with approximately 200.000 holiday-house rentals in 2017, which are still growing in popularity (Statistics Denmark, n.d.).

With over 11000 km of marked cycle routes, the country is one of the best places in the world to cycle in - both for top-trained or totally inexperienced road riders. Accordingly, many tourists take their bicycles when vacationing in Denmark (Visit Denmark, 2021c). One of the most popular bicycle routes is in the coastal town of Skagen, situated in North Denmark (Visit Nordjylland, 2021a). Skagen is a very charming town, where visitors can experience a bustling city life, their unique yellow houses, art and spectacular nature including white sand beaches (Visit Nordjylland, 2021b).

In the beginning of the early 2000s Denmark developed a more modern culinary kitchen called the new Nordic Cuisine. The concept became a hit and is defined by seasonality, sustainability, local ingredients and produce. The chefs use Nordic cooking methods to make food which represents Scandinavian culture, geography and history (Lonely Planet, 2021). One of Nordic Cuisine`s most famous restaurants is Noma, which is situated in Copenhagen. Noma is a two-Michelin-star restaurant, which in fact has been elected to the best restaurant in the world. The restaurant is perfect for tourists who love culinary experiences (Visit Denmark, 2021d).

Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark and has several popular tourist attractions. In the heart of the city, you find the Tivoli, which with more than four million visitors each year has become a popular point-of-interest for tourists. The Tivoli is much more than just an amusement park with carousels as it features beautiful parks, a food hall with 16 restaurants and several shops and cafes. Another popular attraction in Copenhagen is the Copenhagen Zoo with more than 4000 different animals (Visit Denmark, 2021e). The Royal Christiansborg, which is on one of

Denmark's many popular castles is also situated in Copenhagen - more precisely on the small island Slotsholmen. One part of Christiansborg castle arranges gala dinners for the Queen and is open for visitors, and the other part accommodates politicians and the supreme court. The most popular castle in Denmark is however situated in Fredriksborg. Frederiksborg Castle, surrounded by gardens and a lake, is full of national history, art and architecture (Visit Denmark, 2021f).

6.5.3. Current Destination Image studies of Denmark

Although there exists a limited amount of destination image studies of Denmark, a master thesis from Aalborg University from 2010 studies the destination image of Denmark and its effects on the Russian Outbound travel. The results of the study reports that Russians overall have very little information about Denmark, and that there is a lack of advertising and general information about Denmark. The study thus concludes that Russians have no particular destination image of Denmark (Saenko, 2010, p. 62).

With reference to the German research conducted in the University of Wurzburg as earlier mentioned in the current study, results reported that typical associations of people who had already visited Denmark was summer vacation, beach and Copenhagen. Those who had not been to Denmark more frequently answered neighbor, monarchy and cold. Overall, foreigners had a strong image of Denmark being a cozy family- and summer holiday destination. In addition, topics like sea, beach, sand, island and holiday were regularly mentioned. The study also indicates that contemporary culture, history and traditions in Denmark in fact are quite unknown territories in foreigners' minds. The most frequent associations were: Copenhagen (27%), lego (10%), neighbor (10%), beach (9%) and holiday (8%). Further associations were: North Sea (8%), sea (7%), royal family (7%), cold (6%) and mermaid (6%) (Schroödl, 2009, p. 68).

6.6. Finland

6.6.1. Tourism in Finland

According to UNTWO's 2019 report Finland had an arrival of 3180 international tourists in 2018 (World Tourism organization, 2019). In 2017 Finland had 6,7 million overnight stays and an export value estimated to 4,4 billion Euro in 2017 (Business Finland, 2021). Finland is a round year destination with many overnight stays both summer and winter. In countries like the UK, Netherlands and France the majority of tourists travel to Finland during the winter season. Tourists from Norway, Sweden and Denmark mainly travel to Finland during summer (Business Finland, 2021).

6.6.2. Finland as a destination

The combination of pure nature and urban scene makes Finland a year-round destination. According to Visit Finland, extraordinary accommodation, sauna, skiing, northern lights, midnight sun, land of thousand lakes, world's largest archipelago, clean nature and sustainable lifestyle, organic local food, santa claus, moomins, culture and design, cool and urban are what Finland is known for (Visit Finland, 2021a).

Finland is often referred to as the "The Land of the thousand lakes" because of the 188 000 lakes that start in the south around Helsinki, and all the way up to Lapland (Visit Finland, 2021a). Great forests, baltic sea islands, arctic fells and blue lakes provide a perfect habitat for wild animals, and excursions and tours are offered where bears, wolves and wolverines can be spotted. Lake safaris where ringed seal and osprey can be seen (Visit Finland, 2021b). The Urho Kekkonen National park is a great place to hike if an active holiday is the preference (Visit Finland, 2021c). Northern lights, also called Aurora Borealis, are regarded as the most

spectacular lights show the world has to offer. In Finnish Lapland they can be seen 200 nights a year (Visit Finland, 2021a). This is up north in Finland, but it is also possible to sport the spectacular light show further south, but only if you go far away from city lights. Even though it is approximately only possible to spot from the south 20 nights a year. Another very interesting phenomena in the north is the midnight sun. In June and July, the midnight sun is the strongest, but the further north you go the more prominent it is (Visit Finland, 2021a). Lapland is Finland's main ski area and has a six month long skiing season (Visit Finland, 2021a). The resort here has something for every level and also has other activities like dog sled rides, reindeer rides, snowmobiling and ice-fishing. Lapland is also the home of “The real Santa Claus”. Rovaniemi, is his hometown where he can be visited all year. This seems to be a big attraction for travelers with children. Here children can meet Santa Claus at his home, office and meet Rudolph the reindeer (Visit Finland, 2021a). The Finnish sauna plays a great part in the culture and heritage. It is estimated that there is one sauna per household (Visit Finland, 2021a). Sauna is an experience with many rituals and traditions, but the most important part is to relax and cleanse body and soul (Visit Finland, 2021a). According to *Visit Finland and a study done in 2017*, six main visitor segments that had already traveled to Finland were identified: *Nature Wonder Hunters, Nature Explorers, Activity Enthusiasts, Comfort Seekers, City Breakers and Authentic Lifestyle Seekers* (Business Finland, 2017).

6.6.3. Current Destination Image studies of Finland

In relation to the German study conducted at the University of Wurzburg, results state that students who have visited Finland associate the country with nature, Lapland, Helsinki and cultural peculiarities. Respondents who had never been to Finland most frequently mentioned cold, dark, education and Formula 1. The concepts of “sauna” and “Nokia” scored high in both of these groups together. Overall, the study reports that foreigners have strong associations of

Finland in terms of an excellent education system, and technology and innovation. In addition, perceptions like policitis, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the shared border to Russia are also prominent. Finland`s image is also dominated by the perception of being a cold and snowy country. The most frequent associations were: sauna (24%), coldness (20%), Helsinki (18%), lakes (18%) and Nokia (12%). Further associations were: forest (9%), snow (8%) and PISA (8%) (Schroödl, 2009. p. 68).

6.7. Iceland

6.7.1. Tourism in Iceland

Iceland is a rather large island in the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Scotland and Norway as nearest neighboring countries. As the second largest island in Europe, followed by Great Britain, Iceland stretches across 40,000 square miles with a population of approximately 360,000 inhabitants (Visit Iceland, 2021a; Visit Iceland, 2021b). Roughly 60% of these citizens live in and around the northernmost national capital in the world, namely Reykjavik. The territory of the island itself is characterized by a varied terrain including glaciated mountains, volcanic topography and uninhabited desert grounds (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 424).

Tourism in Iceland has in recent decades developed more rapidly, in comparison to global growth. Accordingly, tourism arrivals have multiplied and in fact expanded by 66% in the years between 2000 and 2008 (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 419). In light of Iceland's history of foreign travelers, tourist arrivals were relatively slow prior to the mid 1980s. Thereafter the tourism has been thriving, especially considering a 56% increase in registered overnight hotel-stays by foreigners between 1997 and 2008 (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 426). In general, tourism in Iceland has from time to time been dealing with typical challenges of island tourism,

being persistent patterns of seasonality in addition to high amounts of tourists at specific attractions - putting the fragile natural environment at risk. Tourism in Iceland is also highly dependent on air-transport. As a result of Icelandic airlines' extensive route network and promotion of stopovers between both mainland Europe and North America, Iceland has been gaining access to a much greater number of potential visitors flying between these continents. Ultimately, this has become a fundamental precondition of tourism development on the island (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 427).

6.7.2. Iceland as a destination

Iceland is a country of major geological contrasts. Home to some of the world's most active volcanoes, including some of the largest glaciers in Europe, Iceland is broadly known as "the land of fire and ice". Long summer days consisting of nearly 24 hours of sun, in addition to short winter days with a few single hours of daylight, has led to the country also often being referred to as "the land of light and darkness" (Visit Iceland, 2021c). "With almost 80% of the country uninhabited, much of Iceland's terrain consists of plateau, mountain peaks, and fertile lowlands" (Visit Iceland, 2021a). Overall, the landscape is mainly portrayed by deep fjords and glaciers, waterfalls, volcanoes, geysers, steaming lava fields and black sand beaches (Visit Iceland, 2021a).

Both lava fields and ice sheets cover an extensive amount of space on the island. In fact, more than 11% of Iceland consists of glaciers, in addition to 32 volcanic systems that have extended their lava far and wide (Reykjavik Cars, 2020). Iceland represents one of the youngest landmasses on earth and was formed as much as 25 million years ago. The existence of the island itself originates from a volcanic hotspot established by a fissure in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge - namely where the American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet (Visit Iceland, 2021a).

As volcanic activity is a fact of life in Iceland, its inhabitants have become accustomed to living with both the benefits and drawbacks of a dramatic natural environment. According to research, Iceland encounters, on average, a volcanic event every five years (Visit Iceland, 2021d). The last volcano to erupt on the island was Grimsvotn in 2011, which in fact brought disruption to air traffic in Northwestern Europe (BBC News, 2011; Visit Iceland, 2021a).

Driving the Golden Circle has become one of the most popular and iconic trips to experience inside of Iceland. With Reykjavik as both the start and finish point, the circular tourist route will at just over 300 km display most of the island's geography including volcanic craters, hotspots, lagoons, waterfalls and even a world heritage site - Thingvellir National Park (Reykjavik Cars, 2019; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2021). The name Golden Circle derives from the word "Gullfoss", which means Golden Falls in Icelandic. This is in fact considered as one of the leading attractions on the famous route, where massive amounts of water deluge 32 meters down into an enormous canyon (Reykjavik Cars, 2019; Reykjavik Cars, 2020).

Another stop along the Golden Circle is the Geysir Geothermal Area. Overlooking steam vents and boiling mud pools, tourists can at this point also experience the famous Strokkur - the geyser that flare up every few minutes. Iceland's famous black-sand beaches has also, as earlier mentioned, become one of the main tourist attractions on the island. Among these is Diamond Beach consisting of black sand and chunks of glacial ice, and Reynisfjara where tightly packed hexagonal basalt columns has resulted in the beach gaining a lot of attention from popular media. The latter beach was in fact featured in the seventh season of the popular Game of Thrones series (Reykjavik Cars, 2020).

6.7.3. Current Destination Image studies of Iceland

While there are several destination image studies in the case of Iceland that do already exist online, they still approach the phenomena from different points of view. One of the articles analyzes a topic briefly mentioned above, namely the image of Iceland as a gateway destination. The main point of discussion in the study is the islands geographic position as a stopover between European and North American continents, and namely how this effects its perceived image as a tourism destination (Lund, Loftsdottir & Leonard, 2016, p. 144).

Another study investigates two different matters within the concept, the first being the image tourists in Iceland during the summer months have of the country as a destination, and second: whether or not positioning both Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland together in tourist markets as one area is achievable or advantageous. In light of the survey conducted for this study, results show that travelers' strongest image perception of Iceland is its scenic nature and natural beauty. Additionally, the results suggest that Iceland, the faroe Islands and Greenland have quite different images in tourists' minds. Ultimately the study concludes that although the three countries should not be positioned together, a working relationship in view of marketing activities and promotion of the area as a tourist region could be beneficial (Gudlaugsson & Magnusson, 2015, p. 169).

Further, another study addresses the effect of a global banking crisis on the destination image of Iceland. In specific, the research study explains how tourism plays a bigger role on the economy of island destinations and why they accordingly are hit harder by global economic crisis - which in the long run can influence the image among foreign travelers. The main result of the survey was that the image of Iceland as a tourism destination in fact did not change notably in the minds of foreign travelers (Gudlaugsson & Eysteinnsson, 2012). Finally, an

additional study explores the challenges and implications in relation to researching images of destinations in general - while briefly demonstrating images of Iceland for illustrative purposes only (Gren & Gunnarsdottir, 2008, p. 427). In relation to an analysis of information material on display conducted in Reykjavik`s tourist information centre, the study reveals the image of Iceland being described as both a peripheral-, cold- and `different` destination (Gren & Gunnarsdottir, 2008, p. 431).

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1. Research context

To determine foreigners' image of the Nordic countries as tourist destinations, online reviews were collected from one of the world`s largest travel sites - namely TripAdvisor. Guiding millions of tourists each year, the web site is in fact based on reviews from former visitors who post their experience and advice about destinations all over the world. Accordingly, TripAdvisor is highly trusted and credible in the minds of its users (TripAdvisor, 2021). The data was collected based on the following categories: attractions, outdoor activities and food and drinks and tours combined.

7.2. Data collection

In the first category, 30 different attractions were collected. For both “outdoor activities” and the category consisting of “food and drinks” and “tours”, 15 activities were selected on each. The selection of these attractions and activities was taken on the basis of popularity characteristics and highest number of reviews. Furthermore, a specific number of online reviews were collected for each category. Prior to writing a review on TripAdvisor, travelers are required to rate their experience on a 5-point scale representing the following classifications: terrible (1), poor (2), average (3), very good (4) and excellent (5). For each of the 30 attractions,

four reviews were chosen – essentially two rated “very good” or “excellent” and two rated “poor” or “terrible”. An equivalent method was executed for the two remaining categories. However, rather than four, six reviews were chosen for each of the 15 activities – three rated “very good” or “excellent” and three rated “poor” or “terrible”. A convenience sampling technique was utilized with the intention of selecting the most describing and rich-in-content reviews. Hence why reviews rated as “average” also were chosen from time to time. Overall, a procedure incorporating the most convenient reviews was selected with the aim of acquiring a more complete picture of travelers’ image of Nordic countries. For each of the five countries, 300 reviews were collected, making a total of 1500 reviews. The reviews shared by tourists on TripAdvisor were kept in an Excel database, which included the review title, its rating and lastly the review content. Only English reviews were taken into account for the current research. As TripAdvisor excludes detailed demographic descriptions of its reviewers, the data did not incorporate travelers’ characteristics.

7.3. Methodology approach

When choosing a method, one must base the choice on the basis of what one wants to achieve a better understanding of (Gripsrud, Olsson & Silkoset, 2018. p. 46). Therefore, one should choose the method that is best adapted to the problem of the thesis. The three main categories in research design are exploratory, descriptive and causal design. Since there is little research in the chosen area and the phenomena in the thesis problem are therefore relatively unknown, it will be obvious to choose an exploratory research design. This will be appropriate because the purpose is to gain greater understanding and insight into tourists' perceptions of Nordic countries. A descriptive design may be more appropriate to use if this topic is to be researched further (Gripsrud et al., 2018, p. 46).

Tourists use tripadvisor to share their experience and perception of destinations and businesses around the world (Tripadvisor, 2017). We decided to use this information in our attempt to identify the destination image in the Nordic countries. By retrieving reviews on tripadvisor, and analyzing it in Leximancer, we will identify word-occurrences, patterns and in this way extract the main elements in the texts. This is an observational method where it is possible to collect primary data without making direct contact with the respondents (Gripsrud et al., 2018, p. 129). The use of this method means that the concepts in the data collection are not systematically operationalized which means it is a possibility that we don't share the same perceptions of words and concepts as the respondents (Gripsrud et al., 2018, p. 129).

Leximancer is a text analysis tool used to perform in-depth analysis of qualitative data (Leximancer, 2021). Using Leximancer, we have processed our qualitative data in a quantitative way to more systematically and skillfully not only understand, but also measure the phenomenon (Gripsrud et al., 2018, p. 129). With this tool you will be able to explore and visualize the content of text and in this way identify key concepts that recur. This is a method that makes data and analysis work much easier and faster. Instead of going through qualitative data manually, the program does it for us in seconds. This will therefore be a competent and systematic way of reviewing all data retrieved from Tripadvisor (Gripsrud et al., 2018, p. 129). Leximancer identifies correlations between themes and related frequencies. The program uses the observations to create a "concept map." The concept map presents main themes and concepts among collected data, and further the connection between them. We have used this information to try to identify the destination image in the Nordic countries.

With reference to the following result section of the current study, reviews exemplified are presented in line with the Apa6- and Apa7 reference adviser. Words within the quotations are

therefore emphasized in italics, followed by “emphasis added” in square brackets (American Psychological Association, 2019, p. 275). This is to highlight and more easily recognize the individual concepts Leximancer identified as the most frequent word-patterns among travelers on TripAdvisor. In addition, ellipses have also been used in accordance with Apa6 to omit non essential content to the concepts at issue (Lee, 2015). The reviews exemplified are cited with hyperlinks with the intention of creating a more accessible admittance to the original source of information. In relation to source reference in the literature section of the current study, letters (e.g. Visit Norway, 2021a) have been applied to distinguish between an authors’ several publications within the same year.

8. RESULTS

This section of the study presents the findings to its two main objectives. In light of the data collected and further analyzed in Leximancer, the following affirms the most prominent themes and key concepts that reoccured amongst travellers’ online reviews about Nordic countries.

8.1. Norway

The content analyses provided by the Leximancer program disclosed the existence of seven concepts in travellers’ online descriptions of Norway as a destination (Figure 1): “place” (hits=254), “guide” (hits=201), “interesting” (hits=145), “hike” (hits=67), “shops” (hits= 28), “camping” (hits= 15) and “ferry” (hits=9).

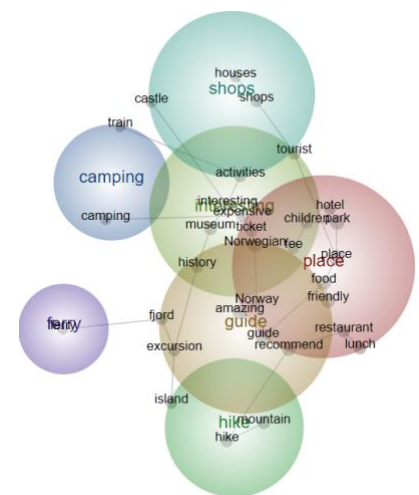


Figure 1: Concept map of Norway

8.1.1. General description of foreigners’ experiences

Place. The most repetitive theme among the reviews about Norway

is place. The theme includes concepts like “hotel”, “park”, “food”, “friendly”, “restaurant”,

“fee”, and “children”. One example of a review that deals with the concept of food reads as follows:

This *food* [emphasis added] hall is a great stop if you've been strolling the paths along The Akerselva, visiting the funky boutiques & vintage shops in Grünerlokka, or you went to a show at the Dancehus or Vulkan Arena. Great to choose between lots of restaurants, both casual market-style & sitdown, to choose from here, & within a block (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Another traveler shared online:

Buildings dating back as old as early 1700, a cobble stone street walked on for centuries, this *place* [emphasis added] is a trip back in time with its perfectly preserved homes. Several small *parks* [emphasis added] and gardens to meet *friendly* [emphasis added] cats and people watch (TripAdvisor, 2020).

A third tourist reported,

So it was midnight sun and we were told that the thing to do was go up the gondola to see it. But too cold up there to linger and besides view from roof bar of *hotel* [emphasis added] was just as good (TripAdvisor, 2017).

A fourth reviewer stated, “We had the best trip doing the Arctic Adventure in Tromsø, people were *friendly* [emphasis added], the huskies were so well looked after and beautiful, the sledding was stunning. The Orca sightings in Skjervøy was absolutely breathtaking and very emotional” (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Guide. The theme of guide encompasses the concepts “amazing”, “Norway” and “recommend”, “excursion” and “fjord”. One traveler stated, “The experience was *amazing!* [emphasis added] Our tour guide Max was very friendly and knowledgeable, he put a lot of effort to take pictures of everyone with his professional camera and to inform us about the lights and Tromsø” (TripAdvisor, 2020). A second reviewer expressed, “The owners and *guides* [emphasis added] were really friendly and open to questions. I would *recommend* [emphasis added] this day-trip to anyone who visits Tromsø” (TripAdvisor, 2021). A further visitor wrote: “We did this *excursion* [emphasis added] after listening to our expedition team leader on our Hurtigruten cruise and being impressed by his description. The trip started with a coach ride of about half an hour” (TripAdvisor, 2018).

A fourth traveler described the experience as follows: “Only saw the part of the *fjord* [emphasis added] around Oslo itself and I didn't find it very impressive. It could be, however, that the more beautiful parts are further down the stream and it takes a boat to discover them” (TripAdvisor, 2017). Another further traveler wrote: “We (my daughter and I) enjoyed a lovely morning cruise on the *Lysefjord* [emphasis added]. We were blessed with good weather so we re able to stand on deck and drink in the views, including the iconic Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen)” (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Interesting. The theme of interesting introduce concepts like “museum”, “Norwegian”, “history”, “expensive” and “activities”. A typical review concerning the prices in Norway reads as follows: “Great mountains for skiing, but simply way too *expensive* [emphasis added]. you can find many other destinations with better value for your money” (TripAdvisor, 2016). An additional visitor wrote, “Once there is a great *museum* [emphasis added], I wasn't overly interested before going but loved going to the top of the ski jump and seeing the view over Oslo.

Interesting [emphasis added] *museum* [emphasis added] with lots of *historical* [emphasis added] ski related items” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another further review reads as follows:

It was a nice day outside, and while on a rainy day a bit of cover with a few *activities* [emphasis added] is enough to stave off the worst of the day, it is - after all - a museum about drilling for oil. One of the exhibits is "a collection of various types of drill bits”” ([TripAdvisor, 2016](#)).

Hike. The theme of hike incorporate the concepts “mountain” and “island”. A tourist wrote, “Beautiful landscape and a nice boat trip out to the *island* [emphasis added]. Our guide was the owners and did his job very well” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)). A second visitor shared, “It is something amazing to watch this wonders from nature. Watching the sea conquer the *mountains* [emphasis added] it is something amazing than the beautiful scenery it creates is unbelievable extraordinary” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Shops. The theme of shops comprise the concepts of “houses” and “castle”. A traveler posted, “Strolled over this way after a short walk from our hotel (10 minutes from Oslo Central Station). While these are just two streets with *houses* [emphasis added] on them, they are historical (over 200 years old) and contain beautiful” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)). Another tourist stated online, “Also another area about how the *castle* [emphasis added] in later times had been used as a prison. The *castle* [emphasis added] looked good but unfortunately on our visit until May 2021 it was closed due to maintenance” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). A third reviewer on TripAdvisor wrote, “Besides the fact that there were hoards of tourists here, the wooden buildings consist of tourist *shops* [emphasis added]. There were some nice quality ones but most were the typical trolls and sweater places” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#))

Camping. “Train” is the only concept that includes in the theme of camping. A review reads as follows: “Supposedly related to some mythical tale! We took bikes with us on *train* [emphasis added] and cycled back down the well signposted and popular old navvies road” (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Ferry. This theme doesn’t incorporate any concepts in particular. However, one visitor reported, “We caught the fast *ferry* [emphasis added] from Tromso to Lynses return which took about 2 hours and 130NOK per person return. *Ferry* [emphasis added] departs morning and evening” (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Figure 2 and Figure 3 demonstrates the most common concepts amongst foreigners perceptions of Norway, divided into favourable and unfavourable tables. For each concept in particular, the analysis provides insight into the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Unfavorable concepts Norway		
Word-like (16)	Co-Count	Likelihood
lunch	3	15 %
restaurant	3	15 %
expensive	2	11 %
food	4	8 %
hotel	1	6 %
recommend	2	5 %
activities	1	5 %
guide	3	5 %
mountain	1	5 %
place	2	3 %
museum	1	2 %

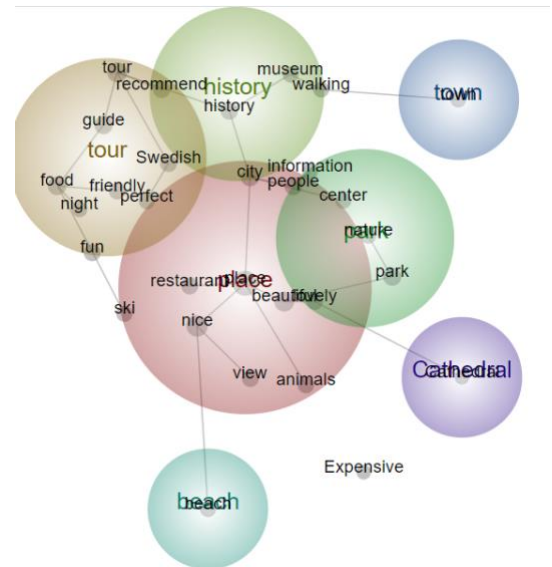
Figure 3: Unfavorable concepts Norway

Favourable concepts Norway		
Word-like (30)	Co-Count	Likelihood
friendly	20	80 %
shops	5	45 %
mountain	9	41 %
lunch	8	40 %
restaurant	7	35 %
amazing	15	35 %
place	23	34 %
castle	2	33 %
excursion	5	31 %
guide	19	30 %
history	4	27 %
tourist	5	25 %
island	2	25 %
park	13	25 %
fjord	5	23 %
ferry	2	22 %
food	10	20 %
recommend	8	20 %
camping	1	20 %
hotel	3	17 %
expensive	3	16 %
activities	3	15 %
museum	6	15 %
hike	5	12 %
interesting	4	11 %
train	1	10 %
fee	1	9 %
houses	1	8 %
ticket	1	7 %
children	1	6 %

Figure 2: Favorable concepts Norway

8.2. Sweden

The content analyses provided by the Leximancer program disclosed the existence of seven concepts in travellers' online descriptions of Sweden as a destination (Figure 4): "place"(hits=430), "tour" (hits=252), "history" (hits=123), "park" (hits=115), "beach" (hits=40), "town" (hits=24) and "cathedral" (hits=2).



8.2.1. General description of foreigners' experiences

Place. The most frequent theme amongst Sweden's reviews is place. The theme includes concepts like "nice", "beautiful", "city", "people", "restaurant", "view", "lovely", "animals" and "ski". A traveler shared the following experience: "Cute little square with many bars and *restaurants* [emphasis added] - *lovely place* [emphasis added] to chill with friends during summer and cozy in winter ... Pronto cafe is serving the best variety of New York style cheesecakes" (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Figure 4: Concept map of Sweden

A second visitor wrote, "Big zoo which is easy to move around in. Lots of different *animals* [emphasis added] and *nice* [emphasis added] surroundings" (TripAdvisor, 2017). Another tourist stated, "*People* [emphasis added] of multiple ability levels can enjoy the park either by hiking, nature walk, picnicking, camping, etc.3. The scenery is *beautiful* [emphasis added] and very tranquil" (TripAdvisor, 2017). A fourth reviewer reported, "Slopes were well prepared and I think that *people* [emphasis added] in general was paying attention in the slopes. Overall the *skiing* [emphasis added] experience was great and we really appreciated Ken and Rebecca" (TripAdvisor, 2019). Lastly, a further traveler expressed "The Walking Tour with Arturo through Stockholm's Gamla Stan was one of the highlights of our stay! A great introduction to

the *city* [emphasis added] and its history ... interaction that made it unique” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Tour. This theme encompasses concepts such as “guide”, “food”, “night”, “friendly”, “perfect”, “fun”, “recommend” and “Swedish”. A tourists` experience reads as follows:

We went to Åre on a company trip and booked five activities with Explore åre (snowboard *night tour* [emphasis added], largest waterfall in *Sweden* [emphasis added], dogsledding, feed the reindeer and icefishing). Our *guide* [emphasis added] Bea was very skilled and *friendly* [emphasis added] and our team had a very good time! ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

A second traveler stated, “The pace was *perfect* [emphasis added] for us. The Vasa Museum is really a must see & a great spot to end the *tour*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another tourist shared, “We had a wonderful Nordic Experience *Food Tour* [emphasis added] with Food Tours Stockholm and Ana as our *guide* [emphasis added]. It was a great way to see new parts of the city, different kinds of venues, and taste all kinds of *food* [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). A further reviewer described the experience as “Joel was a *fun guide* [emphasis added]. The *tour* [emphasis added] was well organized, well designed with great graphics and a fun interactive ending with cosmopolitan” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). Lastly a visitor reported:

An amazing experience that I will never forget, everything was *perfect* [emphasis added]: the *food* [emphasis added] was amazing, the explanations of the *guide* [emphasis added], the fire to keep us warm and of course the Aurora spot where we saw amazing northern lights!! I *recommend* [emphasis added] it 100% it’s really worth it, the best experience you could have in Abisko ([Tripadvisor, 2021](#)).

History. The theme of history comprises the concepts of “museum”, “walking”, “recommend” and “city”. A traveler wrote, “A park for all ages, this was a fantastic place. It houses the Gothenburg natural *history museum* [emphasis added], it has a small zoo, cafes, restaurants, but if you just want a picnic, there is plenty of open space for that!” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). A second visitor reported:

The tour gave us an opportunity to *walk* [emphasis added] around and learn some *history* [emphasis added] and explore a few places that I don't think that we would have found on our own. Our tour guide was delightful and super helpful and even gave us some great recommendation of places that we had to see with our remaining time in Stockholm ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Park. The theme of park incorporates concepts like “nature”, “center” and “information”. A tourist described the experience as follows: “A beautiful *park* [emphasis added] above the *center* [emphasis added] of historic downtown. A large *park* [emphasis added] with open green spaces, gardens, water features, sculptures and the historic Karnan tower” ([TripAdvisor, 2013](#)). Another reviewer expressed, “The gardens are a joy: colourful, well-tended, magic. The manor is a rich source of *information* [emphasis added] about the royal couple of Oskar II and Sofie, with some very interesting exhibits and photos” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). A further traveler stated, “Driving down to fyren Långe Jan was one of our favourite excursions on land. It sits on Ottenby *Nature* [emphasis added] reserve, a beautiful *nature* [emphasis added] reserve with various birds and seals” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Beach. The theme of beach does not include any concepts in particular. However, a review reads as follows: “Tylosand is a nice *beach* [emphasis added]. The neighborhood is an interesting place to visit and see how is the life in this place” ([TripAdvisor, 2014](#)). A second

tourist wrote, “Top time *beach* [emphasis added] in Sweden. It’s a long beautiful beach with restaurants, walking paths, mini golf and golf close by” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Town. The theme of town does not encompass any specific concepts. Nonetheless, a visitor described the following experience:

My wife and I made the last cruise of the season from Stockholm to Goteborg on the M/S Diana, and would highly recommend this trip for anyone wanting to cruise through the country of Sweden, with a great crew, outstanding food, beautiful scenery, and time to walk and see *towns* [emphasis added] along the way. This was a trip of a lifetime, and we can't say enough good things about the entire experience ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Cathedral. The theme of cathedral also does not introduce any concepts in specific. Yet, a traveler shared:

Visby is a lovely city, almost entirely surrounded by a medieval wall and accompanying towers that are in remarkably good condition. Take your time and you will see some really quaint houses and *cathedrals* [emphasis added] & churches as you wander around the place ([TripAdvisor, 2021](#)).

Expensive. “Expensive” is a separate theme that is not connected to any concepts or other themes in particular. Even so, a typical review concerning the prices in Sweden reads as follows:

It seems like a Stureplan (swedes told me) place with a lot of beautiful people, every thing dirt expensive and the skiing is far below average, compared to any mountain in the US or the Alps. With the risk of freezing to death (minus 20) we tried the slopes but we had to frequent the coffee huts /restaurants more. ...

After leaving Åre I am poor! (TripAdvisor, 2016).

Figure 5 demonstrates the most common concepts amongst foreigners perceptions of Sweden. As the data collected for Sweden mostly consisted of positive reviews, the Leximancer program did not provide any analysis in relation to unfavorable concepts. However, for each favourable concept in particular, the exhibit provides insight into the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Favourable concepts Sweden		
Word-like (27)	Co-Count	Likelihood
lovely	18	90 %
beautiful	46	84 %
friendly	19	79 %
nice	57	76 %
view	19	59 %
guide	22	54 %
food	28	49 %
fun	18	47 %
history	15	45 %
ski	10	45 %
city	20	43 %
information	7	37 %
animals	12	36 %
place	64	36 %
center	6	35 %
perfect	7	35 %
tour	30	34 %
town	8	33 %
walking	7	32 %
park	20	31 %
restaurant	10	29 %
beach	11	28 %
recommend	12	27 %
nature	6	24 %
museum	7	23 %
people	13	22 %
night	4	21 %

Figure 5: Favorable concepts Sweden

8.3. Denmark

The content analyses provided by the Leximancer program disclosed the existence of seven concepts in travellers' online descriptions of Denmark as a destination (Figure 6): “place” (hits=373), “tour” (hits=354), “history” (hits=237), “view” (hits=195), “beach” (hits=145), “activities” (hits=132) and “animals” (hits=76).

8.3.1. General description of foreigners' experiences

Place. The most repeated theme amongst Denmark's reviews is place. The theme incorporates concepts

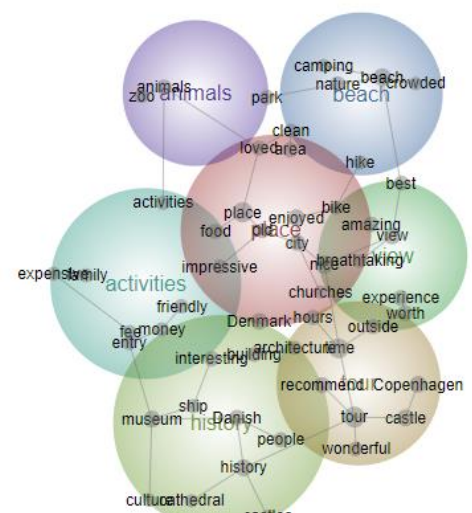


Figure 6: Concept map Denmark

such as “city”, “bike”, “area”, “love”, “city”, “food”, “impressive”, “churches”, “enjoyed”, “loved” and “nice”. A review reads as follows: “It's nice *area* [emphasis added] also for *bike* [emphasis added] tour or other sport activities as there is plenty of free space. The spectacular view to the *impressive* [emphasis added] Øresund bridge which connect Denmark and Sweden is included” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). Another traveler shared online, “Please tour the old part of town and pay a visit to another one of Denmark’s old, magnificent *churches* [emphasis added], Nexø Kirke. Of course, as you are staying in this *area* [emphasis added] ..., it also has a great bakery” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). A third visitor posted:

We spend half a day driving around the tiny town of Rømø. Have some *seafood* [emphasis added] at one of the many restaurants on the south part of the island, visit the beaches on the west coast, watch the kitesurfers on the beach, hike or *bike* [emphasis added] along the trails and enjoy the beautiful wild life and farm animals living on this quaint little island ([TripAdvisor, 2016](#)).

A fourth reviewer described the experience as follows: “The play *areas* [emphasis added] are also great - spacious and clean. We also *loved* [emphasis added] the farm area, you can get right in with the goats - the goats can also go through a tunnel to get away which is good” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Tour. The theme of tour introduces concepts such as “wonderful”, “castle”, “recommended”, “outside”, “architecture”, “hours” and “Copenhagen”. One traveler stated, “The city centre in *Copenhagen* [emphasis added] is truly beautiful in terms of classical *architecture* [emphasis added] ..., which is full of life” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)). Another visitor reported, “I was struggling to decide which *castle* [emphasis added] to visit, this one or Kronborg *castle* [emphasis added] (UNESCO) so I visited both as part of a *tour* [emphasis added] with Hamlet tours. ... I wouldn't

recommend [emphasis added] Kronberg if you are choosing between the two!” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

History. The theme of history encompasses concepts like “interesting”, “building”, “ship”, “museum”, “Danish”, “people”, “castles”, “culture”, “cathedral” and “Denmark”. One traveler posted:

I went for the ‘Meet the Vikings’ as having a part Norman going back to Nordic heritage I was curious to how *people* [emphasis added] lived and worked etc, it was a beautiful display ..., if going back to *Denmark* [emphasis added] I would definitely be returning and really. recommend here if you are *interested* [emphasis added] in *history* [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2016](#)).

Another review reads as follows, “The visit to the four main sites including Kronborg *Castle* [emphasis added], Frederiksborg *Castle* [emphasis added], Roskilde *Cathedral* [emphasis added] and finally the Viking *Ship* [emphasis added] *Museum* [emphasis added] ... have a taste of rural and pristine *Denmark*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). A third reviewer stated, “The *Museum* [emphasis added] is outdoors and the several completed *buildings* [emphasis added] use authentic remnants of *buildings* [emphasis added] and craftsmen using *historical* [emphasis added] tools (NOTE: a *church* [emphasis added] is now being built)” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

View. The theme of view comprises the concepts of “amazing”, “breathtaking”, “best”, “worth” and “experience”. A visitor on TripAdvisor posted, “Animal life around here is *worth* [emphasis added] a visit in itself. And watching all the ships passing by is another great *experience* [emphasis added]” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another traveler wrote, “This is *amazing* [emphasis added] place. *View* [emphasis added] is just stunning but the *best* [emphasis added] comes when

you go down to the sea and just go for little swim” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). A third review reads as follows: “Part of the most beautiful gardens in the city. From the park you see great views of the castle itself, and from the castle you have *breathhtaking* [emphasis added] *views* [emphasis added] of the park” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Beach. The theme of beach incorporates concepts such as “nature”, “crowded”, “clean”, “hike” and “camping”. One reviewer wrote, “The sand is very thin, and the *beach* [emphasis added] is very long, making it easy to find a good spot even in a *crowded* [emphasis added] (sunny) day. ..., long distance” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). Another traveler expressed, “The *beach* [emphasis added] is amazingly *clean* [emphasis added], the sand lovely and *clean* [emphasis added] and perfect for sandcastle building” ([TripAdvisor, 2016](#)).

A further review reads as follows: “At the top of Sams , you will find this peaceful and beautiful piece of *nature* [emphasis added]. Plenty of *hiking* [emphasis added] trails, so a great opportunity for a nice walk” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). A fourth visitor described his visit as following: “This is definitely the best *beach* [emphasis added] in Bornholm, stretching several kilometers and is reached through a beautiful pine wood area. Ideal to spend a day here, with access to food at one of the three *camping* [emphasis added] sites” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)).

Activities. Concepts like “fee”, “money”, “entry”, “friendly”, “expensive” and “family are included in the theme of activities. A reviewer shared online, “All in all a great selection of animals to watch and explore, and lots of other *activities* [emphasis added] too, would recommend for a *family* [emphasis added] day out” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). Another review online reads as follows, “The premise of this live museum is great in theory but ... It’s quite *expensive*

[emphasis added] to get in and then any other activity you have to spend more on top of the *entry* [emphasis added] *fee*” [emphasis added] (TripAdvisor, 2018).

A third visitor expressed, “Henrick was a good tour guide telling about the history at the castles and the items of interest on the drive. *Money* [emphasis added] well spent!!” (TripAdvisor, 2019). A fourth reviewer reported, “We went to ARoS museum during a daytrip in Aarhus. The museum is very good organized and has very *friendly* [emphasis added] staff” (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Animals. The theme of animals encompasses the concepts “zoo” and “park”.

A traveler described the experience as follows: “The *Zoo* [emphasis added] layout is very good, with pathways to different *animal* [emphasis added] enclosures and different types of attractions and foods all around” (TripAdvisor, 2020). Another reviewer wrote, “When spending Your summer holliday in Denmark ... Located in Southern part of Aalborg in a lovely treeful *park*” [emphasis added] (TripAdvisor, 2017).

Figure 8 and Figure 7 demonstrates the most common concepts amongst foreigners perceptions of Denmark, divided into favourable and unfavourable tables. For each concept in particular, the analysis provides insight into the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Unfavorable concepts Denmark		
Word-like (23)	Co-Count	Likelihood
expensive	10	30 %
crowded	2	22 %
zoo	2	9 %
outside	2	7 %
food	2	5 %
entry	1	5 %
animals	1	3 %
museum	2	3 %
tour	3	3 %

Figure 8: Unfavorable concepts Denmark

Favorable concepts Denmark		
Word-like (49)	Co-Count	Likelihood
nice	49	77 %
friendly	14	74 %
clean	5	56 %
animals	18	53 %
camping	3	50 %
architecture	5	45 %
castles	5	45 %
crowded	4	44 %
hike	7	44 %
tour	46	43 %
building	10	42 %
ship	7	39 %
experience	16	37 %
view	21	37 %
history	22	37 %
family	8	35 %
fee	2	33 %
beach	29	33 %
castle	20	32 %
enjoyed	16	32 %
zoo	7	32 %
place	39	31 %
bike	4	31 %
museum	21	30 %
recommend	15	30 %
food	11	29 %
park	10	28 %
hours	9	27 %
area	11	26 %
city	10	25 %
impressive	4	25 %
cathedral	1	25 %
loved	8	24 %
time	25	24 %
activities	7	23 %
people	9	23 %
money	4	22 %
outside	6	21 %
worth	10	21 %
churches	1	20 %
culture	1	20 %
wonderful	4	17 %
interesting	7	17 %
expensive	4	17 %
amazing	6	15 %
old	4	14 %
entry	3	14 %
nature	5	13 %
breathtaking	1	13 %

Figure 7: Favorable concepts Denmark

8.4. Finland

The content analyses provided by the Leximancer program disclosed the existence of eight concepts in travellers' online descriptions of Finland as a destination (Figure 9): "place" (hits=279), "ski" (hits=220), "food" (hits=212), "tour" (hits=185), "activities" (hits=88), "animals" (hits=43), "museum" (hits=26) and "island" (hits=26).

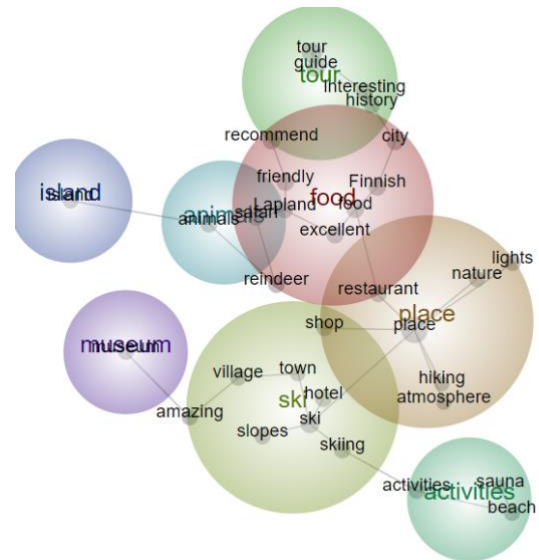


Figure 9: Concept map of Finland

8.4.1. General description of foreigners' experiences

Place. The most repeated theme amongst Finland's reviews is place. The theme includes concepts like "hiking", "atmosphere", "restaurant", "shop", "nature" and "lights". A review reads as follows: "This square was a beautiful *place* [emphasis added] during winter, the christmas trees, *lights* [emphasis added] and holiday market *shops* [emphasis added] were great. Plenty of *restaurants* [emphasis added], bars and shops all the way along this square" ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)). A second traveler wrote:

Killopaa is run by Suomen Latu ..., so it is perfect *place* [emphasis added] to come and enjoy the Lapland wildlife and wild *nature* [emphasis added]. It is right next to The UKK *Nature* [emphasis added] Park, so location is excellent for *hiking* [emphasis added] and Winter activities like skiing ([TripAdvisor, 2021](#)).

A further reviewer stated, "Excellent beach with a pleasant *atmosphere*" [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Ski. The theme of ski comprises the concepts of “skiing”, “slopes”, “town”, “village”, “hotel” and “amazing”. A tourist described the experience as follows: “The *slopes* [emphasis added] are brilliant for our level of *skiing* [emphasis added] - advances beginners/intermediate - we stayed at the Acasshotel which is on the other side of the mountain” ([TripAdvisor, 2015](#)). Another traveler shared, “Fantastic kid friendly, family-run *ski* [emphasis added] resort 10 mins from *town*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2016](#)). A third reviewer wrote:

This was our 1st skiing holiday and I have to say we weren't disappointed, Ruka is *amazing* [emphasis added]! A 30 min bus journey from Kuusamo airport and you are right in the *village* [emphasis added]. We stayed in the Ski-inn *hotel* [emphasis added] and apartment and it had everything we needed! ([TripAdvisor, 2012](#)).

Food. The theme of food incorporates concepts such as “Lapland”, “safari”, “city”, “Finnish”, “reindeer”, “excellent”, “friendly”, “recommend” and “restaurant”. One traveler shared, “This was an *excellent* [emphasis added] experience provided by two wonderful people, in good company!” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). A second tourist wrote, “Though we can't see aurora because of the cloud. The overall experience is nice and the tour is *recommended* [emphasis added] to everyone visiting *Lapland*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

A further review reads as follows: “Delicious *food* [emphasis added], best drinks in Finland, *friendly* [emphasis added] staff. Homy, cozy feel” ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). A fourth reviewer expressed, “I love a *food* [emphasis added] tour and try to do one as often as I can. Heather's tour was great, sharing some of the best of *Finnish* [emphasis added] cuisine as well as introducing us to the *city*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Tour. The theme of tour introduces concepts like “guide”, “history” and “interesting”. A typical review concerning guided tours reads as follows:

Of course, it`s always best to select a *guided tour* [emphasis added], as you`ll get lots of insight into the *history* [emphasis added] of this *interesting* [emphasis added] city. Check out the architecture, the market, the guided tour of the city, and of the waterways (TripAdvisor, 2019).

An additional tourist wrote, “Sergio, our *guide* [emphasis added] from Nordic Unique Travels was great - very patient and explaining things about Lapland and the huskies” (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Activities. The theme of activities encompasses the concepts “beach” and “sauna”. A traveler shared, “The best *beach* [emphasis added] in the Nordic countries and many *activities* [emphasis added] but old rooms in the spa hotel” (TripAdvisor, 2012). Another traveler wrote, “In the evening it`s also a nice place to chill and have your evening swim. There is *Sauna* [emphasis added] possibilities and a good variety of drunks / snacks / ice cream” (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Animals. The theme of animals includes the concepts “safari” and “reindeer”. A reviewer stated, “Last part were different types of *reindeers* [emphasis added], wolfs, fox, etc. Good and easy tour too see some cute *animals* [emphasis added] and enjoy snow forest views” (TripAdvisor, 2019). A second tourist reported, “Probably the best trip was the *reindeer* [emphasis added] and husky *safari* [emphasis added]. You get to go mushing ... with the dogs which is awesome and learn about their way of life” (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Museum. The theme of museum doesn't incorporate any concepts in particular. However, a traveler shared the following experience: "I really enjoyed visiting the *museum* [emphasis added] and learning about life in the Arctic in the summer and winter and how the Lapps lived in the area in the past" ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another reviewer wrote, "The small stone *museum* [emphasis added] downstairs gives an interesting education about the variety of semiprecious stones largely used in contemporary jewellery. A good selection of Finnish products is available in the museum shop" ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Islands. The theme of island also does not comprise any specific concepts. Nonetheless, a visitor's review reads as follow:

my wife and i biked this with out half year old being towed in a trailer. this was a great trip. nice to experience a mix of pedaling and ferrying in between the *islands* [emphasis added]. this is another character of finland you just don't experience on the mainland. well be doing this again soon ([TripAdvisor, 2015](#)).

Another tourist shared, "The ferries connecting the *islands* [emphasis added] of the Turku archipelago enable bikers to make a great round trip" ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Figure 10 and Figure 11 demonstrates the most common concepts amongst foreigners perceptions of Finland, divided into favourable and unfavourable tables. For each concept in particular, the analysis provides insight into the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Unfavorable concepts Finland		
Word-like (10)	Co-Count	Likelihood
slopes	2	7 %
village	2	6 %
reindeer	1	3 %
animals	1	3 %
amazing	1	3 %
skiing	1	3 %
tour	2	2 %
food	1	2 %
city	1	2 %
place	2	1 %

Figure 10: Unfavorable concepts Finland

Favorable concepts Finland		
Word-like (31)	Co-Count	Likelihood
friendly	29	91 %
excellent	22	85 %
guide	31	62 %
island	16	62 %
food	20	48 %
atmosphere	5	45 %
restaurant	11	44 %
skiing	15	42 %
tour	34	41 %
animals	13	41 %
hotel	13	39 %
slopes	11	39 %
beach	16	39 %
reindeer	12	39 %
village	12	38 %
hiking	4	36 %
safari	4	36 %
lights	10	36 %
place	72	35 %
recommend	15	34 %
activities	12	33 %
town	7	33 %
sauna	5	33 %
ski	21	32 %
city	13	31 %
amazing	9	27 %
museum	7	27 %
nature	8	26 %
history	6	25 %
interesting	8	24 %
shop	5	23 %

Figure 11: Favorable concepts Finland

8.5. Iceland

The content analyses provided by the Leximancer program disclosed the existence of nine concepts in travellers´ online descriptions of Iceland as a destination (Figure 12): “tour” (hits=344), “glacier” (hits=164), “beach” (hits=141), “people” (hits=111), “hiking” (hits=109), “city” (hits=86), “museum” (hits=75), “tourists” (hits=47) and “night” (hits=21).

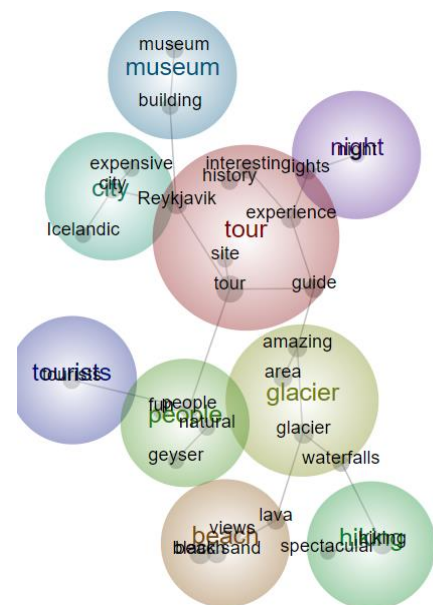


Figure 12: Concept map of Iceland

8.5.1. General description of foreigners' experiences

Tour. The most frequent theme amongst Iceland's reviews is tour. The theme encompasses concepts like "guide", "experience", "history", "site" and "interesting". A review reads as follows:

We arrived with an idea we would have to choose which of the things we wanted to see and do that we could fit in to the time available. The courteous Scot who helped us figured out a walking route that got us to all and put us onto the Walking History *Tour* [emphasis added] which was a highlight of our Iceland *experience* [emphasis added] (TripAdvisor, 2018).

Another traveler wrote, "The sculpture is a wonderful spot for photos and to sit and relax a bit during a *touring* [emphasis added] day in Reykjavik. We stopped by a couple of times as we walked around the *site* [emphasis added] and enjoyed the waterfront" (TripAdvisor, 2020).

A third reviewer shared, "My friend and I booked a Golden Circle *tour* [emphasis added] with Troll Expeditions. Our *guide* [emphasis added] was very knowledgeable about the *history* [emphasis added], geography, and mythology of Iceland and he had a fabulous sense of humor" (TripAdvisor, 2020).

Glacier. The theme of glacier incorporates concepts such as "area", "waterfalls" and "amazing". A traveler shared online, "We were too focused on the *waterfalls* [emphasis added], mountains, sheep, and *glaciers* [emphasis added]. What a beautiful day" (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Another traveler wrote, "In half a day you can see beautiful *waterfalls* [emphasis added], geysirs, geothermal *areas* [emphasis added], a national park, volcanoes, tectonic plates of two

continents meeting, small villages, restaurants and Game of Thrones film locations just to name a few” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). A third reviewer stated:

After some exhilarating weaving through steep valleys and canyons, we landed at the top a beautiful *waterfall* [emphasis added] and then the highlight - landing inside the crater of Eyjafjallajokull volcano. The ground was actually still steaming as Gisli popped the champagne to celebrate our *amazing* [emphasis added] flight ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)).

Beach. The theme of beach introduce concepts like “black sand”, “views” and “lava”. One traveler reported, “It has a beautiful *view* [emphasis added] of the *black sand beach* [emphasis added]. If you keep left towards reynisfjara *beach* [emphasis added] *viewpoint* [emphasis added] we saw many puffins in between the grass on the right side” ([TripAdvisor, 2021](#)). Another traveler wrote, “The *beach* [emphasis added] itself i beautiful. With the *black* [emphasis added] rocks of *sand* [emphasis added], and the cliffs, it offers a nice *view*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2018](#)). A further reviewer expressed, “Magnificent falls, surreal landscapes, beautiful snow capped mountains and coastlines, glaciers, hot springs, geysirs, *lava* [emphasis added] fields, lagooms, diamond *beach* [emphasis added], quaint small towns and villages etc in this land of ice and fires!” ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

People. The theme of people comprises the concepts of “fun”, “natural” and “geyser”. A traveler described the experience as follows: “The geothermal field in Haukadalur is a *natural* [emphasis added] wonder of hot springs and boiling mud pools. “The great *Geyser*” [emphasis added], which have the name to this spectacular phenomenon around the world” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

An additional traveler wrote, “Without a doubt the most exciting trip i have ever done. Glaciers, *geysers* [emphasis added], black sand beaches and wonderful, friendly *people*” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). A third tourist reported, “A lot of *fun* [emphasis added]. Very easy hike on the side of a volcano against a beautiful icy glacier landscape” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Hiking. The theme of hiking includes the concept “spectacular”. A review reads as follows: “We had a beautiful day for the *hike* [emphasis added]. Both “ends” of the *hike* [emphasis added] were *spectacular* [emphasis added], green and lush - certainly a highlight” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another traveler stated, “Take your time to walk around and enjoy the *spectacular* [emphasis added] nature. The weather is very often cloudy and rainy, except some exceptions with lovely weather ” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

City. The theme of city encompasses concepts such as “expensive”, “Icelandic” and “Reykjavik”. A typical review concerning the perception of Iceland being expensive reads as follows: “Beautiful Church, Great Statue. But man is everything expensive” [emphasis added] ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)). Another traveler published:

Walked into the city centre down Laugavegur Street, we saw the Tourist Information Centre and thought it would be a good idea to ask them about the the Blue Lagoon as our Taxi driver said it was a complete tourist trap but if we wanted to go, we should book. ... all done quickly and efficiently - another *expensive Icelandic* [emphasis added] ‘must do’ arranged ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

An additional tourist shared, “Whereas I wouldn't normally tour a *city* [emphasis added] hall (more likely to tour national capital buildings, etc.), the *Reykjavik City* [emphasis added] Hall is quite beautiful. Design features both inside and outside are interesting and aesthetically beautiful” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)).

Museum. The theme of museum comprises the concept of “building”. A reviewer stated, “Ticket to the National Museum [emphasis added] includes the Culture House and well worth crossing town for. Sited in a beautiful building [emphasis added] originally a library, the displays are viewed from top floor downwards” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). A second traveler wrote:

The newest branch of Iceland`s national *museum* [emphasis added] is downtown near and a great place to start your tour, because it is where Reykjavik started! It is a small *building* [emphasis added] that covers the archaeological site of the oldest *building* [emphasis added] found on Iceland, from around 871 CE ([TripAdvisor, 2019](#)).

Tourists. This theme doesn't incorporate any concepts in particular. However, a traveler shared, “This place is really beautiful but it quickly loses its charm when you can't take 2 steps without stepping into *tourists* [emphasis added] groups” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)). Another reviewer reported, “Driving around Iceland you encounter many black sand beaches and this one is the bottom of the list for me. Too many *tourists* [emphasis added], you can't even admire the basalt columns because people are climbing all over them!” ([TripAdvisor, 2017](#)).

Night. The last theme includes the concept “lights”. A traveler stated, “This famous sculpture appears in lots of “Things to See in Reykjavik” guides, and rightly so - it's very impressive, both by day and *night!* [emphasis added]” ([TripAdvisor, 2020](#)). Another visitor shared, “I had

a lovely trip to Reykjavik and this was my final activity. I had hoped to see the northern *lights* [emphasis added] for real but due to cloudy skies all week it wasn't possible” (TripAdvisor, 2019). An additional tourist wrote, “Our whole reason for going to Iceland was to see the Northern *Lights* [emphasis added]. Our guide Magnus Thoroddsen was fantastic” (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Figure 13 and Figure 14 demonstrate the most common concepts amongst foreigners' perceptions of Iceland, divided into favourable and unfavourable tables. For each concept in particular, the analysis provides insight into the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Unfavorable concepts Iceland		
Word-like (15)	Co-Count	Likelihood
night	1	5 %
area	2	5 %
lights	1	5 %
history	1	3 %
experience	2	3 %
lava	1	3 %
views	1	3 %
guide	1	2 %
hiking	2	2 %
tourists	1	2 %
interesting	1	2 %
people	1	2 %
amazing	1	2 %
beach	1	1 %
tour	1	1 %

Figure 13: Unfavorable concepts Iceland

Favorable concepts Iceland		
Word-like (27)	Co-Count	Likelihood
waterfalls	12	57 %
building	14	47 %
city	17	46 %
guide	17	40 %
hiking	33	36 %
fun	7	35 %
black sand	15	33 %
beach	23	33 %
glacier	18	32 %
natural	6	32 %
experience	23	31 %
views	12	31 %
lava	11	30 %
tour	39	30 %
spectacular	6	29 %
area	12	27 %
museum	13	27 %
interesting	14	27 %
people	14	26 %
tourists	11	23 %
amazing	13	23 %
history	7	23 %
site	4	21 %
geyser	6	21 %
night	3	14 %
lights	3	14 %
expensive	3	12 %

Figure 14: Favorable concepts Iceland

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1. Norway

In line with the current study's issue statement, two research objectives sought to determine foreigners' destination image of Norway. Based on the sample of online reviews shared on TripAdvisor, content analyses provided by Leximancer revealed seven themes in foreigners' image of Norway as a destination: place, guide, interesting, hike, shops, camping and ferry. Among these, four were especially prominent (e.g. most hits) and will thus be the foundation of the following discussion. The four leading themes are “place” (hits= 254), “guide” (hits=201), “interesting” (hits=201) and “hike” (hits=67). These are important, as they have

been mentioned most frequently among reviews and thus represent the strongest perceptions foreigners have of Norway.

Place

The most dominant theme, *place*, includes concepts like *park*, *food*, *friendly*, *restaurant*, *fee*, *children* and *hotel*. As these are the most repetitive words among the reviews, they can be considered as the most prominent perceptions foreigners have of Norway. Accordingly they are important findings in terms of defining Norway's destination image. *Park* is on the list of favourable concepts (e.g. Figure 1), and one can thus assume that tourists have good associations with the concept *park*. This finding can be interpreted and further analysed in two ways. Firstly, the concept can be related to *parks*, as in gardens. Seeing as these often contain buildings or artifacts, they are often popular points of interests for tourists. According to Visit Norway, Vigelandsparken located in the country's capital is a fairly popular attraction with over 1 million visitors each year (Visit Norway, 2021g). While this results in general could indicate that foreigners associate Norway with *parks*, the latter fact may also imply that the word *park* points to Vigelandsparken in specific as well. On the other hand, this finding can also mean *park* - as in parking, and thus be related to Norway's popular scenic road trips featuring nature, design and architecture (Visit Norway, 2021d). With reference to the result section of the current study, reviews exemplified indicate that the concept *park* mostly is complementary to popular activities and road trips in particular.

The concepts *food* and *restaurant* go hand in hand, and they will thus be analyzed as one. Considering these are among the top concepts in the current studies results, it could namely indicate that foreigners have strong perceptions of Norway in terms of gastronomy. The findings are both among the favourable- and unfavourable concepts (e.g. Figure 2 and Figure

3), which means that travelers both have positive and negative associations regarding food and restaurants in Norway. With reference the literature review, Norway has in recent years been put on the map as a food destination (Visit Norway, 2021h). In addition, fresh seafood is according to Visit Norway one of the country's four main attractions (Klimova, 2015, p. 6). Ultimately, one can see a correlation between how the country already markets themselves and our findings indicating that travelers have a strong image of Norway being a food- and culinary destination.

Although the concept *children* has a relatively low co-count with a likelihood of only 6%, it is still incorporated in the most prominent theme *place*. In light of previous research reporting that few tourists travel to Norway with children, our results might indicate that foreigners in fact associate Norway as a family destination (Innovation Norway, 2019, p. 27). The concept *friendly* being among the most prominent, might suggest that tourists consider or has an image of Norway being a friendly country in general. With reference to the result section of the current study, reviews exemplified supports this theory in which travelers described people in Norway as *friendly*. *Hotel* is another main finding. Based on the example reviews presented in the result section, this may indicate that Norway has a strong image in terms of accommodation.

Guide

Guide is the second most prominent theme, and incorporates concepts like *amazing*, *Norway*, *excursion*, *recommend* and *fjord*. According to the literature review, Norway is known for its natural beauty, its 1000 fjords and their many popular outdoor activities (Visit Norway, 2021a). Considering all of these concepts as a whole, one can in fact draw the conclusion that foreigners have a strong desire to experience Norway's nature as well as exploring different outdoor activities. In addition the word *guide* is most likely related to the activity of *tour* - a popular

tourist exercise that often incorporate the main essence of what a country has to offer. Accordingly, as *Norway* is among the concepts of this theme, the finding could thus imply that travelers perceive Norway as *amazing* in terms of its nature and further excursions that include this nature. With reference to the result section of this study, reviews exemplified under this theme often revolved around activities that presented Norwegian nature - confirming the latter conclusion.

Interesting

Another important finding represents the theme *interesting* and its concepts of *museum*, *history*, *expensive*, *activities* and *Norwegian*. The concepts *museums* and *history* in specific, could indicate that Norway is perceived as a historical country. Results could further imply that when foreigners think of Norway, their museums, which namely often exhibits Norwegian historical artifacts and narratives, is among the strongest associations. The concept *expensive*, is a finding that suggests that foreigners have an image of Norway as an expensive destination overall. In relation to the result section of the current study, this concept may go hand in hand with *activities*. A review exemplified indicate that although the travelers experience of an attraction was nice, it was too expensive. The concept is also exhibited in Figure 3 presenting the unfavourable concepts, with a likelihood of 11%. One can thus assume that this is a quite negative association foreigners have of Norway. Therefore it can be considered as an important finding for Norway in terms of their nation brand and competitive advantage - as they now are aware of this being a common negative perception among travelers. Especially considering that previous research reports that negative eWOM easily circulates online and therefore has an overwhelming effect on a destination`s image (Jalilvand, 2016, p. 153).

Hike

Although *hike* has considerably fewer hits compared to the latter themes, it still presents prominent findings. The theme includes as earlier mentioned in this study the two concepts of *mountain* and *island*. According to Visit Norway, Norway is known for its fantastic nature, including their majestic mountains (Visit Norway, 2021a). This result might thus in line with literature and the country's destination brand suggest that foreigners very much associate Norway with its varying landscape like their mountains. The latter discussion could also explain why the theme of *hike* in general, and the concept of *island*, is among the most prominent results of Norway.

Destination image studies

Among the existing destination image studies of Norway presented in the literature review, one in particular share comparable results as the current study. Schroödl (2009) found that fjords and expensive were among the most frequent associations of Norway as a destination. Despite the fact that the current study was not based on the same criteria, results state that the concepts of fjords and expensive in fact is amongst the most prominent perceptions foreigners have of Norway. Andersen et al. (2018) identified six main activities that tourists associate Norway with during the winter season: alpine skiing, crosscountry skiing, general destination criteria, children, friendliness and snow. Although the current study was not based on a particular season, prominent concepts such as “excursion”, “activities”, “children” and “friendly” might suggest a correlation between the latter research and our findings. Lastly, Jensen, Chen & Korneliussen (2015) reported that the most frequent associations of Northern Norway among foreigners were the Sami people, midnight sun and reindeers, winter- and snow activities and the North Pole. Overall, the research`s results does not draw any direct parallels to the findings of the current study.

9.2. Sweden

In line with the current study's issue statement, two research objectives sought to determine foreigners' destination image of Sweden. The content analysis provided by Leximancer based on samples of reviews from TripAdvisor revealed eight themes: Place, tour, history, park, beach, town, cathedral and expensive. Each theme contains concepts that are frequently mentioned. The concept maps will help us understand foreigners' perception of each country. Among these, four were especially prominent (e.g. most hits) and will thus be the foundation of the following discussion. The four leading themes are "place" (hits= 430), "tour" (hits=252), "history" (hits=123) and "park" (hits=115). These are important, as they have been mentioned most frequently among reviews and thus represent the strongest perceptions foreigners have of Sweden.

Place

Place is the theme with most hits and it contains concepts like *restaurant*, *city*, *people*, *nice*, *view*, *ski*, *animals* and *beautiful*. Because these concepts have been frequently used they can be considered to be the most prominent perceptions of Sweden. *Restaurant* is one of the concepts in *place* which is in close proximity to *nice*. This could indicate that *nice* has been used to describe *restaurant* visits. As mentioned in the literature review, Sweden has started a program to make Sweden a meal destination (Visit Sweden, 2021d). The results in this context analysis could suggest that this has been a successful campaign. The concept *city* is intertwined with both themes, *place* and *history*. This indicates that this concept has been frequently mentioned in both categories. The literature about Sweden portrays Stockholm as a city with a lot of history (Visit Sweden, 2020c). A traveler mentioned both concepts in a review about a "Walking tour in the old part of Stockholm". In the review presented in the result part the concept *people*

appear as a recommendation for a park where people of different ability levels can enjoy the park. The frequent use of the word *people* could indicate that the reviews either describe a lot of people like crowds or the absence of people. It could also be used in a characteristic manner to describe local people or tourists. Due to the fact that we didn't get a list of "unfavourable concepts" of Sweden, this could be an indication that the use of *people* has been in a favourable situation. In one of the reviews displayed in the result section, the concept *people* has been used to describe *people's* attentiveness in the slopes. And because the concept *nice* is frequently mentioned in the theme, one could assume that the concepts *nice* and *people* have been mentioned in the same context. *Nice* is being used in one of the examples to describe the surroundings at the zoo. Here animals are mentioned as well. The concept *animals* could be mentioned frequently because of zoos and parks, but also because of wildlife. Visit Sweden is fronting both zoos and wildlife safaris as great tourist activities (Visit Sweden, 2021a). *Nice* is a concept under the theme *place* that is both connected to *view* and the secluded theme *beach*. This could indicate that a beach has been described as a place with a nice view or just a nice beach. *Beautiful* is a concept under the theme *place*, but it is also connected to the theme and concepts *park* and the theme *cathedral*. This indicates that the word *beautiful* has been used to describe both parks and cathedrals. The concept map also shows that there is a link between *park*, *nature* and *center*, which could indicate that tourists appreciate parks and nature in close proximity to the city, like "The Royal Djurgarden" in the heart of Stockholm (Visit Sweden, 2020c). The concept *ski* is in the theme with the most hits, it indicates that Sweden is perceived as a ski destination for foreigners. In a traveler's review about a ski experience, the slopes are described as well maintained and that *people* were paying attention in the slopes. In the literature review about Sweden, Visit Sweden promotes Sweden as a destination where both alpine and cross country skiing is popular at great ski resorts (Visit Sweden, 2020b).

Tour

This theme encompasses concepts such as *guide, food, night, friendly, perfect, fun, recommend* and *Swedish*. *Guides* and *tours* are important concepts which indicate that there are popular attractions where a guide is needed. *Guide* is in relation to *fun* which could indicate that it is a review about some of the popular outdoor action activities like dog sled rides. *Night* is also one of the concepts under the theme *tour* which could indicate the north light or midnight sun is mentioned. Looking at the reviews we see examples of northern lights being mentioned alongside *guide, perfect* and *food*. Some of the activities mentioned in the reviews are *food tours* where you walk around in the city and explore local cuisine followed by a guide. This could be the reason why the concept *food* is located under the theme *tour* instead of *place* where the similar concept *restaurant* is. *Friendly, fun, perfect* and *recommend* are descriptive words. The fact that these appear in the concept map means they are frequently used in combination with the other words in the theme *tour*. One could assume that when concepts like *people* and *nice* are in close relation on the concept map, Swedish *people* are perceived as *nice*.

History

Under the theme *history*, concepts like *museum, walking, recommend* and *city* are frequently mentioned. The fact that *walking* is one of the frequently mentioned concepts could be explained by the information from Visit Sweden where many museums in Sweden are outdoors, like Skansen museum (Visit Sweden, 2020c). There is also a link between *history, museum, walking* and *town*. The concepts *history* and *city* are linked together in the concept map, which could indicate that Sweden is perceived as a country with historic cities and museums.

Destination image studies

The results in the study conducted at the University of Würzburg in Germany, have some similarities to our results (Schroödl, 2009, p. 68). The correlating associations are expensive, animals, nature, ski, city and Stockholm. This indicates that young Germans have some of the same perceptions of Sweden as we found in the content analysis.

9.3. Denmark

In line with the current study's issue statement, two research objectives sought to determine foreigners' destination image of Denmark. Based on a sample of online reviews shared on TripAdvisor, content analyses provided by Leximancer revealed seven themes in foreigners' image of Denmark as a destination: place, tour, history, view, beach, activities and animals. Among these, three were especially prominent (e.g. most hits) and will thus be the foundation of the following discussion. The four leading themes are "place" (hits=373), "tour" (hits=354) and "history" (hits=237). These are important, as they have been mentioned most frequently among reviews and thus represent the strongest perceptions foreigners have of Norway.

Place

The most dominant theme *place*, includes the concepts of *bike, city, area, love, food, impressive, churches, enjoyed, loved* and *nice*. As these are the most repetitive words among the reviews, they can be considered as the most prominent perceptions foreigners have of Denmark. Accordingly, they are important findings in terms of defining Denmark's destination image. In relation to the literature review, Visit Denmark states that the country's many cycle routes is an activity they in general are quite known for among tourists (Visit Denmark, 2021c). As the concept *bike* is among the most prominent findings, one can assume that foreigners have strong associations of Denmark in terms of biking. Considering that one of Denmark's most popular

cycle routes is situated in the coastal city of Skagen, the concept of *biking* might also go hand in hand with the concepts of *city* and *area* (Visit Nordjylland, 2021a). With reference to the result section of the current study, reviews from foreigners often mentioned the words *bike* and *area* in parallel. The concept of *city* could on the other hand also be related to the city of Copenhagen in particular, and thus potentially indicate that when foreigners think of Denmark they promptly conceptualise the country's capital. Especially considering that the capital offers several popular tourist attractions that attracts large numbers of tourists each year (Visit Denmark, 2021e).

Seeing as the concepts of *love*, *enjoyed*, *loved* and *nice* are exhibited in Figure 8 presenting favourable concepts, these describing words could altogether indicate that foreigners have quite a positive image of Denmark as a destination overall. The concept of *nice* does in fact represent the concept with the highest likelihood of 77%. As the literature review states, Denmark has in recent years developed a more modern culinary kitchen called new Nordic cuisine, which has a two-Michelin-star restaurant in Copenhagen (Visit Denmark, 2021d). As the concept of *food* is among our most prominent findings, one can assume that foreigners have strong associations of Denmark in terms of gastronomy. The concept is exhibited on both the favourable and unfavorable list (e.g. Figure 8 and Figure 7), indicating that the associations of *food* is both positive and negative. The result might also suggest that new Nordic cuisine's reputation precedes them, since their most famous restaurant is located in Copenhagen and Copenhagen in fact was among the most prominent concepts parallel to *food*.

The concept of *churches* might be a new discovery in terms of what Denmark is known for, as it being among the most prominent findings suggests that foreigners have strong associations of the country in relation to churches. One can thus also assume that tourists' image of Denmark

as a destination overall is characterized by the country's national history and architecture. Hence why the concept *impressive* could be related to *churches* in which foreigners finding these architectural historical buildings impressive.

Tour

Tour is the second most prominent theme, which presents the concepts *wonderful*, *castle*, *recommended*, *outside*, *architecture*, *hours* and *Copenhagen*. These concepts are altogether related to the activity of a tour, a typical tourist activity that often incorporate the main essence of what a country has to offer. In light of the concept *Copenhagen* in specific, one can assume that foreigners associate Denmark with a specific tour in Copenhagen for instance - featuring popular points-of-interests like The Royal Christiansborg (Visit Denmark, 2021f). As stated in the literature review, this is one of many famous castles in Denmark (Visit Denmark, 2021f). Seeing as the concept *castle* is among the current study's leading findings, one can assume that foreigners have a strong image of Denmark in relation to castles and their following historical contribution. The concept is in fact also exhibited in the Figure 8 of favourable concepts, with a likelihood of 45%. The concept *castle*, also exhibited in the favourable list of Figure 8, could indicate that tourists perceive Denmark as a destination with a lot of beautiful architecture. Lastly, the concepts of *recommend* and *wonderful* might go hand in hand, in terms of foreigners recommending a specific tour or Denmark in general on the premise that they consider the country a *wonderful* destination overall.

History

The theme *history* is the third most prominent theme and encompass the concepts of *interesting*, *building*, *ship*, *museum*, *Danish*, *people*, *castles*, *culture*, *cathedral* and *Denmark*. Considering these concepts altogether, one can assume that some of them have a cross-cutting context. The

concept of *culture* could indicate that foreigners have strong perceptions of Denmark in terms of both the country's history and culture. The latter statement could also apply to the concepts of museum, castles and cathedral - seeing as these are all historical artifacts related to Danish history and culture. When it comes to the concept of “people”, one can suggest two interpretations. Firstly, considering that the word “crowded” is exhibited in the list of unfavourable concepts in Figure 7, one can suggest that “people” is related to foreigners perceiving Denmark as an overpopulated destination. With reference to the result section of the current study, the concept could on the other hand simply be related to Danish people in general.

Activities and Animals

Although these two themes have the least amount of hits, they can still be considered as imperative results of our findings - especially in light of literature. According to Visit Denmark, the country is namely considered as a typical family destination offering various family-friendly activities like the Lion Zoo amusement park for instance (Visit Denmark, 2021a). Among the concepts of the theme activities, “family” is presented - underlining a correlation between Denmark's destination brand and the current study's results. The concept of “family” suggests that foreigners do in fact perceive Denmark as a family destination. The latter statement could also be related to the theme of animals, which include the concept of “zoo”. Overall, the results could indicate that foreigners have a strong image of Denmark being a typical family destination that also highly appeals to tourists travelling with children. The concept of “expensive” is also included within the theme of activities, and represent an important finding which therefore should be highlighted. “Expensive” is in fact exhibited in Figure 7 as the most unfavourable concept with a likelihood of 30%. In other words, the word expensive was used frequently by travelers on Tripadvisor in a negative context. One can thus assume that foreigners have an image of Denmark being an expensive destination overall. The finding could be considered as

crucial for Denmark in terms of their nation brand and competitive advantage in the marketplace - as they now are aware of this being a common negative perception among travelers.

Destination image studies

Among the existing destination image studies of Denmark presented in the literature review, only one of the two share comparable results to the current study. Schroödl (2009) found that a typical association of Denmark among other things were Copenhagen, and that foreigners in general had a strong image of Denmark being a 'cozy family- and summer holiday'. Findings of the current study states that Copenhagen in fact is among the most prominent associations foreigners have of Denmark. Although not being among the most prominent results, the current study also found that tourists perceive Denmark as a family destination. Further, Schroödl (2009) also reported that culture, history and traditions in Denmark were quite unknown territories in foreigners' minds. The findings of the current study does in fact suggest the opposite, as history and culture were among the most frequently mentioned themes and concepts of the reviews collected. Saenko's (2010) study is not relevant to the current study, and one can thus not draw any specific parallels between that study and the current one.

9.4. Finland

In line with the current study's issue statement, two research objectives sought to determine foreigners' destination image of Finland. Based on a sample of online reviews shared on TripAdvisor, content analyses provided by Leximancer revealed eight themes in foreigners' image of Finland as a destination: Place, ski, food, tour, activities, animals, museum and island. Among these, three were especially prominent and will thus be the foundation of the following discussion. The three leading themes are "place" (hits=279), "ski" (hits=220) and "food"

(hits=212). These are important, as they have been mentioned most frequently among reviews and thus represent the strongest perceptions foreigners have of Finland.

Place: The theme with most hits is *place*, and contains concepts like restaurant, nature, lights, hiking and atmosphere. This gives us an indication of the most frequently used words in the reviews and will help identify Finland's destination image. The concept *shop* is intertwined with the theme *ski*, and in one of the reviews “holiday marked shops” are mentioned. This could indicate that *shop* refers to the Santas home in Finnish Lapland where it is Christmas all year (Visit Finland, 2021a). The concept *restaurant* is located between the theme's *place* and *food* on the concept map which indicates that the concept has been frequently mentioned in both themes. Apart from *restaurant* and *shop* the theme *place* is dominated by nature and outdoor activities. This could indicate that nature and outdoor activities like hiking is what foreigners associate Finland with. This supports Visit Finland's portrait of Finland where untouched nature and outdoor activities are popular (Business Finland, 2021).

Atmosphere is connected to *place* but does not automatically give away specifics, but the concept is on the list of favourable concepts and that is why we can assume that it is a positive atmosphere that describes one or more places in Finland. The review that is used as an example in the result section refers to a beach with a pleasant atmosphere. On the concept map, atmosphere and beach are situated in close proximity, but are not directly linked. Because atmosphere and hiking are next to each other on the concept map, this could indicate that reviews describe the atmosphere while hiking. And because both of these concepts are on the favourable list of concepts this indicates that the atmosphere was described as favourable (Figure 11). We could also assume that atmosphere has been frequently used to describe the other concepts under the theme *place* like *nature* and *lights*. Nature is a concept that has a wide

range of possibilities. It is located in close proximity to lights on the concept map, which indicate that “lights” is “Northern lights”. This is because northern lights have been mentioned several times in the reviews collected. The information collected from Visit Finland, also supports this assumption, because the northern lights are a big attraction and tourists enjoy night safaris and dog sled rides to experience the northern lights in the most spectacular way (Visit Finland, 2021a).

Hiking is a concept under the theme place which goes hand in hand with nature. This is not just a general assumption, because in the reviews they specifically mention a national park which is excellent for hiking. Visit Finland does also promote hiking in this national park as a recommended activity to do in Finland. According to one of the reviews about Finnish Lapland, it was the perfect place to enjoy wildlife and wild nature. Wildlife-experiences are also promoted on Visit Finland's website. Trips to the natural habitat of bear, wolf, seals, wolverines and different birds are some of the activities offered to visitors (Visit Finland, 2021b). Hiking and winter activities are mentioned in the same review, which is also illustrated in the concept map because the theme place and ski are intertwined.

Ski: Ski is the second largest theme with 220 hits with concepts like *amazing, village, town, ski, slopes, hotel* and *skiing*. This could indicate that Finland is known as a skiing destination. This is supported by the fact that Finland has tourists all year (Business Finland, n.d.). All the concepts in this theme are very closely related. Ski, slopes and skiing are practically one and the same. When looking at the reviews, *hotel* is also a natural part of this theme because a “ski-inn” hotel is mentioned. This means that the hotel is located in very close proximity to the slopes and you can just leave the hotel with skis on. Village, Skiing and slopes are both concepts on the unfavourable and the favourable list, which mean there has been some mixed reviews.

Food: The theme food incorporates concepts like *Finnish, food, excellent, finnish, reindeer, city, lapland, friendly, recommend* and *restaurant*. It is very interesting that the theme food has 212 hits and is the third largest theme. This gives a strong indication that food is an important part of Finland's destination image. According to Visit Finland, Finland has remarkable organic local cuisine (Visit Finland, 2021a). As portrayed in the concept map, the concept *reindeer* is on the edge of the theme food circle with a link to the theme *animals* and the concept *safari*. This indicates that reindeers has not only been mentioned as a meal and local finnish cuisine, but also to activities like reindeer safari. Lapland is also in close proximity on the concept map, which makes sense in regard to the information presented in the literature review about Finland where reindeers plays a big part of the activities offered in Finnish Lapland. Reindeer is both on the favourable and the unfavourable list of concepts (Figure 11 and Figure 10). According to one of the reviews highlighted in the result part of this thesis, guided food tours are very popular where Finnish cuisine is in the spotlight.

Destination image studies

Comparing the findings from tripadvisor reviews with the results from the study conducted at the University of Wurzburg in Germany, there are some correlations like sauna, nature, ski, reindeer, animals and village. This study was done in Germany and this is an indication that some of the associations with Finland are universal. The study done in 2009 supports our results to some degree (Schroödl, 2009, p. 68).

9.5. Iceland

In line with the current study`s issue statement, two research objectives sought to determine foreigners destination image of Iceland. Based on the sample of online reviews from

TripAdvisor, content analyses provided by Leximancer revealed nine themes in foreigners image of Iceland as a destination: tour, glacier, beach, people, hiking, city, museum, tourists and night. Among these, four were especially prominent (e.g. most hits) and will thus the foundation for the following discussion. The four leading themes are “tour” (hits=344), “glacier” (hits=164), “beach” (hits=141) and “people” (hits=111). These are important, as they have been mentioned most frequently among reviews and thus represent the strongest perceptions foreigners have of Iceland.

Tour

The most dominant theme, “tour”, includes the concepts of guide, site, experience, history and interesting. These are therefore among the most essential perceptions travelers have of Iceland. Although literature suggests that Iceland’s nature is what the country is mainly known for, results from the data collection illustrate a more tourism-related perception that may surpass this fact (Visit Iceland, 2021c). This could indicate that tourists associate Iceland as a typical tourist destination, seeing as the latter concepts could mostly be related to tourists’ points of interests. On the other hand, the Golden Circle tour has as mentioned in the literature review become one of the most popular and iconic trips to experience in Iceland (Reykjavik Cars, 2019). Accordingly, one can assume that when travelers think of Iceland as a destination, the perception of tour is more likely to be associated with the Golden Circle route than the actual word “tour” itself in general. Especially considering that a tour like this largely exhibits Iceland’s varying nature, in addition to the country’s cultural- and historical value overall (Reykjavik Cars, 2019; Reykjavik Cars, 2020). With reference to the result section of the current study and reviews exemplified, the Golden Circle was repeatedly mentioned in parallel with travelers describing a tour-experience.

Glacier and Beach

The second and third most prominent themes are “glacier” and “beach”. As earlier presented in the result section of the current study, these encompass concepts like area, waterfall, amazing, black-sand, views and lava. With reference to literature, Iceland is widely known as “the land of fire and ice” in which both lava- and ice sheets covers a large amount of space on the island (Visit Iceland, 2021c; Reykjavik Cars, 2020). Additionally, the country's famous black-sand beaches have also become fundamental points of interests (Reykjavik Cars, 2020). In accordance with the literature, our findings could thus substantiate the latter claim. As these themes were among the leading ones, results might namely suggest that foreigners in general have a strong image of Iceland in terms of its natural phenomenons and geological contrasts.

People (Tourists)

The fourth theme with the most hits is “people”, which present the concepts of fun, natural and geyser. In relation to geysers, literature emphasizes that Iceland is broadly known for these hot springs (Reykjavik Cars, 2020). Correspondingly, results of the current study have a correlation to the theory in which geysers are among the top things foreigners associate with Iceland. However, a further essential point to highlight is that with reference to the content analyses provided by Leximancer (Figure 12) the theme of people is linked to the theme of tourists. Johannesson & Huijbens (2010) stated that tourism in Iceland has been dealing with typical challenges of island tourism, namely high amounts of tourists at specific attractions - putting the natural environment at risk. In reference to the result section of this study, a fairly high amount of travelers on TripAdvisor shared that although their experience was fun, there were too many tourists. One can therefore assume that foreigners have a substantial image of Iceland being a crowded tourist destination, which potentially ruins their experiences. In addition, research reports that tourism in Iceland in recent decades has been thriving and developed more

rapidly in comparison to global growth (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 419). This fact may prove to be reflected in this study's results, seeing as the theme of people is among the primary perceptions foreigners have of Iceland.

City

Even though the theme of city is not among the most prominent, it still presents important findings. As earlier mentioned, the theme incorporates concepts like Reykjavik, expensive and Icelandic. With reference to the reviews exemplified in the result section of this study, tourists' often expressed dissatisfaction in terms of prices in Iceland. One can thus assume that foreigners have an image of Iceland being an expensive destination in general. This finding could be imperative for Iceland in terms of their nation brand and competitive advantage in the marketplace - as they could be more aware of this being a common perception among travelers. Being attentive of this is especially important considering that Jalilvand et al. (2012) found that one-third of tourists visited a message forum like TripAdvisor prior to online travel purchase. The concept of Reykjavik could indicate that when travelers think of Iceland they promptly conceptualise the country's capital city - namely Reykjavik (Johannesson & Huijbens, 2010, p. 424). And rightly so - a lot of the experiences described by travelers did review activities that took place in Reykjavik.

Night

Although the theme of night has the least amount of hits, it can still be considered as an imperative result of our findings. According to Visit Iceland, Iceland is often referred to as "the land of light and darkness" (Visit Iceland, 2021c). The theme of night, and its further correlation to the concept "lights", could thus namely imply that foreigners do in fact have an image of Iceland as the land of light and darkness. Also - in relation to the current study's result section

it is exemplified that the word “lights” mostly is used in the context of northern lights. This astronomical phenomena could potentially thus also be an event that foreigners associate with Iceland.

Destination image studies

Among the existing destination image studies of Iceland presented in the literature review, one in particular share similar results as the current study. Gudlaugsson & Magnusson (2015) concluded that travelers’ strongest perceptions of Iceland as a destination during the summer months is its scenic nature and natural beauty. Although the current study was not based on one season in particular, the overall results (Figure 12) reveal that foreigners’ key image of Iceland refers to its nature. Gren & Gunnarsdottir (2008) presents that the main image of Iceland is described as both a peripheral-, cold- and ‘different` destination. As concepts among the most prominent theme of tour was “interesting” and “experience”, results of the current study could suggest a correlation to the findings of the latter research. In addition, Iceland’s results are quite peculiar in comparison to the further Nordic countries - which have more themes and concepts in common. This may indicate that Iceland in fact does stand out in the minds of foreigners as a ‘different` destination. Lund, Loftsdottir & Leonards’ (2016) study, as well as Gudlaugsson & Eysteinnsson’s (2012) study, both did research fairly distinctive topics which does not draw any direct parallels to the findings of the current study.

9.6. Conclusions

Overall, the findings indicate that foreigners' key image of Norway is determined by its nature, as well as outdoors excursions and activities featuring the country's natural phenomenon's. Based on the results from Leximancer's context analysis, Sweden's destination image is dominated by nature, activities, tours, food and history. Findings show that foreigner's image

of Denmark is related to biking, Copenhagen and the country's history and culture. Overall, tourists perceive Denmark as a typical family destination. The concepts that dominate the destination image of Finland are nature, ski and food. Finland is in fact the one Nordic country that seems to have an image strongly based on food. Ultimately the findings also reveal that foreigners' key image of Iceland is related to its unique- and iconic nature. Considering that Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland share either the theme or concept of *beach*, the findings indicate that this is a common association foreigners have of Nordic countries altogether. In light of the results, foreigners also seem to share a common perception of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland being expensive destinations. Overall, apart from Iceland, the Nordic countries share a good amount of themes and concepts.

9.7. Theoretical contributions and future research

The current study offers valuable insights into foreigner's image of the Nordic countries as destinations based on TripAdvisor-reviews travelers shared online. The analytical tools of Leximancer facilitated the identification of main themes in foreigners' overall experiences, some of which proved to be more important than others. In addition, the study contributes to the literature by identifying favorable- and unfavorable concepts within foreigners' experiences. As there has been little research aligned with destination images of Nordic countries overall, this study's findings fulfill the apparent gap in literature by determining the main associations and perceptions foreigners have of the Nordic countries. The current study could also increase the probability of conducting more effective marketing of a destination, as the results assist in identifying the destination's overall strengths and weaknesses. Going forward, Nordic countries could accordingly be more attentive to their nation brand and visitor image.

The current study only focused on one social media platform, namely TripAdvisor. Future research could thus study user-generated content (UGC) from various social media (e.g. travel blogs, Instagram and Facebook) combined, to assess compatibility with this study's findings. Another issue that could be of future research is whether foreigners' images vary according to demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, nationality or income). This might provide more insight into the essence of foreigners' image, in addition to the destination's market segments. What we initially consider to be the most important findings in this study is based on most hits in the context analysis, because this indicates what foreigners associate these countries with and what shapes the destination image. On the other hand, and in light of marketing and destination branding, the most important results could be the themes with less hits. By focusing on the themes with less hits, it could be possible to reach other market segments and increase the amount of tourists that come to Finland. This could be a very interesting topic for future studies.

10.LIMITATIONS

The current study has some limitations that need to be taken into account. Firstly, the associated territories of Greenland and the Faroe- and Åland islands were not included in determining the image of Nordic countries. Secondly, only 300 reviews were collected per country in this study. In addition, demographic descriptions of travelers were not taken into consideration. Future research could be by including larger samples of data and foreigners characteristics contribute to a fuller understanding of foreigners image of Nordic countries. Further, only English reviews were taken into account, which does not reflect the world wide image of the Nordic countries. Lastly, as a convenient-sampling procedure was utilized, data collected was not evenly distributed - accordingly creating limitations to the study's findings.

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