

BRANDING FINLAND ON THE INTERNET

Images and Stereotypes in Finland's Tourism Marketing

Master's Thesis

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Intercultural Communication

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August 2009

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty FACULTY OF HUMANITIES	Laitos – Department DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
Tekijä – Author Carolyn Winter	
Työn nimi – Title BRANDING FINLAND ON THE INTERNET Images and Stereotypes in Finland's Tourism Marketing	
Oppiaine – Subject Intercultural Communication	Työn laji – Level Pro Gradu -thesis
Aika – Month and year August 2009	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 122 + 3 appendices
Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>This study links intercultural communication to country branding by showing theoretical connections between stereotypes and country images. Due to the largely overlapping definitions of stereotypes and country images found in literature, it is proposed to use the combined term of stereotyped images.</p> <p>The aim of this study is to explore what images of Finland are presented in tourism marketing activities and how marketing specialists evaluate the image of Finland.</p> <p>In the empirical part of this study, using qualitative content analysis it was investigated which pictures of Finland were presented on the website www.visitfinland.com of the Finnish Tourist Board. Furthermore, a qualitative expert survey with employees of the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) was conducted, asking them to evaluate the image of Finland and the importance of the website www.visitfinland.com.</p> <p>In the content analysis it was found that most of the pictures on the website fell into the following categories: Helsinki, winter activity, nature/landscape/animals, and Finnish design/art/symbols. This showed that all together Finland is presented as a winter destination, a country of contrast between urban and rural, and a centre of design and arts. It also became obvious that the picture selection varied between the different target countries of the website (e.g. Australia, China, Russia, Sweden, etc.).</p> <p>The expert survey with employees of the FTB showed that the image of Finland was generally evaluated as weak. Although the respondents criticised Finland's lack of unique attractions, most of them stressed as specialties the country's natural beauty, lakes, purity, Lapland, and contrasts. According to the respondents, the FTB mostly promotes Finland as winter and nature destination following the 4C-core values of the FTB: credible, creative, contrasting and cool.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Stereotype, image, tourism, destination/country branding, Finland	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository University of Jyväskylä, Tourula library	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.

Norman Douglas (1917: 62)

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, countries compete on all levels and especially economically. In this global competition a positive country image is essential for success. Therefore, most countries actively shape their image in order to be recognized and appreciated abroad. These image-shaping activities can be summarized under the term 'destination branding', which is a rather young and still somewhat ambiguous field of study. It has been found that depending on the market, up to 70 percent of the earnings can be attributed to the brand (Lindemann, 2004). Moreover, scholars widely agree that a positive country image not only influences economic factors such as incoming tourism, sales of national products, direct foreign investment, and immigration of skilled workforce to the country, but also enhances the identity of the population and promotes cultural exchange.

In this study, I will look at destination branding in the context of tourism, although it is intertwined also with other fields such as politics, international relations, and product marketing. Tourism is one of the biggest economic factors for countries and Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004: 4) argue that "choice of holiday destination is a significant lifestyle indicator for today's aspirational consumers, and the places where they choose to spend their squeezed vacation time and hard-earned income increasingly have to have emotional appeal, high conversational capital and even celebrity value". According to the World Tourism Organization, the twenty-first century might see the rise of tourist destinations as fashion accessories. This includes the notion that tourism destinations are becoming brands with an emotional loading.

The aim of this study is to explore what images of Finland are presented in tourism marketing activities and how marketing specialists evaluate the image of Finland. More specifically in this study I examine photos of the website www.visitfinland.com of the Finnish Tourist Board to discover their main themes. As a second step, I conduct an expert survey with employees of the Finnish Tourist Board in Helsinki to gain insights in the marketing processes and aims. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the themes of the pictures of the website [visitfinland.com](http://www.visitfinland.com)?

2. What kind of target country specific differences can be seen in the selection of pictures?
3. What steps and what people are involved in the content creation of the website visitfinland.com?
4. What are central aspects of Finland's image for the marketers of the Finnish Tourist Board?

According to a study of the Finnish Tourist Board¹ (FTB, 2008: 27) marketing activities (i.e. recommendations by travel agencies, information from newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, internet, travel brochures, advertisements, and travel fairs) have the biggest influence on non-Finnish tourists choosing Finland as a tourist destination. Of these sources the internet (15 %) is most important, which makes the website visitfinland.com a central tool for marketing the country and shaping its image as a tourist destination.

The formation of a Finnish "Country Branding Working Group" appointed by the Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb in September 2008 shows the current importance of Finland's image within the country.

The delegation is charged with the creation of a country brand for Finland, i.e. to create a strong national image that will enhance Finland's international competitiveness. Appointment of the delegation is based on the present Government Programme, where the Government mentioned strengthening of Finland's image as one of its central objectives. (Formin.finland.fi, 2008)

Experts claim that studies should explore the relationship between cultures and branding, depending on the assumption that cultural differences of places make them distinct and unique (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004: 15). For instance the fact that sauna is originally from Finland makes it the "country of saunas", a title which can hardly be challenged by any other country. However, those special characteristics do not always have to be based on facts only. This can be illustrated by the campaign of the Finnish Tourist Board and Finnair, the national Finnish airline, which launched the concept of "Finland's official Santa Claus" in 1989 (Wallin, 1995).

Because of this unclear borderline between truth, myths and constructed reality, this study compares and combines the concepts of image and

¹ Finnish Tourist Board, FTB (English) = Matkailun edistämiskeskus, MEK (Finnish)

stereotypes. In literature, the connections between image and stereotypes are described in many different and sometimes even contradicting ways. This study tries to give an overview about different understandings, finally suggesting the combined term of stereotyped image. In this study I consider a stereotyped image as an image in peoples' minds which is biased but still contains some kind of truth.

Stereotypes or stereotyped images are on the one hand useful cognitive means of complexity reduction, but on the other hand they can also have negative effects on interpersonal and especially intercultural communication. Bennett (1998: 8) argues for example that by generalizing from media images (i.e. also marketing activities) we are likely to create stereotypes, which might lead to prejudice and misunderstandings. He states further that "we need to look beyond the immediate image to the cultural patterns that can only be ascertained through research" (Bennett, 1998: 8).

Barnett and Lee (2003: 260) define intercultural communication as "the exchange of cultural information between two groups of people with significantly different cultures" and remark that the increase of transborder communication has led to a rapid global diffusion of values and ideas, which created a global community with an increasingly homogenous culture. In contrast to this, there are countermovements of localization or differentiation. Tourism marketing promotes countries' specialties in order to have a unique product and thus contributes to the preservation of cultural differences. However, as mentioned above, the presented country image might be stereotyped and like that pose a threat to intercultural understanding.

In the theoretical part of this study I discuss the concepts of image and country image especially in the contexts of marketing and culture. Furthermore, I discuss country branding and the measurement of country images, stereotypes and the combined concept of stereotyped images. Then I explore earlier studies about the image of Finland, explain my methodological approach and finally present the results and discussion of my own empirical research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 IMAGE AND COUNTRY IMAGE

Cold winters, hot sauna, tranquillity, lakes and forest, Nokia and Santa Claus represent probably some of the most frequent associations with Finland. Chew (2001: 3-4) states that we are all imagologists because national stereotypes determine our self-perception and the image of others.

We are all imagologists, even if we do not realize the fact, and we cannot function socially and politically, in a humane and reasoned fashion, as individuals or groups, without studying the (national) stereotypes so current in our collective memory.

For these stereotypes color, to a large extent, not only our self-perception (our “auto-image”) via the image of the other (our “hetero-image”), but determine for better and, regrettably, more often, for worse our behavior toward the other.

William L. III Chew (2001: 3-4)

In this chapter I explore the theoretical background and the function of country images.

2.1.1 Defining Image

Many researches have posed the question: What is a country image and how can it be measured? In reviews of tourism destination image studies of the last 40 years, it was found that the field is very fragmented because researchers use different definitions of image or none at all (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). Often country image, destination image and national image are used to describe more or less the same concept. Sometimes also brand is used instead of image, because branding is understood to be created through images (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007).

In this study the term country image will be used because it is more specific than destination image, which can also refer to regions, states, cities or single attractions (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991: 38). Country image and national image can be seen as synonyms, which stress either the characteristics of the country or its inhabitants. As this study works in the framework of tourism marketing, I refer to the term country image, which has been used for example by Kotler and Gertner (2004).

Definitions of country image have varied a lot in past research and still do. Many adapt Crompton's (1979) definition: "sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination". In this study country image will be understood as comprising attribute, holistic, functional, psychological, common, and unique components (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). First, I will explain the term image and I will discuss the definition of country image in Chapter 2.2.5 in more detail.

Defining the term image is challenging, as researchers use it in many different fields of study. Often the terms image and reputation are used interchangeably because they both refer to a collective belief or evaluation of a person or a thing. According to the online dictionary Dictionary.com, reputation is "the estimation in which a person or thing is held, esp. by the community or the public generally" and it often refers to a positive evaluation ("favorable repute; good name") (Dictionary.com, 2009). Balmer and Greyser (2002: 76) argue that perception at one point in time is called image, while the perception over time is called reputation. In this study I use the term image because it includes both positive and negative evaluations and is used more widely by scholars in the field of destination branding.

Fundamentally, the term image can be divided into five semantic categories (graphic, optical, perceptual, mental, and verbal) which occupy a central role in different disciplines (Mitchell, 1986: 10). These image categories, examples and their field of discipline are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Image categories, based on Mitchell (1986: 10)

Image Category	Examples	Discipline
Graphic	Pictures, statues, designs	Arts history
Optical	Mirrors, projections	Physics
Perceptual	Sense data, 'species', appearances	Border region connecting different disciplines
Mental	Dreams, memories, ideas, phantasmata	Psychology, epistemology
Verbal	Metaphors, descriptions	Literary Criticism

Physics for example deal with images as optical phenomena, such as reflections in mirrors. This study deals with images of countries which can fall into

the category of mental images and perceptual images, depending on the perspective taken. First I will explain the concept of mental or conceived images in the field of imagology, and second the concept of perceptual or communicated image in the field of marketing.

2.1.2 Conceived and Communicated Image

In the field of imagology researchers analyze “our mental images of the Other and of ourselves” in literature (Beller & Leerssen, 2007: xiii). These mental images can also be called conceived images.

When looking at the origin and formation of national or country images in literary form, “the most important sphere of origin of all national typological fictions are the mental imaginations, ideas and *Vorstellungsbilder*” (Beller, 2007: 3, italics as in original). In the imagological definition, image is “the mental or discursive representation or reputation of a person, group, ethnicity or ‘nation’”, which does not include factual, empirically testable statements (e.g. Finland has a female president.) but relies on moral and characteristical attributions (e.g. Finns are silent.) (Leerssen, 2007b: 342). Imagology aims at exploring which images of different groups or nations are shown in “subjective and rhetorically schematized” sources and discursive environments, and does not claim these images to be social realities (Beller & Leerssen, 2007: xiii-ix).

Nonetheless it is recognized that these images influence our opinion of others and control our behaviour towards them. “Cultural discontinuities and differences (resulting from languages, mentalities, everyday habits, and religions) trigger positive and negative judgements and images” (Beller, 2007: 4). Thus, although in this imagological definition mental images of other countries are rather abstract concepts in the minds of people, they exceed a strong influence on their behaviour and buying decisions, which makes images a central interest of marketing.

Marketing is interested in influencing people’s mental images and therefore relies on perceptual or communicated images. Mitchell (1986: 10) puts images “created for products and personages by experts in advertising and propaganda” in the category of perceptual images which lie “between ourselves and

reality". Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2007) as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". According to the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2009) brand image is defined as "the perception of a brand in the minds of persons. (...) It is what people believe about a brand – their thoughts, feelings, expectations." Although this definition stresses the images in the minds of people, the actual interest of marketing lies in creating or changing such images, which makes marketers "image communicators".

The dual nature of image as conceived and communicated has been found in many other studies. Karvonen (1997) analysed theories of the public image and concluded that on the grounds of the reviewed literature the concept of public image is "Janus-faced": Image is on the one hand understood as a mental picture or idea, and on the other hand as communication.

Grunig (1993) calls these different conceptions "psychological image" and "artistic image". The artistic image refers to the sender, who performs or presents something, and the psychological image refers to the receiver, who interprets and comprehends the presentation.

Bramwell and Rowding (1996: 202) made a distinction between projected and received image: "Projected images are the ideas and impressions of a place that are available for people's consideration". Those projected images are distributed through communication channels, received by the people, and interpreted according to their subjective characteristics, like personality, attitudes, experiences and knowledge. In this way projected images are formed into "own unique representations or mental constructs" (Bramwell & Rowding, 1996: 202) and become received images.

Balmer and Greyser (2002) have studied multiple identities of corporations and found that there are five different facets of corporate identity: actual, communicated, conceived, ideal, and desired. Conceived identity and communicated identity are connected to the concept of image. By conceived identity Balmer and Greyser (2002) understand the perceptions of relevant stakeholder groups: corporate image, reputation, and brand associations. All messages sent by the corporation to audience through different channels, such

as advertising and public relations, constitute the communicated identity in Balmer's model.

In this study I will use the terms "conceived image" and "communicated image", in order to distinguish between the images in held by people, and the ones created by marketing activities. The distinction between conceived and communicated image can be seen in the table below, which summarizes the other definitions which were discussed above.

Table 2. Distinction between conceived and communicated image

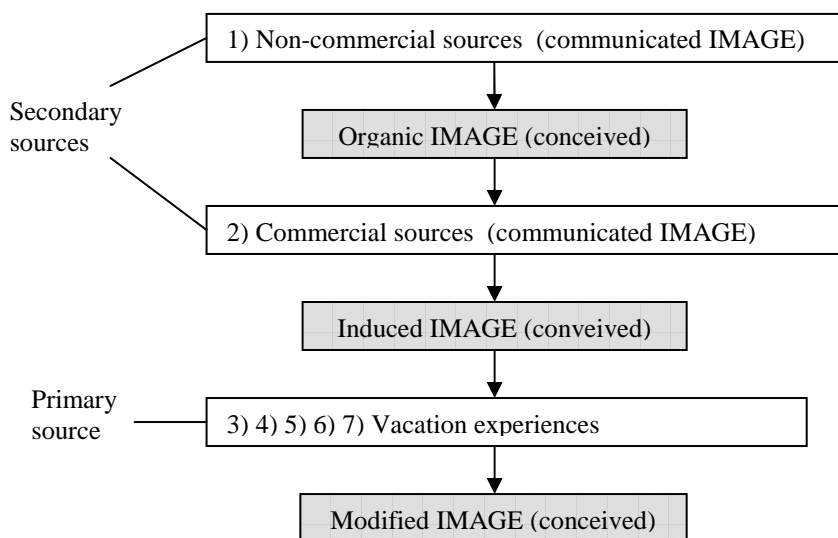
CONCEIVED IMAGE	COMMUNICATED IMAGE
Mental image: mental imaginations, ideas and <i>Vorstellungsbilder</i> (Beller, 2007: 3)	Perceptual image: created for products and personages by experts in advertising and propaganda (Mitchell, 1986: 10)
mental picture, idea (Karvonen, 1997: 318)	communication (Karvonen, 1997: 318)
Psychological image: referring the receiver, who interprets and comprehends the presentation (Grunig, 1993)	Artistic image: referring to the sender who performs or presents something (Grunig, 1993)
Received image (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996: 202)	Projected image (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996: 202)
Conceived identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002)	Communicated identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002)

In this study, the interplay between conceived and communicated image is important for understanding the formation of country images. Kunczik (1997: 1) states that national images "seem to form, fundamentally, through a very complex communication process involving varied information sources". According to Kunczik (1997) media, news services, sports, and books are probably the strongest image shapers, while education and travel – that is the degree of personal experiences of foreign cultures – contribute to image building.

2.1.3 Image Formation

Gunn (1988) has described destination image formation in seven phases, which show the relationships between conceived and communicated image: 1) Accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences, 2) Modification of these images by further information, 3) Decision to take a vacation, 4) Travel to the destination, 5) Participation at the destination, 6) Return home, and 7) Modification of images based on the vacation experience. Figure 1 is based on Gunn's model.

Figure 1. Stages of destination image formation, based on Gunn (1988)



For this study, the influence of commercial sources on the conceived image is the focal point. The conceived image is formed and altered by the phases 1, 2, and 7. Gunn (1988) calls the image formed during phase 1 “organic image” and during phase 2 “induced image”. Both are based upon secondary sources of information and do not include actually visiting a country.

The organic image of phase 1 relies primarily on non-touristic, non-commercial sources, such as mass media, education and opinions of peer groups. Also Kotler and Gertner (2004: 42) argue that even when a country does not consciously manage and promote its name as a brand, people have a certain image of countries.

The organic image is modified into an induced image by further information from commercial sources, such as travel brochures, travel websites, travel guidebooks, or travel agents, which can be seen as channels for transmitting an image. This communicated image influences the receiver’s organic image and turns it into an induced image.

After actually visiting the destination, the image is again modified, but this time by the actual experiences of the country, i.e. primary sources.

After having defined image in different contexts, distinguished between conceived and communicated image, and reviewed the different stages of image

formation, in the next chapter I will explore images of countries in more detail. I will look at the connection between image and identity and at image theory which originally comes from political science but has been adapted to general intergroup perceptions.

2.1.4 Image and Identity

Hetero- and auto-image are terms used to distinguish between images of others and ourselves (Leerssen, 2007b: 342). Auto-images are closely connected to the concept of identity, and also hetero-images might influence the way in which people perceive themselves. Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004) recognize that a country's image does not only have an impact on the nation's economy, but also on national self-image and identity. Lehtonen (2005: 62) states that just as organizations have a corporate identity, countries can possess an identity, which allows their personification: "the country may be perceived as hostile, friendly, hospitable or frosty as if it were an alive human being with feelings and sensations of its own". Identity, in turn, is connected to representations and shared meanings of culture.

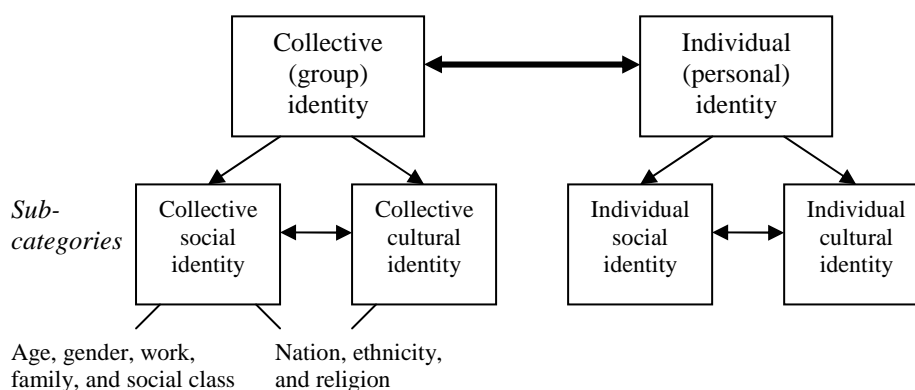
As Stuart Hall (1990: 225) puts it, "identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past". Identity concerns the study of psychology, culture, politics, economics, philosophy, and history, which are for example dealt with Alcoff and Mendieta's work (2003). Here I will concentrate on psychology and culture.

The term "identity" derives from the Latin word "idem" (= the same), and fundamentally expresses the "sameness of a thing with itself" and thus identity involves the meaning of "being identifiable" (Leerssen, 2007a: 335). Being identifiable can mean that something stays the same over time but also means that it can be separated from something else. Leerssen distinguishes between the older, diachronic, meaning of "permanence and continuity" and the more current, synchronic meaning of "separate and autonomous individuality". This means that a collective sense of identity is derived from a shared historical awareness, while at the same time the identity of a person or group involves the

impossibility of substitution, the idea of individuality. The diachronic continuity is more connected to the auto-image, while the synchronic individuality refers to the distinction between self and others, and therefore more to hetero-images. (Leerssen, 2007a)

Furthermore one can distinguish between collective and individual identity. The concept of collective identity was first introduced by psychoanalyst Freud, who stated that individuals always belong to groups (ethnic, national, crowd) and that individuals behave uniformly in the ingroup, while at the same time distinguishing themselves from outgroups. Petkova (2005: 14) argues that social and cultural identity are sub-categories of the general concept of collective identity. Social identity usually signifies the identity of a social group (depending on institutional organization and social strata), while cultural identity concerns cultural groups or communities (depending on a system of traditions, customs, values, and symbols) (Petkova, 2005: 14-15). At the same time cultural and social identity cannot be separated because “there is no social group without culture and no culture outside the frames of a social group” (Petkova, 2005: 15). Age, gender, work, family, and social class tend to be defined in terms of social identity while nation, ethnicity, and religion involve both social and cultural identities (Petkova, 2005: 15). Figure 2 visualizes Petkova’s categorizations.

Figure 2. Collective and individual, social and cultural identity, based on Petkova (2005)



Social identity theory recognizes that the way we perceive others and ourselves is based on both our unique characteristics (i.e. personal identity) and our

membership in various groups (i.e. collective identity) (Greenberg & Baron, 2003: 40). Comparison of ourselves with other individuals and other groups helps us to define our identity.

Although collective and individual identity influence each other, Petkova (2005) stresses the importance to distinguish between collective cultural identity and individual cultural identity. Collective cultural identity means that one looks at the identity of a cultural community, which means that there are as many cultural identities as there are communities. On the individual level however, each person is part of different cultural communities at the same time and therefore possesses an individual cultural identity which is a combination or mixture of his or her collective cultural identities. As an example one could say that on the one hand all Finns share the same collective cultural identity of being Finnish. On the other hand, one Finn might be part of the Swedish-speaking minority while another one might have an Indian ethnic origin, which means that they have different individual cultural identities.

There have been two main approaches to cultural identity. The “essentialist” approach states that a number of essential core features are deeply rooted in every cultural group and that they make it unique and specific (Petkova, 2005: 17). The second approach is social constructivism which was developed in the middle of the 20th century. It denies the essentialist belief that cultural communities originate from a common ethnic or racial origin and proclaims that communities are socially constructed (Petkova, 2005: 17). Eller (1999) states that in social constructivism the essentialist “fact” of a common origin is replaced by a myth of a common origin. Also others have dealt with identity as a socially constructed phenomenon as “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) and “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). This means that “not cultural community itself but its image, continuously constructed, shaped and reshaped by individuals becomes the basis of the collective identification with it” (Petkova, 2005: 17). Although the social constructivist approach toward identity alone would be misleading, one can say that it contributes to the understanding of identity.

Lindsley (1998: 202) argues that “individual identity is negated when individuals are stereotyped and characteristics are attributed to them based solely on group membership”. The concept of stereotypes will be dis-

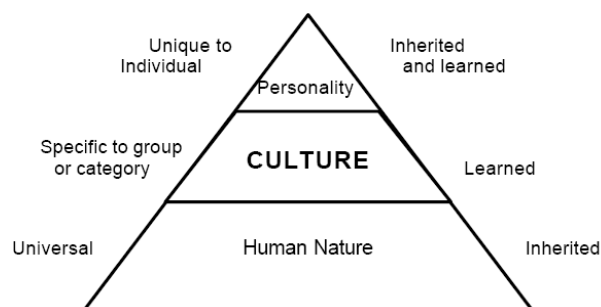
cussed in Chapter 2.3. Now I will explain the connections between representation, culture and national identity.

2.1.5 Representation, Culture and National Identity

The concept of representation is closely connected to the idea that identity is, at least partially, socially constructed. Because things themselves do not have a meaning, meanings have to be given to them – meanings have to be socially constructed. For example a stone can be used in different contexts as a monument, a weapon or a border mark. Meanings have to be represented through certain media, and language can be such a medium of representation, in fact a system of representation. In the wider sense language can be understood as including more than the spoken or written word; it can include mimics, body language, music and images. Culture (understood as shared values of a group of people) is based on shared meanings, which allow people to understand the world in roughly similar ways. These shared meanings and values give people a sense of their identity, because they define who they are and how they are different from other groups. (Hall, 1997: .)

Hofstede (2004) defines culture as “mental software”, which people have learned throughout their lifetime. Culture is learned and group-specific, based on a universal inherited human nature and topped by an individual personality (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Three levels of uniqueness in mental programming (Hofstede, 2004: 4)

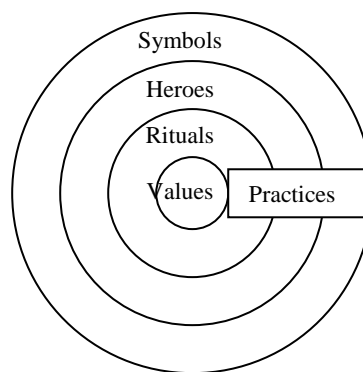


This interplay between common and individual factors fits with Petkova’s (2005) distinction between individual and collective identity. Hofstede (2004: 4) states that “Culture is always a collective phenomenon (...), it is the collec-

tive programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.” (Italics omitted)

Hofstede (2004: 6-11) also provides an “onion model” of the layers of culture (see figure 4). According to Hofstede’s model, cultural differences manifest themselves at different levels of depth: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The onion-model symbolizes that the outer layer is more affected by change, while the centre is rather persistent.

Figure 4. The "onion": manifestations of culture at different levels of depth (Hofstede, 2004: 7)



In the outermost layer there are symbols like gestures, pictures or objects that carry meaning that can be only understood by insiders of that culture. Symbols are for example words in a special language, way of dressing or flags. Heroes are in the second outermost layer, which are people or figures dead or alive, real or imaginary who serve as models for behaviour in that culture. In Finland, heroes could be for example President Tarja Halonen, Formula-1 driver Mika Häkkinen or the comic figures Viivi and Wagner. At the next layer are rituals, which are defined as “collective activities, technically superfluous to reaching the desired ends, but which within a culture are considered as socially essential” (Hofstede, 2004: 8). Examples are greetings, table habits or religious ceremonies. Hofstede submits symbols, heroes and rituals under the term practices as they are visible to an outsider although he might not understand their meaning. In the core of the onion model there are values, which are mostly learned in an early stage of life and give a feeling of what is desirable and what is not. Hofstede (2004) argues that values are stable over time although prac-

tices may change and that parents have an unconscious tendency to educate their children in the same way they have been brought up. Like that culture reproduces itself in the core values.

Shared meanings of a common language are central to the formation of national identity. Human identity only exists in the framework of interpretation provided by language and cultural symbols in terms of which we become aware of ourselves and others (Poole, 2003). According to Poole (2003), Johann Gottlieb Herder was one of the first theorists of nationalism who argued that a nation is constituted through its language and culture – through its practices, customs, and rituals of everyday life, through its stories, folk beliefs, and myths in terms of which people make sense of their lives. The term “nation” derives from the Latin word “natio”, which means birth or decent. In most usages, nation signifies a “human aggregate united by common decent, or, more loosely, by common history, language, or (place of) origin” (Leerssen, 2007c: 377). Sometimes the terms nation and people are used both to describe “the population of an entire country or state, or large-scale ethnic groups like speakers of a separate, recognized language” (Leerssen, 2007c: 378). Leerssen (2007c: 380) also states that culture (i.e. mores, manners, customs, character, outlook and mentality) defines a nation and distinguishes it from others. In this study nation is understood as the population of a state which shares a certain culture.

Poole (2003) states that cultural identity does not necessarily take the form of national identity. In earlier days, cultural identities were much more localized, e.g. to the village community people lived in, but the emergence of print technology and the development of bigger official language communities soon lead to the development of national communities.

The French philosopher Olivier Mongin argues that in today’s world, individuals lack a stable source of identity, which leads to a collective identity crisis of modernity (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn Jr., & Ganesh, 2004: 110). Also Petkova (2005) describes different scenarios of the crisis of national identity which is mostly caused by the processes of globalization: 1) After a period of serious weakening, national identity reaffirms itself in the traditional form, 2) National identity fails and is replaced by other cultural (hybrid) identi-

ties, such as global cultural identity or religious identity, 3) National identity remains the primary identity through transformation and discovery of new principles and foundations, and 4) The crisis of national identity becomes chronic and is only suppressed but not resolved. Of these four possibilities the second seems to be most supported by different scholars, who discuss the possibilities of cultural identity hybrids (Dahl, 2007; Hall, 1992; Leerssen, 2007a; Pieterse, 2004).

Although national identity might be weakened by processes of globalization, in which nations become more heterogeneous and borderless, it has kept a certain power: First, national identity is somewhat inescapable, because in most cases people are born in a certain country and spend their first years there, learn the national language(s) and are socialized in its culture and community. And second, a nation has a richness of cultural resources, such as the feeling of a home country, the national history, and a vast cultural heritage. (Poole, 2003)

Historically, national identity was formed and strengthened through discrimination against “the other”, i.e. an enemy, aggressor, oppressor, or rival (Petkova, 2005: 25). Even though the process of nation-building is over in many parts of the world and the discrimination against “the other” might be less important, many of the original national images are still valid today. The origins and consequences of the images that nation-states hold of each others were studied in international relations research in political science, which led to the emergence of image theory. I will describe the basic assumptions of image theory in the following chapter.

2.1.6 Image Theory

Boulding (1959: 120-121) stated that “the images which are important in international systems are those which a nation has of itself and of those other bodies in the system which constitute its international environment”. Alexander, Brewer and Herrmann (1999) adapted this image theory to explain general intergroup perceptions, which also gives important insights to the origin and function of country images

Table 3. Images of nation-states depending on aspects of their intergroup relationship, based on Alexander et al (1999; 2005)

	Ally	Enemy	Dependent	Barbarian	Imperialist
Goals	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
Power	Equal	Equal	Outgroup weaker	Outgroup stronger	Outgroup stronger
Cultural Status	Equal	Equal	Outgroup lower	Outgroup lower	Outgroup higher

Image theorists have identified five main outgroup images: ally, enemy, dependent, barbarian, and imperialist (Herrmann & Fischkeller, 1995), which are summarized in table 3. These five images depend mainly on three aspects of intergroup relationships: goal compatibility, relative power, and relative cultural status (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999; Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005). For instance, compatible goals combined with equal power and status, leads to an ally image. If there are incompatible goals with similar power and status, the nations perceive each other as enemies. Both ally and enemy images are called symmetric, because the images will mirror each other. For example, French people perceive the Germans as enemies, while at the same time Germans also perceive French as enemies. On the other hand the dependent, barbarian, and imperialist images are asymmetric, because if the French would think that the Germans are dependent, the Germans might consider the French as barbarians or as imperialists depending on whether they consider French culture as lower or higher.

These different outgroup images can be understood as “organized stereotypes” (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999: 79), because they actually lead to certain evaluations of the others. The enemy is for example stereotyped as hostile, manipulative, opportunistic, and untrustworthy, the ally as cooperative, trustworthy, and democratic (Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005: 782). Barbarian out-groups are seen as irrational, ruthless, violent and destructive, imperialist outgroups as arrogant, paternalistic, controlling and exploitative, while depending out-groups are evaluated as lazy, lacking discipline, naïve, incompetent, and vulnerable (Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005: 782-783)

Image theory goes beyond the description of images as organized stereotype, as it is both structural and functional (Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005: 782). It is structural, because it explains the origins of inter-

group stereotypes with the structure of intergroup relations, i.e. perceived intergroup competition, relative power, and relative cultural status (Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005: 781). It is functional, because it presents purposes outgroup stereotypes serve, i.e. balancing “sentiments and behavioral inclinations” between the self- and the other image (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999: 79). That means that “stereotypes both *reflect* the nature of the structural relationships between groups and serve to *justify* intergroup attitudes and behavior (Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005: 782). The connection between image and stereotype will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In the following chapter I will describe how important image is in country marketing.

2.2 COUNTRY BRANDING AND IMAGE MEASUREMENT

Country branding means promoting a country's image. In this chapter I will explain different aspects of country branding and describe approaches for measuring country images. "Place branding is an extremely complex and highly political activity that can enhance a nation's economy, national self-image and identity" (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004). A common framework for country image measurement has not been established so far, but Echtner and Richie's (1991) model of the components of country image offers a good starting point which is also used as a basis for this study.

2.2.1 Country Branding

"Every nation is a brand and most nations have their brand made for them" (Loo & Davies, 2006: 198). Country or nation brands, also referred to as images, develop mostly involuntarily formed by different sources, such as education, mass media, travel, product purchases and encounters with people. De Chernatony (2006: 16) states that one of the challenges of country brands "is to ensure that the stereotypical perception of a place does not become outdated". This statement already includes the assumption that stereotypical perceptions are an important part of image formation, at least as long as they hold true to some degree.

Country images may be true or stereotyped, or even both at the same time, but nonetheless they have a huge influence on people's buying decisions. According to the so called country-of-origin effect, for instance, some products are strongly identified with their country of origin, which can influence the sales of these products. For example, wine or perfume from France is usually associated with high quality. Also direct foreign investment decisions or travel decisions are connected to the image of the countries, which makes country brand management an essential success factor in today's global market. Ryan (2008) states that branding products effectively is "to create a distinctive identity in a crowded and competitive international marketplace".

The increase in communication across national borders in today's globalized world has led to a "rapid global diffusion of values, ideas, opinions,

and technologies” and created a global community with an increasingly homogenous culture (Barnett & Lee, 2003: 264). This convergence of cultures has been noted in many areas, especially regarding political, economic, educational, and scientific activities (Beyer, 1994; Robertson, 1992). In spite of this homogenisation, marketing is in general based on the strategy of distinction, a unique selling proposition (USP), and a brand can be briefly defined as a “point of difference” (Avery, 2000: 105). According to the American Marketing Association a unique selling proposition is “an approach to developing the advertising message that concentrates on the uniquely differentiating characteristic of the product that is both important to the customer and a unique strength of the advertised products when compared to competing products” (AMA, 2009). Also in tourism marketing a unique brand is essential, because more and more countries offer similar services and commodities for tourists in different segments. The location and the beaches are similar but what makes Spain different from Portugal? Why should people travel to Finland instead of Sweden if they search for a Nordic experience?

According to experts in destination branding, places currently offer the greatest branding opportunities and the choice of holiday destination is a significant lifestyle indicator for today’s consumers. Branding connects the country to a mental image and emotions, which make Spain “feel” differently than Portugal. At the same time, destination brands are also reaching beyond tourism industry, positioning themselves as holistic place brands; indeed many countries, states and regions are embarking on brand-building initiatives that are inclusive of tourism and economic development. (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004: .)

In this study I am exploring the role of tourism promotion (i.e. of the Finnish Tourist Board) in the formation of the image of Finland and therefore want to describe the concept of tourism before continuing with branding in general.

2.2.2 Tourism

The word tourism comes from Latin “*tornus*” (turn) and was used first in French as “*tour*” in the meaning of a trip in the beginning of the sixteenth cen-

ture. The words “tourism” and “tourist” were first officially used by the League of Nations. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism “comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity from within the place visited”. Tourism inherently involves travel, by whatever type of transportation, but all travel is not tourism. In the narrowest sense tourism means “travel from one’s usual place of residence, without precise objectives and for a pre-determined and limited period of time”. (Bonadei & Frediani, 2007: .)

Tourism promotes cultural exchange, spreads images of different nations and destinations, and is one of the most important world industries (Bonadei & Frediani, 2007). Tourists bring money to the country visited, support local companies by buying their products and services, and create employment (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 23). Although without doubts tourism also has negative effects (such as environmental pollutions or crowding local facilities) it has proven to be an essential economic and social factor: According to the World Tourism Organization, travel and tourism generated worldwide directly and indirectly 11.7 percent of the global gross domestic product and nearly 200 million jobs in 2001 (Kotler & Gertner, 2004). In Finland, according to a study of the Finnish Tourist Board, foreign visitors spent over 1.6 billion Euros during the year 2007. It is probably mostly these economic factors which motivate countries and bigger cities set up tourism and convention bureaus, to attract non-business and business visitors to the country.

Image became a focus of tourism research in the early 1970s, and attention to this construct increased in the 1990s (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007: 194), because it is considered to have “a major influence on a buyer’s choice” (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 142). Due to the lack of a common terminology in the field, country or destination images are studied under different names: destination attractiveness, destination awareness, destination evaluation, destination perception, destination attributes and destination quality (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007: 196). Also the term “brand” is used instead of image (Olins, 2002). Especially Simon Anholt (1998) has coined the term of nation branding, which is also referred to as country branding or in a wider

term as place branding. Anholt (2007) points out on his website that the reputation of a country has to be managed by a “partnership of tourism, culture, government, business and civil society”.

2.2.3 Brand, Branding and Image-Building

Although branding is used frequently by marketers, they often do not give a clear definition. “They just label as branding every effort to make a brand known and liked by consumers” (Li, 2001: 17). One study attempted to find common criteria of brand success and a central definition of branding by in-depth interviews with 20 leading-edge brand consultants, but could only find that brand success is a multidimensional construct of both business-based and consumer-based criteria (de Chernatony, Dall’Olmo Riley, & Harris, 1998).

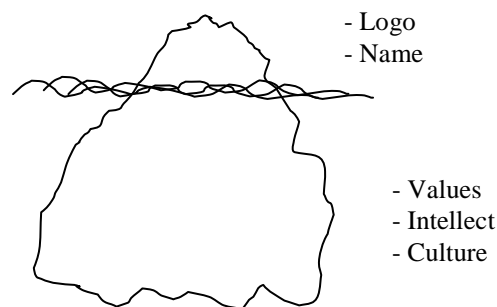
De Chernatony (2006: 26-27) offers an overview about the different interpretations of brand in three categories: input perspective (i.e. managers directing resources to influence customers), output perspective (i.e. consumers’ interpretations), or time perspective (i.e. brand evolution over time). With an input perspective brand can be understood as logo, legal instrument, shorthand, risk reducer, positioning, personality, cluster of values, vision, adding value, or identity. Taking an output perspective, a brand can be regarded as image or as a relationship, while the time perspective sees a brand as an evolving entity.

The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2009) defines a brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers”. This definition stresses the input perspective of a brand as logo, and bears connotations to the origin of the word: Branding actually comes from branding cows, in order to be able to identify their owner. While the AMA definition of brand stresses the marketers’ point of view, the website Buildingbrands.com (2009) offers a more output oriented definition which regards a brand as image: “A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer”.

De Chernatony (2006: 11-12) points out that brands are multifaceted concepts and that a great part of them is invisible to the consumer. He compares brands to icebergs, of which only 15 percent is visible above the wa-

ter and 85 percent invisible beneath the water. Figure 5 shows the iceberg model after Davidson (1997), which visualizes that only the logo and the name of the brand are visible while values, intellect, and culture are invisible to the customer.

Figure 5. The branding iceberg (according to Davidson, 1997)



De Chernatony (2006: 8) states that a brand represents a “dynamic interface between an organization’s actions and consumers’ interpretations. It can be regarded as a cluster of functional and emotional values which promises a unique and welcomed experience”. Functional values include more comparable properties such as performance and quality; emotional values concern for instance prestige and expression of a certain lifestyle. Traditionally, advertising has been a particularly powerful way for communicating both functional and emotional values of a brand (De Chernatony, 2006: 6). De Chernatony (2006: 13) defines a successful brand as “an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceive relevant, unique, sustainable added value which match their needs most closely”.

While brand can be understood as a status, i.e. the current brand image, branding is the process of improving this image. Lake (2009) argues that branding does not aim at being better than competitors, but at being perceived as the only option – therefore, she states that branding goes far beyond marketing. Other researchers see branding as a tool of marketing: “Branding is perhaps the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers” (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004: 60).

Li also focuses more on the output perspective (image, relationship) and defines branding as “a kind of marketing communication for consumers which aims to set up an image” (2001: 30). Although branding is not the same as image, researchers widely agree that branding is created through image (Cai, 2002; Croy, Govers, & Ravinder, 2003; Jensen & Korneliussen, 2002; Kotler & Gertner, 2004; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). In this study I will follow Li’s (2001) definition and understand branding as a kind of marketing communication which aims at building a certain image.

Holt (2004) does not offer a specific definition of branding, but his comparison of branding models gives insights in characteristics of branding. Holt classified four types of branding: mind-share branding, emotional branding, viral branding, and cultural branding. The first one, mind-share branding, derives from the metaphor of “brands contesting for scarce mental real estate in consumer’s minds” (Holt, 2004: 15). The second type of branding is emotional branding, an “extension of mind-share”, which emphasizes that a brand essence should be communicated through emotional appeals to “spur emotionally charged relationships with core costumers” (Holt, 2004: 21). The third type, viral branding assumes that consumers and not organizations themselves have the most influence on the creation of brands and “focuses on the paths of public influence: how non-company actors influence customers to value the brand” (Holt, 2004: 28). The final type of branding is cultural branding, which stresses that a “product is simply a conduit through which customers can experience the stories that the brand tells” (Holt, 2004: 36). Holt’s typification makes us understand that brands are trying to built images in peoples minds, they are emotional, have multiple sources of influence and contain cultural narrative aspects.

Branding is closely related to the creation of images, or as Mundt (2002) argued, branding seems to be merely used as a replacement for “image-building”. Others see image creation as part of country branding. According to Kotler and Gertner (2002: 46) country brand management is said to have four central tasks: managing the image, attracting tourists, attracting factories and compa-

nies, and seeking new market opportunities. Image marketing – along with attraction marketing, infrastructure marketing, and people marketing – is a central strategy for marketing of destinations (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 33-36). Image marketing means that a place hires or creates a special agency with the task to identify, develop, and spread a strong positive image of the place, which in comparison to others is a relatively inexpensive strategy (ibid: 33).

Strategic image management (SIM) is the ongoing process of re-searching current images of the country in target audiences, changes in these images, and trying to influence them over time (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 142-143). A place might find itself in one of these six image situations: 1. Positive image, 2. Weak image, 3. Negative image, 4. Mixed image, 5. Contradictory image, 6. Overly attractive image (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 34-35). After the current image situation is clear, place image marketers have three tools for communicating an image (i.e. slogans, themes, and positions; visual symbols; events and deeds) which are mediated by broad influence tools like media advertising and public relations (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 151, 167ff) “Advertising is the use of any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas goods, or services by an identified sponsor” while Public Relations “is the effort to build good relationships with the organization’s publics by obtaining favorable publicity” (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 166, 169). Kunczik (1997: 12) however, states that the attempt to distinguish between advertising and PR is “merely a semantic game”.

Walter Lippmann (1922: 181) wrote about the impact of media that man “is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach”. This means that mass media, including news as well as advertising and PR, are shaping our images of countries, which we have no or only little knowledge of from our own experiences. Kunczik (1997: 7) affirms that “there can be no doubt that the mass media influence the way a country's people form their images of the people and governments of other countries, because it is the mass media that disseminate the greater part of the information about foreign countries”. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993: 215) describe not only intended mes-

sages by advertising and PR but also other mass media such as movies, television programs, music, and celebrities, shape the images of countries.

2.2.4 Classical Branding and Country Branding

Destination branding or destination marketing are other terms for place marketing. All of these terms describe the promotion of an area, country or region. One should remember that promoting tourism is not the same as country or nation branding, but merely a part of the whole. Besides tourism promotion other country branding activities include stimulating inwards investment, encouraging immigration of workers, promoting the country's exports internationally, increasing the international business of the national airline, and facilitating the process of integration into political and commercial organizations (Anholt, 2004: 37).

Although some definitions separate image marketing and tourism promotion, both are intertwined. Every communication about a country, commercial as well as non-commercial, influences the image of the country. This study focuses on tourism promotion (as part of nation or destination branding/marketing) and its role in the construction of a country's image.

Nation branding or marketing bears the connotation of a country as a product, which can be sold. Not everybody might feel comfortable with this claim and even experts of the field have different assumptions. Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 60) claim that a destination is not a product and therefore should not be promoted according to the rules of the classical marketing approaches. Also Papp-Váry and Ferenc (2007) argue that although classical branding and country branding have a lot in common, one should keep in mind some basic differences, which are listed in the table 4. A classical brand usually has a clear owner, while a country brand is not really possessed by anybody.

Some of the most important differences are that a country brand consists of many elements which are influenced by its inhabitants, and its communication is largely unorganized. This shows also that a country brand can be influenced by stereotypical assumptions and that the management of a country

brand can be more challenging because of many external influences on the brand.

Table 4. Comparison between classical branding and country branding (Papp-Váry & Ferenc, 2007)

Classical brand	A country as a brand
Clear property relations	There is no one real owner, everybody who lives there is a holder
The management is the owner's competence	The 'management' is chosen by the citizens (in democracies)
Goal: profit for the owner	Goal: the citizenry's welfare
From above led, top down control	From beneath, by community values, bottom-up (in democracies)
The brand image consists of a few elements	The brand image consists of a vast number of elements
Consistent marketing communications through a few channels	Mostly uncoordinated communications through a large number of channels
The brand name is made-up, it can be changed	The brand name is a geographical area, it cannot be changed
The brand is temporal	The brand wants to live forever

Anholt (1998) suggests using the metaphor of "country as corporate brand" instead of "country as product brand". Olins (2002: 24) argues that "branding business and branding nations do have a lot in common" and that it is "snobbery, ignorance and semantics" (2002: 23) which make people deny that fact. However, Kotler and Gertner (2004: 52) even come to the conclusion that countries can not only serve as brand names but also be products themselves. For this study, it is enough to know that countries can be marketed and that one should rather see them as more abstract entities than products.

As noted above, strategic image management relies on measuring the current country image before actually trying to modify it. Therefore in the next chapter I will describe different approaches towards country image measurement.

2.2.5 Components and Measurement of Country Image

The many different definitions and conceptualizations of destination or country image lead to various operationalizations and methodological approaches in the field. However, Tasci et al (2007) argue that, as a synthesis, three main components of image can be identified: cognitive, affective, and conative (behav-

ioral) (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007: 199). Boulding (1956), who introduced the concept of national image as a unit in international systems, describes these three components as what we know about an object (cognitive), how we feel about that knowledge (affective), and how we behave or act upon these (conative).

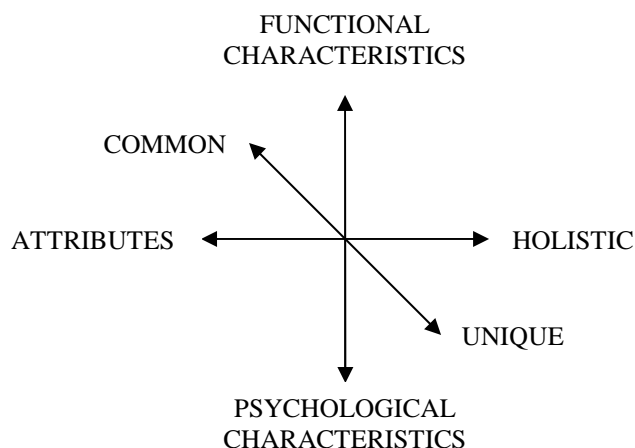
What is known about a country is based on cognitive information. The image formation of receivers has been described by Reynolds (1965) as the development of a mental construct based upon a few impressions selected from an flood of information. In the case of country image, this information has many sources including promotional literature (travel brochures, posters, webpages), the opinions of others (family/friends, travel agents), the general media (newspapers, magazines, television, books, movies, internet) and experiences from actually visiting the country (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991: 38).

The affective component describes how one feels about the information. The so called costumers or receivers of information about countries “tend to personalize the country based on their associations, giving it an identity: perceptions about this identity are often called images” (Lehtonen, 2005: 62).

The conative component concerns the way in which one behaves on the basis of the given information. Country images are likely to influence for example inward-investment to the country, sales of the country’s products abroad, and also people’s decisions about travelling or residence (Kotler & Gertner, 2004: 42).

Until today most studies concentrate on the cognitive component of image, as it is measurable by quantitative approaches. In recent years however one can notice a shift towards broader approaches, which also take into account the affective component of country images by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The article *The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image* by Echtner and Richie (1991) contributed considerably to this development. The model of Echtner and Richie (1991) organizes image on three continua ranging between attributes and holistic, functional and psychological, common and unique. Figure 5 visualizes the model, which can be imagined as three-dimensional and serves as basis for this study’s concept of country image.

Figure 6. Components of destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991)



On the one hand, a country's image can be seen as a holistic impression, as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that an individual has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979). On the other hand, country images can be considered as consisting of certain attributes, as "one's perception of attributes or activities available at a destination" (Gartner, 1986). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) found that most studies up to 1991 had measured only the cognitive attributes of a country using structured methods and a list of attributes. They argue that also the holistic impression of a country should be taken into consideration, which calls for qualitative and more unstructured approaches.

The second continuum ranges from functional characteristics to psychological characteristics, which is based on Martineau's (1958) conceptualization of retail store image. Functional characteristics, such as prices and store layout, are directly observable and measurable while psychological characteristics, such as friendliness and atmosphere, are more abstract and cannot be directly measured.

The third axis distinguishes between the common and unique aspects of image. Paris for instance possesses a unique sight with the Eiffel tower, while for example all Caribbean islands have a common exotic appeal for visitors.

2.2.6 The Nation Brand Index

The “Nation Brand Index” (NBI) is one recent example of the attempt to measure the images of countries, which shall be described here because it gained considerable attention by country marketers. In total the image of 50 countries was studied by a large scale interview research with people from 20 different countries. The results of the overall NBI-ranking of 2008 can be seen in the following table.

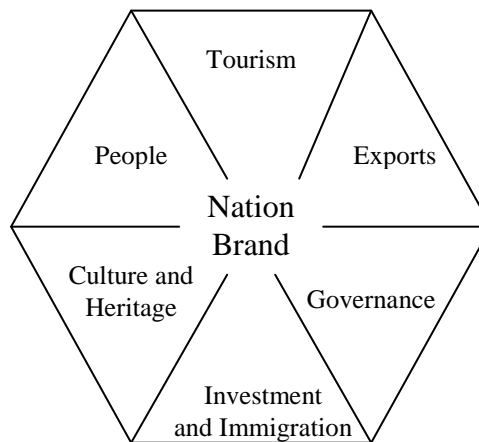
Table 5. Overall ranking of the Nation Brand Index 2008 (GfK, 2008)

1 Germany 67.4	18 Finland 59.2	35 Taiwan 50.6
2 France 67.3	19 Ireland 58.7	36 Turkey 50.5
3 United Kingdom 66.8	20 Belgium 58.1	37 South Africa 49.6
4 Canada 66.3	21 Brazil 56.6	38 Chile 49.4
5 Japan 66.1	22 Russia 55.7	38 Malaysia 49.4
6 Italy 65.9	23 Iceland 55.0	40 Peru 49.1
7 United States 65.5	24 Singapore 53.7	41 Romania 48.9
8 Switzerland 64.9	24 Argentina 53.7	42 Lithuania 48.0
9 Australia 64.6	26 Mexico 53.2	43 Indonesia 47.7
10 Sweden 64.1	27 India 52.9	44 Estonia 47.6
11 Spain 63.3	28 Hungary 52.8	44 United Arab Emirates 47.6
12 Netherlands 61.6	28 China 52.8	46 Cuba 46.6
13 Norway 60.6	30 Poland 52.7	46 Ecuador 46.6
13 Austria 60.6	31 Czech Republic 52.5	48 Saudi Arabia 45.5
15 Denmark 60.3	31 Egypt 52.5	49 Nigeria 40.9
16 Scotland 60.2	33 South Korea 51.6	50 Iran 38.0
17 New Zealand 60.1	34 Thailand 50.7	

NBI scores range from 1-100

The NBI was developed by Simon Anholt in collaboration with the consultancy GfK (Growth from Knowledge) in 2005. Simon Anholt has contributed considerably to the theoretical frameworks and practical applications of nation branding in marketing (i.e. image promotion of a country). The NBI measures the national image of 50 countries based on six components, which are said to “be key factors impacting a nation's reputation” (GfK, 2000): 1) Exports (image of products and services), 2) Governance (level of competency and fairness), 3) Culture and Heritage (film, music, art, sport and literature), 4) People (competence, education, openness and friendliness and other qualities), 5) Tourism (level of interest in visiting a country and draw of natural and man-made tourist attractions), 6) Investment and Immigration (power to attract people to live, work or study in the country) These six dimensions have been arranged in the form of a hexagon, which is shown in figure 7.

Figure 7. The "Nation Brand Hexagon" by Anholt (GfK, 2000)



Although the NBI is said to be “the only analytical ranking of the world's nation brands” and “a unique barometer of global opinion” (GfK, 2000) one has to be critical about that. Flaws of the study could already be found in the conceptualization, which limits the nation brand to six dimensions and does not consider the holistic impression of a country images as claimed by Echtner and Richie (1991). Moreover, it is hard to claim that these six categories are exhaustive, mutually exclusive and equally important. For instance, the categories “People” and “Culture and Heritage” could overlap to some degree. Furthermore, the limitation to six general dimensions is based mostly on general attributes and probably largely neglects the unique attributes of countries.

Within each of the six categories, cultural differences might lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations as well. For example in the category “People”, openness and friendliness might have totally different ways of expression and connotations in different countries. The NBI imposes a western view on these factors. Moreover, it seems that the economically wealthier countries take the top ranks, because they tend to have a larger budget for country marketing activities.

Also the method of measurement might be flawed, as only citizens in 20 countries (of 195 countries in the world) were interviewed, which does not really justify the claim for being a barometer of global opinion. It stays also unclear whether the online interviews included both functional and psychological attributes.

Besides all the shortcomings, the NBI gives some signals to country marketers, who trust in such rankings because of its seemingly analytical and quantitative ranking. The ranking of Finland in the six different sections will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

“Tourism requires image making and branding grounded in the place's reality” (Kotler & Gertner, 2004: 48). But no matter how hard marketers try to measure country images and no matter how diligent they are in creating authentic country images, it is often not possible to distinguish reality from common stereotypes. Bennett (1998: 7f) states that media create images of cultural behaviour, which are chosen “not for their typicality, but for their unusualness” and therefore lead to stereotypes. This study attempts to combine both - image as a marketing concept and stereotype as concept of cultural anthropology - by putting forward the term “stereotyped image”. In the next chapter, I will explain this new concept by first describing stereotypes.

2.3 STEREOTYPES AND STEREOTYPED IMAGES

The concept of stereotype originated from duplication of printing plates in traditional printing technology, while the word itself comes from the Greek words “stereos” (solid) and “typos” (model) (Schneider, 2004: 8). Walter Lippman used the term stereotype for the first time in his book “Public Opinion” (1922) as a metaphor in the everyday meaning of the word: an image of a certain group of people that derives mostly from superficial impressions, which are rather negative and oversimplified (Lehtonen, 2005: 66). A more general definition of stereotype would be “a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people” (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 5, italics omitted). Stereotypes are on the one hand shared beliefs about certain characteristics of the group on the other hand they serve as social expectations, which makes them both descriptive and prescriptive (Lehtonen, 2005: 71).

2.3.1 Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice is a term which was prominently used during Enlightenment and refers to “any preconceived and unsupported opinion and attitude that influences our perception, description and judgement of others” and that is governed by our own cultural perspective and ethnocentrism (Beller, 2007: 404). Hecht (1998: 8) states that prejudice is “an attitude consisting of the combination of affect and belief or at least the affective or evaluative reaction to group differences”. Prejudice is often used interchangeably with stereotype, but Beller (2007: 404) advises scholars to distinguish between prejudice “as a moral judgement or attitude”, and stereotype “as that attitude’s fixed expression”.

Although one can make such conceptual distinction, most scholars would agree that stereotypes and prejudice are interrelated. Many scholars stress that it lies in human nature to constantly classify other people into group categories and evaluate them on this basis, and that stereotypes and prejudice are outcomes of this process (e.g. Bar-Tal, Graumann, Kruglanski, & Stroebe, 1989: v). Stephan and Stephan (1996) developed a radial network model for explaining the causes of prejudice which includes four types of threats: realistic threats (e.g. challenges of economic or political power), symbolic threats (e.g.

value conflicts which endanger the group's way of life), intergroup threats (e.g. high anxiety of contact with rather unknown outgroups), and negative stereotypes. So in this model negative stereotypes can be the cause for prejudice. Also Stroebe and Insko (1989: 4) agree that stereotype and prejudice are closely related, and that prejudice (a negative attitude towards an outgroup) is usually based on a negative stereotype (beliefs that associate that group with mostly negative attributes).

Neuberg (1994) believes that both stereotypes and prejudice are expectancies: Stereotypes are expectancies of what a group is like, and prejudice about how we are likely to feel about that group. Schütz and Six (1996) argue that both stereotypes and prejudice have behavioural intentions and obvious behaviours are associated with them. These behaviours are also labelled discrimination.

Although some studies have found that the empirical relationship between stereotypes and prejudice is small, Hecht (1998: 9-10) argues that it might be that the separation of these constructs might be disregarding "the holistic nature of human experience" and that "we need to treat things more holistically or at least place them into a more holistic context". According to Hecht, we have to see stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, in the context of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements within a social, historical and economical context of intergroup relations.

In this study, it is important to keep in mind this holistic approach and the interrelation between stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination; however I consider a conceptual separation as being useful for a better understanding. Stereotypes seem to be more connected to an attitude towards a certain group, while prejudices include mostly negative emotional loading.

2.3.2 Classifying Stereotypes

The following factors for distinguishing stereotypes are discussed here: a) Target group: such as nation, ethnicity, gender, b) Observer group: idiosyncratic or collective stereotypes, c) Evaluation: positive or negative stereotypes, d) Inference: inductive or deductive stereotypes, e) Direction: auto- or hetero-stereotypes, f) Level: simple or projected stereotypes.

Stereotypes can be applied to all kinds of groups including race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender (Bennett, 1998: 6), profession or even hair colour, however they most often refer to members of national, ethnic and gender groups (Schneider, 2004: 8). This study focuses on stereotypes on the national level. According to Lehtonen (2005: 62) “stereotypes of nations are distinctive characteristics attributed to a country and its inhabitants by some group or groups of outsiders”.

Not only the target but also the observer group can distinguish stereotypes. One crucial issue concerning stereotypes is whether they should be seen as individual beliefs or as inherently collective (Sani & Thompson, 2001). Schneider (1996: 430) argues that it is not clear “whether it should be a defining feature of stereotypes” that they are held widely or not. Lehtonen (2005: 64) at least distinguishes between stereotypes held by one individual (idiosyncratic) and stereotypes held by a group of people (collective).

Stereotypes are evaluative as they show respect or disrespect of certain characteristics of a group. This leads to the distinction of positive and negative stereotypes, which both cause problems in intercultural communication, because they are only partly true and might lead to misunderstandings or become self-fulfilling prophecies (Bennett, 1998: 6). It has been shown that stereotypes of outgroups are less positive than those of ingroups, which points toward ethnocentric tendencies in evaluations (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). The possibility of positive evaluations in stereotypes also makes them distinguishable from prejudices, which are defined as purely negative derogatory judgments based on organized discriminatory predispositions towards certain ethnic group (Aboud, 1998: 4).

Following the functional perspective of the image theory as described by Alexander, Brewer and Hermann (1999: 78), the content of outgroup stereotypes is determined by intergroup relations regarding goal compatibility, relative power and relative status. Sumner (1906) first used the functionalist approach to intergroup relations, stating that that the ‘we-ingroup’ is opposed to a ‘them-outgroup’ on the basis of a competition for survival (Brewer, 1979: 307).

Stereotypes originate when one assumes that all members of a group share the same characteristics. According to Bennett (1998: 7) one can

distinguish between deductive and inductive stereotypes. Deductive stereotypes derive from generalizations about the whole group depending on one individual or a very small sample. Inductive stereotypes arise when one assumes that a generalization applies to every single individual of the group. According to Bennett's argumentation, cultural generalizations are proven by large-scale research which investigates the "central tendency" of the whole group, although there might be "deviant" individuals who do not show this characteristic. Bennett (1998: 6) points out that in intercultural communication sometimes generalizations are necessary in order to make some assumptions about cultural differences as working hypotheses. However, it seems difficult to draw a clear distinction between stereotypes and generalizations, as both might be misleading when it comes to the individual and results in inductive stereotyping. Lehtonen (2005: 78) also criticizes that generalizations by scholars are nothing else than stereotypical statements, which Osland and Bird (2000) call sophisticated stereotyping. In this study it is assumed that – although this separation between generalizations and stereotypes might be essential theoretically – generalizations in practice mostly lead to inductive stereotyping.

Lehtonen (2005: 69) distinguishes between four types of national or cultural stereotypes: 1) Simple auto-stereotype: In our opinion we [my nationality] are..., 2) Projected auto-stereotype: We think that they [inhabitants of the foreign country] consider us to be... 3) Projected hetero-stereotype: We feel that they [the inhabitant of the foreign country] think that they are... 4) Simple hetero-stereotype: We think that they are ...

After having described different factors for distinguishing stereotypes, some questions remain still open: Why do stereotypes arise? Which function do they fulfil in communication? Which problems can they cause?

2.3.3 Formation of Stereotypes

There are different levels of analysis concerning the origin of stereotypes, including individual as well as sociocultural processes to explain their formation.

On the individual level, scholars try to explain the origin of stereotypes by cognitive approaches. Psychologists argue that our environment is too complex for us to fully perceive and therefore we automatically and uncon-

sciously apply some mechanisms in order to reduce complexity. The brain automatically filters information and routines help us to function in everyday life. Stereotypes have been described as “mental shortcuts” (Greenberg & Baron, 2003: 44), tools of complexity reduction (e.g. Allport, 1954; Lehtonen, 2005: 67) or “energy-saving devices” (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994), referring to the explanations which was already given by Lippmann (1922).

Another individual cognitive approach is the theory of illusory correlations based on Hamilton and Gifford (1976), which states that a cognitive bias in information processing can lead to differential perceptions of two social groups. The cognitive bias is called illusory correlation because it refers to an incorrect judgment of the relationship between two variables. For example it could be an illusory correlation if one assumes that being Finnish is correlated to silence. Illusory correlations can derive from many factors such as the influence of expectancies based on existing beliefs, different salience and different weighing of information (Hamilton & Sherman, 1989: 59).

On the sociocultural level, it has been shown that stereotypes rely on conflict theories and social learning theories (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 13-17). Conflict theories assume that societies are held together by force, which is exerted by a few powerful members who dominate the society. According to this point of view stereotypes are part of an “ideology by which the powerful justify the suppression of the powerless” (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 13).

Social learning theories assume that at common values hold a society together and outweigh conflicts of interest. These values are passed to all members of society by socialization processes, which include stereotypes as part of this “societal heritage” (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 13). According to social learning theories, stereotypes arise from actual observation of group differences or rely on influences from mass media, schools, parents, and peer groups (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 15). Especially racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes seem to be influenced by social learning (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 15-16). Bartal (1996) conducted a study on social categorization and found out that Israeli Jewish children had a concept of “the Arab” by the age of two-and-a-half to three years. He states that the children developed these categories not on the basis of physical observable differences but rather on the basis of social categorizations, which are developed from parents, peers, media, and interactions but

also partly rely on cultural ideology. Moreover, studies have shown that within a given society or culture stereotypes seem to be widely shared and stable over time (Stroebe & Insko, 1989: 28).

Although both approaches, individual as well as sociocultural, cannot fully explain the existence, group differences, and contents of stereotypes, they contribute to a better understanding of their formation.

2.3.4 Function of Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication

In intercultural communication situations stereotypes have two main functions: identity construction and uncertainty reduction. Firstly, stereotypes of the self and others are essential elements of the collective identity of the in-group (Lehtonen, 2005: 82). Secondly, the less we know about another culture the more we depend on stereotypes in order to deal with the uncertainty (Lehtonen, 2005: 63, 78). Thus often we have expectations of or draw conclusions about others due to the group they belong to. In international encounters nationality is a key factor in classifying others – at least preliminarily.

As said in the beginning of this chapter, stereotypes are superficial impressions; however they do not come from nothing. There lies some “kernel of truth” in each stereotype and the closer it is to the truth, the more it can help to reduce uncertainty (Lehtonen, 2005: 78, 82).

Often stereotypes are unjust and cause negative emotions impeding successful intercultural communication. As Lehtonen (2005: 82) puts it: “What may make stereotyping and the use of stereotypes sometimes detrimental, is the fact that stereotypical inferencing most often takes place on a subconscious level.” This means that stereotyping would not be such a big problem if communicators would be aware of this bias, open to new impressions and adjust their attitudes accordingly. Many social psychological experiments have shown that people are very likely to stick to the stereotypes even if they experience that they do not match with reality (Lehtonen, 2005: 76). Lehtonen (2005: 76) points out that “stereotypes are part of a person’s world view, values and knowledge structure”. Campbell (1971) states that stereotypes are “inferior judgmental processes that can distort the real picture of out-group behaviour and exaggerate inter-group differences”.

Especially in the early days of stereotype research, 1930-1950, stereotypes were seen as being relatively rigid, oversimplified and biased. Brown (1965) was one of the first scholars in social-psychology who recognized their importance for human information processing. He summarized his position in the following statement:

Stereotypes are not objectionable because they are generalizations about categories; such generalizations are valuable when they are true. Stereotypes are not objectionable because they are generalizations that have been proven false; for the most part we do not know whether they are true or false—in their probabilistic forms. Stereotypes are not objectionable because they are generalizations acquired by hearsay rather than by direct experience; many generalizations acquired by hearsay are true and useful. What is objectionable about them? I think it is their ethnocentrism and the implication that important traits are inborn in large groups.
(Brown, 1965: 181.)

As a conclusion about the function of stereotypes one should remember that they help to reduce complexity and uncertainty, but at the same time they can be detrimental to intercultural understanding by distorting reality.

2.3.5 Stereotyped Images as a New Concept

This study is based on the assumption that images and stereotypes could actually be the same concepts having different names. Indeed it turns out that many scholars support this assumption. Leerssen (2007b: 343) points out that “images tend to invoke generally current commonplaces and reduce the complexity of historical contingency to the invariance of ingrained topoi and clichés, they are often considered a form of stereotype.”

Research in the field of perception – the way we perceive and organize the world – has shown that people tend to have distorted images of collectives because of several biases: 1. the fundamental attribution error, 2. the Halo effect, 3. the similar-to-me effect, 4. the first impression error, and 5. the phenomenon of selective perception (Greenberg & Baron, 2003: 46ff). The fundamental attribution error means that people try to explain other’s behaviour by their personal traits and not by situational or environmental factors. The Halo effect means that the overall positive or negative impression is applied to every single aspect related to the stereotyped group. The similar-to-me effect makes people believe, that others are more or less the same, which leads to

ethnocentric interpretations. The first impression error refers to people's tendency to base their judgments on their first impression of a group. Finally, the phenomenon of selective perception makes people see only what they expect to see. So if they have a certain image in mind beforehand, they will focus their attention to this aspect which reinforces their earlier image. All these perceptual biases cause distorted images, which one could also call stereotypes (Greenberg & Baron, 2003: 44f).

Bennett (1998: 8) states that "through media of all kinds we are besieged with images of 'cultural' behaviour (...). When we generalize from any of these images, we are probably creating stereotypes." Bennett states further that media images in many cases do not match reality as they are chosen more for their unusualness than their typicality. For instance media reports about the Finnish mobile phone throwing world championship do not imply that all Finns enjoy using their mobile phone as a piece of sports equipment.

Alexander et al (1999; 2005) argue that images are based on inter-group relationships and explain the origin and purpose of certain stereotypes held between those groups. They also call image an "organized stereotype", an organized set of attributes (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999: 79).

Kotler and Gertner (2004: 42f) point out that "most country images are stereotypes, extreme simplifications of the reality that are not necessarily accurate. They might be dated, based on exceptions rather than on patterns, on impressions rather than on facts, but nonetheless pervasive". Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) have found that nation or country brands consist of images, which are often powerful stereotypes, carrying cognitive, affective and normative dimensions.

Although a country's image might not only consist of stereotypes, one could argue stereotypes constitute a large part of them. Also Lehtonen (2005) sees a close connection between country image and stereotypes. He states that, stereotypes are a "subgroup of cognitive schemata, generalized, highly abstract beliefs about groups and their members" (2005: 64) and so-called country images often belong to this category. Country image is the general image of a country, adding a plus or minus sign to the country" - it is "the impressions common to 'average' people" (Lehtonen, 2005: 62, 78). Lehtonen's perspective stresses pictures in people's minds about the qualities attrib-

uted to the country (e.g. climate, location, nature) and its inhabitants (e.g. physical or behavioural traits), marketing research understands image more as a picture constructed by media via news, public relations and advertising (e.g. Kunczik, 1997). Although one might not frequently find stereotyping dealt with in marketing literature, the term image is often central and might deal with a very similar concept. Lehtonen (2005: 78) states that most studies under the title 'country image' dealt with simple auto- and hetero-stereotypes about countries and their inhabitants.

Lehtonen (2005: 62) compares the image of a country with the image of a company, which communicates its identity and products via public relations and advertising. He argues that "the aim of identity advertising is to teach the target group a stereotypical perception of that organization" (ibid) which implies that the same is true for a country. This leads to the assumption that the aim of destination marketing in general and of tourism marketing in particular is to create an image, a more or less stereotypical impression, of the country in the mind of potential visitors.

Creating such an image is the task of strategic image marketing. It is recognized that images are "a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place" and that they serve complexity reduction (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 141). Furthermore it is stated that "an image sticks in the public's mind for a long time, even after it loses validity" (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 143). Strategic image marketers argue that an effective place image should fulfil the following criteria (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993: 148ff): It must be valid (which means that it has to be close to reality), believable, simple, have appeal and be distinctive. So in strategic image marketing one acknowledges that images are simple and resistant to change, serve complexity reduction and do not match reality totally – stereotypes share the same characteristics.

What distinguishes image from stereotype, according to Kunczik (1997) is that image is something that is created and cultivated actively by the holder of the image, whereas stereotypes are created by the environment and are ascribed. According to Kotler et al. (1993: 141) image is different from stereotype because a stereotype is a "widely held image that is highly distorted and simplis-

tic and that carries a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards the place” whereas an image “is a more personal perception of a place that can vary from person to person” and does not rely on an affective component. This distinction however cannot be supported if one considers that it is doubtful whether it is a defining characteristic of stereotypes to be held widely. As Lehtonen’s (2005: 64) classification shows, one can also assume idiosyncratic stereotypes held by one person only. Image might be understood as a mirror image which is shared and perceived identically, or as an images in the heads of people which can be very different from each other (Lehtonen, 2005: 67).

Figure 8. Overlapping of image and stereotype

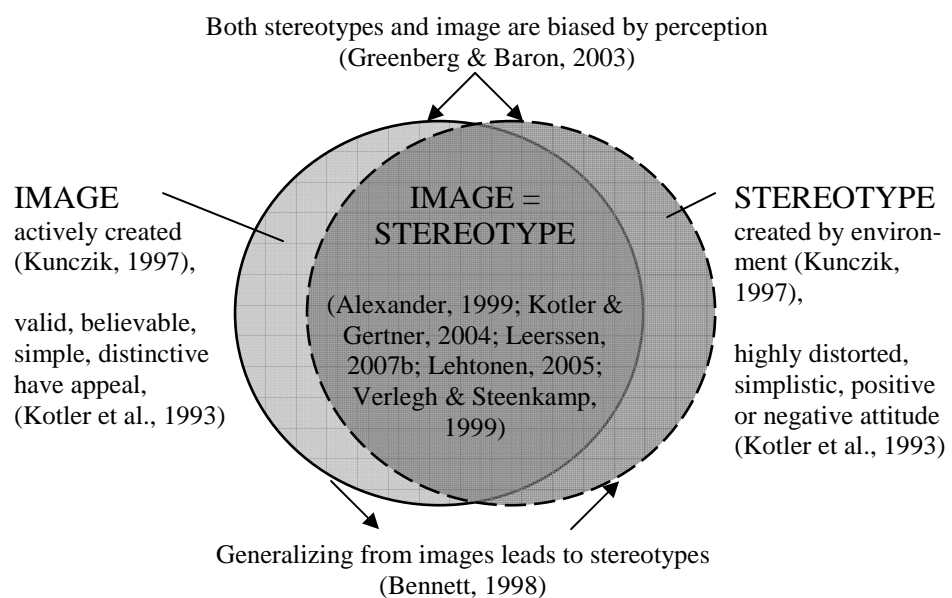


Figure 8 summarizes the connections between images and stereotypes. Although some authors try to distinguish between images and stereotypes it seems that definitions are largely overlapping.

Except from the similarity of definitions and theoretical conceptualizations of image and stereotype, which other arguments can support the assumption that stereotyped images could be used in marketing?

There are several characteristics which make stereotypes very attractive tools in marketing. First of all, stereotypes are held unconsciously and may influence the process of opinion formation and decision making

(Lehtonen, 2005: 63f). So if one succeeds in creating positive stereotypical impressions of a country, they might have subconscious influences on people's sympathies to countries. In the most ideal case this positive attitude would not only influence buying and travelling decisions but also promote further a positive country image, if people would share their opinion with others. Secondly, stereotypes and images tend to persist, which is very attractive for marketing because it implies long-term effects. Of course the effects are only positive if the image is positive, so marketers should be the aware of the possible negative effects also. A third relevant characteristic of stereotypes for marketing is that they fit people's cognitive structures because they help to reduce complexity. Simplifications stick in the head better and can be communicated more easily than complex matters.

In order to solve the problem of largely overlapping definitions between image and stereotype it seems to be useful to introduce a combined term of both: stereotyped images. In her study Varamäki (2005) also used the term stereotyped image arguing that images of nations which are often oversimplified and include an affective component. Furthermore she argues that images of nations are relatively inflexible and far from reality, which in some cases can be due to long geographical distances, political and cultural differences.

Although in literature some researchers argue that image and stereotypes are different, it can be stated that especially when it comes to country branding, image and stereotype have a very large overlap. To sum it up: Country brands depend on images, which in many cases can be called stereotyped.

2.4 IMAGES OF FINLAND IN EARLIER STUDIES

In this chapter I present an overview of studies that have investigated the images of Finland. In the field of Intercultural Communications several scholars have investigated aspects of Finnish culture (e.g. Hofstede, 2001, 2009) and Finnish communication habits such as silence (e.g. Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985, 1997). I will not describe these studies here because they do not directly refer to country image.

2.4.1 Finland in Literary Representations

In the field of imagology the image of Finland in literary representations has been studied, and it turned out that foreign observers had mostly described Finland as an exotic and savage place inhabited by traditional, pagan, irrational and/or mystical people who lack sophisticated manners and lived very close to nature. It is also found that in today's modernized Finland, the traditions of the Sami and Lapland became more important features of the Finland image. (Saukkonen, 2007: 151.)

In the nineteenth century, literature about rural idyll or romanticized war stories by Johann Ludvig Runeberg (1804-1877), the 'national poet' of Finland, contributed to the nation-building and identity formation process of the Finns, promoting a positive image of the Finnish-speaking minority population to the Swedish speaking elite. Considering Runeberg's intellectual and social position, Finnish identity was formed in the early days mostly by a top-down rather than a bottom-up process. After the actual beginnings of Finnish-language literature Alexis Kivi's (1834-1873) book *Seitsemän veljestä* ("Seven brothers") showed the Finns as ordinary individuals rather than an abstract nation, and was harshly criticized therefore. This tension between the elite and the common people became obvious also in the social and political upheavals between 1899 and 1918 when Finland became independent. Literature also played a role in the reconciliation between the classes after the Second world war, when Väinö Linna's (1920-1992) trilogy *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* ("Here under the North Star", 1959-1962), was published and lead again to an image

of a socio-economical and cultural homogenous nation. (Saukkonen, 2007: 151-152.)

Zacharis Topelius (1818-1898) created the most famous personification of the national character, “Matti” (1875), a phlegmatic, diligent, perseverant, obedient, and stubborn character, who represented the people of the Finnish southern inland province Tavastia. The people from Karelia, which is now partly belonging to Russia, contributed joyfulness, childishness and unreliability to typical characteristics of the Finns. (Saukkonen, 2007: 152.)

According to Saukkonen (2007) representations of Finns in modern foreign literature are relatively scarce and many authors base their works on very limited, second-hand knowledge about Finland. Saukkonen (2007: 153) states that familiar stereotypes in most books are binge drinking and stubbornness (especially men), blonde beauty and witchcraft (women), as well as experiences of sauna, ice-hole swimming, cross-country skiing, darkness in winter and nightless nights in summer. Bertholt Brecht, who lived in Finland in 1940-1941 because of the political situation in Germany, coined the famous saying about the Finns as the people who can be silent in two languages in his poem *Finnische Landschaft* (translated “Finnish Landscape”).

2.4.2 The Image of Finland as Travel Destination

In 2002, Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) conducted an interview study commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board about spontaneous images of Finland as a travel destination in the seven main market areas of Finland: Germany (338), Sweden (231), Russia (400), Great Britain (339), The Netherlands (252), Italy (190) and France (251). All together 2001 interviews were conducted.

The interviews were conducted in several cities in each country and the participants (men and women over the age of 15) were randomly selected for example in the city centre. The questions were asked in the mother language of the participants and included two main questions: When you hear the word “Finland”, what does it bring to your mind? And: How would you describe Finland as a tourist destination? It was also investigated whether the interviewees had visited Finland before and how often, and if they could imag-

ine travelling to Finland. Statistical data included the current country of residence, gender, age group, and level of education.

Overall the most frequent first associations with Finland were cold, nothing, snow, lakes, country, Scandinavia, forests, northern, sauna, and friends (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 37). As six percent of all interviewees were not able to give any image of Finland, the results seem to show that Finland is still a relatively unknown country.

All together, findings showed that generally nature, winter conditions, and northern location were emphasized, but there were differences found in first associations between countries, which are summarized in table 6.

Table 6. The five most frequent associations with Finland according to countries, translated from Saraniemi & Komppula (2003: 37-39)

All countries n = 1985	1. Cold (12.9 %)	Sweden n = 231	1. Sauna (16.0 %)
	2. Nothing (6.0 %)		2. Friends (8.2 %)
	3. Snow (5.5 %)		3. Lakes (6.9 %)
	4. Lakes (5.3 %)		4. Finland-ferries (6.9 %)
	5. Country (5.1 %)		5. Sports (4.8 %)
France n = 242	1. Cold (32.2 %)	Netherlands n = 252	1. Cold (19.4 %)
	2. Snow (9.5 %)		2. Lakes (9.9 %)
	3. Scandinavia (8.7 %)		3. Nature (7.1 %)
	4. Country (6.6 %)		4. Forest (7.1 %)
	5. Northern (4.5 %)		5. Scandinavia (6.0 %)
Germany n = 338	1. Lakes (10.4 %)	Italy n = 190	1. Cold (15.3 %)
	2. Cold (8.9 %)		2. Snow (10.5 %)
	3. Nothing (8.3 %)		3. Nothing (9.5 %)
	4. Snow (5.6 %)		4. Country (9.5 %)
	5. Forest (5.0 %)		5. Reindeer (6.8 %)
Russia n = 393	1. Country (8.1 %)	United Kingdom n = 339	1. Cold (14.7 %)
	2. Santa Claus (4.3 %)		2. Nothing (11.5 %)
	3. Neighbouring country (4.1 %)		3. Snow (11.5 %)
	4. Cold (3.8 %)		4. Scandinavia (7.7 %)
	5. Northern (3.8 %)		5. Country (3.8 %)

For instance, especially the French associate Finland with coldness, while in Germany lakes are most often mentioned. However, it was also shown that the images depended upon whether people had visited Finland before or not. Over 90 % of the interviewed Brits, Dutch, Italians, French and Germans have never visited Finland, while only 26.5 % of Swedes and 83.1 % of Russians have never been their neighbouring country (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 31). Those who had visited Finland before associated the Finland more often with saunas, lakes, forests, and friends, and used more positive adjectives to de-

scribe the country. People who have visited Finland before were mostly in Helsinki, but also in Turku, Mariehamn, Lapland and on round trips (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 69).

Moreover, the first three associations were identified as functional or psychological, following the approach of Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The functional category, which includes physical and measurable aspects, was divided by Saraniemi and Komppula (2003: 80) into seven subcategories: environment; buildings; events, activities, hobbies; service, price level, infrastructure; people; fictional figures; nothing. The psychological category of abstract aspects was divided into the following eleven subcategories: culture and history; area, locality, descriptive characterizations of the area; location, accessibility; business life, companies; atmosphere, way of life, traditions/customs; holidays and essential things connected to them; food and beverages; own memories/experiences of the country; single negative adjectives; single positive adjectives; I have never visited/would like to visit.

Altogether it was shown that mostly functional expressions with reference to nature were used to describe the image of Finland, which shows that Finland's image is more concrete. The Swedish images of Finland showed to be more concrete, referring more to people and culture (e.g. sauna, friends), which partly derives from own experiences. The common Finland image in Russia is divided between more concrete associations like Santa Claus and more abstract nature terms such as cold and Northern. The marketing slogan of the "country of thousand lakes" did not show clear influences on people's images in all countries. Germans, Dutch, and Swedes associate Finland with lakes most clearly, while this is not the case for Italians or Brits. (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 69-70)

People gave fewer answers to the second question, concerning Finland as a tourist destination, which seems to show that the image of Finland as tourist destination is not very clear (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 47). The most frequent first associations of Finland as tourist destination were nothing (13.2 %), a positive adjective such as good or nice (6.9 %), beautiful (6.6 %), nature (5.6 %), cold (5.2 %), and interesting (4.9 %). Other thing mentioned where: I never was there, peace, Helsinki, I would travel there, a neutral adjective, and skiing (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 48). Again there are differ-

ences between the images in different countries. Finland as a winter-travel destination is mostly identified by French and Dutch. The least clear image of Finland as a tourism destination is held by Brits, Germans, and Italians.

The most common positive adjectives were good, nice, exotic, hospitable and friendly. Finland as a tourist destination was described mostly by the following adjectives: good, enjoyable, nice, wonderful, exciting, cosy, having a beautiful nature, hospitable, friendly and traditional/authentic. Finnish brands or celebrities were not emphasized in the responses. (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 70-71)

Saraniemi and Komppula (2003: 3) state that “the mental associations of the interviewed respondents do not merely represent the images of those potentially travelling to Finland. Instead, they reflect the general image of Finland within the country in question”. They also argue that the image can be called organic image because the people interviewed did not search for special information about Finland beforehand, have not been to Finland earlier and did not intend to travel there. This means that their image of Finland was based on such information sources as education and general media.

2.4.3 Japanese Stereotyped Images of Finland

As Finland’s image has been mainly studied from a European perspective before, Varamäki (2005: 88) studied Japanese stereotyped images of Finland by conducting a questionnaire survey with 177 respondents on ten flights from Osaka and Tokyo. According to Varamäki (2005: 88f) two studies about Finland’s image in Japan have been conducted by the Finnish foreign ministry in 1973 and the Finnish Tourist Board in 2003. In those studies it was found that Japanese images of Finland consisted of the following characteristics: Northern lights, Santa Claus, midnight sun, winter activities (dog- or reindeer-sledge rides), seafood from the Baltic Sea, Moomins, Amiraali beer, nightless nights, lakes, forest, Finnish architecture and music.

According to Varamäki (2005: 90) earlier studies have found that Finns perceive themselves (auto-image) as hard-working, jealous, shy, honest, prejudiced, rigid, persevering, taciturn, selfish, and complacent, while other Westerners have described them (hetero-image) as friendly, quiet, timid, pru-

dent, calm, reliable, patient, logical, comfortable, withdrawn, cooperative, effective and open.

The results of Varamäki's (2005: 100) study showed that the most common associations with Finland were the Moomins, lakes and water, forest, Santa Claus, nightless nights, northern lights, sauna, reindeer, Nokia mobile phones, fjords, xylitol, winter sports (skiing, skijump, ice-hockey), Sibelius/Finlandia symphony, cold place/weather, snow, social welfare and the Helsinki Olympics. Adjectives were not frequently used, however cold, beautiful, calm/peaceful were most frequent. Furthermore the respondents agreed with the statements that Finland is a country of forest and lakes, that it is safe, cold, wealthy and good for travel; also the image of Finland as a welfare state was strong (Varamäki, 2005: 101, 110).

Japanese perceptions about Finns include that they are shy, quiet, persevering, reliable, patient, friendly, calm, relaxed, comfortable, sociable, humorous, warm, direct, polite, hard-working, honest, prejudiced and that they spoke many languages (Varamäki, 2005: 104). Although some adjectives fit the Finns auto-image (hard-working, shy, honest, prejudiced, persevering, quiet), Finns' auto-image of being complacent and rigid was not supported. The Japanese association of Finns with speaking many languages does not match the stereotype of Finns "being silent in many languages" (Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1997).

The most well-known Finnish characters were the Moomins, comic figures invented by the Finnish-Swedish author Tove Jansson, and Santa Claus, who was launched in marketing campaign "Finland's official Santa Claus" of the Finnish Tourist Board and the airline Finnair in 1989 (Wallin, 1995). For the Japanese Finnish celebrities were relatively unknown: composer Jean Sibelius, Formula 1 driver Mika Häkkinen and ski jumper Janne Ahonen were recognized mostly; and apart from Nokia Finnish brands were hardly identified (Varamäki, 2005: 112). Varamäki (2005: 115) states that the Japanese "stereotyped image of Finland was very nature-oriented" which was also found in the study by Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) conducted in European countries.

2.4.4 Finland's Nation Brand Index 2008

As mentioned before, the Nation Brand Index (NBI) is a measurement of nation brands based on Simon Anholt's model. For the NBI 2008, 20,157 online-interviews were conducted in 20 countries with adults (18 years or older): USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Turkey, Japan, China, India, South Korea, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, and South Africa (GfK, 2008). The population parameters of the interviewees were used to weigh the results according to the demographics of each country.

The NBI aims at measuring the power and appeal the brand image or different countries by examining six dimensions: exports, governance, culture, people, tourism, immigration and investment. Keeping in mind the shortcomings of these dimensions and restrictions of answers by only evaluating a country on given categories, I still want to present the results of Finland's rating on the NBI 2008.

The overall ranking of Finland was rank 18 (out of 50 researched countries). Sweden and Russia gave the best overall rankings for Finland, while Latin American and African countries rated it consistently low. In the governance-dimension Finland reached its best rank (11th). Finland was also associated with creativity, high technology and environmental protection. The worst results for Finland were for culture and tourism (27th). (GfK, 2008: 9.)

The reports summary states further that Finland's overall performance is "satisfactory rather than stellar", that Finland seems to be rather unknown but profits from being associated with Scandinavian countries (GfK, 2008: 9). The report also suggests that Finland's image profile does not live up to the countries actual performance, which offers "plenty of room for improvement, and clear opportunities for Finland to 'round out' its reputation" (GfK, 2008: 9).

Furthermore, the NBI report states that Finland's relative weakness in culture "should be a cause for concern" because culture is an important aspect of a country's image and a sign for the country's self-respect (GfK, 2008: 9). However the fact that others evaluate Finland low in the dimension of culture might also only mean that they simply do not know anything about

Finland's heritage, its music, films, art, literature, and sports. I think it goes too far to be concerned about the Finn's self-respect, when it might be simply a lack of information in other countries about Finnish culture. However it might be true that "culture is one of the most intensely competitive of all the areas measured in the NBI", which means that countries with a well known and highly ranked cultural heritage (such as China, Egypt or the USA) have advantages in the global market (GfK, 2008: 10). The report also states that Turku as the "European Capital of Culture" in 2011 offers an outstanding opportunity to influence Finland's cultural image abroad.

Furthermore the report suggests that investing more in tourism development and promotion will increase the numbers of visitors, which in turn will promote Finland abroad. It is also noted that Finland lacks strong visual icons (such as the Eiffel Tower or Big Ben) which help promoting the country's brand image but its natural assets are seen as an advantage and especially non-leisure visitors could be a main target group because of Finland's cool climate. The report ends by stating that "Finland is a uniquely clear case of a country that could have a stronger image, should have a stronger image, and would decidedly benefit from a stronger image" (GfK, 2008: 10).

3. METHOD

In this study, qualitative data analysis methods were used in order to answer the research questions. The data was collected by two different data collection methods. Firstly, using a content analysis the main pictures of the website visitfinland.com were analyzed in order to identify the main image themes in the different language versions. Secondly, a survey was conducted with the marketers of the Finnish Tourist Board in Helsinki to explore the motivations, aims and strategies behind the website contents.

When designing a study and conducting research, two concepts deserve special attention: internal and external validity. According to Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000: 109) accuracy is the best synonym for validity: Internal validity concerns the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from the findings, while external validity concerns the generalizability of the findings.

As in all research, I tried to keep internal and external validity at the highest level possible by paying attention to measurement and analysis procedures, the research material and participants, the influences I as a researcher had on the research, as well as sampling (see Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 110). In all qualitative studies there is a trade of between depth and generalizability because they usually work with a rather small sample which is analyzed in detail. This means that in general qualitative studies cannot be generalized to the same extent than quantitative studies.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Until today, there is a lack of research on destination branding and the images created by countries' marketing activities. The aim of this study is to explore which images of Finland are presented in marketing activities and which intentions the marketers have. More specifically in this study I examined photos of the website visitfinland.com of the Finnish Tourist Board to identify their main themes. In a second step, I conducted an expert survey with staff of the Finnish Tourist Board in Helsinki to gain insights in the marketers' intentions. With this study I aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What are the themes of the pictures of the website visitfinland.com?

2. What kind of target country specific differences can be seen in the selection of pictures?
3. What steps and what people are involved in the content creation of the website visitfinland.com?
4. What are central aspects of Finland's image for the marketers of the Finnish Tourist Board?

The first and second research questions were answered by a picture analysis of central photos of the website visitfinland.com. Pictures were selected as the material for analysis because they are believed to have a strong effect on the image formation in peoples mind. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 23) argue that there is a shift from the verbal to the visual: Visual communication should no longer be treated as inferior to language but as an independent form of communication. Due to this shift, they argue that today, the control over language seems to decrease (e.g. the greater variety of accents allowed on the public media, the increasing problems in enforcing normative spelling), while the control over the visual increases (e.g. the use of image banks from which ready-made images can be drawn for the construction of visual texts, and, generally, the effect of computer imaging technology) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 28-29). Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen remind us that the "world represented visually on the screens of the 'new media' is a differently constructed world to that which had been represented on the densely printed pages of the print media of some thirty or forty years ago" (2006: 31-32). Especially in the internet where space is not a limitation visual communication in the form of still and moving pictures takes a central role. Moreover, the proverb of a picture saying more than thousand words holds true in many ways because visual impressions stick in peoples' minds: the Eiffel tower represents Paris, and Big Ben stands for London.

The first research question aimed at identifying themes on the pictures of the website visitfinland.com, which is the official website of the Finnish Tourist Board, and therefore a central source of information for tourists and other people interested in Finland. By identifying the themes, i.e. the central motifs of the pictures, conclusions were drawn about the most important marketing themes of the Finnish Tourist Board, which gives an impression of dif-

ferent aspects of the country image of Finland in tourism marketing. The identification of the themes of the pictures helps to understand what kind of Finland-image visitors of the website could derive from the pictures.

The second research question focused on country specific differences of the image of Finland as presented on websites in different languages, which are targeted at different country markets. Including the main page, there are 16 different websites with different pictures. I analyzed these websites to identify country-specific differences in the selection of the themes in the pictures. This helped to understand, if and how the image of Finland differs from country to country.

In question three, I investigated the steps of the content creation process of the website *visitfinland.com* and what people are involved in it. This information was retrieved by an email investigation with one employee of the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) who was involved in the creation of the website. The knowledge about how the website is created and by whom, gave valuable insights in the image promotion of the FTB. Who makes strategic decisions? Who is realizing them? Who is responsible for different language versions?

The fourth question was explored by an email-survey with selected employees of the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) and aimed at identifying the content creators' evaluations and opinions about central aspects of Finland's image and the website. This was important because it shed light on the background and strategies of the FTB.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

In the following, I will describe my data collection methods: picture analysis and survey research. Both are qualitative in nature and therefore I will first explain the nature of qualitative research.

Qualitative research methods seek to obtain a great depth of information and holistic understanding of phenomena, although it does not allow generalizations and universal statistics due to non-random sampling and the non-positivist nature of the study (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). While quantitative research relies on a positivist paradigm, which assumes a singular objective reality and a value-free and unbiased research process, qualitative research

relies on a naturalist paradigm, which assumes a multiple intersubjective reality and a value-laden and biased research process (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 18-20). Therefore in qualitative research, the researcher has to acknowledge his or her biases based on prior values, knowledge and experiences. Advantages of qualitative research include that it is more contextualized in the natural setting than quantitative research and takes into account different perceptions of reality. The qualitative approach was chosen because it offers more flexibility and allows exploring new ideas.

3.2.1 Selecting Pictures

I selected the official tourism marketing website “visitfinland.com” of the Finnish Tourist Board as my material because of its official publisher and its prominent ranking on the Google search engine. The Finnish Tourist Board represents the central marketing activities of Finland and has a higher credibility than many other websites. A top position in the ranking of Google, the most popular internet search engine, promised that the website would reach large audience, which justifies the relevance of this website as contributing to the image of Finland. When searching with Google.com for “Finland” in March 2008 and in April 2009, the website visitfinland.com of the Finnish Tourist Board was the second search result after Wikipedia, which also provides a link to the FTB-website visitfinland.com.

The main website visitfinland.com includes links to 20 country versions (in alphabetical order: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States). However, because some of the countries share a site there are in fact only 16 different sites, which include four to 20 pictures and short texts. I decided to analyze the pictures only because they contribute more to image formation than words. Furthermore, the pictures from the different websites can be analyzed without knowing each language and are therefore easier to compare as they do not require translation.

The sampling was non-random and purposive, based on particular selection characteristics (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 130-132), i.e. only the

pictures on the starting page of each language version were analyzed, because it was assumed that these starting pages are visited most frequently. A purposive sample is very focused and information-rich, but at the same time the results are not generalizable to a larger population (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005: 65-68). All together the websites contained 160 pictures for content analysis. Table 7 shows an overview of the analyzed websites sorted according to the number of pictures on the websites.

Table 7. Analyzed websites sorted by number of pictures

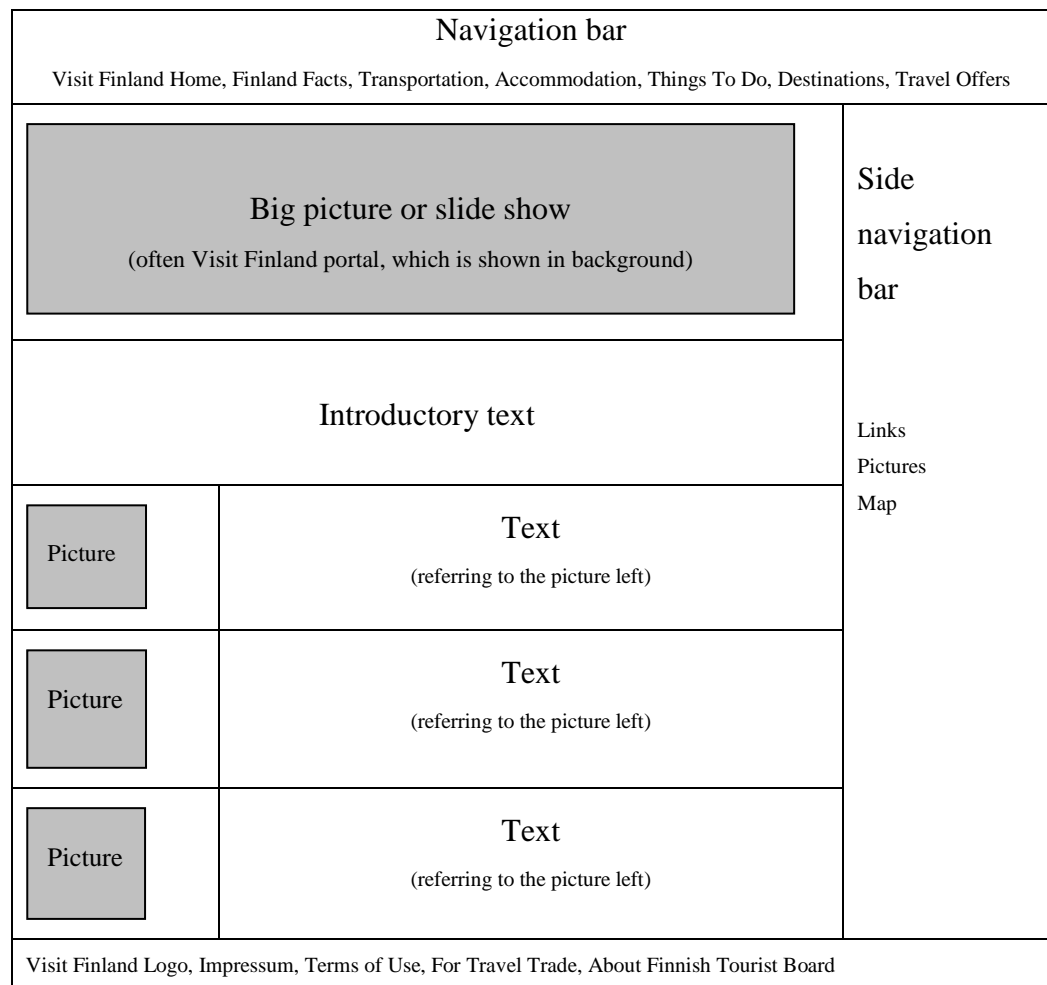
Website	Language	Number of pictures
Australia	English	22
Main page	English	14
Hong Kong	Chinese	13
USA & Canada	English	13
United Kingdom & Ireland	English	12
Japan	Japanese	10
South Korea	Korean	10
Russia	Russian	10
China	Chinese	8
India	English	9
Italy	Italian	9
Spain	Spanish	9
Netherlands & Belgium	Dutch	7
Sweden & Norway	Swedish	7
Germany & Switzerland	German	5
France	French	4
<i>Total</i>		<i>162</i>

Because website contents change frequently in the process of updating contents, structures and designs, screenshots of the 16 pages of were taken on March 4, 2009. This date was chosen randomly. Table 7 shows an overview of the 16 analyzed websites and the number of pictures. All 162 pictures can be found as appendix 1.

The analyzed websites usually had the same structure which is shown schematically in figure 9. Usually the website had a navigation bar on the very top of the page with links to the following or similar contents: Visit Finland Home, Finland Facts, Transportation, Accommodation, Things To Do, Destinations, and Travel Offers. The navigation bar on the right side included more links, pictures and often a map of Finland. A bigger picture was located below the

main navigation bar, which often showed the country portal logo of Visit Finland and in two websites a slide show. After some introductory text, smaller pictures and corresponding texts were presented. The pictures usually serve as a hyperlink to another webpage with more content about the shown topic.

Figure 9. General website structure



3.2.2 Email Survey Design and Participants

For this study, I conducted a survey at the Finnish Tourist Board in order to obtain current information from a focused target group of experts in Finland's tourism marketing. The Finnish Tourist Board is a bureau under the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy and responsible for promoting Finland as a tourist destination internationally. Its budget is a combination of public and private funding: The state contributes 14,800.000 Euros (budgeted

for 2009), while approximately 500.000 Euros annually come from the Finnish tourism industry (FTB, 2009a).

In January 2008, I contacted the Executive Assistant of the Finnish Tourist Board in Helsinki and got the permission to conduct an email survey with selected employees. The survey was conducted in two steps: first an email inquiry to one person only, then a larger email survey with eight selected participants.

In order to answer the third research question, I sent an email-inquiry to one employee of the Finnish Tourist Board involved in the website creation. This employee was chosen non-randomly and purposively (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 130-132). On April 28, 2009, I sent the following open-ended qualitative questions about the creation process of the website by email both in English and Finnish: Which persons make strategic decisions, decide about themes/slogans, write texts, choose photos, etc.? How are the different language versions of the Country Portal website created? Are they just translated or are they customized for the different countries? I got a reply to these questions on May 20, 2009.

For my larger study, related to the fourth research question, I chose eight employees non-randomly and purposively (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 130-132) according to their job title. These eight people were chosen because they were involved in brand strategy and website content creation. The survey participants were selected from different levels and fields: Director General, Communication Manager, Brand Manager, Marketing Director, Product Development Coordinator, Project Manager of the Country Portal website, Editor-in-Chief, and Web Editor. Gender was not a selection criterion but according to the names six persons in the target group were female and two male.

On May 5th 2009, qualitative email-questionnaires with six open-ended questions were sent to the target group (see appendix 2). The questionnaire was provided both in English and Finnish, giving the participants the possibility to choose their preferred language. The questionnaire was translated with support of a native Finnish speaker and consisted of three parts: personal information, image of Finland, and the Country Portal website visit-finland.com. The questions were related to personal evaluations of Finland's

image, and the importance of internet and pictures in the marketing activities of the Finnish Tourist Board. The participants were asked to answer the questionnaire within two weeks.

The questionnaire was accompanied by an introductory text, clearly informing all participants that the participation in the study was voluntary, and that the data would be treated anonymously and confidentially. The participants were also asked to sign a letter of consent for the publication of the data in the context of the Master's thesis. Contact details of the researcher were provided in case the participants needed more information concerning the study. An electronic copy of the thesis will be sent to the Finnish Tourist Board which shall be accessible for all participants.

An email questionnaire was chosen instead of interviews, because it is cheaper, faster and easier to analyze, and fit well for attitude and opinion surveys (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005: 68-82). Moreover, the written survey form gives the respondents more time to think about their answers which allows asking complex, detailed questions and they are not confronted by an interviewer, who might bias the answers and poses a somewhat greater threat to their anonymity (Berger, 2000: 190). On the other hand, disadvantages of questionnaires are misinterpretations of questions, a rather low response rate, and not knowing who actually filled in the questionnaire (*ibid.*).

Mann and Steward (2000) argue further that computer-mediated communication has advantages in reaching more distant individuals, and offers a safe and informal context for the participants. Although insufficient skills of information technology can limit the amount of participants, this should not be a considerable problem in this study because the participants work with computers regularly or are even specialized in web content. Furthermore I also offered the possibility to print out the questionnaire and send it back by post.

Four of the eight participants responded, which constitutes a response rate of 50 percent: Director General, Marketing Director, Project Manager Country Portal, and Product Development Coordinator. One of them was male, three female. The age of the respondents ranged from 51 to 60 years, with an average of 56 years. The respondents had been working for the Finnish Tourist Board between six and 30 years (18 years and three months in aver-

age). All of the participants were Finnish, and three of four respondents answered in Finnish.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

3.3.1 Content Analysis of the Pictures

Generally, picture analysis is a form of content analysis or textual analysis. Text is understood a wide concept, which does not only include written text but also photos, paintings, movies, spoken words, music, sounds, etc. Content analysis is used to “identify, enumerate, and analyze occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in texts” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 236). Content analysis allows making “replicable and valid inferences from texts (...) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004: 18). Textual analysis is a method used to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message, to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages in texts (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000: 225).

Qualitative content analysis involves categorization and classification of the communication content. It consists of analyzing texts (and pictures) for similarities and differences in order to find themes and to develop categories (Krippendorff, 1980). According to Krippendorff (2004: 40-42) content analysis has four significant advantages over other methods of research: Content analysis is an unobtrusive technique, can deal with unstructured material, studies data in their context, and is capable of handling massive amounts of data.

The biggest challenge of textual analysis is that texts and pictures do not possess a single meaning. Krippendorff (2004: 19) writes that there are essentially three different kinds of definitions of content analysis, which take content to be inherent in a text, to be a property of a text, or to emerge in the process of a researcher analyzing a text. In this study, the third perspective is most relevant because I analyze the pictures as a researcher “relative to a particular context” (Krippendorff, 2004: 19) which influences the outcome in a certain way. Also Lindkvist (1981: 23) points out that the “meaning of a text can be identified with the producer, the consumer, or the interpreter of a text”.

In this study, I will take an interpreters point of view by analyzing pictures which are originally presented to the consumer. The following survey will then shed some light on the producer's perspective.

According to Krippendorff a problem-driven content analysis starts with the formulation of research questions. Furthermore the researcher has to make sure that a direct relation exists between research questions and the chosen material, and that content analysis is a suitable method to answer these questions. (Krippendorff, 2004: 343-347.)

In this study, marketing and media effects studies support the relationship between research questions and the method, because they assure that marketing and media texts have an influence on the recipients and contribute to image formation. Further steps of content analysis include locating relevant material for analysis, defining units of analysis, and sampling the material (Krippendorff, 2004: 347-355). These steps were already described above in the data collection part.

The two final steps of content analysis are developing categories, and analyzing the data (Krippendorff, 2004: 347-355). Krippendorff (1980: 76) writes: "How categories are defined (...) is an art. Little is written about it." For the development of categories in this study it is important to understand some aspects of visual literacy. Gillespie and Toyne (2006) identify three main purposes of media text analysis: 1. to understand how power is encoded and how texts exert power over society, 2. to understand how texts represent and construct knowledge, values and beliefs, 3. to explore patterns of change and continuity in media systems of representation. This study looks mostly at the second aspect, because it analyses the photos of the webpage and looks at the image they create. However it is important to notice that this constructed or represented image can be used to exert certain power over the recipients.

Messaris (1994: 10) states that when examining still images, e.g. photos, one should ask oneself the following question: "Assuming we could find someone who had never seen pictures before (...), is there any a priori reason that the person should not be able to interpret a picture?" According to Messaris, representational conventions particular to this medium, such as presenting a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, are one bar-

rier for interpretation. However, in this study I will not discuss this fundamental problem any further and assume the receivers' familiarity with the representational conventions of photos or other still images. Messaris states further that lack of familiarity with the cultural content of the pictures poses another obstacle for interpretation, which is also relevant for this study. If someone has never seen or heard of sauna before, he or she might have problems to interpret a picture which shows a Finnish sauna.

In this study, I concentrated on identifying what Messaris (1994: 46) called "concrete representation" as opposed to "abstract representation", although both concepts cannot be separated totally. Abstract representation concerns for example the feeling of balance and symmetry, whereas concrete representation refers to concrete portrayed things such as people or places. Denotation and connotation are other terms used to refer to the immediate, direct, literal meaning and the second, indirect meaning with an added value (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005: 204; Gripsrud, 2006: 16). Given the same denotation, connotations might change according to the cultural context, time and place. For example a star can refer to Christmas when it is used to decorate a Christmas tree, or to symbolize Israel when used on a flag.

Messaris (1994: 46-47) remarks that although a picture might give a real-world representation, it is still different because of differences in brightness levels, colours, lack of three-dimensionality and movement. In my study, I do not aim at interpreting the abstract representation of images because they can differ considerably from person to person, although they are omnipresent. I want to identify the concrete representation of the photos, a process which Messaris (1994: 56) calls "object recognition" (i.e., how we know what it is we are looking at). Messaris argues that object recognition is extremely unlikely because often the represented object has little in common with the real-life object (e.g. a stick figure and a person) and that there is no satisfying theory how it works.

The categories for coding the pictures were developed inductively, that means in repetitive process of identifying themes in the pictures and trying to create clear and mutually exclusive categories. The codebook in table 8 gives an overview on the codes, categories, descriptions and examples. All together, eleven coding categories were identified: 1. winter activity, 2. sum-

mer activity, 3. other activity, 4. sauna, 5. nature, landscape, animals, 6. Santa Claus, Christmas, 7. Helsinki, 8. food, 9. Finnish design, art, symbols, 10. winter site, and 11. other.

Table 8. Code book

<i>Code name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples</i>
winter activity	pictures of or references to outdoor winter sports and activities	skiing, snowboarding, ice hole swimming, snow mobile, snowshoeing, husky sledge ride, snowman
summer activity	pictures of or references to outdoor summer sports and activities	rowing, sailing, hotel with pool
other activity	pictures of or references to other activities, which are not specifically winter or summer activities	massage, wedding, mobile phone throwing, wife carrying, swimming with special suits
sauna	pictures of or references to sauna	people in sauna, sauna whisks
nature, landscape, animals	pictures of landscapes without human trace, pictures of animals and plants without people	northern lights, berries, husky, reindeer
Santa Claus, Christmas	pictures of Santa Claus and references to Christmas	Santa Claus, Christmas lights, Christmas tree
Helsinki	pictures of or references to Helsinki	Helsinki cathedral, Helsinki Card, Best of Helsinki Awards
food	pictures of or references to food	Café, set table, sweets, bakery
Finnish design, art, symbols	pictures of design and art items made in Finland, e.g. paintings, jewellery, glassware, furniture, music, Finnish symbols, costumes	ice sculpture, Alvar Aalto chair, Aarikka sheep, Iittala glassware, Kalevala jewellery, wooden Scandinavian houses, Finnish flag, Lapland traditional costume
winter site	pictures of winter sites without activity but human influence, e.g. buildings	snow/ice hotel, lit house entrance/window in snow, glass igloo in snow
other	pictures which could not clearly be assigned to any other category	portal of Visit Finland, key, Finland Roadshow 2008, finnfacts, book(s)now, Nordic Oddity, ad in Swedish, laughing girl, Finland winter guide with comic figures, airplane wing

For instance, pictures were coded as winter activity when they depicted outdoor winter sports and activities such as skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, husky sledge rides and so on. Also results of winter activities such as a snowman were counted as winter activity because they refer to the action.

Furthermore, I identified whether the pictures showed people and if they show a summer or a winter setting. Of course this categorization somehow overlaps with the categories, for example the tree activity categories tend to

include people while the nature category explicitly was coded when it did not show people, or the categories of winter activity and winter site were showing a winter setting. Nonetheless, adding these two indicators was believed to give some further insights.

3.3.2 Analysing the Email Survey

The answers to the email-survey were first translated from Finnish to English. In this translation, I paid attention to connotations and tried to translate them as exact as possible with the support of a native Finnish speaker. In a second step, the results of the six open-ended questions were read through several times and analyzed in a qualitative content analysis.

The basic principles of this qualitative content analysis are the same as for the picture analysis described above. Qualitative content analysis consists of analyzing texts for similarities and differences in order to find themes and to develop categories (Krippendorff, 1980).

The survey answers were analyzed in two larger themes according to the structure of the questionnaire: the image of Finland and the Country Portal website, which consisted of three questions each. Due to the low number of respondents and the rather short answers, no strict categories were developed and no frequencies were counted. The answers of the four participants were analyzed descriptively and comparatively.

4. RESULTS

4.1 IMAGES OF FINLAND IN THE WEBSITE PICTURES

In order to answer the first two research questions, selected pictures of the website visitfinland.com were analyzed. The analysis focused on three aspects: country specific layout specialties, the themes of the pictures, as well as the identification of a season and people in the pictures.

4.1.1 Country Specific Layout Specialties

The layout of the websites was rather similar for all country versions. However there are two country specific specialties in layout, which are worth mentioning.

Usually when clicking on the flag icon on the main page, one gets right away to the page of the country. When visiting the Italian page however, one first sees an intro page with a picture. With a click on this picture, one is able to enter the page and the picture appears as the heading picture. Furthermore on the Italian page the pictures were not as usual in the middle of the page, but on the right side, while in the middle there were different logos of travel agencies. Moreover, the page had animated snowflakes moving from the top to the bottom of the page like falling snow.

The website of South Korea differed from others because the pictures did not have names but only numbers. Usually, when clicking with the right mouse button on website pictures and choosing the “save as” option, the pictures were saved with a name that somehow described the picture content (e.g. a picture of Santa Claus has the name “santa_claus_face”). This was possible on all websites except for the one for Hong Kong, where the pictures only had numbers. This could mean that the pictures on the Hong Kong website come from another source than the pictures on the other websites.

It is important to note here that if names of pictures were mentioned this did not influence the picture analysis, so the analysis of the South Korean website was not different due to the lack of picture names. Only the pictures were analyzed and not their names. For example the picture of the Cathedral in

Helsinki on the French website had the name “helsinki_christmas” but one only recognizes the Christmas tree clearly if the name is known. That is why Christmas or winter season were not assigned to the picture.

Although the other country pages showed a lot of similarities in layout, there were big differences in the number of pictures. Australia’s website included 20 pictures, while the website for France only showed four pictures. The differences in numbers of pictures were not balanced by mathematical operations, so the overall results are biased towards those websites which include more pictures. It was decided not to balance the results because the number of pictures might just show that in certain countries visual images are more important than in others, which justifies their bigger influence on the overall results.

4.1.2 Themes Identified

Taken all 162 analyzed pictures together, eleven themes were identified in the following order from most frequent to least frequent: Helsinki, winter activity, other, nature/landscape/animal, Finnish design/art/symbols, other activity, winter site, sauna, Santa Claus/Christmas, food, summer activities. The absolute number and percentages are summarized in the following table.

Table 9. Identified themes overall

Theme	Absolute Number	Percent (rounded)
1. Helsinki	27	17 %
2. Winter activity	25	15 %
3. Other	23	14 %
4. Nature, landscape, animals	21	13 %
5. Finnish design, art, symbols	18	11 %
6. Other activity	12	7 %
7. Winter site	10	6 %
8. Sauna	8	5 %
9. Santa Claus, Christmas	7	4 %
9. Food	7	4 %
10. Summer activity	4	2 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>100 %</i>

In more detail, themes were also identified for each of the 16 individual websites. The following table 10 shows the occurrence of the themes per website.

Table 10. Themes identified by website (main page and others in alphabetical order)

	Theme	Absolute Number	Percent (rounded)
Main page n = 14	1. Helsinki	4	29 %
	2. Other	3	22 %
	3. Nature, landscape, animals	2	14 %
	4. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	7 %
	4. Food	1	7 %
	4. Other activity	1	7 %
	4. Sauna	1	7 %
	4. Winter activity	1	7 %
Australia n = 22	1. Other	4	18 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	3	14 %
	2. Helsinki	3	14 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	3	14 %
	2. Other activity	3	14 %
	3. Food	2	9 %
	3. Santa Claus, Christmas	2	9 %
	4. Winter activity 4. Winter site	1 1	5 % 5 %
China n = 8	1. Winter activity	3	38 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	13 %
	2. Food	1	13 %
	2. Other	1	13 %
	2. Other activity	1	13 %
	2. Santa Claus, Christmas	1	13 %
France n = 4	1. Helsinki	2	50 %
	1. Winter activity	2	50 %
Germany and Switzerland n = 5	1. Helsinki	2	40 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	20 %
	2. Other	1	20 %
	2. Winter site	1	20 %
Hong Kong n = 13	1. Other	4	31 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	2	15 %
	2. Winter site	2	15 %
	3. Food	1	8 %
	3. Helsinki	1	8 %
	3. Other activity	1	8 %
	3. Santa Claus, Christmas	1	8 %
	3. Winter activity	1	8 %
India n = 9	1. Helsinki	3	33 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	2	22 %
	3. Winter activity	1	11 %
	3. Winter site	1	11 %
	3. Other activity	1	11 %
	3. Other	1	11 %
Italy n = 9	1. Winter activity	5	56 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	2	22 %
	3. Santa Claus, Christmas	1	11 %
	3. Winter site	1	11 %
Japan n = 10	1. Winter activity	3	30 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	2	20 %
	3. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	10 %
	3. Other	1	10 %
	3. Other activity	1	10 %
	3. Sauna	1	10 %
	3. Winter site	1	10 %

Netherlands and Belgium n = 7	1. Winter activity	1	14 %
	1. Helsinki	1	14 %
	1. Nature, landscape, animals	1	14 %
	1. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	14 %
	1. Other	1	14 %
	1. Winter site	1	14 %
	1. Sauna	1	14 %
Russia n = 10	1. Helsinki	2	20 %
	1. Nature, landscape, animals	2	20 %
	1. Winter activity	2	20 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	10 %
	2. Santa Claus, Christmas	1	10 %
	2. Sauna	1	10 %
	2. Winter site	1	10 %
South Korea n = 10	1. Finnish design, art, symbols	2	20 %
	1. Nature, landscape, animals	2	20 %
	1. Sauna	2	20 %
	1. Summer activity	2	20 %
	2. Helsinki	1	10 %
	2. Santa Claus, Christmas	1	10 %
Spain n = 9	1. Finnish design, art, symbols	3	33 %
	2. Winter activity	2	22 %
	3. Helsinki	1	11 %
	3. Nature, landscape, animals	1	11 %
	3. Other	1	11 %
	3. Winter site	1	11 %
Sweden and Norway n = 7	1. Summer activity	2	29 %
	2. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	14 %
	2. Helsinki	1	14 %
	2. Other	1	14 %
	2. Sauna	1	14 %
	2. Winter activity	1	14 %
United Kingdom and Ireland n = 12	1. Other	3	25 %
	2. Helsinki	2	17 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	2	17 %
	2. Other activity	2	17 %
	3. Winter activity	1	8 %
	3. Food 3. Sauna	1 1	8 % 8 %
United States and Canada n = 13	1. Helsinki	4	31 %
	2. Nature, landscape, animals	2	15 %
	2. Other activity	2	15 %
	2. Other	2	15 %
	3. Finnish design, art, symbols	1	8 %
	3. Food	1	8 %
	3. Winter activity	1	8 %

4.1.3 Seasons and People

In addition to identifying the themes, it was also analyzed whether the pictures included clear indicators of summer or winter season, and whether people were in the pictures. These two indicators help to explain whether Finland is pro-

moted more as a winter or summer destination, and whether activities are stressed or not.

Snow, ice and people in warm clothes were indicators of winter, while green trees, blooming flowers and people in light clothes were pointing towards summer season. If none of these indicators were visible, the picture was coded with no seasonal code. People were identified if they were in the focus of the pictures, but not if they were hardly recognizable small figures only.

All together 53 of the 162 pictures were coded as winter, 18 as summer, and 91 without a clearly recognizable season. Of the 162 pictures, 58 showed people, 104 did not include people. Table 11 gives an overview of these absolute numbers and their percentage.

Table 11. Seasons and people identified in all pictures

	Absolute number	Percentage		Absolute number	Percentage
Winter	51	31 %	People	55	34 %
Summer	18	11 %	No people	107	66 %
No season	93	57 %			
<i>Total</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>100 %</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>100 %</i>

There is some overlapping between the themes, the seasons and people categories, which at the same time serve as a control for the coding. The relationships between season, people codes and the eleven themes can be found in table 12.

Table 12. Relationships between season, people, and theme codes

	Winter	Summer	No season	People	No people
Winter activity	25	0	0	22	3
Summer activity	0	4	0	2	2
Other activity	0	6	6	12	0
Sauna	0	0	8	6	2
Helsinki	0	6	21	1	26
Nature, landscape, animals	10	1	10	0	21
Finnish design, art, symbols	3	1	14	2	16
Winter site	10	0	0	0	10
Santa Claus, Christmas	2	0	5	7	0
Food	0	0	7	1	6
Other	1	0	22	2	21
	51	18	93	55	107

Table 12 shows that all winter activities and winter sites have been coded with “winter”, and all summer activities have been coded with “summer”. All pictures in the category “sauna” and most of the pictures in the category “other” are coded without recognizable season.

Furthermore of the 41 pictures in the three activity categories (winter, summer, other activity) 36 show people, while no people are found in the categories “landscape/nature/animal” and “winter site”. In the category “Santa Claus/Christmas”, all pictures show people.

4.2 SURVEY RESULTS

The reply to the e-mail inquiry about the creation of the Country Portal website came rather late but was due to the busy implementation phase of the new website. The answers were rather short but informative.

The response rate of the larger email-survey was 50 percent and satisfying, especially considering that the most important decision makers (Director General, Marketing Director, and Project Manager Country Portal) replied. Although the Finnish Tourist Board is an international organization in which English is probably used widely, three of the four participants preferred answering in Finnish. This proves once more that the researcher has to be aware of the language preferences of the participants and offer them different language choices, especially their mother tongue. The four respondents generally gave rather short but information-rich answers, sometimes short sentences, often also a list of key words.

4.2.1 Creation of the Country Portal Website

A web editor of the Finnish Tourist Board was sent an email inquiry about the creation of the country portal website. It was asked about the creation process of the website, i.e. who is involved in strategic decisions, decides about themes/slogans, writes texts, and chooses pictures, etc.

The answer to this question was that the marketing team makes decisions which are connected to marketing: slogans, campaigns and is participating in other ways also, as the portal is the most important marketing channel of

the Finnish Tourist Board. While marketing decides about marketing strategies, the country portal leader decides about the general strategy of the country portal. Pictures and common texts are also chosen in the country portal team.

Furthermore it was investigated, how the different language versions of the website are created: Are they mere translations of the main page or are they customized for the different target countries?

The respondent informed that the basic texts are first written in English as default language, which is then translated in nine other languages. If there is clearly something in the text that is not needed for the marketing area, then it not translated. Especially for the close vicinity, it can be that certain information is not translated. After translation the texts are still edited according to the marketing area, for example information about “How to get to Finland”.

4.2.2 Evaluations of Finland’s Image

The email survey included three questions dealing with the image of Finland.

Question 1: How would you evaluate the image of Finland as a tourist destination?

All in all, the four respondents evaluated Finland’s image as a tourist destination rather critically. They saw it as a “challenger brand”, “weak”, “uninteresting”, and “unknown”. One respondent described Finland as niche market, only “attracting a certain type of people (approximately 15 percent of all travellers, visionaries and balance seekers with a common mindset but differing demographics)”. Another stated that Finland is “not the first option when choosing a holiday destination” and rather known as “winter destination” (Lapland, snow). According to one respondent, Finland is “no culture-destination”, “nature is highlighted” while special products are not advertised.

It was stated also, that the people who know Finland “view it positively”. One respondent also saw the image of Finland “slightly positive” and referred to the Nation Brand Index in which Finland reached “rank 27 in comparison of 50 countries”.

Question 2: In your opinion, what aspects make Finland unique? Which Finnish specialities, icons or symbols would you emphasize?

Three of the four respondents stated that Finland does not have unique aspects or icons, or that they are at least difficult to appoint. (“We do not have unique aspects.”, “Unique factors are difficult to appoint - everyone has much the same, there is lots of copying, etc.”, “We lack a touristic icon such as the Eiffel tower.”) All respondents however agreed that nature and water are essential characteristics of Finland’s image: lakes, rivers, seashore, plenty of water, archipelago. Also freshness, fresh air, fresh food and purity are mentioned, and one respondent states that the country brand logo of the Finnish Tourist Board “symbolizes shapes of Finnish nature and/or design”.

Three respondents mention Lapland in their answers, while “trendy Helsinki” and the “border with Russia” are only pointed out once. Two respondents state that Finland is a country of contradictions which contribute to its image: “Lakeland and Lapland”, “east and west”, “cities and pure country side”, “summer and winter” (“seasons”), “ice/snow and hot saunas/hot events”, “high tech/modern and traditions”).

Two respondents stress that Finland is a “functioning” country with “uncomplicated and careless travelling due to excellent infrastructure and uncomplicated way of life”. One respondent evaluates Finland as a “different holiday destinations for individualists, people who are very active in sports and who are seeking for new kind of spiritualism”. Another also counts “peace, space, silence”. According to two respondents, also the honest Finnish people (“people are not cheating, they do what they say, say what they mean”) contribute the image of Finland. Another respondent states that the Finnish language is “100 percent unique”; one stresses bilingualism.

Two respondents mention that Santa Claus is part of Finland’s image. One of them also mentions Christmas, while the other states that Santa Claus “could be developed further as icon, although it exists in many countries”.

Finally, the ice-breaker “Sampo”, snow- and glass-igloos, and reindeer are also associated by one respondent as being uniquely Finnish.

Question 3: In your opinion, what Finnish aspects are promoted and stressed most by the Finnish Tourist Board?

The respondents had quite different answers to the question, which Finnish aspects are most promoted and stressed by the Finnish Tourist Board. One stated that the FTB promotes a “contrasting, creative, cool and credible Finland”. In the opinion of two other respondents winter, snow, winter/snow activities, Christmas and Santa Claus were stressed in the last years, but also “very recently it was invested in the development of summer product offers” such as summer activities, cottages, lakes, etc. Two agree that “nature activities” and Finland’s “beautiful nature” are stressed by the FTB. One also points out that the FTB promotes Finland as “modern country”.

4.2.3 Evaluations of the Country Portal Website

In a second part of the email survey, three questions pointed at the country portal website of the Finnish Tourist Board.

Question 4: How do you contribute to the content of the website www.visitfinland.com? (e. g. strategic decisions, web editing, writing texts, translating texts, selecting pictures...)

The fourth question was first of all a control question to ensure that the respondents actually were involved in the work for the Country Portal, but at the same time gave insights in the respondents’ contributions to the website content.

The respondents contributed in different way to the contents of the country portal website, e.g. “general management of the portal development”, “theme contents, pictures, etc”. It was mentioned that “all marketing communication decisions and actions conform to the directions of the branding handbook”, which means that also the website has to follow these guidelines.

Furthermore it was pointed out by one respondent that the current version of the country portal does not meet the needs of the customers and “will be replaced by a completely renewed and revamped 2.0 styled portal” in July/August 2009. Through this new portal the users will be able to search for information, profile themselves as traveller, get recommendations based on

their profile, compare products, plan their travel, make bookings, share opinions, experiences, images and videos with other travellers, rate products and destinations etc. “The travellers will be even escorted during their trip through Finland by mobile services.”

Question 5: How would you evaluate the internet’s importance for communicating the image of Finland compared to other media (e.g. brochures, print advertisements, TV spots...)?

All respondents agreed that the internet is one of the most important channels for communicating the image of Finland. One states that “print supports” online marketing, while another recognizes that the “significance of brochures is decreasing” and that “the effect of traditional media is quite small”. Another respondent stated that the target group of the FTB are “heavy internet users” and therefore all marketing activities will be focused on promoting the new Country Portal. One respondent also remarks that the older people still use traditional media, but expects this generation gap to be closed soon. This respondent also believes that television spots “keep a destination in peoples’ minds”.

Question 6: How would you evaluate the importance of pictures on the website for creating a unique image of Finland?

Two respondents agreed that “high-quality, striking, and interesting pictures very important” or “extremely important” for creating a unique image of Finland because “many do not bother reading the written texts”. One respondent argues that the current website and its pictures are “not representing Finland in a way we will do soon”, which means that the new country portal and its picture might reflect and shape the image of Finland more.

The answer of the fourth respondent does not exactly correspond to the questions about the importance of pictures for creating Finland’s image but discusses the meaning of a unique Finland-image. In the respondent’s opinion, a unique image is “a very personal/subjective point of view” and moreover “there are specific images of each country and each is kind of unique, because there is only one of each country”. However, the respondent confirms the “paramount importance of the country portal in creating an image of [Finland

as] a travel destination” and that the influence of tour catalogues has been decreasing. According to the respondent “a uniform winter-Finland has long been emphasized” in marketing products.

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results of both, picture analysis and survey, will be discussed followed by a critical evaluation of the method used and implications for further research.

5.1 OVERALL THEMES OF THE PICTURE ANALYSIS

The content analysis of selected pictures from the website www.visitfinland.com has shown that overall pictures of Helsinki and winter activities appear most frequently. Overall, these two most frequent picture themes show two faces of Finland: on the one hand the southern Helsinki region with a denser population and city feeling, on the other hand the northern Lapland region with vast nature, snow and ice.

After the pictures which could not clearly be assigned to any theme (coded as “other”), the theme “nature/landscape/animals” was on rank four followed by “Finnish design/art/symbols”. “Other activity”, “winter site”, “sauna”, “Santa Claus, Christmas”, “food”, and “summer activity” did not appear very frequently: all together only 48 of 162 pictures (i.e. 28 %) were assigned to these themes.

Overall, 31 percent of the pictures were identified as winter, 18 percent as summer, and 57 percent did not show a clear season. The stress on the winter season is probably connected to the timing of the data collection, which was done in March, when Finland is usually still in winter conditions. It is also interesting that more than half of the pictures were rather neutral concerning seasonal cues. That might be useful because these pictures do not have to be changed on the websites all the time.

Of the 162 pictures, 34 percent included people as central motif. The fact that 66 percent did not show people could hint at Finland’s low population density, its cultural appreciation of solitude and space, or its emphasis on nature. Also it might be that there are fewer pictures of people because people in the pictures have to approve the publication of the photos and models have to be paid.

In the following, I will describe in more detail the motifs of the pictures in each category. Some of the explanations go beyond the first impression

of the pictures and require some background knowledge, which the average visitor of the website might not have, and therefore might not be able to assign a certain meaning to the picture. Anyhow, it is beneficial to have a closer look at the pictures and the depicted motifs in order to understand more about the aspects contributing to the image of Finland.

5.1.1 Helsinki and the Cathedral

Overall 27 pictures of 162 were connected to Helsinki, the capital of Finland. The 27 pictures of Helsinki include 14 pictures of the Cathedral, eleven logos of “Best of Helsinki Awards” and two pictures of the Helsinki Card. “Best of Helsinki Awards” is a competition launched by the Helsinki City Tourist & Convention Bureau, which offers the possibility to evaluate nominees in six different categories: Best Winter Experience, Best Family Resort & Fun, Best CityBreak Attraction, Best CityBreak Service, Best Nordic Oddity, and Best Meeting Experience (“Best of Helsinki Awards”, 2009). Helsinki Card is a tourist ticket that gives free entry to main sights, museums, and public transport (“Helsinki Card”, 2009).

More than half of the pictures depict the Cathedral of Helsinki, which show its importance as an iconic symbol. Although the Cathedral might not be as well known as the Eiffel tower or Big Ben, it is nonetheless an important icon in marketing Finland. The focus on the Cathedral as an icon also becomes obvious in the fact that only one picture of the Cathedral includes people in the foreground.

Six of the pictures show the Cathedral in a summer context, while in the other eight pictures no season could be clearly identified. This implies that Helsinki, which is associated with the Cathedral, tends to be marketed more as summer location in contrast to snowy landscapes and winter activities which are more connected with Lapland in Finland’s North. The Border Interview Survey by the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB, 2008: 41) states that about one third of the visitors interviewed during the year 2007 travelled to Helsinki as their main destination and only 4 percent to Lapland.

5.1.2 Winter Activities

Of all 162 pictures analyzed, 25 showed winter activities. All winter activities clearly showed the winter season mostly identified by snow, and 22 of them included people performing the activity.

Five pictures show children climbing on a heap of snow, five other pictures include people with sledge huskies, four pictures illustrate people on snow mobiles, and three pictures show people with snowshoes. A snowman can be found in two pictures, and two other pictures illustrate people on a reindeer sledge. The last four pictures show a snowboarder, a downhill skier, ice-hole swimming and a woman sitting in snow with winter cloths.

In sum, besides playing in the snow, winter activities include more traditional winter activities such as snowshoeing, ice-hole swimming, reindeer and husky sledge rides, as well as more modern activities such as snow mobile rides, snowboarding, and downhill skiing. While the more modern activities nowadays are offered in most winter sports locations around the world, ice-hole swimming, reindeer and husky sledge rides offer a more unique experience. Furthermore, these special experiences of winter might bear connotations of coldness, snow, Lapland, and northern location, which were identified as essential parts of Finland's image in earlier studies (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003; Saukkonen, 2007; Varamäki, 2005). In addition, the stress on winter activities also has to be seen in connection to the timing of data collection which was done in March, so one expects that winter activities are still advertised more than summer activities.

5.1.3 Nature and Northern Lights

The pictures analyzed showed that untouched nature and landscapes are an essential image for marketing Finland. All together 21 of 162 pictures analyzed depicted nature without human trace, which also means that these pictures did not include people.

Twelve nature pictures showed Northern lights, five a husky's face, two snow landscapes, one berries, and one a reindeer. Ten nature pictures clearly related to winter and only one to summer, which is probably also connected to the timing of the data collection in March. As the website is currently

updated, one expects that the nature pictures refer to the current or upcoming season.

The Northern lights were mentioned already by participants in earlier studies as a part of their Finland image (Varamäki, 2005). According to the online dictionary Wikipedia (2009), Northern lights (also called aurora borealis) are natural light displays, which can best be observed at night from September to October and from March to April in the polar region. Northern lights also appear in other Nordic countries, but are still a quite unique experience, which makes them an important part of Finland's image.

In other studies, forests and lakes were identified as a central part of the Finland image related to nature (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003; Varamäki, 2005). Most of the pictures of Northern lights, and also some pictures of winter activities, included some trees but they were not the focus. Lakes were only found in three pictures: winter landscape (nature/landscape/animal), rowing (summer activity), and ice-hole swimming (winter activity). The lack of lake and forest pictures could again be connected to the timing of the analysis, which was done in March when the lakes and forests are usually still covered with ice and snow, and are therefore not as attractive for tourism marketing as in summer, when people go for hikes through the forests and swimming in the lakes. Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) already noted that the marketing slogan of the "country of thousand lakes" did not show clear influences on people's image of Finland, and was also not represented in the pictures of this study.

5.1.4 Finnish Design, Art, and Symbols

All together 18 pictures fell into the theme "Finnish design/art/symbols". Most of them showed no clear seasonal characteristics (14) and did not include people (16).

The most frequent pictures in this category showed an ice-sculpture in the form of a horse's head (4), Kalevala jewellery (4), and different design objects such as a chair by Aalto (1), a wooden sheep by Aarikka (1), or a candle holder by Iittala (1). Furthermore, there were pictures of pieces of modern art (2) and architecture (2), the band "Lordi" (1), a Finnish flag (1) and a woman in a traditional costume of Lapland (1).

The ice sculpture in the form of a horse's head is the only picture that stresses coldness or winter conditions. The Finnish flag could be interpreted as sign of national pride, while the traditional costume refers to Lapland and traditions. As there was only one picture of each, national and traditional symbols do not seem to be stressed a lot by the marketers.

The hard rock band "Lordi" won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006 and gained attention mostly through their monster-like outfits. Finnish classical music by the composer Sibelius was mentioned by the Japanese respondents in Varamäki's (2005) study. Today, Finnish bands like HIM, The Rasmus, Apocalyptica, Nightwish, or Sunrise Avenue are also popular outside of Finland. Finland offers also various music festivals during summer ranging from heavy metal over jazz to classical music, which are interesting events for country marketing purposes. On the website visitfinland.com one can find a variety of music and dance events in the section "Things To Do".

All in all, Finnish design objects and artists seem to play an important role in this category: The work of the Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) includes architecture, furniture, textiles and glassware and enjoys celebrity in Finland and abroad (Brady, 2001). The jewellery company Kalevala Koru ("Kalevala Jewellery") founded in 1935 got its name from the Finnish national epos and is today's largest jewellery manufacturer in Finland ("Kalevala Koru", 2009). Aarikka founded in 1954 designs and manufactures design products, jewellery and decorative items, which are handmade in Finland using Finnish materials. Aarikka's products are sold in Europe, USA, and Japan. Iittala is an international design brand established in 1881 that offers glassware, homeware and interior design objects ("Iittala", 2009). Kalevala Koru, Aarikka, and Iittala have in common that they promote their products as uniquely Finnish quality products, which might have an influence on tourists who seek for souvenirs and presents with truly Finnish origin. Another company, which would fit into this list is Marimekko, a leading Finnish textile and clothing design company established in 1951 that designs, manufactures and markets clothing, interior decoration textiles, bags and other accessories both in Finland and abroad ("Marimekko", 2009).

The Finns themselves seem to be very conscious about the origin of products and prefer products produced in Finland (Heikkinen, Barlow, &

Parry, 2009), which could also explain the popularity of Finnish design products among Finns. This popularity in turn also might affect the tourists in their buying decisions because they see that Finns themselves buy and identify with those design products.

5.1.5 Other Pictures

The theme “Other” included 23 pictures, which could not be clearly assigned to any other category. One picture in this theme was identified as winter season and two had people as their main motif. Eleven of the pictures in the theme “Other” were the logo of the website visitfinland.com, four others were logos or texts (finnfacts, book(s)now, Nordic Oddity, an advertisement in Swedish), and eight were other pictures (a key, Finland Roadshow 2008, a laughing girl, a Finland winter guide with comic figures, an view from an airplane window, a ship, and a reindeer as Easy Jet advertisement).

The category “Other activity” included twelve pictures of activity which were not typical winter or summer activities. Anyhow six of the pictures were coded as summer season because they included cues, that the event took place in summer although it does not qualify as a typical summer activity. For example rowing on a lake was coded as summer activity because it is impossible on a frozen winter lake; but a wedding in summer was coded as other activity, because weddings do not necessarily have to be held in summer. The other six pictures were coded as no season and all twelve pictures had people as the main motif.

Pictures in the category “Other activity” included a comic of a man carrying a woman (5), a woman being massaged (4), a girl throwing a mobile phone, a wedding couple, and a man swimming in water with a special suit.

Wife carrying and mobile phone throwing are special Finnish competitions, besides the sauna bathing, air guitar contests, and swamp soccer. Also foreign media report about these eccentric events, which lead to the impression of a somewhat crazy nation. In Germany one can read often in this context that Finns are crazy (e.g. Heise Online, "Handy-Weitwurf: Die spinnen, die Finnen, 23.07.2003").

The picture of the massage most likely symbolizes spa treatments and wellbeing holidays, which are also offered in Finland but might not be a central or unique part of the country's image.

The last five categories included pictures of winter sites (10), sauna (8), Santa Claus and Christmas (7), food (7), and summer activities (4).

The ten pictures of winter sites differed from the category "nature/landscape" because they included traces of human activity such as buildings. All pictures in the category "winter site" clearly showed winter conditions and did not focus on people. Examples of pictures in this category were: a hotel built from snow and ice, a lit house entrance or window in snowy surroundings, or a glass igloo in the snow. These pictures again bear the connotation of Finland being a cold place (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003; Varamäki, 2005).

In the category "sauna" four pictures showed people in the sauna and two pictures showed sauna whisks, made from birch branches. All pictures in the category "sauna" were coded without season because they did not show seasonal cues and sauna is used all year in Finland. Sauna is claimed to be a Finnish invention and therefore a unique characteristic of the country which therefore is a good tool for marketing the country. For foreigners sauna might be a totally new and memorable experience connected to their visit in Finland.

Santa Claus is associated with Finland by most Japanese people (Varamäki, 2005) and also found in six of the analyzed pictures. One other picture shows Christmas lights in a street. Santa Claus is shown as a smiling old man with a long white beard, with a reindeer or surrounded by children. In 1989, the Finnish Tourist Board and Finnair, the national Finnish airline, launched the campaign of "Finland's official Santa Claus" (Wallin, 1995) and promoted the Finnish Rovaniemi at the Arctic Circle as Santa's home. Especially in the USA however, Santa's residence is believed to be at the North Pole. On the website visitfinland.com one can read that "the Finnish Santa Claus lives in peace and harmony with his many foreign relatives and colleagues. Among these are the German Weihnachtsmann, the Russian Grandfather Frost (Ded Moroz), the Swedish Tomten, the Norwegian Julenissen, the Greenlandic Santa Claus, and many others. The only real Santa Claus lives, however, in Finland" ("The ABC on Santa Claus", 2009). For Finland, Santa

Claus definitely is an important role for marketing the country. According to the magazine "Travel Rovaniemi" (Polarlehdet, 2007) Santa Village opened in 1985 and 400.000 people visit it every year. Today there are also Santa Claus Office, Santa Claus Main Post Office, SantaPark, souvenir shops, restaurants and activity services, which are offered almost all-the-year ("Visit Rovaniemi - Sights", 2009). However, the Santa Claus theme park SantaPark struggled financially since it was opened in 1998 and in March 2009 it was announced that the Finnish government would sell its 32 percent stake to local investors, also due to influences of the current economical crisis which influences the whole tourism sector (24.03.2009, Reuters).

There were seven pictures in the category "food" which did not show clear seasonal characteristics and only one of them showed people. Four pictures showed a set table with a square plate, knife and fork, which are arranged in a quite unusual way: the fork lies above the plate and the knife across the corner of the plate. Another picture shows a café window from inside, which only can be identified as such because on the window one reads the word café mirror-inverted. Both, the set table and the café scene, do not show actual food but refer to it. The two other pictures in the category "food" show a woman in a bakery with a tray of rolls, and some chocolates and dried fruit, which could not be clearly identified. Overall it seems that the Finnish cuisine is not an outstanding characteristics of the country for others as neither Saraniemi and Komppula's (2003) nor Varamäki's (2005) image survey identified food in the responses.

Four pictures showed summer activities, which all were coded as summer season. The pictures depict a sailing boat on a lake with the sun setting in the background, two people in a canoe on a lake, a small ferry on a lake with a car in the foreground, and a hotel with a pool. The low number of summer activity pictures is probably due to the timing of the data collection in March. It is interesting that all pictures except the one of the hotel pool were showing lake settings, which supports the assumption that Finland will be more advertised as country of the thousand lakes during the warmer season. Not only tourists but also Finns themselves enjoy the country's lakes during the summer months. According to Statistics Finland (2007), there were more than 475.000

summer cottages in the year 2006 which is quite a lot considering the population of about 5.3 Million.

5.1.6 Themes Identified as Components of Finland's Image

Echtner and Richie's (1991) model of country image, which was described earlier, consists of three dimensions ranging from attributes to holistic, from functional to psychological, and from common to unique. Also Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) used this model for categorizing their identified themes as functional or psychological aspects. Although the model was mostly used in the context of survey research I will try to apply it also to the picture analysis.

Single pictures definitely cannot present a holistic image of a country, because they can only depict a certain motif, a certain attribute of a country. Sauna for instance is a part of Finland's image but do not represent a holistic impression such a statement like "Finland is safe". The nature and landscape pictures are the only ones which would stand for a holistic image such as "Finland is beautiful" or "Finland is pure".

Pictures can show both common and unique aspects of a country's image. The categories "Helsinki" and "Finnish design, art, symbols" definitely belong to the unique aspects, while also "sauna" and "Santa Claus and Christmas" could be claimed to be uniquely Finnish. Also some pictures in the category "nature, landscapes, animals" might show some unique Finnish traits but they might not be identified as such, e.g. certain lake landscapes which are typical of Finland. It would have been expected that the pictures in the category "food" would show more unique Finnish products or dishes such as Karelian pastry, mämmi or leipäjuusto, but that was not the case.

The most ambiguous dimension distinguishes functional and psychological. Pictures contain both aspects because they usually show a physical motif but can also express for instance an atmosphere, which can be interpreted in different ways. A picture of a snowy landscape for instance may cause different reactions in the observer, both positive and negative. It can stand for untouched nature and purity, as well as for coldness and loneliness. In this picture analysis, I have tried to identify the functional aspects of the pictures because the psychological ones tend to be less tangible and tend to vary more

from person to person, which would require a survey instead of a picture analysis.

Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) have divided the results of their survey in functional and psychological components as summarized in table 13. As functional aspects they have categorized 1) environment (e.g. nature, flora, fauna, landscape, weather, natural phenomena), 2) buildings and sights (e.g. museums, churches), 3) events and activities (e.g. sports, nature activities, festivals), 4) services, prices, and infrastructure, 5) people (e.g. celebrities, characteristics of people, friends), and 6) fictitious figures (e.g. Santa Claus, Moomins).

Psychological aspects include 1) culture and history (e.g. national culture, architecture, music, language, historical background, people/figures of cultural value, politics, economy, social and health care system), 2) region (e.g. Scandinavia, Lapland, Helsinki), 3) location (e.g. North, northern, next to Russia), 4) business life, companies (e.g. Nokia, Marimekko), 5) atmosphere, way of life, habits (e.g. relaxing, exciting, drinking, sauna), 6) holidays and things referring to them (e.g. Christmas, Christmas tree) 7) food and drinks (e.g. vodka), 8) own memories/experiences from the country, positive/negative adjectives.

Table 13. Functional and psychological aspects according to Saraniemi and Komppula (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2003: 80, own translation)

Functional aspects (physical, measurable)	Psychological aspects (abstract)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment - Buildings and sights - Events and activities - Services, prices, infrastructure - People - Fictitious figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture and history - Region - Location - Business life, companies - Atmosphere, way of life, habits - Holidays and things referring to them - Food and drinks - Own memories/experiences from the country, positive/negative adjectives

In their study about the functional-psychological continuum in the cognitive image of a destination Alcañiza, García, and Blas (2009) have also categorized certain aspects based on Echtner and Ritchie (1993) but added a middle category on the continuum. Their categorization can be seen in the following table.

In comparison to Saraniemi and Komppula (2003), Alcañiza et al. (2009) have similar aspects in the functional category: environment (natural attractions, climate), buildings and sights (interesting places to visit, historic sites/museums), events and activities (open air activities, fairs, festivals and exhibitions, night life and entertainment), as well as services, prices, and infrastructure (local transport, shopping facilities, sports facilities). Alcañiza et al. add the availability of accommodation while Saraniemi and Komppula (2003) count people and fictitious figures as functional aspects. Apart from the accordance in the functional category, both studies have little in common in the psychological one in which only atmosphere, way of life, habits could be compared to friendliness/hospitality and tranquillity.

Table 14. Components of the cognitive image of the destination (Alcañiza, García, & Blas, 2009: 718)

Functional	Mixed	Psychological
- Availability of accommodation	- Cleanness and hygiene	- Quality accommodation
- Interesting places to visit	- Urbanisation	- Quality restaurants
- Natural attractions/scenery	- Crowdedness	- Friendliness/hospitality
- Climate	- Gastronomy	- Tranquillity
- Open air activities	- Access	- High quality beaches
- Local transport		- Value for money
- Shopping facilities		- Quality services
- Sports facilities		
- Historic sites/museums		
- Fairs, festivals and exhibitions		
- Night life/entertainment		
- Different activities		

Based on the categorizations of Saraniemi and Komppula, Alcañiza, García, and Blas, I have tried to categorize the picture themes of my content analysis. The problem was however, that the picture analysis does not allow to measure personal evaluations as in a survey research. Therefore, some pictures might evoke psychological evaluations which were not identified in this study. As an orientation one could say that winter activity, summer activity, other activity, nature/landscape/animals, and winter site tend to be functional, while the other categories, Helsinki, sauna, Finnish design/art/symbols, Santa Claus and food can be interpreted as both functional and psychological.

5.2 THEMES ON THE DIFFERENT WEBSITES

After having discussed the general themes identified in the picture analysis in detail, I will now turn to the differences in the picture selection by website.

When comparing the themes of the pictures on the country-specific websites, it becomes clear that there are differences. These differences could be seen as pure coincidence but according to the Finnish Tourist Board (see survey) website contents are adapted to target markets. According to the FTB-website, there are three market regions with assigned regional managers: 1) Continental Europe (including Eastern Europe) and the Baltic countries, 2) Scandinavian countries (including main incoming agents located in Denmark), Russia, CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and Overseas Markets, 3) UK, USA and countries which are not specifically assigned to regional managers.

It is not quite clear what is meant by overseas markets, but if counting Asia and Australia as overseas markets this would lead to the following division: 1) France, Germany and Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands and Belgium, Spain, 2) Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Sweden and Norway, 3) United Kingdom and Ireland, USA and Canada. However, this division does not become obvious in the picture selection. The pages of Italy and Germany fall in the same market area but definitely show different focuses in the pictures: While Italy's website totally focuses on winter activities the German website mostly delivers impressions of the capital Helsinki.

Larger geographical areas offer another possibility of grouping. The data was summarized in three regions: Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom), North America and Australia (United States, Canada, Australia), and Asia (Japan, China, Hong Kong, India, South Korea). The main page included 14 pictures, pages for Europe 63 pictures, for Asia 50 pictures, and for North America and Australia 35 pictures. The following table shows themes, which were identified by region.

Table 15. Themes by geographical region: Europe, Asia, North America and Canada

	Theme Category	Absolute Number	Percent (rounded)
Europe n = 63	1. Winter activity	14	22 %
	2. Helsinki	11	17 %
	3. Nature, landscape, animals	8	13 %
	4. Finnish design, art, symbols	7	11 %
	4. Other	7	11 %
	5. Winter site	5	8 %
	6. Sauna	4	6 %
	7. Summer activity	2	3 %
	7. Santa Claus, Christmas	2	3 %
	7. Other activity	2	3 %
	8. Food	1	2 %
	<i>Total</i>	63	100 %
Asia n = 50	1. Winter activity	8	16 %
	2. Other	7	14 %
	3. Nature, landscape, animals	6	12 %
	3. Finnish design, art, symbols	6	12 %
	4. Helsinki	5	10 %
	5. Winter site	4	8 %
	5. Other activity	4	8 %
	6. Sauna	3	6 %
	6. Santa Claus, Christmas	3	6 %
	7. Summer activity	2	4 %
	7. Food	2	4 %
	<i>Total</i>	50	100 %
North America and Australia n = 35	1. Helsinki	7	20 %
	2. Other	6	17 %
	3. Nature, landscape, animals	5	14 %
	3. Other activity	5	14 %
	4. Finnish design, art, symbols	4	11 %
	5. Food	3	9 %
	6. Winter activity	2	6 %
	6. Santa Claus, Christmas	2	6 %
	7. Winter site	1	3 %
	<i>Total</i>	35	100 %
TOTAL		162	

As becomes obvious in the table, the grouping according to larger regions does not show a clear structure in the picture selection either. All that can be said is that each of the three regions shows great variety in themes. In Europe winter activities (22 %) and Helsinki (17 %) are stressed most, while in Asia winter activities (16 %) and in North America Helsinki (20 %) are the most prominent themes in the pictures. Due to the lack of a larger framework for analysis, it is justifiable to analyse the 15 country pages plus main page individually without further attempts to find larger units. The findings for the main page and the 15 country websites in alphabetical order will be discussed in the following.

5.2.1 Main Webpage

The main webpage visitfinland.com included 14 pictures and the links to the other 15 language versions. Four pictures were coded as “Helsinki” of which two showed the Cathedral, one the Helsinki Card and one the logo of the Best of Helsinki Awards. Other pictures on this webpage included Northern lights and a Husky (nature, landscape, animal), children climbing on a snow heap (winter activity), a woman getting a massage (other activity), a woman in sauna (sauna), and Kalevala jewellery (Finnish design, art, symbols). Only three of the 14 pictures showed people, two clear signs of winter season and one of summer season.

All in all, the main page stressed Helsinki and nature most. Also unique Finnish aspects like sauna, food and design objects were presented, along with winter and other activities. Most pictures neither showed activity nor obvious seasonal signs.

5.2.2 Australia

Australia’s website had 22 pictures which were the most in comparison with the other websites and showed a great variety of themes with no real focus. Besides four pictures in the category “Other” (portal, Nordic Oddity logo, book(s)now logo, airplane wing), three pictures each were identified as “Finnish design, art, symbols” (Kalevala jewellery, ice sculpture, Lapp woman), “Helsinki” (twice the Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards), “nature, landscape, animals” (Northern lights, Husky, winter landscape), and “Other activity” (twice wife carrying, massage). Two pictures each showed food (café window, set table), and Santa Claus. Five of the pictures do only appear on the Australian website: Nordic Oddity logo, book(s)now logo, airplane wing and the Lapp woman. Winter and summer season were shown in almost equal numbers, while two thirds of all pictures did not show a clear season.

The Australian website was found to stress Helsinki and nature, as well as unique Finnish aspects such as art and design, as well as wife carrying and Santa Claus.

5.2.3 China

China's main website included eight pictures, of which three fall into the category winter activity: snow mobile ride, sledge huskies, and ice-hole swimming. The other five pictures show a woman in a kitchen or baking factory taking rolls from a tray (food), Santa Claus with a reindeer (Santa Claus, Christmas), a sheep made from wood by Aarikka (Finnish design, art, symbols), a comic of wife carrying (other activity), and the country portal (other). Three of the eight pictures showed unique motifs which did not appear on the other websites: woman in bakery, ice-hole swimming, and the wooden Aarikka-sheep. In percent of all pictures on each website, China's pictures were among the ones which show most people (62 %) and most winter cues (50 % while only 13 % summer).

All in all, China's page stressed especially winter activities, as well as Finnish specialities such as food, design, Santa Claus and wife carrying. In general, the pictures were rather activity-oriented and focused on Finland as a winter destination.

5.2.4 France

France had only four pictures on its main page, which fall into two categories: winter activity (reindeer sledge ride, snow mobile ride), and Helsinki (Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards). Because there were only four pictures, the percentages of winter and people were comparably high with 50 percent each while summer was not identified at all.

The picture selection of France lacked variety and focused on Finland's two main marketing centres, which are the capital city area as well as winter destinations in Northern regions. Overall, the pictures showed an orientation towards winter and activity.

5.2.5 Germany and Switzerland

The starting page of Germany and Switzerland featured only five pictures. Two of them referred to Helsinki (Helsinki Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards), while the others showed an ice sculpture in the form of a horse's head (Finnish

design, art, symbols), an entrance gate made from ice blocks (winter site), and the VisitFinland-portal (other). Moreover, winter season is prominent in two of the five pictures, while none showed summer or people.

Due to the low numbers of pictures, the variety of themes on the main website of Germany and Switzerland was rather limited and focused on Helsinki. Finland was presented more as winter destination but lacking activity offers.

5.2.6 Hong Kong

It is remarkable that Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, has its own website which is different from the Chinese one. The pictures of the website of Hong Kong seemed to come from a different source than the pictures on the other websites because they did not show a photo name when being copied from the website and none of the pictures on the Hong Kong website appeared on any other website.

The starting page of Hong Kong included 13 pictures, which cover a variety of themes and did not show a clear focus. Four pictures fall into the category "other" (portal, logo of finnfacts, people at Finland Roadshow 2008, big ship), two into the category "Finnish design, art, symbols" (Iitalla candle holder, Scandinavian houses), and two into the category "winter site" (lit window covered in snow, hotel in snowy landscape with Northern lights in the background). The other pictures presented winter activity (snowboarding), Helsinki (Helsinki Cathedral), a city street with Christmas light decorations (Santa Claus, Christmas), dried fruit and chocolates (food), and a man in a diving suit floating in the water (other activity). Except for the Helsinki Cathedral and the lit window, all other motifs were unique and did not appear on the other websites. Winter conditions were found more in the pictures than summer, but for the most part the pictures do not show any season.

The website of Hong Kong was rather different from all other websites in the selection of pictures and motifs. All in all, Finnish design and winter site and activities were stressed; also Christmas, Helsinki and food were identified.

5.2.7 India

The main page of India was in English and included nine pictures. Three pictures referred to Helsinki (twice Helsinki Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards), two pictures showed nature or animals (Northern lights, husky face), while the rest showed winter activity (children climbing a snow heap), a winter site (glass igloo in snow), wife carrying (other activity), and the country portal (other). The site showed a little more winter than summer conditions.

All in all, the page stressed Helsinki and nature, and also included winter activities and sites, while wife carrying depicted the more “crazy” side of Finland.

5.2.8 Italy

Italy’s page had an introductory page with a picture and animated snowflakes. Also the general website structure after the introductory page was different. Pictures were located on the right side column, while logos of different travel agencies replaced the pictures usually found in the middle column. Five of the nine pictures showed winter activities (twice husky sledge ride, snowmobile ride, skiing, woman sitting in snow). Two pictures were categorized as nature or animal (Northern lights, reindeer), one as winter site (lighted house entrance in snow), and one shows Santa Claus with kids.

In comparison with all other websites, Italy stressed winter most, while no pictures included obvious cues of summer. All pictures except for two showed clear winter signs and also the snowflakes contributed to this focus. The picture of Santa Claus gave a hint at one of Finland’s unique aspects. Two thirds of all pictures had people as their main motif, which is the most in relation to the number of pictures and in comparison to other websites. The stress of winter activities contributes to the high number of people depicted.

5.2.9 Japan

The starting website of Japan included five pictures in a slide show on top of the page and five pictures at the usual location in the middle column. Winter activity was stressed and appeared in three pictures showing people in a rein-

deer sledge, on a snow mobile, and with sledge huskies. Two pictures depicted landscapes and nature (Northern lights, winter landscape), while the motifs of the other pictures were a girl throwing a mobile phone (other activity), men in sauna (sauna), a wooden design chair of Alvar Aalto (Finnish design, art, symbols), and the cover of winter guide (other). Three of these motifs were only found on Japan's website: the Finland Winter guide, the girl throwing the mobile phone, and the chair designed by Alvar Aalto. After Italy, Japan's website included relatively the most pictures referring to winter and also the number of people in the pictures was rather high.

All in all Japan's website stressed Finland as a winter and nature destination, and points out some Finnish specialities such as sauna, design, and mobile phone throwing.

5.2.10 Netherlands and Belgium

The website of the Netherlands and Belgium was in Dutch and included seven pictures. No focus on a certain theme could be recognized as all pictures were assigned to different categories: Finnish design/art/symbols (Kalevala jewelry), Helsinki (Best of Helsinki Awards), nature/landscape/animals (lingonberries), other (portal), sauna (sauna whisks), winter activity (snow shoeing), and winter site (building made from snow). The picture of the lingonberries was a unique motif not found on any of the other websites. After Germany and Switzerland, the website showed the least people and most pictures did not show obvious seasonal signs although winter pictures were more frequent than summer.

All in all, Helsinki, nature, and winter pictures, as well as Finnish design and sauna are shown on the website of the Netherlands and Belgium.

5.2.11 Russia

The Russian website included ten pictures of which two each depicted Helsinki (Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards), winter activity (snow shoeing, snowman), and nature/landscape/animal (twice Northern lights). Other pictures showed a horse ice sculpture (Finnish art), Santa Claus, sauna whisks, and an

entrance to a building made from snow and ice (winter site). Four pictures referred to winter, none to summer.

All in all, Russia's webpage depicts Finland as destination for winter and nature travel, as well as for trips to the capital Helsinki, with sauna and Santa Claus as special features.

5.2.12 South Korea

Besides the Japanese website, also South Korea's site featured a slide show with four pictures on top of the page. Moreover, the website included six other pictures, which adds up to a total number of ten pictures analyzed.

No real focus on a special theme could be found in these ten pictures. Two pictures each showed Finnish design/art/symbols (colourful house front, modern art sculptures), nature/landscape/animals (twice Northern lights), sauna (twice women in sauna), and summer activities (canoeing, sailing). Other pictures depicted Helsinki (Cathedral) and Santa Claus.

South Korea's website was the only one in which more pictures referred to summer than to winter. Two of the four identified summer activities were found on the website of South Korea, while the website of Sweden and Norway included the other two. Four of the ten pictures appeared uniquely on the website of South Korea: canoeing, sailing, colourful house front, and modern art sculptures.

All in all, South Korea's webpage promoted Finland more as a summer destination already in March. Summer activities, nature, sauna, and Finnish design were stressed, while also Helsinki and Santa Claus were shown.

5.2.13 Spain

The website of Spain featured nine pictures of which three fell into the category Finnish design/art/symbols: the band Lordi, a piece of modern art showing buildings with black roots, and a ice sculpture in the form of a horse's head. Moreover, two pictures showed winter activities (snow shoeing, snowman), while others referred to Helsinki (Best of Helsinki Awards), nature/landscape/animals (Northern lights), winter site (entrance to a building

made from snow and ice), and other (laughing girl). Almost half of the pictures included obvious winter cues, while summer cues were not found at all.

Overall, the Spanish website clearly focused on winter conditions and stressed Finnish arts and winter activities. Moreover, nature and Helsinki were other themes.

5.2.14 Sweden and Norway

The webpage of Sweden and Norway was in Swedish and featured seven pictures. Two of these show summer activities (small ferry on a lake, hotel pool). The other pictures depicted a woman with a husky with an ad for winter-weekend-trips to Finland (winter activity), a woman in sauna, the Finnish flag (Finnish design/art/symbols), Helsinki (Best of Helsinki Awards), and an advertisement in Swedish for winter-weekend-trips to Finland (other). Furthermore, five of the seven pictures appeared only on the website of Sweden and Norway: two advertisements for winter-weekend-trips, small ferry on a lake, hotel with pool, and the Finnish flag. After South Korea, Sweden and Norway's webpage has the most pictures referring to summer; in fact these two websites included the only pictures of summer activities.

All in all, Sweden and Norway's webpage had a rather exclusive selection of pictures which did not appear on other websites. They stressed summer activities, and also depicted Helsinki, sauna, design, and winter activities.

5.2.15 United Kingdom and Ireland

There were twelve pictures on the website of United Kingdom and Ireland, which do not stress particular themes strongly. Three of the pictures fell into the category "other", of which two pictures showed the VisitFinland-portal and one a reindeer used in an advertisement for the airline EasyJet. After the category "other", three categories included two pictures each: Helsinki (Best of Helsinki Awards, Cathedral), nature/landscape/animals (Northern lights, husky face), and other activity (wedding couple, massage). The other three pictures showed children climbing on a heap of snow (winter activity), a set table

(food), and a woman in sauna. Of all pictures, two appeared exclusively on the starting page of UK and Ireland: the EasyJet advertisement with the reindeer and the wedding couple. Two of the twelve pictures were coded as winter season, while the other ten did not show clear signs of any season, which makes winter still prominent on the website.

All in all, the website of UK and Ireland stressed Helsinki on the one hand and nature on the other hand. Relaxation in sauna or during a massage was also a focus. No other webpage referred to weddings in Finland and also the British found airline EasyJet was only found on the website of UK and Ireland.

5.2.16 United States and Canada

The websites of the United States and Canada featured 13 pictures showing a focus on Helsinki. Four of the 13 pictures refer to the Finnish capital: twice the Cathedral, Best of Helsinki Awards, and Helsinki Card. Other pictures were identified as nature/landscape/animal (Husky face, Northern lights), other activity (massage, wife carrying), and other (portal, key on a wooden wall). The rest of the pictures show a set table (food), Kalevala jewellery (Finnish design/art/symbols) and children climbing a heap of snow (winter activity). There is no stress of a certain season, as two pictures show signs of winter, two signs of summer.

All in all, the webpage of USA and Canada stressed Helsinki most, while also showing nature and different activities (winter activity, massage, wife carrying) without stressing a certain season.

5.3 FINNISH TOURIST BOARD: FINLAND'S IMAGE AND COUNTRY PORTAL

The results of the email-inquiry and survey are discussed in this chapter in three parts. First, I will discuss the creation process of the Country Portal website. Then I will turn to the results of the larger email-survey, analyzing the respondents' evaluations of Finland's image, and finally, of the Country Portal website.

5.3.1 Creation of the Country Portal Website

The responses showed that the Country Portal website is created in cooperation between the marketing department which decides about general marketing strategies and the Country Portal leader who decides about the strategy of the website. The Country Portal team of editors chooses specific pictures and texts. The basic texts are first written in English as default language, which is then translated in nine other languages and edited according to the marketing area.

The respondent pointed out that the Country Portal website is “the most important marketing channel of the Finnish Tourist Board” which is therefore strongly intertwined with the main marketing strategies. The fact that English is used as default language instead of Finnish shows the international orientation. Furthermore the website content is not only translated but also adapted to the marketing area. However, it stayed unclear whether this customization only concerns factual information (e.g. how to get to Finland from different countries) or also takes in considerations cultural factors and other special needs of the marketing regions or countries. Furthermore the respondent stated that the texts were translated in nine languages but I found ten other languages on the website: Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish.

5.3.2 Evaluations of Finland's Image

The four respondents evaluated Finland's image as tourist destination rather critically: “challenger brand”, “weak”, “unknown” and “uninteresting”. Also

Saraniemi and Komppula (2003: 3) have found in their study that “Finland is still a fairly unknown country” and this is also stated in the latest Nation Brand Index report for Finland (GfK, 2008).

The respondents’ opinions about Finland’s position in the global tourism market comes closest to what Kotler et al. (1993: 35) categorizes as “weak image”. According to Kotler et al. a weak image basically has three reasons: The countries are small, lack attractions, or do not advertise. In the case of Finland the lack of attractions definitely weakens the image, which has been stated by the respondents when asked about unique aspects or icons of Finland. One respondent remarks that Finland does not have “a touristic icon such as the Eiffel tower”, which is also criticized in the report of the Nation Brand Index (NBI) for Finland of last year (GfK, 2008). The NBI-report states that there is “plenty of room for improvement” of Finland’s image and that it “could have a stronger image, should have a stronger image, and would decidedly benefit from a stronger image” (GfK, 2008: 9-10). One respondent even refers to the NBI mentioning that Finland reached “rank 27 in comparison of 50 countries”. Actually, the overall ranking of Finland was rank 18, while it was weakest in the category “culture” in which it only reached rank 27.

All respondents agreed that nature and water are essential characteristics of Finland’s image. Also Saraniemi and Komppula’s (2003) as well as Varamäki’s (2005) findings showed that generally nature, water and lakes were associated with Finland. The aspect of nature was also clearly represented in the pictures of the Country Portal website, as has been explained earlier in the discussion of the picture analysis results.

Three respondents mentioned Lapland, two also referred to Santa Claus while Helsinki only appeared once in the responses. Lapland represents Finland somehow as a winter destination and also is connected to the myth of Santa Claus living at the Arctic Circle. Finland’s northern location and its winter conditions were also stressed by the respondents of Saraniemi and Komppula (2003), while the Japanese respondents in Varamäki’s (2005) study also associated Santa Claus with Finland. One of the respondents of the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) saw branding possibilities in further developing Santa Claus as a Finnish icon, which seems to suit at least the Japanese market. Santa

Claus was also found in pictures on the main websites of Australia, China, Italy, Russia, and South Korea which shows that the figure is currently used for marketing purposes by the FTB.

Two survey respondents referred to Finland as a country of contradictions or contrasts, which neither Saraniemi and Komppula nor Varamäki have found in their surveys. It seems that most people are not aware of Finland's contrasts for example the influences of both East and West as Finland was under Swedish as well as under Russian rule. Contrasts were not really pointed directly in the pictures of the FTB-website but in the total results, in which Helsinki as well as nature were among the most frequent picture motifs showing the contrast between city and countryside.

Two respondents also pointed out the honesty of Finnish people and the Finnish language and bilingualism as unique features of Finland. The Japanese also perceive the Finns as being honest and speaking many languages (Varamäki, 2005: 104). These aspects were not represented in the pictures of the Country portal.

The respondents had different points of views, what aspects are promoted and stressed most by the Finnish Tourist Board. One respondent mentioned the four C's, contrasting, creative, cool and credible, which were defined as Finland's main branding dimensions of the FTB in 2008 (presentation by FTB Director General Lehtonen, 2008: 19). At least, cool and creative aspects are found in the pictures on the website which depict winter activities, Finnish design and art. Credibility seems to be connected to the appreciation of honesty in Finnish culture which amazes foreigners (Sillitoe, 2009) and also shown in the statistics of Transparency International which ranks Finland as one of the least corrupted countries in the world.

Two other survey respondents stated that winter and winter activities, Christmas and Santa Claus were stressed most by the FTB during the last years. The focus on winter activities becomes obvious in the selection of pictures for the Country Portal, in which winter activities were the second most frequent motifs after Helsinki.

Two respondents agree that Finland's nature and nature activities are stressed by the FTB, while one points out that the FTB promotes Finland as modern country.

5.3.3 Evaluations of the Country Portal Website

All respondents agreed that the internet is one of the most important and effective channels for communicating the image of Finland, while the importance of print and television is decreasing. It was also stated that the target group of the FTB are "heavy internet users" and therefore all marketing activities will be focused on this channel.

One respondent criticized the current version of the Country Portal website, pointing out that it will be completely renewed in August 2009 to serve the customer needs better by offering e.g. personalized user profiles and more interactivity.

Two respondents agreed that high-quality and interesting pictures on the Country Portal website were extremely important for creating a unique image of Finland because many people do not read long texts. The importance of headlines and pictures in print products was long proven by eyetracking studies; however, the latest study of the Poynter Institute ("EyeTrack07", 2007) points out that online readers read deeper than print readers and that navigation bars are more important than photos or headlines in an online environment. It was also found that in print as well as in online media large documentary colour photos gained more attention than small black-and-white staged photos. The photos which were analyzed in this study from the Country Portal website were rather large on top of the page (514× 234 pixels) and quite small in the middle column (104 × 104 pixels). It was found in the Eyetrack III (Outing, 2004) that images that are at least 210 x 230 pixels in size were viewed by more than half of the testers. The new Country Portal might pay attention to this finding and increase the picture size accordingly.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are some limitations regarding the findings of my study. First of all, qualitative research does not allow generalizing the findings, and secondly the results might be biased by the procedures of data collection, analysis and sampling, by the survey participants and the researcher.

In the content analysis, there might be biases due sampling because the starting pages of the different country versions were chosen purposefully and non-randomly. The pictures might have been interpreted and categorized differently by another researcher who might have reached somewhat different results. Keeping in mind these limitations, I tried however to be as objective as possible, conducted the content analysis in a clearly structured manner and developed the categories inductively from the material through repeated re-coding. The categories were clearly explained in the code book, complete and mutually exclusive, which makes the coding reliable and reproducible.

Also a questionnaire has certain limitations and biases (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005: 68-73). Again the sampling of the participants was purposive and non-random, which does not allow for generalization. Furthermore, although the questions were formulated in a clear and easy language and contact details of the researcher given for possible questions, there might have been misunderstandings. The translation of the responses posed another possible threat due to misunderstandings although it was conducted with the support of a native Finnish speaker. Finally, although the respondents were informed that the data will be treated confidentially and anonymously some answers might not be honest or incomplete.

Another limitation lies in the fact, that this study could not explore the concept of country image in its full extent. Echtner and Richie (1991) proposed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to best grasp the image of a destination in all its facets. Although this study acknowledges the rightfulness of this claim, it only applied qualitative methods due to the limited scale and resources of this research. Larger studies could be done on a similar topic.

The new Country Portal website of shall be online in August 2009 and it would be a great opportunity to research how this new website incorporates more personalized and interactive features and how it differs from the older version. One could explore if and how these new features influence the image of Finland presented on the website. Furthermore similar studies could be done for other countries in order to see how country marketing and image strategies differ.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, I showed and explained theoretical connections between stereotypes and image proposing the combined term of stereotyped image. This term was already used by Varamäki (2005) but lacked clear definition.

Many scholars agree that country brands consist of images, which are often powerful stereotypes. This means also that a connection exists between two fields of study: intercultural communication and destination branding. On the one hand, in destination branding, an awareness of the close relation between stereotypes and image might inspire marketers to counteract negative effects of stereotyping in country branding by showing a more multifaceted image of the country. They might recognize that marketing a country is more than product marketing and acknowledge their responsibility as image shapers in intercultural matters.

On the other hand, in intercultural communication, stereotypes have been studied in the contexts of identity construction and uncertainty reduction, but mostly were regarded as obstacles of successful communication. With the rise of global media and country branding activities, one should pay more attention to their implications in the field of intercultural communication: How do country images which are created or stressed by branding activities show nations? And how do these images influence international relationships and intercultural communication?

Knowing, that country images have developed over time, are transferred over generations, and are constantly influenced by different sources of information, might help to better understand the formation of stereotypes as well. So far, mostly individual cognitive-psychological (e.g. complexity reduction) as well as sociocultural theories (e.g. socialization) have been applied in intercultural communication to explain the origin of stereotypes. Although mass media are included in the social-learning theories, country branding activities have not been considered in particular. For instance, one could try to find connections between the main themes in the marketing of Finland's country image and the stereotypes towards its inhabitants: Does the country branding's stress of Finland as winter destination contribute to the stereotypical evaluation of Finns as emotionally rather cold, distant and quiet?

In my own empirical research I explored what images of Finland were presented on the website visitfinland.com, and how experts of the Finnish Tourist Board evaluated the image of Finland and the website.

I found that most of the pictures on the website fell into the following categories (excluding the category “Other”): Helsinki (17 %), winter activity (15 %), nature/landscape/animals (13 %), and Finnish design/art/symbols (11 %). This shows that all together Finland is presented as a winter destination, a country of contrast between urban and rural, and a centre of design and arts. Besides other activity (7 %), winter site (6 %), and summer activity (2 %), some rather unique Finnish specialties were presented: sauna (5 %), Santa Claus/Christmas (4 %), food (4%). Although Finland is also known for its high-tech and innovations such as Nokia mobile phones and Linux software, as well as for its sportsmen such as Mika Häkkinen, Janne Ahonen or legendary runner Paavo Nurmi, these themes did not appear in the pictures at all.

I also showed that the picture selection varied from country-website to country-website and sets other thematic priorities. Based on the email-inquiry and regional marketing segments of the Finnish Tourist Board it seemed that the selection of the pictures was to some degree purposeful and customised for each market although the selection criteria did not become totally clear. Survey results about the Country Portal website creation showed that the contents depend on general marketing and specific strategies for the website. The team of web-editors finally chooses pictures and texts. Texts are written in English, translated in different languages and adapted to the market region. Details about the extent of the adaptation and selection criteria were not made explicit.

The larger survey showed that the image of Finland is evaluated as weak by the respondents. This means that there is definitely space for improvement which could be promoted by marketing and branding activities. The strategy of the FTB for 2009-2014 clearly stresses a holistic approach to develop Finland’s image as a tourist destination with the new Country Portal website as main channel (FTB, 2009b). Although the respondents criticised Finland’s lack of unique attractions, most of them stressed the country’s natural beauty, with lakes, purity, Lapland, and contrasts as specialties. According to the respondents, the FTB mostly promotes Finland as winter and nature desti-

nation following the 4C-core values of the FTB: credible, creative, contrasting and cool.

Getting back to the quote by Norman Douglas (1917) in the very beginning of this study, the final question is: Which ideals of Finland can you tell by the advertisements and strategies of the FTB? The answer to this question also refers back to identity issues of Finns and their own image of their home country, because all survey participants were Finns and according to the names on the website most of the FTB-employees are Finns.

Looking at the results of the picture analysis and the survey, four themes appear frequently: nature and winter, as well as creativity and contrasts. The Finns themselves seem to appreciate their nature, which becomes obvious for example in the more than 475.000 summer cottages (StatisticsFinland, 2007) owned by the Finns and the preference of domestic travel especially during the summer holidays (June-August) and skiing holidays (February/March). Winter sports such as cross-country skiing and ice-hockey are part of the school curriculum and popular sports.

Also in the book “Suomalaisten Symbolit” (Halonen & Aro, 2005: 8), best translated as “The symbols of the Finns”, tells that certain symbols strengthen the Finnish culture and identity, and connect the Finns. It is stated that the countryside, lakes, water, and forests play a huge role in the Finnish identity, while cities became part of the identity rather late due to late industrialization and urbanization of the country (31-54). Furthermore, important designers and artists are presented as shapers of Finnish symbols (60-78): painter Axel Gallén (1865-1931), composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), cross-country skier Anton Collin (1891-1973), runner Paavo Nurmi (1897-1973), architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), writer Tove Jansson (1941-2001), glass ware by Iittala (since 1881), and fabrics by Marimekko (since 1951). The book also describes Finnish symbols in everyday life and at holidays (116-142): Santa Claus (joulupukki), rye bread (ruisleipä), Koskenkorva vodka, salty liquorice (salmiakki), coffee, buns (pulla), sauna, tar (terva), and mobile phones (kännykkä).

Although these descriptions do not allow generalizations, it seems that the FTB promotes Finland in a way which corresponds at least partially

with the images the Finns have of themselves and their own country. One should keep in mind that, this image has grown historically and is confronted with changes due to globalization and a more and more multicultural society. According to Statistics Finland (2009), the number of immigrants per year has been rising from 9,142 in 1987 up to 29,114 immigrants in 2008. Umayya Abu-Hanna, writer and Cultural Diversity Coordinator of the Finnish National Gallery's Research Department, criticized in an interview with SixDegrees (Koskinen, 2009), that the discourse on multiculturalism in Finland is “infantile” and “vacuous”. In the future, Finland too will have to face the challenges of multiculturalism, but at the same time has the chance to profit from it.

Be curious, not judgemental.

Walt Whitman

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Analyzed Websites in Alphabetical Order

Main: VisitFinland.com



VisitFinland_Home



finland_winter_fun



finland_helsinki_card



finland_facts_northern_lights



husky_harriniva



visit_finland_portal



old_key



brochure_finland_summer



best_of_helsinki



palace_kamp_day_spa



setting_eatandjoy



kalevala_jewelry_finland



yllas_gondola_sauna



helsinki_christmas

Australia (English)



VisitFinland_Home



finland_winter_fun



finland_crazyevents_wifecarrying



finland_crazyevents_wifecarrying



finland_nordic_oddity



finland_Kakslautanen_igloo



finland_facts_northern_lights



finland_lappwoman



husky_harriniva



brochure_finland_summer



best_of_helsinki



palace_kamp_day_spa



setting_eatandjoy



kalevala_jewelry_finland



helsinki_christmas



airplane_wing



finland_winter_landscape



cafe



santa_claus_face



finland_santa_claus



finland_winter_icesculpture



finland_book_snow

China (Chinese)



VisitFinland_Home



food09



home-santa-winter



home-lapland



home-winter



home-sauna-winter



home-design



home-crazyevents

France (French)



finland_activities_reindeersafari_Ruka



finland_winteractivities_snowmobiling



best_of_helsinki



helsinki_christmas

Germany and Switzerland (German)



VisitFinland_Home



best_of_helsinki



finland_destinations_Yllas_snowhotel



finland_winter_icesculpture



helsinki_christmas

Hong Kong (Chinese)



VisitFinland_Home



India (English)



finland_facts_northern_lights



husky_harriniva



brochure_finland_summer



helsinki_christmas



best_of_helsinki



finland_winter_fun



finland_crazyevents_wifecarrying



finland_Kakslauttanan_igloo

Italy (Italian)



finlandia_che_neve_pare.



animated snowflakes



finland_winter_huskyteam



winter_northern_lights



finland_winter_activities_snow
mobiling.jpg



down-
hill_skiing_full_moon_ruka.jp
g



finland_christmas_Santa.jpg



finland_lapland_snow_cottage.
jpg



finland_winter_reindeer.jpg



finland_winter_skiing_luhta.jp
g

Japan (Japanese)

Diashow on the top of the page



Visit Finland



Visit Finland



Visit Finland



Visit Finland



Visit Finland



aurora-top08



br-wm08s



top-events



top-sauna



top-design

Netherlands and Belgium (Dutch)



VisitFinland_Home



best_of_helsinki



finland_winter_brochure_dutch



finland_Kakslauttane_ice_restaurant



finnish_nature_lingonberries



finnish_design_jewelry



finland_sauna_whisks

Russia (Russian)



finland_activities_snowshoe_fun_new



best_of_helsinki



finland_winter_aurora



helsinki_christmas



finland_sauna_whisks



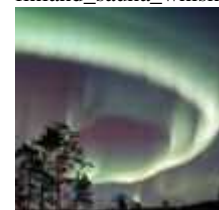
santa_claus_face



finland_destinations_Yllas_snowhotel



finland_winter_icesculpture



finland_nature_aurora



finland_winter_snowman

South Korea (Korean)

Diashow on top of the page



a_to_z



helsinki_main



design



finland_facts_northern_lights



yllas_gondola_sauna



finland_santa_claus

Spain (Spanish)



finland_activities_snowshoe_fun_new



fitur_girl



lordi_from_finland



markku_haanpaa_art



best_of_helsinki



finland_winter_icesculpture



finland_destinations_Ylläs_snowhotel



finland_nature_aurora

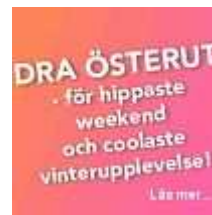


finland_winter_snowman

Sweden and Norway (Swedish)



yllas_gondola_sauna



finland_weekend_winter



best_of_helsinki



finnish_archipelago_ferry



haikko_manor



flag_of_finland

United Kingdom and Ireland (English)



VisitFinland_Home



visit_finland_portaali



best_of_helsinki



yllas_gondola_sauna



helsinki_christmas



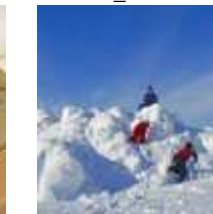
finland_wedding_kaksiauttanen



palace_kamp_day_spa



setting_eatandjoy



finland_winter_fun



husky_harriniva



easyjet_helsinki



finland_facts_northern_lights

USA and Canada (English)



VisitFinland_Home



husky_harriniva



old_key



brochure_finland_summer



best_of_helsinki



palace_kamp_day_spa



setting_eatandjoy



kalevala_jewelry_finland



helsinki_christmas



finland_winter_fun



finland_crazyevents_wifecarrying



finland_facts_northern_lights



finland_helsinki_card

Appendix 2: Questionnaire in English and Finnish

May 5, 2009

Survey about Finland's Image in Tourism Marketing

In today's competitive global tourism market, a unique and distinguishable image is essential for success. I am a student of Intercultural Communication at the University of Jyväskylä. In my Master's thesis I study the image of Finland in tourism marketing. I have been in contact with Executive Assistant Kirsi Salminen and got the possibility to conduct this survey.

I appreciate your support as participant in this survey.

The questionnaire consists of six open-ended questions concerning the image of Finland, and the Country Portal Website "Visitfinland.com". Please also sign the letter of consent below, so the data can be used for my thesis.

Please send your answers back to casawint@jyu.fi by Friday, May 15th 2009.

The survey data will only be used in the context of this Master's thesis and treated confidentially and anonymously. Your answers cannot be connected to your name or your position. It is voluntary to participate in this survey, and you have the possibility to withdraw from the project without having to state a reason for doing so.

Feel free to contact me in case you have any further questions concerning this survey.

A digital copy of my thesis will be sent to the Executive Assistant of the Finnish Tourist Board, Kirsi Salminen, after it has been approved by the University of Jyväskylä.

Thank you for participating!

Carolin Winter

Student of the Master's Programme in Intercultural Communication
University of Jyväskylä
Email: casawint@jyu.fi
Phone: 050 345 7494

Letter of Consent

*I have received information about this research project and accept to participate.
I accept that the survey data will be published in the Master's thesis in print and digital version.*

Date, Place

Name

*I can be reached at the following phone number for possible further questions:
_____ (optional)*

SURVEY

I. Personal information

- Age:
- Gender:
- Nationality:
- I have been working for the FTB since _____ years
- My position in the Finnish Tourist Board:
- My main tasks include:

II. Image of Finland

1. How would you evaluate the image of Finland as a tourist destination?
2. In your opinion, what aspects make Finland unique? Which Finnish specialities, icons or symbols would you emphasize?
3. In your opinion, what Finnish aspects are promoted and stressed most by the Finnish Tourist Board?

III. Country Portal Website “VisitFinland.com”

4. How do you contribute to the content of the website www.visitfinland.com? (e.g. strategic decisions, web editing, writing texts, translating texts, selecting pictures...)
5. How would you evaluate the internet’s importance for communicating the image of Finland compared to other media (e.g. brochures, print advertisements, TV spots...)?
6. How would you evaluate the importance of pictures on the website for creating a unique image of Finland?

5 toukokuuta 2009

Kysely: Mielikuva Suomesta Turismimarkkinoinnissa

Globaaleilla turismimarkkinoilla ainutlaatuinen mielikuva on tärkeä osa menestymistä. Opiskelen kulttuurienvälistä viestintää Jyväskylän Yliopistossa. Maisteritutkimuksessani tutkin Suomi-kuvaa turismimarkkinoinnissa. Olin yhteydessä Executive Assistent Kirsi Salmiseen kanssa ja sain mahdollisuuden tehdä tämän tutkimuksen.

Kiitos, että osallistut tähän kyselyyn.

Kyselylomake sisältää kuusi avointa kysymystä Suomi-kuvasta ja "Visitfinland.com" web-sivustosta. Muistathan myös allekirjoittaa suostumuskirjeen, jotta voin käyttää tietoja gradussani.

Lähetäthän vastaukset perjantaihin 15. huhtikuuta 2009 mennessä osoitteeseen casawint@jyu.fi.

Tutkimuksen tietoja käytetään ainoastaan tässä Pro gradussa ja käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettömänä. Vastauksia ei voida yhdistää nimiin tai asemiin. Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista, ja tutkimuksesta on mahdollista vetäytyä antamatta syytä.

Voit ottaa minuun yhteyttä kaikissa tutkimukseen liittyvissä kysymyksissä.

Lähetän digitaalisen kopion gradustani Kirsi Salmiselle, kun se on hyväksytty.

Kiitos osallistumisesta!

Carolin Winter

Opiskelija, kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän maisteriohjelma
Jyväskylän Yliopisto
Sähköposti: casawint@jyu.fi
Puhelin: 050 345 7494

Suostumuskirje

*Olen saanut tietoa tutkimuksesta ja suostun osallistumaan.
Hyväksyn, että tutkimuksen tiedot julkaistaan Pro graduun painettuina sekä digitaalisena versiona.*

Päivämäärä, paikka Nimi

Mahdollisia lisäkysymyksiä varten minut tavoittaa seuraavasta puhelinnumerosta:

_____ (vapaaehtoinen)

KYSELY

I. Henkilökohtaiset tiedot

- Ikä:
- Sukupuoli:
- Kansalaisuus:
- Olen ollut töissä Matkailun edistämiskeskuksessa vuodesta _____
- Asemani Matkailun edistämiskeskuksessa:
- Pääasiallisiin tehtäviini kuuluu:

II. Suomi-kuva

1. Miten arvioisit mielikuvaa Suomesta matkailukohteena?
2. Mitkä näkökohdat tekevät mielestäsi Suomesta ainutlaatuisen? Mitä suomalaisia erikoisuuksia, ikoneita tai symboleja painottaisit?
3. Mitä suomalaisia näkökohtia Matkailun edistämiskeskus on mielestäsi eniten edistänyt ja painottanut?

III. Country Portal Web-sivusto "VisitFinland.com"

4. Miten vaikutat työlläsi web-sivuston www.visitfinland.com sisältöön? (esim. strategiset päätökset, web-editointi, tekstien kirjoittaminen, tekstien kääntäminen, kuvien valitseminen, ym...)
5. Miten arvioisit Internetin merkitystä Suomi-kuvan viestittämisessä verrattuna muihin medioihin (esim. esitteet, mainostulosteet, TV-spotit, ym...)?
6. Miten arvioisit web-sivusto-kuvien tärkeyttä ainutlaatuisen Suomi-kuvan luomisessa?

Appendix 3: Survey Responses

3.1 Single E-mail Inquiry

I am interested, how the different language versions of the website are created.

Are they only translated or customized for different countries?

[Olen kiinnostunut siitä, miten eri kieliversiot verkkosivustosta luodaan.

Ovatko sivut vain käännetty vai onko ne valmistettu eri maiden mukaisiksi?]

The basic texts are first done in English (default), which is then translated in other languages (nine other languages). If there is clearly something in the text that is not needed in a marketing region, then it is of course not translated. Especially in the close vicinity, it can be that certain information is not translated. After that the texts are still edited to suit the marketing region, e.g. How to get to Finland.

[Perustekstit tehdään ensin englanniksi (default), josta ne sitten käännetään muille kielille (9 kpl). Jos teksteissä on selkeästi jotain sellaista, jota ei ko markkina-alueella tarvita, sitä ei tietenkään käännetä. Etenkin lähialueilla voi olla että tiettyjä tietoja ei käännetä. Tämän jälkeen tekstit vielä editoidaan markkina-alueelle sopiviksi, esim. How to get to Finland.]

Lisäksi olisi hyvää tietää, ketkä tekevät sivustoa koskevia strategisia päätöksiä, päättävät aiheista/iskulauseista, kirjoittavat tekstejä, valitsevat valokuvia sivustolle, ja niin edelleen.

The marketing team makes decisions connected to marketing, slogans, campaigns, and is participating in other ways also – as the portal is the most important marketing channel of the Finnish Tourist Board. Photos and common texts are also chosen by the portal team. Marketing decides about marketing strategies, and the portal leadership decides about the general portal strategy.

[Markkinointitiimi tekee markkinoitiin liittyviä päätöksiä, iskulauseita, kampanjoita ja ovat mukana muutenkin - onhan portaali MEKin tärkein markkinointikanava. Valokuvat ja yleiset tekstit valitaan myös portaalitiimissä. Markkinointistrategioista päättää markkinointi, ja portaalin yleisestä strategiasta päättää portaalin johto.]

3.2 E-mail Survey with Four Respondents

1. *How would you evaluate the image of Finland as a tourist destination?*

- a. Challenger brand, attracting a certain type of people: visionaries and balance seekers with common mind set globally but the demographics can differ country by country. Approximately 15 percent of all travellers.
- b. Weak, slightly positive, uninteresting, rank 27 in comparison of 50 countries. [Heikko, varovaisen positiivinen, mielenkiinnoton, 50 maan vertailussa sija 27.]
- c. Unknown, but the ones who know it view/regard it positively. In peoples' minds/opinions, Finland is not the first option when choosing a holiday destination. Finland is more known as a winter destination, Lapland is considered as Finland, the element of snow is important [Tuntematon, mutta ne jotka tuntevat suhtautuvat positiivisesti. Suomi ei ole ihmisten mielissä ensimmäisenä valittaessa lomakohdetta. Suomi tunnetaan enemmän talvikohteena, Lappi mielletään Suomeen, lumielementti tärkeä]
- d. No culture-destination, nature is highlighted. Offers of product are not found, Finland's markets its resources (= tells how beautiful it is, what it has). [Ei kulttuurikohde, luonto korostuu. Tuotetarjontaa ei löydy, Suomi markkinoi resurssejaan (=kertoo miten kaunista, mitä kaikkea on).]

2. *In your opinion, what aspects make Finland unique? Which Finnish specialties, icons or symbols would you emphasize?*

- a. Different holiday destination, for individualists, people who are very active in sports and who are seeking for new kind of spiritualism. Pure nature, fresh air and fresh food, uncomplicated travelling where everything functions and people are not cheating, they do what they say, say what they mean. Where you can travel carelessly, due to excellent infrastructure and uncomplicated way of life. Lakes, rivers, sea shore, plenty of water, interesting contrasts like Lakeland and Lapland, east and west, cities and pure country side, ice and snow, hot saunas, hot events, high tech etc. Icons and symbols: as you are asking Finnish Tourist Board, the symbol is our country brand logo which symbolizes shapes of Finnish nature and/or design.
- b. We do not have unique aspects. Characteristics are among others nature, freshness, honesty, border with Russia, 188 000 lakes, archipelago, Lap-

land, seasons, trendy Helsinki, bilingualism. We lack a touristic icon such as the Eiffel tower. Santa Claus could be developed further as icon, although it exists in many countries. [Ainutlaatuista ei meillä ole. Erityispiirteitä ovat mm luonto, raikkaus, rehellisyys, raja Venäjän kanssa, 188 000 järveä, saaristo, Lappi, vuodenajat, trendikäs Helsinki, kaksikielisyys. Meiltä puuttuu matkailullinen ikoni, kuten Eiffel-torni. Joulupukista voisi kehittyä, vaikka niitäkin on monilla mailla.]

- c. Christmas, Santa Claus, ice-breaker Sampo, snow- and glass-igloos, Lakeland, Lapland, sauna, reindeer, Finnish people, nature, peace, space, silence, modern, functioning [Joulu, joulupukki, jäänmurtaja Sampo, lumi- ja lasi-iglut, Lakeland, Lapland, Sauna, Poro, suomalaiset ihmiset, luonto, rauha, tila, hiljaisuus, moderni, toimiva]
- d. Unique factors are difficult to appoint – everyone has much the same, there is lots of copying, etc. Finland's main selling points are contradictions (east-west, winter-summer, traditions-modern, etc.), large lakes and lake areas (which the Finns however do not put forward very visible at large). Language is 100 percent a unique thing. [Ainutlaatuisia tekijöitä on vaikea nimetä – kaikilla on paljon samaa, kopiointia on paljon jne. Suomessa päämyyntipointteja ovat vastakohtaisuudet (itä-länsi, talvi-kesä, perinteet – moderni jne), suuret järvet ja järviolueet (joita suomalaiset eivät kuitenkaan tuo esille kovin näkyvästi kokonaisuutena). Kieli on 100 %sesti ainutlaatuinen asia.]

3. In your opinion, what Finnish aspects are promoted and stressed most by the Finnish Tourist Board?

- a. Contrasting, creative, cool and credible Finland
- b. In the last years, winter, winter activities, as well as Christmas. Very recently it was invested in the development of summer product offers. [Viime vuodet talvea, talviaktiviteetteja sekä joulua. Ihan viime aikoina panostettu kesän tuotetarjonnan kehittämiseen.]
- c. Christmas, Santa Claus, cabin/cottage, lake, summer activities, snow, snow activities, beautiful nature [Joulu, joulupukki, mökki, järvi, kesäaktiviteetit, lumi, lumiaktiviteetit, kaunis luonto]
- d. Nature activities, modern country [Luontoaktiviteetit, moderni maa]

4. *How do you contribute to the content of the website www.visitfinland.com? (e. g. strategic decisions, web editing, writing texts, translating texts, selecting pictures...)*

- a. Your survey comes two months too early as the current version will be replaced by a completely renewed and rewamped 2.0 styled portal where you can search for information, profile yourself as traveller, get recommendations based on that, compare products and make bookings. In addition also use tools like Travel planner, share opinions, experiences, images and videos with other travellers, rate products and destinations etc. The travellers will be even escorted during their trip on Finland by mobile services. Current version is not serving our customers well.
- b. General management of the portal development. [Portaalin kehitystyön yleisjohto.]
- c. All marketing communication decisions and actions conform to the directions of the branding handbook and -manual [Kaikki markkinointiviestintäpäätökset ja teot noudattavat brändikäsikirjan ja -manuaalin ohjeistuksia]
- d. To the theme contents, pictures, etc. [Teemasisältöihin, kuvat jne]

5. *How would you evaluate the internet's importance for communicating the image of Finland compared to other media (e.g. brochures, print advertisements, TV spots...)?*

- a. Internet is the most important channel and media. All marketing activities, online and offline, of Finnish Tourist Board will be created in a way that they bring visitors to the new portal, global activities locally adapted (virals etc.) will be set up. Our customers, our target group of 15 percent, are heavy internet users, who are not watching TV very much, so all activities will be designed to reach this group the best, e.g. via different communities where our target group is active and in many other different means depending on the target market and the demographics. We do not try to reach everyone. We are concentrating on our main target markets and the target group.

- b. The significance of brochures is decreasing; the role of internet and social media is growing. The effect of traditional media is quite small after all. [Esitteiden merkitys alenee, internetin ja siellä etenkin sosiaalisen median rooli kasvaa. Traditionaalisen median vaikutus on aika pieni, loppujen lopuksi.]
- c. Important, print supports [Tärkeä, printti tukee]
- d. Nowadays, people get information from the internet. Among the older travellers it is probably not like that yet, but it will change too. Guide books are then taken along and things like that. TV-spots keep a destination in peoples' minds. [Nykyisin tieto haetaan netistä. Varttuneemman matkailijaväen kesken näin ei varmasti vielä ole, mutta sekin tulee muuttumaan. Mukana pidetään sitten opaskirjoja tms. TV-spotit pitävät kohdetta mielessä]

6. How would you evaluate the importance of pictures on the website for creating a unique image of Finland?

- a. See above. It is not representing Finland in a way we will do soon.
- b. High-quality, striking, and interesting pictures are very important. Many do not bother reading the written texts, at least not a lot. [Korkealaatuiset, iskevät ja kinnostavat kuvat ovat hyvin tärkeitä. Kirjoitettua tekstiä monikaan ei viitsi lukea ainakaan paljon.]
- c. Extremely important [Erittäin tärkeä]
- d. I am not talking about a unique Finland-image. This is a very personal/subjective point of view – in addition: what is meant by that – there are specific images of each country and each is kind of unique, because there is only one of each country. The other Finland-image is another thing. The portal is of paramount importance in creating an image of a travel destination. Above all have been so far tour catalogues, based on which trips have been purchased. In these (the products) a uniform winter-Finland has long been emphasized, so the summer-image is declining. [En puhu ainutlaatuisesta Suomi-kuvasta. Se on hyvin omalähtöinen näkökanta – lisäksi : mitä sillä tarkoitetaan – jokaisesta maasta on omanlaisiaan mielikuvia ja jokainen on tavallaan ainutlaatuinen, koska kutakin maata on vain yksi. Suomi-kuva muuten on toinen asia. Portaali on ensiarvoisen

tärkeä matkailumaakuvan luomisessa. Sitä ovat olleet tähän saakka myös ennen kaikkea matkanjärjestäjien katalogit, joiden mukaan matkoja on ostettu. Niissä (siis tuotteissa) on jo kauan korostunut yhtenäinen talvi-Suomi, joten kesän imago on hiipunut.]