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Analysis Dimensions of City Destination Character and Image Positioning [1]

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ABSTRACT

City tourism, with its unique character and image, has increased considerably over the last decades. At the same time, the complexity of destination development and image marketing has increased, and there is a lack of analysis tools for image positioning.

The purpose is to investigate city destination image and character as prerequisites for destination marketing and development and how the image and character position can be analysed. City destination character, visitor destination image and visitor segments are used as the main theoretical framework. An exploratory qualitative study approach has been chosen with an image case study of destination Stockholm. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the visitor segment international students and destination specialists.

The study shows that destination specialists have assessed a combination of city destination characteristic areas, which can be developed. Furthermore, visitors have a mindset of several image aspects and holistic expressions for city destinations that can be used in destination marketing to change the current image position into the desired one.

In order to determine a desired position, six analysis dimensions have been found useful: Desired positioning, Demand and supply, Visitor segmentation, Destination generalisation, Visit process and Expression type. The analysis dimensions are based on relevant dichotomous aspects. The effects of the used dimensions are called "positioning leverage effects", and their main aim is to obtain a competitive advantage and to differentiate to other destinations.

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Keywords: Destination Image; Destination Characteristics; Visitor Segments; Image Position; City Destination

Introduction

Cities can be central tourism bases, or tourism hubs, for an entire country. For example, Stockholm can be considered a tourism hub for all of Sweden. The capital city of Stockholm had 22 % of all commercial overnight stays and 30 % of all foreign guest nights during 2016 in Sweden (Visit Stockholm AB, 2017). The city destination of Stockholm has been chosen as the empirical study object for this research. Stockholm has undergone a change in character in recent decades, with the addition of many new visitor attractions and a more effective transport system, for example. The number of visitors is growing much more in Sweden's cities than in the rural areas (Tillväxtverket, 2015b), which presents new opportunities to develop and market the city destinations.

During recent decades, studies of city characteristics have been conducted worldwide and have even included other related aspects, such as city image. Characteristics can be defined as unique factors in a particular destination in terms of its economic and tourism development (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017). All destinations, including cities, have certain characteristics (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Even though one can identify some obvious characteristics for a destination, it could be questioned whether various actors will interpret the characteristics based on a subjective destination image perception. Such perceptions can vary from individual to individual and from one group of stakeholders to another.

The destination supply side will perceive the characteristics as their identity. Such important characteristics can be used by the supply side when planning and marketing a tourism product concept, thereby recreating the positive image of the destination. However, one can ask how the phenomenon of "destination characteristics" could be understood in a city destination context.

In the end, a tourist destination's success depends on incoming visitors representing its demand side as they show an interest in the destination. Therefore it is interesting to investigate what image aspects might be chosen by visitors, such as the attribute "interesting cultural attractions". The chosen image attributes (the same as aspects) can be related to the core visit motive for a particular journey (Kouri, 2014). Attributes of the destination image can be evaluated by the visitors either as positive or negative visit motivators (Zhang, Xiaoxiao, Cai & Lu, 2014). It is important for a destination to understand the visit motives associated with it so that it can conduct fundamental destination development such as brand marketing and product development. It is therefore important to understand how visitors can bring the most important attributes together with a holistic impression, encompassing both common and unique features, to form a coherent destination image. Presenting a city as a "brand" can be similar to presenting a fashion accessory, portraying it in ways that appeal to different people's identities, needs and desires (Caldwell & Freire, 2004).

Another issue, which makes the image interpretation even more complex, is that visitors from different visitor segments might have different images of the same destination. The specific visitor segment in the following article is international students studying at a university in Stockholm. Studies abroad have increased during recent decades, mostly due to globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education in Sweden, and due to cooperation programmes (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2017).

Using knowledge of destination character and image perceptions of different visitor segments, the current image position can be analysed. Furthermore, the destination

management organisation can analyse the desired image position and devise strategies to reach this position. However, in order for destinations to be more competitive in this complex world, they must understand underlying patterns of destination image and character and how they can be analysed.

The purpose of this study is to investigate city destination image and character as prerequisites for destination marketing and development and how the image and character position can be analysed.

1. Literature Review

1.1 City Destinations and their Characteristics

There are many different definitions of destinations in general, such as "The main destination of a tourism trip is defined as the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip" (UNWTO, 2018). Earlier studies discuss city destinations' unique features and character. City destinations are viewed as major urban areas, either capital cities or former industrial cities that are very popular among visitors (Maitland & Ritchie, 2010). Cities in the globalisation era are subjects of place promotion (Morgan, 2004), and due to their various advantageous factors they are visible to tourists and can therefore be regarded as destination sites in a local-global interaction (Chang & Huang, 2004).

European cities, due to some significant variables, are of major importance compared to other places. For example, either they are major European capitals, like London, with consideration to population size and political and economic importance (Berger, 2012), or they have a high tourism density (the number of bed nights a city hosts per citizen) like Barcelona (Cabi, 2015; ECM, 2014), or they are niche destinations like Prague (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002). The cities in the Baltic Sea region could mainly be categorised as niche destinations, that is, destinations that offer more meaningful, sophisticated and sustainable tourism activities than mass tourism destinations offer (Robinson & Novelli, 2005; Tillväxtverket, 2015a).

A number of the city destinations' various characteristics can be offered to visitors, influencing their choice of destination. Major cities within the same country (like Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, or Ankara and Istanbul in Turkey) can have different characteristics, for example, in terms of level of modernity or tourism development (see e.g. Duman & Kozak, 2010; Rekers & Van Kempen, 2000). Further, tourism scientists differ in their theoretical definitions of the characteristics and their empirical measurement of them, and they have different ideas about which characteristics are most important for tourists. Results from a single destination image investigation cannot be generalised across different tourist destinations that have dissimilar characteristics in terms of economic and tourism development (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) have presented two general types of destination characteristics that are essential in the development process of the destination: functional/physical (such as natural attractions, prices, climate, sites and activities) and psychological/abstract (such as friendliness of staff, quality of products and fame). Later, this explanation model inspired other researchers; they developed the model, adding some new terms and including a large number of attributes, such as transport facilities and historic sites (Timmermans, 1996; Turner and Reisinger, 1999). In recent decades whole systems of destination characteristics

have been developed. For example, Valls, Banchini, Falcón and Valls (2013) have investigated the characteristics of 11 tourist cities in Europe and developed the Tourism Innovation Capacity of Barcelona Index. They analysed 82 items which were categorised into four fields: basic city facts such as population and GDP; transport connections, such as direct flights; tourism competitiveness, such as number of museums and tourists; and finally, creative society, such as level of research and use of technology. In order to categorise the characteristics, Pearce (2005) chose to develop the model as a process or system of characterisation consisting of six labels (activities, settings, facilities, service, management and hosts).

Besides the development of a system of characterisation, in recent years several empirical studies have been conducted with a focus on single/particular destination characteristics in different types of destinations. For example, tourists' spatial movements in the destinations have been linked to the destination characteristic of transportation systems (see e.g. Currie & Falconer, 2013; Le-Klähn, Gerike & Hall, 2014; Lew & McKercher, 2006).

Destination characteristics can be used in destination development (Henderson, 2015), even though there is a lack of investigations in this respect. Henderson (2015) found that tourist destinations' distinctive characteristics influence their destination development; for example, Oman has interesting heritage sites, whereas Qatar is known as a destination for business. Guizzardi and Stacchini (2017) examined the performances of the main attributes of the Italian tourist experience in term of tourist satisfaction in the 1997- 2013. The ten destinations recording the highest of number of arrivals include the most famous Italian destinations in the world, particularly because of their character of art, history and culture.

It will be important that new indicators and trends be considered in order to devise and implement new strategies to make destinations more competitive (Aquilino & Wise). The concept of smartness is an important example of these trends that has been used in the last decade to position city destinations and create value. Integrating the components of smartness provides managers with strategic tools to implement innovation within the smart tourism framework so that it creates value for all stakeholders in the destination and the tourism industry in general (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014).

1.2 Visitors' Destinatio Image

A relatively large number of earlier studies have dealt with the issue of destination image as subjectively interpreted by visitors. Destination image is briefly and simply defined as perceptions, ideas or impressions that tourists have of a destination; see Echtner and Ritchie (1991) for further definitions.

Destination image is considered to be created in an image-formation process consisting of the tourists' personal factors on one side, and stimulus factors such as information and previous experience on the other side (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Beerli and Martin (2004), who use this model, argue that tourists' destination image is shaped in a process consisting of the information they have in advance of their visit as well as their own evaluation before, during and after their travel to the destination. Turner and Reisinger (1999) compared expectations of and satisfaction after visits to various tourist destinations. They used 27 destination aspects, such as opportunities to visit historic sites, and they found clear differences. Furthermore, different cities with different city characteristics give rise to image attributes such as different levels of risk aversion among visitors (Griffin, Hayllar & Edwards, 2008; Montgomery et al., 2012).

Determining destination image position is a complex task; the construct is often subjectively assessed, and no standardised system of analysis exists to determine destination image, as pointed out by Stepchenkova and Mills (2010). With support from earlier studies they touched upon a large number of variables within various themes, such as natural resources and natural environment, general and tourism infrastructure, culture and history, political and economic factors etc. that determine perceived destination image. Other researchers (e.g., Hosnay, Ekinci & Uysal, 2006) link destination image to destination personality, which refers to a set of humanistic characteristics associated to a tourism destination

The image plays a certain role in the choice of a destination by potential visitors, since different visitors have different perceptions of various destinations with various image attributes in their minds (Dolnicar & Grabler, 2004). It is suggested that a series of push and pull factors shape visitors' travel motivation and their choice of destination (Jang & Cai, 2002; Josiam, Smeaton & Clements, 1998). However, a destination's image that is created by its characteristics not only contributes to travel motivation and satisfaction with the travel but also creates destination loyalty among its visitors and tourists (Chi & Qu, 2008; Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). Knowledge of what images visitors have in their minds about a destination enables destinations to make themselves more competitive and to positively differentiate themselves from their competitors with a view to increasing their share of visitors (Botha, Crompton & Kim, 1999). In addition, it helps marketers in a city destination to improve branding for their city (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011), creating an even better image position for the city and attracting even more visitors. The city destination characteristics in combination with chosen visitor segmentation criteria, where visit motives are crucial, can be used to identify and choose some typical visitor segments to the destination (Andersson, 2016).

1.3 The Visitor Segment "International Students"

International students who study a couple of semesters abroad are interesting to investigate as a visitor segment for many reasons, not least because of the economic benefits they bring to the host society (see e.g. Donaldson & Gatsinzi, 2005; Min-En, 2006). In literature, study abroad is called "academic tourism" (e.g. Pawlowska & Roget, 2009) or "educational tourism" (e.g. Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008), and the phenomenon has been rather widely investigated compared with other segments, as a review of the literature shows. There are relatively few studies that deal with international students' destination image and perception – in particular their image of the city destination and city characteristics – before and after their arrival. Nevertheless, Huang (2008) conducted a more detailed study on pre-arrival motivations, perceptions, concerns and expectations (in terms of experiences) among these students plus almost all similar aspects during their stay in Plymouth (UK).

Most studies deal with host countries and their characteristics that attract international students, rather than the specific cities (see Lee, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Nyaupane, Paris & Teye, 2011; Wang & Davidson, 2008). Another example is Min-En's (2006) study in Australia, which showed that foreign students perceived the country before their arrival first as a place where it would be less expensive to study than in the US and the UK, and second in relation to other motivational factors, such as safety and to some extent touristic opportunities.

In contrast to studies about countries and their characteristics, there are studies focused on characteristics more related to the universities. There are some pull factors that attract

international students to their host universities and thereby to the cities where they are located. The students compare the attributes of universities and cities (Canale, 1996; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi, 2003). Important factors included costs; reputation of the university; quality of the courses; facilities and activities besides studies, including leisure; access to suitable accommodation; course availability; and courses in English (Anderson, 1999; Lawley, 1998; Soutar & Turner, 2002; Townsend & Lee, 2004; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). Furthermore, Shanka, Quintal and Taylor (2005) studied a university in Perth, Australia, focusing on students from Asian countries. The authors discovered that the main reasons behind the students' choice of the university were geographic proximity of the city destination to their own countries, followed by safety, quality of the courses, course fees and living costs. In Donaldson and Gatsinzi's (2005) study on the international students at the University of Western Cape in South Africa, the authors discovered that the main reason behind the students' choice was course availability followed by low fees and recommendations by friends and relatives.

There are some studies that focus directly on the cities and their characteristics, such as one on the choice of study destination by Garcia-Rodriguez and Jimenez (2015). The perceptions of physical environment of the host city where the university is located influence the choice of host country and university (Llewelyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). Other factors, such as living costs, safety and security, social facilities and quality of public transport are also important in the choice of city (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino, 2006; Price et al., 2003). In addition, Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008), in their Australian study, found that the host city where the university is located plays an important role in attracting international students in terms of pull factors such as living costs, access to other cities and good accommodation and as a result influences students' degree of satisfaction with the host city and university.

2. Research Method

The research takes a multidisciplinary approach with an explorative purpose, where the goal is to understand the studied phenomenon (Veal, 2011) in a societal context. A triangulation is conducted (Yin, 2009) with different methods based on a qualitative research strategy, where the chosen study object is Stockholm as destination and international students as visitor segment.

First, this empirical study consists of data collection from the supply side in Stockholm using interviews of destination specialists from the Tourism Department's Business Council, conducted at a university in Stockholm. Ten qualitative telephone interviews, each lasting about one hour, were also conducted. Respondents were asked open-ended questions based on Andersson's (2012) destination characteristic areas: History and society, Destination area, Tourism volume and character, Cultural and natural character, Permanent and temporary visitor attractions, Regional business and tourist industry, and Travel infrastructure and service. All international students responded anonymously to general questions, including follow-up questions.

Second, this empirical study consists of data collection from the demand side using open-ended qualitative interviews of visitors to Stockholm. Twenty international students coming from outside Sweden who were studying part-time or full-time at a university in Stockholm

during the study year 2016-2017 were chosen for this study. A qualitative interview guide was used consisting of open-ended questions printed out on paper. The question areas were A. Participant background; B. The visit; C. City image attributes in general; D. City image attributes for Stockholm – Expectations before your visit to Stockholm; E. City image attributes for Stockholm – Satisfaction with experienced visit to Stockholm; and F. Final questions. All international students responded to general questions, including follow-up questions. The students were from all over the world except Oceania, but most came from Europe. Most were women between 20 and 25 years old. The students were enrolled in different programmes, including tourism. The interviews took about half an hour per international student and were conducted in a room at the university with the authors in attendance.

In general, the findings have been analysed using a content analysis method that best fit this research purpose and its questions. Burns's (1994) analysis methods of pattern matching and developing explanations from data/information are used in this content analysis. The CPA method (City Perception Analysis) presented by Dolnicar and Grabler (2004) has influenced our approach to analysing the destination images as perceived by the tourists. Important points in the CPA for this investigation are, first, that archetypal destination perceptions have to be identified before revealing information about which cities they were associated with. Second, in the CPA, for the final positioning strategy, segments underlying the single perceptual positions have to be studied in detail.

The international students' interview documents were later carefully registered in a software program by one of the authors. Then the content was condensed into meaningful codes in category matrixes according to Miles, Huberman and Saidana's (2014) qualitative data analysis. The content was repeatedly reviewed and the most common patterns and generalised themes were discovered (Tables 2-4).

The Business Council's interview documents were also carefully registered in the software program by one of the authors and analysed. Andersson's (2012) initial seven characteristic categories were analysed and expanded to 10 characteristic areas with connected important detailed characteristics and development influencers (**Table 1**).

3. Empirical Results
3.1 Empirical Results from Destination Specialists' Interviews

The empirical results from the supply side in Stockholm come from the *qualitative interviews with the Tourism Department's Business Council*. Andersson's (2012) *generic destination characteristic* areas are compared with detailed characteristics about Stockholm from the interviews (**Table 1**). The three most frequent *detailed characteristics* per characteristic area mentioned in the interviews are presented in Table 1. Both the generic destination characteristics and the destination-specific characteristics of Stockholm were also found to be crucial destination development influencers. The interview answers were found to be *dependent on the destination specialists'* tourism experience and interest related to their working life. However, the authors claim that when combining all 10 destination specialists' answers about Stockholm characteristics in comparison with the generic characteristics, a broad picture of the destination character and potential development fields emerged.

The destination specialists were asked if there were any *characteristic areas that they would include* in addition to those included in Table 1, and the specialists responded that in fact the 10 listed in Table 1, after some minor changes, covered all of the characteristics they felt were relevant. All 10 destination specialists declared that these areas are relevant for describing a destination's character and development possibilities.

3.2 Empirical Results from the International Students' Interviews

The empirical results from the demand side in Stockholm come from the *qualitative interviews with the international students*. To be included as an aspect category, at least two international students must have mentioned an aspect associated with it. The international students gave *general image aspects* for destinations, which have been categorised into 26 positive and 14 negative aspects (**Table 2**). The international students gave Stockholm image aspects categorised into 40 positive aspects and 17 negative aspects before visiting Stockholm (**Table 3**), and they gave 36 positive aspects and 23 negative aspects after visiting Stockholm after visiting Stockholm (**Table 4**).

Concerning *holistic image impression in general*, most of the international students defined "City image in general" as "How the city is seen or perceived by people". Some international students defined it more as "How attractive the city is for potential visitors". In general, the *holistic impressions of Stockholm* for particular international students are a few chosen aspects and not an overall coherent phrase such as "The capital of Scandinavia". There were 50 different categorised image aspects mentioned as holistic impressions by all international students before visiting Stockholm and 42 aspects after visiting Stockholm. Eighteen of the aspects were mentioned both before and after visiting Stockholm by at least one of the international students. The most common aspects from the holistic impression mentioned by international students after visiting Stockholm were: Beautiful city, Clean city, Cultural city, Fluent English, Enjoyable climate, High prices, Hospitality, Increased knowledge, Nature in city, Nice city, Nice people, Organised city, Poor immigrants, Activities, Sustainable city, Transport efficient and Unsocial people.

Table 1. Model of destination characteristics as development influencers

Generic characteristic areas	Stockholm characteristics as destination development influencers
Place history =>	Long, well-known, interesting history. Thematic historical eras as attraction prerequisites. A lot of interpreted historic sites.
Developed society and trends =>	Open mixed-cultural society. Creative society with modern trends. Combination of continuously developing and stable society.
Destination geographical area and focus =>	Strong focus on the city centre, but also the archipelago. The destination area is the region with all local destinations demanded by visitors. There are some important local destinations such as the Old Town and Djurgården.
Tourism volume and product character =>	The combined general and niched tourist products. Gateway for both the Stockholm region and the rest of Sweden. Substantial tourism volume compared to other relevant European cities, but could be developed.
Cultural, natural and climate character =>	Beautiful sights with water and nature. The climate can be enjoyable for visitors with creative products. Interesting heritage and cultural life, but must be promoted in product packages.
Permanent and temporary visitor attractions =>	There are several events, but local and recurrent events could be developed. Many professional permanent attractions, but could be developed with related ideas and places. Stockholm has several arenas, but they could be more thematic and oriented to the local place.
Regional economic strength and business =>	Strong regional economy. Many entrepreneurial companies have been founded, but could have a better business focus. Tourism planning could be more integrated with the general city planning.
Tourist industry & hospitality =>	Many nice restaurants and a developed hotel sector, but more rooms are needed during peak demand. There are many attraction companies, but more products could be developed using the city's unique features. Developed general transport infrastructure, but the visitor streams could be better planned.
Important hygiene factors =>	Safe place for general tourism. Good general English, but the language could be developed into the products. Clean place in general, but annoying traffic jams.
Destination organisation and image =>	"Stockholm" as a trademark is old and relatively well known. The complex destination Stockholm needs more coordination and company contacts. The brand names used must be related to strong values and trustworthy associations.

Table 2. General image aspects ------------------------

Positive	Negative
Accommodation available	Bad food & restaurants
Attractive city	Boring city
Beautiful sights	Criminality
City infrastructure	Crowded
Clean	Extreme climate
Cultural events	High costs
Cultural life	No activities
Efficient and strong society	No nature
Enjoyable climate	Not accessible
Events	Unattractive society
Food & restaurants	Unclean
Historical background and buildings	Unsafe
Hospitality	Unsocial
Low costs	Weak transportation
Metropolitan atmosphere	
Modern society	
Nature in city	
Nice people	
Nightlife	
Open society	
Safe	
Shopping and sightseeing	
Tourist services	
Transport efficient	
Understandable language	
Visitor attractions	

Table 3. Specific city image aspects before visit -------

Positive	Positive	Negative
Accessible	Night life	Accommodation
Activities	Opportunities	Boring city
Alternative life	People mentality	Crowded
Attractive city	Quality of life	Expensive
Beautiful city	Safe	Few activities
Beautiful sights	Shopping	Harsh climate
City infrastructure	Social welfare	High living costs
Clean air	Strong brands	High prices
Clean city	Student life	Many immigrants
Cultural attractions	Sustainable city	Poor English
Cultural life	Time management	Price level
Education	Transport efficient	Traffic jam
English		Transport efficient
Equality		Unclean city
Europe accessibility		Unsafe
Exotic culture		Unsocial people
Fluent English		Unwelcoming
Food and restaurants		
Gender equality		
Good networks		
Great history		
Hospitality		
Human rights		
Infrastructure		
Modern city		
Modern society		
Nature in city		
Nice people		

Table 4. Specific city image aspects after visit ---------------

| Positive	Positive	Negative
Accessible	Shopping	Activities of interest
Accommodation available	Sights	Bad tourist services
Activities	Sightseeing	Boring city
Alternative life	Sustainable city	Boring in winter
Attractive city	Time management	Criminality
Beautiful city	Tourist services	Crowded
City infrastructure	Transport efficient	Flat landscape
Clean		Harsh climate
Clean air		High living costs
Cultural activities		High prices
Culture life		Immigrants
Cultural attractions		No cash payment
Education		No night life
Enjoyable winter climate		No student city
Events		Opening hours
Fluent English		Poor bank routines
Food and restaurants		Poor English
Gender equality		Swedish rules
Historical background		Ugly architecture
Hospitality		Not accessible
Inclusion		Unsafe
International student		Unsocial people
Low prices		Unwelcoming
Modern society		
Nature in city		
Nice people		
Open spaces		
Positive city picture		
Safe		

4. Analysis

In this section, six analysis dimensions of image and character are discussed and summarised to arrive at a total positioning of image and character.

4.1 The current destination image and characteristics versus the desired ones

Destination image is briefly defined as perceptions, ideas or impressions that tourists have of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The image is considered to be created by the tourist in an image formation process (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In this formation process every city destination has a current image position perceived by the visitors and focused destination characteristics (about 8-12) using the character umbrella in Figure 1. In order to reach the desired image for the visitor segment, the destination organisations have to conduct destination marketing based on the chosen image aspects.

The current character can be based on the focused destination characteristics (about 8-12) shown in Figure 1. In order to reach the desired character, the destination organisations have to conduct destination development, for example,"Nature in city". The analysis has shown that the chosen image aspects and their weight (judged by the visitors) can be illustrated in a graphical model (Figure 1) called "The destination image umbrella". Every corner of the umbrella is represented by an image aspect, and an aspect is evaluated more positively if the mark is far away from the umbrella's centre. In the figure, the most often mentioned positive image aspects by the visitor segment "students" after their visit to Stockholm are illustrated as an example of this model. Because of limited resources, it is an advantage to choose rather few image aspects, about 8-12. In order to find deeper patterns and better comparisons, several transparent layers can be placed upon each other. The umbrella model can also be used when analysing destination characteristics in order to develop the destination by its organisations, such as the 10 generic characteristic areas (Table 1):
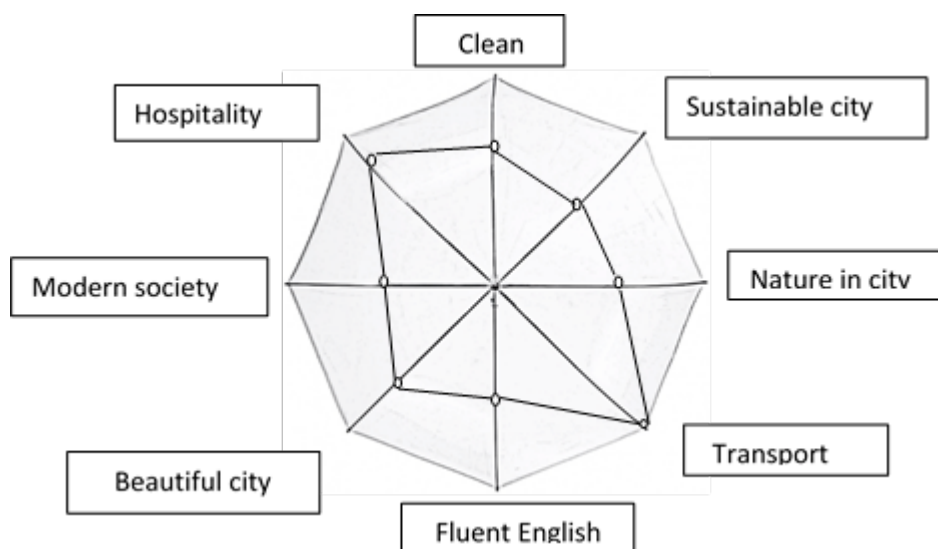
Figure 1. The destination character and image umbrella

4.2 General City Characteristics assessed by the Supply Side versus the Demand Dide

When applying Andersson's (2012) destination characteristic areas in an investigation of Stockholm, with some minor changes, these areas have been found especially important in briefly describing a destination's character. However, in this study the destination characteristic areas have also been connected to some important detailed characteristics mentioned by the destination specialists (Table 1).

Some earlier studies have developed these city destination characteristics into a model of characteristics, such as the six characteristic labels (Pearce, 2005), the Barcelona index (Valls et al., 2013) and the two general types of destination characteristics: functional-physical and psychological-abstract (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). In a comparison between these models, it has been found that Andersson's (2012) destination characteristic areas can be translated to the other models. But the structures of the models are different, largely because the models have different purposes. The purposes of the models, in general, are as follows: Andersson: to present prerequisites for destination development; Pearce: to provide a system for understanding the character of the destination; Valls et al.: to compare innovation capacity between destinations; Echtner and Ritchie: to understand the nature of characteristics.

However, different destination stakeholders have different perceptions of the destination character. On the one hand, the study of international students as representatives from the demand side shows that visitors perceive the destination's image. On the other hand, representatives from the supply side, which are the destination specialists from the Business Council, perceive the destination in their way. Of 30 detailed characteristics mentioned in the interviews with the destination specialists, 15 were not found as general image aspects mentioned in the interviews with the international students. For example, the destination specialists mentioned the destination management organisation as important, but the students did not include that characteristic. This stresses that the supply and demand sides have different perceptions of the destination's character.

4.3 The Visitor Segment "International Students" versus the Overall Destination

Every destination has to find the most important visitor segment, such as international students for economic benefits etc. (Min-En, 2006). As mentioned earlier in this article, earlier studies deal with positive image aspects at the national level (the host country for international students) or they focus on the university itself, and only in rare cases do they touch on the city where the university campus is located. Some of the positive aspects in this study, however, are confirmed by earlier studies on international students and their images and image attributes connected to their perception of studying cities. At least 11 out of 18 aspects in Garcia-Rodriguez and Jimenez's (2015) study of the university town of Laguna, Spain, are repeated here in almost similar formulations. Also, pull factors of accommodation and living costs presented by Llwellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) regarding Adelaide, Australia, and by Donaldson and Gatsinzi (2005) regarding Cape Town, South Africa, have been mentioned concerning the perception of city image.

Furthermore, touristic opportunities (Min-En, 2006), facilities and a good social life (Price et al., 2003) and transportation (Cubillo et al., 2006) as city image attributes are also anticipated here in some way. Twenty of Echtner and Richie's (1991) 34 general positive attributes of destination images are supported by the attributes in this study, more or less –

although these 34 attributes are first applied at the macro level (host country). The importance of city destination image influences the need for overall destination marketing. The specific visitor segment (international students) interprets the city destination as a coherent destination image. The interview with the destination specialists stress that, besides the focus on some important segments, overall destination marketing and development must be must be used because resources are limited and because there is a general demand used for city tourism.

4.4 Generic Destination Image versus Particular Destination Image

Montgomery et al. (2012) propose that different factors, such as risk aversion among visitors, influence the image formation process, and that in the end different cities with different city characteristics give rise to more generic image aspects.
In the interviews, the international students mentioned generic image aspects that were *not* connected to any particular destination, which have been categorised into 26 positive aspects and 14 negative aspects (see Table 2). The Stockholm image aspects in the interviews have been categorised into 36 positive and 23 negative image aspect categories after visiting Stockholm (Table 4), where 17 positive aspects are almost the same for Stockholm as for the general destination, and 9 negative aspects are almost the same for Stockholm as for the general destination. Most of the generic image aspects are used when assessing a particular destination, but there are still some differences between the generic and particular destinations.
When the international students were asked about a holistic image impression in general, most defined "City image in general" as "How the city is seen or perceived by people". The international students used a theoretical definition for a holistic image impression of a destination in general. This implies that a general holistic impression of destination image cannot easily be used in a particular destination marketing.

4.5 Particular City Destination Image Before versus After Visit

Beerli and Martin (2004) argue that tourists' destination image is shaped in a process consisting of the information they have in advance of their visit as well as by their own evaluation before, during and after their travel to the destination.
Of the 36 positive image aspects after (Table 4) the students' visit to Stockholm, 26 are almost the same as the 40 positive aspects before (Table 3) visiting Stockholm. Of the 23 negative image aspects after the students' visit to Stockholm, 11 are almost the same as the 17 negative aspects before visiting Stockholm.
Most of the perceived image aspects before visiting the destination can be perceived after visiting as well, but visiting the destination will in some ways change the perception of the destination after the visit. But when a particular destination, such as Stockholm, is discussed, concrete aspects are mentioned that can later be used in marketing the destination.

4.6 The Single Image Aspect and Characteristic versus the Holistic Impression

The image perceived by the visitor can build on detailed image aspects such as "Nature in city". A finding in the interviews is that the international students have a few chosen image aspects in their mind about a destination. This can be used in focused destination marketing.

Instead of using detailed image aspects, a memorable short, holistic image expression for the whole destination can be used in marketing. The destination management organisation in Stockholm has chosen the holistic expression "The capital of Scandinavia". Even though a coherent image phrase of holistic image impressions for Stockholm is not mentioned by the international students, the phrase can be important in destination marketing to all interested visitor segments. A new holistic expression in city research is "SMART cities". In the interviews with visitors, three main destination image aspects could be connected to the SMART concept: modern society, transport efficiency and sustainable city.

The destination character, assessed by the destination organisation, can build on focused characteristics such as "important hygiene factors". But, as for image, a memorable short, holistic expression for the whole destination's character has also been found to be important. As an example, the destination management organisation in Stockholm chose the same expression that it used for the image expression: "The capital of Scandinavia. However, it has been found that it is important to add new holistic expressions, such as SMART cities, in destination development in order to identify development areas for the society and to improve visitors' image of destination attraction. Boes et al. (2016) have pointed out resource components for SMART cities: technology; innovation ability; social capital; human capital; and leadership. These resource components have been found in the following generic characteristic areas in the investigation of the destination organisations: Developed society and trends, Tourist industry and hospitality, and Destination and organisation. On the other hand, there are still important characteristics which are not connected to the SMART concept.

Conclusion

It has been found that destination specialists have assessed a combination of destination characteristic areas, which can be developed. In addition, visitors have a mindset of several image aspects and holistic expressions for destinations, which can be used in destination marketing. The city destination has to plan an image marketing strategy with some focused aspects and holistic expressions both for the destination's main segments and for the whole destination, which reflects the destination's unique character and the destination development strategy. The knowledge of the destination's strong and weak characteristics can be found with in-depth interviews of destinations specialists. Furthermore, the knowledge of what destination images visitors have in their minds from the current image to the desired can be investigated with structured interviews and illustrated in a visual model called "The destination character and image umbrella" (Figure 1). In order to find deeper patterns and better comparisons, several transparent layers with about 8-12 aspects can be placed upon each other in this model. When analysing destination characteristics the umbrella model can also be used, which is important in destination development by the destination organisations. It is important to focus on rather few image and character aspects, because of the huge amount of complex data.

There is a consensus among scholars that city destinations have their unique characteristics, such as a large, populous urban area that attracts many visitors and has a strong image. However, there are many different city destinations around the world, such as major capitals, large tourist destinations and smaller destinations with particularly attractive

features, and therefore every particular destination has to analyse its own character and image position. In addition, city destinations need a more professional image marketing process because of its importance both for tourism in the own destination and as a gateway for tourism in smaller destinations in the whole country.

The position of the image or character shows the relative place among destination competitors. There is no standardised system of image positioning. However, in this study some elements of structured image positioning have been found. The positioning process is a part of integrative planning of destination image marketing and destination development. In order to be competitive among other destinations in a complex societal context with many stakeholders, the destination management organisation has to coordinate all of the image and character positioning work on an overall level. But to a certain extent all companies and organisations at the destination have a responsibility for this positioning work.

In figure 2, the model "Destination image and destination characteristic leverage positioning" is proposed. The vertical dimension on the left side in Figure 2 points out that every city destination has an initial character position, which is the current character assessed by the destination organisations. The current character can be based on focused destination characteristics using the character umbrella mentioned above. In order to reach the desired character, the destination organisations have to conduct destination development based on the chosen characteristics.

The horizontal dimension on the left side in Figure 2 starts from the visitors' current image of the destination. The current image can be based on focused destination image using the character umbrella mentioned above. When analysing the current image, the analysis can be improved by using not only the current image of a specific destination, but also generic image aspects for city destinations. In order to influence the visitor to adopt a desired destination image, assessed by the destination organisations, it is important that the organisations conduct both overall and segment-oriented marketing. However, the desired position is not always possible to reach because external obstacles such as the visitors' social media influence.

As shown in figure 2 the positioning analysis can be conducted by using analysis dimensions based on relevant dichotomous aspects of destination marketing and development. A comparison between these dichotomous aspects will create a deeper understanding of what is important in positioning. In addition, both dichotomous aspects in a dimension can be useful simultaneously. For example, the image, perceived by the visitor, can build on detailed image detailed aspects such as "Nature in city" but also on a memorable short, holistic image expression for the whole destination. As an example, the destination management organisation in Stockholm has chosen the holistic expression "The capital of Scandinavia". When using both aspects and holistic expression in a relevant way, an extra positive effect will occur, here called positioning leverage effect.

The six position leverage effects, which were discussed above in the Analysis section, are presented in a complete model of destination image and character leverage positioning: Desired positioning, Demand and supply, Visitor segmentation, Destination generalisation, Visit process and Expression type (**Figure 2**).

In order for city destinations to be more competitive and to differentiate themselves from other destinations, it is crucial that their destination organisations combine destination development and marketing activities, making the best use of limited resources and positive coordinating opportunities, called image and character leverage effects. They also need to

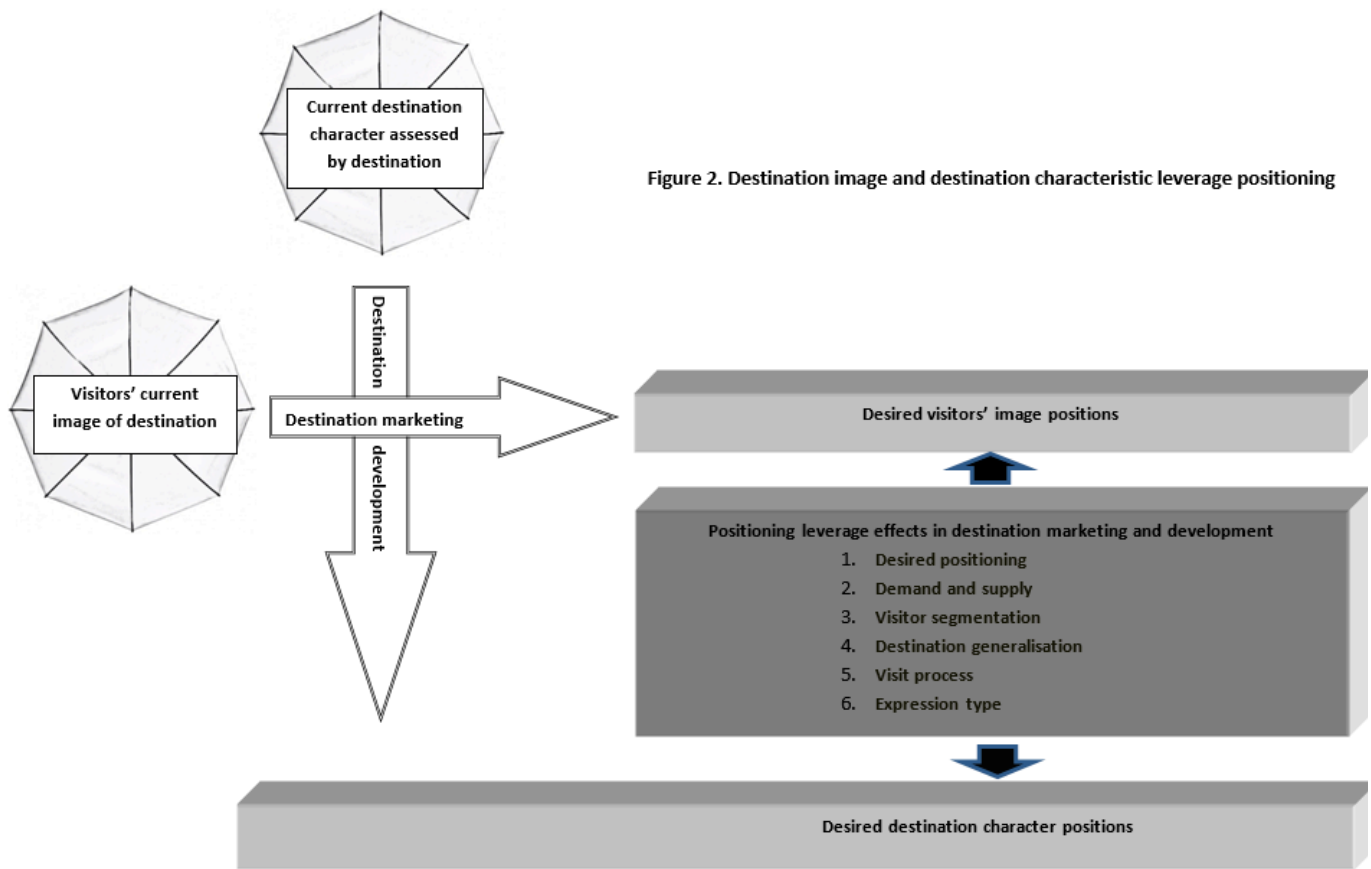identify attractive image trends based on strong destination characteristics, such as the SMART concept.

Figure 2. Destination image and destination characteristic leverage positioning

Figure 2. Destination image and destination characteristic leverage positioning

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