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Destination Images as Reflections of Consumers' Self-concept

- A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

How consumers' self-concept is reflected on destination images is described in this study. In particular, the study describes relationships between destination images and consumers' actual self-, ideal self-, social self- and ideal social self-image. Furthermore, a general understanding for the impact travelling has on consumers is aimed to attain. In order to fulfil the aim of the study, a qualitative approach was conducted in which seven in- depth interviews occurred.

The findings of the study showed that the different dimensions of the consumers' self-concept were activated or triggered to the destination image in different situations. These situations were for example depending on the age of the consumers. Moreover, the results of the study showed that there exists a consistent and homogenous understanding that travelling plays an immense part for how the consumer is defining himself.

Another important finding of the study is the fact that the older persons being interviewed clearly seem to show less concern for their *ideal social self-image* than the younger persons being interviewed. Thus, the age difference seems to play an important part to what extent the consumer is concerned about his or her *ideal social self-image.*

Key words: Self-Concept, Self-Image, Self-Congruity, Destination Image, Actual Self-Image, Ideal Self-Image, Social Self-Image, Ideal Social Self-Image, Travelling, Travels.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This opening chapter will provide a brief description of the problem background and will be followed by a discussion about the problem. Further on, the purpose and the research questions of this study will be established.

1.1 Background

Over the last decades, the tourism and travel industry has experienced continued growth and is becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. The tourism and travel industry is today equal or even surpassing other significant industries like the oil-, food- and automobile industries. (UNWTO)

Being such an important and profitable industry and while the number of new travelling destinations keeps growing, it is not difficult to comprehend that the tourism and travel industry today is facing great competition among different travelling destinations. Also, the increasingly fierce competition in tourism has made the marketers' role even more significant.

Therefore, it is interesting to look into the various aspects that attract and influence consumers when it comes to different travelling destinations. It is said that places, just like products, can provide meaning and value that helps people define themselves (Belk 1990). Consequently, travelling plays a big part in telling us who we are. The possibility for consumers to express themselves through travelling is important, not least when it comes to expressing who we are to the public and significant others.

1.2 Problem discussion

In this study, the focus is restricted to examine how consumers' self-concept is reflected in their choice of travelling destinations. The self-concept model is widely used in Consumer Behaviour in order to determine consumers' relations to brands or products (e.g Malär et al, 2011; Birdwell, 1968) and more recently even social networking sites like Facebook (Hollenbeck &

Kaikati, 2011). However this model has not been used, as far as we understand, as frequently when applied to consumers' travelling destinations.

Travelling is a form of consumption like any other kind. Consumers chose a destination of preference and pay for the travel fee and then they spend money in the given destination during the vacation. Therefore, the idea is that travelling could be seen as a product like any else - just like automobiles, clothes or mobile phones. And as stated above, the self-concept model has been used to understand consumers' connection to brands or products but why not consider applying it on travels, as we have decided that travels also can be viewed upon as products.

The self-concept model assumes that consumers use products as ways to demonstrate and express whom they are and whom they would like to be associated with (Malär et al, 2011). In the very same way it should be possible to investigate how consumers use destinations to demonstrate to the public who they are. This argument is furthermore strengthened by Belk (1990) who states that places, just like products, can provide meaning and value that help people define themselves.

For that reason, this study will investigate if destination images could reflect consumers' self-concept. Another aspect that will be interesting to look closer into is to what extent travelling plays part for consumers when it comes to defining themselves.

It is said that self-congruence is of great relevance for marketers because they can tailor the content of their communication based on how strong the self-congruence image is experienced in the target audience (Evans et al, 2006). Therefore, it is of great importance for marketing managers to identify and investigate how consumers' self-concept is reflected in destination images. If marketing managers could gain a better understanding of how this phenomena works, the communication to their target group would most likely be improved.

In this study, a comprehension will hopefully be provided for how consumers' self-concept may be reflected on destination images. No matter how this turns out it is still of importance. Positively, the aim and the belief is that the self-concept model can be applied to destination images. If it turns out that this is not possible, then that in itself would also be a result.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine which dimensions of the consumers' self-concept that match the choice of travelling destination.

In order to fulfil the purpose, this thesis intends to answer the following questions:

1. What part does travelling play for the consumer when it comes to defining himself?

In consumer behaviour, it is suggested that products help people illustrate who they are (Belk 1988). The aim is to investigate if this could also be applied on the case travels.

2. When choosing travelling destination, how are consumers influenced by other people's opinions?

In order to examine consumers' social self and ideal social self, it is helpful to provide an understanding of how people care about the opinions of others.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to provide an understanding for how the theories regarding self-concept are composed. A summary of what previous research has reached to will be presented. Furthermore, the chapter will approach the self-concept theory mainly using products or product images because it is what the self-concept theory traditionally has been used for. However, the reader is asked to keep in mind that products in this case later on will be transferred to destination or destination images.

2.1 Previous Self–Concept Research

One of the difficulties arising when it comes to the self-concept research is that it has been treated from various points of views in the social and behavioural science. Consequently, an abundance of definitions linked to the self-concept exists and these definitions are viewed in a variety of ways. Traditionally, the self-concept has been focused on a unitary self (e.g. Lecky, 1945; Mead, 1934). However, the more recent psychological research in self-concept suggests the possibility of numerous selves (Sirgy, 1979). This means the self-concept is diverse and multifaceted.

Regarding consumer research, two aspects of the self-concept have traditionally been used to explain consumer behaviour (e.g., Landon, 1974; Belch, 1977; Schewe & Dillon, 1978). The two aspects concerned are the actual self-image and the ideal self-image. Some researchers have gone beyond these two aspects and added two other aspects to the self-concept (e.g Sirgy, 1979; Maheshwari, 1974). Sirgy (1979) describes these additional two aspects as the social self-image and the ideal social self-image. In this study all four aspects of the self-concept are to be investigated. These are accordingly; the actual self-image, the ideal self-image, the social self-image and the ideal social self-image. A further explanation of these aspects is to be followed in the section below.

The research regarding the self-concept has been applied to different areas within Consumer behaviour. For example some studies have revolved around how consumers' different self-

images, (actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image and ideal social self-image), have been in congruence with product image, brand image and store image. (Schewe & Dillon, 1978) One example is the classical study of Birdwell (1968) who was the first researcher to measure the extent to which self-image is congruent with the choice of car brand. Consequently, the self-concept has been applied to a numerous different products and brands.

2.2 What is Self-Concept?

2.2.1 General description

The self-concept is described as how a consumer perceives himself - in other words what self-image they have. The self-concept is about the different attitudes, feelings and judgement you hold about yourself. These factors can be compared either with an object, a product, a brand or a person. (Schewe & Dillon, 1978; Zinkhan & Hong, 1991)
It is the consumer that forms and influences how the self-concept is constructed because the self-concept represents and mirrors the consumer's self-image (Zinkhan & Hong, 1991).

2.2.2 Inconsistency

It is said that the self-concept is not static but changing over time. Hollenbeck & Kaikati (2012) explain that even though the self-concept stays quite stable over time it can be influenced by different social roles and cues and this makes people behave differently in different situations. Regardless of what self-image a consumer chooses to have, the self-concept evolves over time. It is not inherent but created and shaped throughout the whole lifetime (Graeff, 1996). This means that a consumer is likely to have different types of self-concepts in his life and in different situations.

2.2.3 Expressing self-concept

The self-concept constitutes an important role for the individual and therefore he or she will behave in a way that preserves and strengthens the individual's self-concept. For the individual the relationship and interaction with others is of great value and is one of the factors that form the self-concept. Therefore the individual will aim to show and present a "picture" of him-

herself in the most favourable way possible. The products the consumer uses influence the relationship and interaction between the consumer and his social circle. The products can even be referred to as "tools". They mean that the products represent a sort of "tool" that consumers use to symbolise who they are and who they want to be which ultimately affects the self-concept. (Grubb & Gratwhol, 1967)

Furthermore, for a consumer to be able to demonstrate the self-concept both for themselves and for others the consumer uses products and different brands that express special characteristics that the consumer wants to be associated with (Malär et al, 2011). However, it is solely the product or brands with the attributes that match the self-concept that will preserve and strengthen the self (Dolich, 1969).

To sum up, the opinion that a person holds about their qualities and how they value these qualities is referred to as the self-concept. The self-concept is a complex system that includes many different attributes. Among these are the actual self-image, the ideal self-image, the social self-image, and the ideal social self-image, all of which now will be explained further.

2.3 Actual self-image, Ideal self-image, Social self-image and Ideal Social self-image

As stated above, the self-concept consists of at least two dimensions. However, four dimensions will be described in the following section.

The *actual self-image* is defined as a realistic impression of the attributes a person holds about himself or herself. Whereas the *ideal self-image* is described as how a person would like to see him or herself. (Solomon et al, 2010)
For example, the *ideal self-image* could partly be constructed by "heroes" or models that figure in advertisings, which are part of the consumer's culture (Freud, 1965). Consumers choose products that they believe are congruous with their *actual self-image* while they buy other products in order to achieve an ideal standard (ideal self-image) (Solomon et al, 2010).

Another two dimensions can be added to the self-concept. The additional two dimensions are the *social self-image* and the *ideal social self-image.* The *social self-image* is referred to as how a consumer believes others in his or her social circle to perceive him or her. Whereas the *ideal*

social self-image is described as how a consumer would like to be perceived by others in his or her social circle. (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000)

Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg (2000) argue that the actual self-image and the ideal self-image are part of what is called the private self, while the social self-image along with the ideal social self-image is part of the public self.

Table 1 below aims to facilitate an understanding of the four dimensions of the self-concept.

	Actual self	Ideal self
Private self	How I see myself right now (Actual self-image)	How I would like to see myself (Ideal self-image)
Public self	How I think others perceive me (Social self-image)	How I would like others to perceive me (Ideal social self-image)

Table 1. The different dimensions of the self-concept. (Source: Evans et al, 2006:149)

2.4 The Gap

Consumers are in general (unconsciously or consciously) comparing the actual self-image with the ideal self-image. If an individual experience that the actual self differs from the ideal self in a significant way there is a gap between the two and the individual will aim to achieve the ideal self. In this way the ideal self-image can be seen as a motive for people to aim for new accomplishments and to reach new "higher levels" of how they would like to be. (Zinkhan & Hong, 1991)

Additionally, Zinkhan & Hong (1991) suggest that in the consumer's choice of a product it is the ideal self-image that affects the purchase more than the actual self-image. But in order for this to be true, the discrepancy between the ideal self-image and the actual self-image ought to be relatively small and modest. If the discrepancy between the product image and the

consumer's ideal self-image is small or modest the consumer's willingness to buy the product will increase. But if the gap between the actual self-image and the ideal self-image is too large the consumer's willingness to buy a product that corresponds to the ideal self-image will decrease because the consumer realises that the image of the specific product is too different and unattainable from the actual self-image. (Zinkhan & Hong, 1991)

It is more likely for an individual to experience an inconsistency between their actual self-image and their ideal self-image than to experience complete consistency between their actual self-image and their ideal self-image. Some individuals will experience a larger gap between their actual- and ideal self than others. These individuals are further away from their ideal self and are consequently more likely to be influenced by marketing communication since they will try to reach their ideal self-image. (Harrison & Gough, 1983)

2.5 Self-Congruity

2.5.1 General Description

In Consumer Behaviour, researchers suggest that consumers' self-concept is in line with a product's image to varying degrees. The better the match, the greater the satisfaction will be for the consumer, and consequently it is more likely for the consumer to buy the product. Consumers tend to buy products that they believe match their own self-image. In other words, consumers have their own self-image that they compare to a product's image or the image that the users of the products have. The matching process between the consumer's self-concept and the product's image is in Consumer Behaviour literature referred to as self-congruence. (Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000)

Given the fact that the self-concept has been described as a multidimensional concept with various aspects of the self-image (i.e. actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, ideal social self-image), the self-congruence model has also been treated multidimensionally in order to correspond to the various self-images. Accordingly, congruity between the actual self-image and the product image has been referred to as actual self-congruity, between the ideal self-image and product image as ideal congruity, between the social self-image and the product image as

social congruity, and between the ideal social self-image and the product image as ideal social congruity. (Sirgy, 1985)

An example to demonstrate this procedure would be to imagine a female student who thinks of herself as a modern, fashionable and cool person. She can be influenced by a specific brand of computer, which according to her also is used by people who are similar to her (modern, fashionable and cool). This example demonstrates how the self-image and the product self-image unite which leads to self-congruence. Also, since the computer brand image is corresponding to her actual self-image, it is congruent with the actual self-congruity of the computer brand. (Evans et al, 2006)

In summing up, self-congruity describes the process of matching a consumer's self-concept with a product's image. If some dimension of the self-concept and the product image is in harmony with each other, then it is most likely that the consumer buys the product concerned. (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000)

2.5.2 Private self versus Public self

The different impacts that the ideal self-image and the ideal social self-image have on consumer purchase behaviour are discussed to whether it is the ideal self-image or the ideal social self-image that has the biggest effect on the consumer's choice of product. If a product is consumed in a public space it is suggested that the consumer's choice of product often will be more driven from the ideal social self-image than from the actual self-image because of the consumer's concern of how others will react and perceive the specific consumer. Furthermore, if a product mainly will be consumed in private the consumer is not as concerned with how he or she will be perceived by the society. So in this case the consumer is driven by the actual self-image where he or she will be more concerned with the fact that the product should be satisfying for the individual and contribute to strengthen the self-concept. (Zinkhan & Hong, 1991)

3. METHOD

This chapter aims to describe and argue for the methodological approach that has been applied in this thesis. Furthermore, the sampling, data collection and research process that were conducted are presented. Finally, the reliability and validity of the study will be explicated.

3.1 Research Approach

Since the aim of the study is to examine which dimensions of the consumer's self-concept that match the destination image, we have chosen to adopt a qualitative approach in order to answer the research questions. Qualitative methods are qualified when researchers are aiming for an understanding of phenomena through deep-level investigation and analysis of those phenomena (Blumberg et al, 2011). This is most likely the matter of concern and qualitative methods are used accordingly.

When considering different qualitative approaches to collect data, we came to the conclusion that in-depth interviews would be the most appropriate method for the study. According to McCracken (1988), using in-depths interviews enables the interviewer (the person who asks the questions) to step into the mental world of the informant (the person who is being interviewed) and to "see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988:9). In-depth interviews are one of the most powerful qualitative methods and also the method that is the most revealing one (McCracken, 1988). Since the aim for the interviewer in this study is to gain insight of the informant's understandings and perceptions about travelling, nothing can be expected to be answered easily, but will require thorough answers and the possibility for the respondents to speak freely in order for the interviewer to interpret the answers and to satisfy the information needed. Speaking freely, gives the opportunity to reveal and interpret underlying aspects of the respondent's thoughts that wouldn't be covered otherwise. Therefore, in-depth interviewing is concluded to be the method best suited, since the purpose of the study requires some underlying aspects to emerge in order to accomplish rigorous reflections and analysis.

3.2 Sampling

The target population for this study was initially desired to range between 19-75 years, with an almost equal gender representation. However, the seven informants that finally were assembled represented the age range 24-70 years, which corresponds fairly well to the initial plan.

Contact with the informants was initiated by acquaintances. However, the interviewer and the informants did not have a previous connection to each other. Due to the intention of being in the informant's natural environment, the in-depth interviews were conducted in the cities of Gothenburg, Varberg and Stockholm, where the gathered informants live.

In order to investigate which dimension of consumers' self-concept that match the destination image, the conclusion was made that it is better for the informants in the sample to range between 24 and 70 years. The rather large age range was required in order to identify possible differences when it comes to age and consumers' self-concept regarding travel destination image.

Furthermore, apart from age, some requirements were set regarding the informants' travel experiences. The informants should at least have taken one trip abroad per year for the purpose of attaining an accurate picture for this study. We believe that the informants can provide more useful information if they have undergone a travel experience recently, so that they have it fresh in mind.

3.3 Data Collection

As established in the section above, the empirical data in this study has been collected through in-depth interviews.

In order for the interviews to be well prepared, an interview guide was constructed beforehand. Also, an interview guide serves as a memory list to guarantee that the same matters are addressed in every interview and not forgotten in some (Blumberg et al, 2011). The questions ranged from basic, introductory questions to familiarise with the informant, to more structured questions that were related to our research questions and purpose. The basic introductory

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questions aids to create an atmosphere of safety and to make the informant feel comfortable (McCracken, 1988). However, the questions in the interview guide were not adhered precisely. Thereby, room was allowed for follow-up questions and free associations from both the interviewer and the informant. In other words, the in-depth interviews were flexible and were designed as a semi-structured interview. According to Bryman & Bell (2013) semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative studies when it is desirable to let the interview move in different directions, because this provides knowledge about what the informant experiences as relevant and important. Also, the interviewer is allowed to formulate new questions along the interview and is not necessarily obliged to follow the specific order given in the interview guide (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Therefore, the semi-structured method was selected to be the most appropriate way to approach the informants.

As far as possible, the interviews were carried out in the informants' homes, in order for the informants to feel comfortable (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, travel experiences are something you mainly keep in your mind. So as long as the informants are interviewed in a place they feel comfortable in, it turns out well, although the home of the informant is preferable. The interviews lasted from 45-80 minutes each and were naturally conducted face-to-face. All informants were asked for their permission to be recorded during the interview and they were also offered anonymity. During the interviews three persons were participating, one informant and two interviewers. One of the interviewers asked the questions while the other interviewer had a more passive role, but were still attentive to the informant's answers and took notes. In the end of the interview the passive interviewer was then able to ask additional questions to the informant that had arisen throughout the interview.

3.4 Research Process

This study has adopted a deductive approach. A deductive approach is described as a method to transfer knowledge from a theoretical area and deduct these hypotheses on empirical observations (Bryman & Bell, 2013). During the research process, interest was developed for the research regarding the self-concept model. Consequently, after studying the theory regarding the self-concept model it was applied on the empirical observations, i.e. in-depth interviews.

All of the seven in-depth interviews were transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis process. The main purpose of the transcriptions is to control the categories, connections and assumptions that affect the informant's view of the world in the particular topic (McCracken, 1988). McCracken (1988) also states that there does not exist any exact manual describing how the investigator should process the data from observations, because different problems require different strategies.

In this study the transcriptions were at first analysed without paying too much attention to the theoretical framework. Instead, recurring thoughts or key words amongst the informants were indicated. Secondly, the key words that could be linked to the theoretical framework were analysed further and the ones that simply could not be linked to any certain theory in the framework were dropped. Thirdly, the remaining key words were categorised into different themes that showed recurring patterns. Finally, four different themes were categorised out of the transcripts. These will be investigated further in the empirical data.

3.5 Quality of the study

3.5.1 Internal validity

Internal validity is a measure of how well the observation is congruent with the theoretical ideas the investigators develop (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Internal validity of this study has been attained given the fact that the same two persons conducted all seven in-depth interviews. This way, the personal influence is minimised and different ways of interpretation are not practiced. Instead, the interpretation of all in-depth interviews is consistent.

Furthermore, the assignment has been facilitated since we are two investigators managing the study together. We have also had a tutor who has served as an important partner for discussions. It is of great value to have a third perspective to contribute with different viewpoints and directions for guidance.

3.5.2 External validity

When the study commenced the immediate awareness of the limited timeframe resulted in the conclusion that it will not be enough to reach a general conclusion about the study. Although, the idea was that it could probably give a fairly just indication of how the results of more extensive research would turn out.

The seven in-depth interviews that were conducted are presumably too few to obtain theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is accomplished when no more interviews can contribute to any more relevant information for the study. Bryman & Bell (2013) argue that when theoretical saturation is achieved, a fully covered portray is made of the informants different thoughts about the investigated problem and for that reason the answers can be seen as representative.

But if more time was dedicated to this study, more in-depth interviews could have been conducted and the study would be more extensive and representative.

However, the experience during this study was that the answers and thoughts of the seven informants were becoming a bit repetitive, so perhaps the number of additional informants required to reach theoretical saturation might not have been so much greater.

3.5.3 Reliability

Bryman & Bell (2013) describe reliability as a measure of how well the result of a study can be replicated. Although, this is not possible when carrying out a qualitative study. Since this study is of a qualitative nature, by consequence it is difficult to redo this study and obtain the same results. People's way of behaving is not consistent but continually changing, hence the difficulty to redo this qualitative study and achieve the exact same outcome.

Another thing to take into consideration is the reliability of the informant's answers. Sometimes the concern for privacy was taking overhand before answering completely truthfully. We noticed this in a couple of cases, that the questions asked perhaps were formulated a bit too direct. Some informants would then not admit or deny some allegations asked. However, later on during the interview they revealed that it actually was in this way. For that reason, it is important for the investigator to be attentive and ready to read between the lines when the answers of the informants can be quite contradictive.

Furthermore, none of the informants were known beforehand and the contacts were initiated by acquaintances. We believe the fact that the informants were unknown contributes to the reliability of the study, since the answers probably are more neutral and not influenced by any personal attachments.

4. EMPIRICAL DATA

In the following chapter the principal characteristics of the informants' answers are presented. These were put together after conducting the in-depth interviews where the most frequently recurring answers were assembled and categorised into themes. In this chapter these themes are established and presented in further detail.

4.1 Informants

Informant	Occupation	Age
Maya	Student (Education)	24
Oskar	Employed (Security)	24
Adam	Employed (Finance)	32
Hanna	Employed (Care)	33
Martin	Employed (IT)	42
Elisabeth	Employed (Retail)	61
Gunnar	Retired (Economy)	70

Table 2. A brief statement of the informants (the names are fictional).

4.2 Age

4.2.1 Childhood

In the interviews the informants told stories about how they grew up with travelling to varying degrees. The informants in the more mature age, Gunnar and Elisabeth, both narrated their earliest travelling experiences took place mostly in Sweden with a few exceptions for the Nordic neighbouring countries. They explained that it was quite unusual in their childhood to have the

opportunity to travel and Gunnar narrates that it was an entirely different time and situation when he grew up from how it is nowadays. Elisabeth describes a feeling of luxury when she went abroad to a neighbouring country but she also explained that the reason for her and her family to travel to this country mainly happened because her relatives lived there. Consequently, it was because of family that she had the opportunity to travel a lot compared to what her friends did back then. For Gunnar the opportunity to travel came because of his father who was a railway worker. In this way he got to travel a lot in his early years. Both Gunnar and Elisabeth state that these early memories of travelling has affected them later on in life since it was during these trips that their curiosity for travelling was born. Elisabeth speaks about her experiences and explains that she from young age got the feeling of travelling to be "something pleasurable and amusing".

The younger informants had a little different experiences of travelling during their childhood. For the informants Adam and Oskar many of their journeys abroad happened because of the same reasons as in Elisabeth's case, they had relatives who lived in other countries. But they also got to travel to other destinations where they did not have any connections, as relatives or friends. The informants Hanna, Maya and Martin also mention journeys that took place when they grew up. For example, Maya describes how her love for Italy was found during the trips she and her family took during her childhood. These trips as a child have affected her in the way that an interest for the Italian culture was formed and influenced her to learn Italian later on.

The parents' choices of travelling destinations have affected the informants in different ways. Some informants explained that they got inspiration from the choices of destinations the parents made and other informants state the opposite, that their own choices of destinations now are quite different from those they experienced in their childhood with their parents. As Adam explains he found, when he was about ten and started to create his own opinions, that the things his mother was interested in was much more fun than what interested his father.
To summarize, it can be stated that all of the informants more or less founded their interest for new cultures during these trips as a child. Many of the informants describe that these trips during their childhood was an important factor for the reason that it awakened their fondness for travelling and to experience new places.

4.2.2 Life situation

The seven informants are all in different stages of life. Hanna for example has just recently become a mother and she explains that her situation has changed quite radically ever since. Earlier, before motherhood, trips could last between two-three weeks and she visited several other continents. However, she describes that these types of trips no longer are possible when having a baby. Clearly, this new stage in life limits the way she travels today. One of the youngest informants, Maya, shows a clear desire and interest for new places to visit. But she is still a student so economy is restricting in both the quantity of travels and the choice of destinations. Whereas three of the other informants, Oskar, Adam and Martin, are workingmen in their 20's, 30's and 40's. In their case, it is not economy that is controlling how much they would like to travel but the issue is the time. The second oldest informant Elisabeth is working and the oldest, Gunnar, has retired but is still working as a lecturer at universities from time to time. Neither of them states that economy is an issue or a factor that limits the possibilities for travelling. However, Gunnar describes that he is driven to see many places and travel a lot now because he knows that maybe ten years from now there will be a physical restriction. So the fact that he is aware of the physical restrictions he might have later on in life is working as a drive force for him to travel more today.

Consequently, there are external factors that affect the possibilities for travelling. Whether it is family situation, economy, time or physical restrictions – factors like these evidently exist throughout a person's lifetime.

Gunnar and Elisabeth both express how their preferences of destinations have changed over the years. In the beginning of their travelling experiences when they were young they were much more interested in visiting the countries that had lots of sun and bathing opportunities. As Gunnar describes, he went on charter trips and was mostly driven by the urge to party. He explains that what is so important for him now, to meet new and interesting people and to see other cultures, was not a priority back then. Further he explains that charter travelling has changed from these sun trips to more of trekking and hiking trips in the nature. The same can be said for Elisabeth who also admits that sun and bathing destinations had greater importance when she was younger, now she is longing more to go to big cities around the world that according to her has more to offer.

4.2.3 Influence of others

Both Gunnar and Elisabeth argue that when they choose a destination to visit they only consider what they themselves and the people they are travelling with would want to experience and find interesting. Elisabeth describes that she certainly does not care for a place to be "showy" or "unique" in someone else's eyes. She only cares about what she likes for herself, regardless of other people's opinion. Although, she states that this is different from how she was behaving when she was younger, back then the influence of others had a bigger affect on her. Gunnar also explains that when he was younger he listened more to what other people said or thought about a specific destination and that this is something that doesn't affect him today. However, the younger informant Adam describes that when he is planning a trip he listens to others opinions but only to the people that he identifies himself with, people that he knows shares the same interests. He further declares that he prefers the "right" people to go to the same destinations as him. He argues that if someone he knows who is "really boring" or "colourless" goes to a destination, he does not want to visit the same spot or destination himself. Another younger informant, Oskar, is expressing that he does not care about what other people think of the trips he wants to take or the destinations he wants to visit. Further on however, he explains that this may be an image he wants to display about himself. That he is a guy that does not care about other people's opinions but unconsciously he may care anyway.

4.3 Interests

Unsurprisingly, one underlying aspect that affects the consumers' choice of travel destination is the various interests of the informants. This outcome was not hard to imagine, certainly people have different interests or hobbies that will make them strive to visit different locations. However, it was unexpected to what extent the interests actually influenced the informants. In some cases it almost felt like the interests of the informants were tools used to reach another dimension and to become another person for a while. But this will be looked into more closely later on.

As stated above, one thing that all informants had in common was that they all possessed an interest, which acted as an urge for wanting to travel and discover new places. These interests are an important factor for the consumer when it comes to take the step outside the national

borders and see other places. The specific interests of the informants ranged from cultural interests such as music, film and literature to sports, hiking, skiing and other activities.

Regarding the cultural aspects of interests, films and music where recurring features that the informants paid great attention to. Maya, for instance, explained how she was ever so exited to watch films with the "desert island–feeling" as a child and she declares that these films have contributed to her desire to see sub-tropical places. She explains that she tries to recreate these imaginations, that she got from films she saw when she was younger, in a trip today that includes "small bungalows and to live a simple life". Another informant, Adam, clearly describes his passion for music, film and literature and how he would like to be united with people he idolises, like musicians or authors. He explains how he wishes to be connected to these people's stories and visit the places where they grew up, lived and were active. Consequently, this is an obvious incentive for Adam to travel.

Even Gunnar explains how his interest for music can affect the places he decides to visit. He mentions how he listened to Evert Taube singing about Pampas and how he kept this in mind since, that it would be of great pleasure to see Pampas. And in this sense, music becomes an important factor for him when choosing travelling destinations.

Whereas another informant, Martin, was very determined that his passion for snowboarding was the main reason for travelling. He also states that he prefers more active vacations and that he feels uncomfortable and "panics" if he would go to a place just to enjoy the sun and lay on the beach all day. Furthermore, the informant Hanna does also prefer to go skiing on a vacation abroad. However, she does not mind going to other types of vacations once in a while either and therefore she is probably not quite as categorical as Martin.

Yet the unchallenged most frequent factor that the informants had in common was curiosity. Curiosity is the key that strives them to experience new cultures and countries.

4.4 Dreams

It seems that a very important factor for travelling is the opportunity to fulfil the dreams and fantasies about either the destination or yourself. To dream and fantasise about either a person you want to become or to romanticise about a destination is a recurring element among the

answers of the informants. Naturally the fantasies differ from informant to informant and these differences are established in the following paragraphs.

The dreams or fantasies the informants have of themselves correspond to different degrees to the person they seemingly are. Some informants were happy and satisfied about the person they actually are and therefore their "ideal" image of themselves did not look so different from who they already are. For example, the informant Elisabeth clearly describes her fondness for England, a destination she has visited countless times. She describes how she feels attracted to the culture, the people and the pub traditions and how it makes her feel "at home". Also Martin did not show any specific desire to visit any places but skiing resorts, and skiing resorts he goes to frequently.

Clearly, both Elisabeth and Martin are feeling satisfied with the person they are when travelling abroad so there is no need or room for the destinations to fulfil their dreams. They are already living the dreams of their own.

In certain cases, the so-called dreams of the informants seem more specific and almost acted as a portrayal of the persons they wanted to become. However, differences among the informants are also occurring here. Some informants were closer to the persons they fantasised about becoming when travelling. Phrases that were recurring when describing these ideal states were for example "the ski girl", "the city dweller" or "the adventurer". Hanna tells she gladly would like to be associated with "the ski girl". In other words, this is the image she would like her friends to associate her with. But she also states that it is not entirely accurate for the person she actually is. Another informant, Oskar, describes how he feels comfortable to be identified as "the adventurer". He further states that the image corresponds well to the person he actually is. His friends are according to him associating him with "a hiker jacket, good leather boots and mountains".

Furthermore, many of the informants were identifying themselves with the "the city dweller". When travelling abroad to a big city, a surprisingly recurring thought among the informants were the longing and desire to feel and to become "one in the crowd" among the population in the city. Some informants were of the opinion that the thing about travelling to a big city is to get and attain the feeling of living there. In order to achieve this feeling the majority of informants agreed upon the importance of not attending the typical tourist attractions. Instead, when

visiting a big city you should take part of the "real life". As Martin states, he rather misses out on the typical "tourist stuff" and instead he mentions how he for example takes the subway when in New York in order to get the feeling of how it feels to be one of those living there. Adam also shows similar preferences when visiting a big city. He describes how he does not want to be one of the "Japanese" busy with a camera but rather one of the locals who stand aside making fun of the tourists. He further on states that he prefers to visit a city a second time. Then, you have ticked off the boxes of all "musts" the first time and the second time you come to visit you are free to focus on the things you really prefer.

The dreams of experiencing the "real " or "genuine" sides of a destination seemed to attract and to be a very important factor for the majority of the informants. They romanticised certain destinations and pictured them as places where you feel like one of the "locals". For example, Maya refers to search for "the hidden gems" when travelling.

Another thing that strikes us is the search for uniqueness when it comes to destinations. Apart from the fact that people prefer other things than the typical "tourist stuff" there seems to exist an urge for visiting places that are not too common. Although, this seemed to be quite hard for some informants to admit but by reading between the lines the interpretation was that some informants cared for their destination to be unique. For example, Hanna states that she would not prefer visiting Thailand since it so common among Swedes. She claims that if she would visit Asia she would choose something more unique. Also Maya describes how she does not like chartered trips but prefers to book her own trip that is perfectly adapted after her needs and preferences.

4.5 Impact of travelling

There seems to be a clear, shared belief amongst the informants about the importance of travelling and the impact it has on you as a person.

All of the informants expressed how extremely grateful they are to have the opportunity to travel. Gunnar suggests that you learn a lot about the new countries and environments and he also brings up the importance of meeting other people. He reveals that if he had not made all of these trips to distant places around the world and got to experience all of the different

destinations, he definitely would not have been as curious of the people and the life around him as he is now. Further on he states that he probably has been influenced by the impulses he has gotten from other people and cultures when travelling but he has not really been aware of it himself. He explains that it is not until he meets friends or acquaintances that he may not have seen in quite some time that they tell him that he really has changed and thinks differently and is of other opinions from what they remembered. Gunnar really believes that this is due to his trips. In that way, he concludes that travelling certainly affects him considerably.

He also brings up the importance of travelling to be something that helps you realise things about yourself and he suggests that you have to "reconsider some truths". In the same way Adam argues, "The more you travel the more grey-scaled and nuanced everything becomes". Adam states that he almost consciously chooses to travel because he wants to evolve and to be influenced by other environments. Oskar and Martin both suggest that by travelling a person becomes more open towards new cultures and people and therefore you always learn new things about yourself and the world around you.

Maya states that travelling contributes much to her lifestyle and her quality of life. She argues that through travelling a person gets richer in the way that he or she can experience new cultures and meet new people, and therefor you grow as a person. If she were to think of herself without all the experiences she has gotten through her journeys she expresses that "I would really have felt that a big part of me would be missing". She clearly states that she wants to expand herself through travelling and become more than "just a Swede". Further on she describes that her travelling experiences cannot be seen externally, in other people's eyes. It is something that she carries with her every day and she believes that it contributes immensely to her everyday life.

All of the informants agree that they like to share their travelling experiences with their friends and surroundings. Elisabeth states that travelling is something that has helped her, serving as a valuable "discussion topic" in the interaction with new people in the everyday life. She further states that discussing travels enables her to identify herself with other surroundings or people. Also Maya brings up the importance of being able to refer to other people's cultures in everyday life and she also explains that she has been able to relate to other people's experiences on different trips. Maya also reveals that she likes to describe her trips to the countries she adores to others; she comments that she has been "nagging" about her visiting Italy a lot.

Therefore she thinks a lot of people in her social circle, like family and friends, in a way associate her with Italy.

Furthermore, Adam specifies travelling as his favourite topic to discuss both in formal and informal situations.

5. ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to discuss and analyse the established empirical data. The empirical data will be connected to the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the study's purpose and research questions will be investigated more closely and analysed together with the empirical data.

5.1 Self-Concept

It is said that the self-concept can stay relatively stable over time but can be influenced by for example different social roles or life situations (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). This is to a great extent in line with the results of the empirical data. The majority of the informants accentuate the influence the trips during their childhood had on them. Some of them describe that it was during these trips they formed and established their particular interests or preferences for travelling. As established earlier on, Adam came to the conclusion rather young that he had more in common with the interests of his mother than those of his father. An idea could be that during these trips, when one still is relatively young, the foundation of the actual self-image is being formed. The *actual self-image* is defined as a realistic impression of the attributes a person holds about oneself (Solomon et al, 2012). Since this impression was formed by the trips as a child and has, according to some informants, stayed quite the same ever since you could draw the conclusion that the actual self-image most likely was formed in the childhood.

However, even though the foundation for the actual self-image may have been established as a child (your preferences emerge) the self-concept evolves and is shaped throughout life (Graeff, 1996). With that said, a connection could be drawn to the experiences of travelling that both Gunnar and Elisabeth shared. Elisabeth for instance tells that when she was younger it was more important for her to go to places that offered sun and beaches and she further admits that it was important for her to be tanned back then. Although, she declares that these things do not appeal to her today.

"I don't go to a place because it has to be showy or because it has to be unique. I go to places where I myself feel that I really want to go to, regardless of what other people say."

<div align="right">

- Elisabeth, 61

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Elisabeth means that her preferences clearly have changed throughout the years. When she was younger she was more concerned about what perceptions other people held of her. The behaviour she had when she was younger corresponds well with the ideas concerning the public self, more precisely the ideal social self-image. The ideal social self-image is defined as the concerns about the opinions other people hold of yourself, in other words, how you would like to be perceived by others (Evans et al, 2006). However, as Elisabeth stated above, she cares less about the image she displays to others today and is more concerned about the satisfaction for her self. Consequently, she chooses destinations that solely meet her own preferences. Elisabeth seems very comfortable and content with her life situation and the destinations she visits today. Therefore, the conclusion is that today she chooses destinations that match her *actual self-image*. Elisabeth's self-concept has in other words altered over time. Having said that, it corresponds to the ideas of Graeff (1996), that the self-concept is created and shaped throughout one's whole lifetime.

The fact that both Elisabeth and Gunnar were more concerned about their *ideal social self-image* when they were younger makes it interesting to investigate how the situation looks like for the younger informants in the study. For instance, Adam seems quite concerned with the way he is presented for his social circle. He mentions:

"You want the "right" people to go where you go. If there's someone you feel is boring and quite uninteresting as a person you don't want him or her to go to that particular destination."

<div align="right">

- Adam, 32

</div>

In this way, Adam discloses the importance for him to be associated with individuals he finds admirable and interesting. For that reason he cares about the image he expresses to his social circle and therefore his public self, or more specifically his *social ideal-self*. Hanna also shows evidence of caring for the image she demonstrates for her surroundings:

"I wouldn't prioritise to go to Thailand as a matter of fact. I haven't been there and I wouldn't go there either. Maybe it's because it's so common for people to go there on chartered trips. So if you are travelling that far anyway, I would choose to do something more unique actually."

- Hanna, 33

Hanna means that if she would go to Thailand on vacation it would conflict with the image she wants her social circle to have of her. She is obviously aware of what image she represents externally and avoids damaging it. By travelling to Thailand she would break the image of being unique. Consequently, she cherishes her *ideal social self-image* since she shows such strong resistance against breaking it.

Among the younger informants you can clearly interpret a strong will to maintain and enhance their portrayal to their social circle. Or put differently – to favour their *ideal social self-image.*

5.2 The Gap

As stated by Zinkhan & Hong (1991) consumers, more or less consciously, analyse how they are at the moment and how they would like to be; more concrete consumers compare their actual self-image with their ideal self-image. Further on Zinkhan & Hong (1991) explain that consumers can experience that, to varying degrees, these two images differ from one another. This is a phenomenon that is found in the interviews and is by Zinkhan & Hong (1991) denoted as a "gap". All of our informants show signs of this to be accurate, either they have a relatively small gap or, as in the case of some informants, they experience a larger gap.

As the informant Elisabeth comments she is very content and happy if she gets to go on the journeys where she can enjoy the big cities like London, Paris, and New York, and these are moreover the destinations that she travels to nowadays. She most probably has an *ideal self-image* that does not differ that much from her a*ctual self-image* and therefor her situation indicates that her gap is relatively small. Additionally this small gap between the actual self-image and ideal self-image is also found when analysing the informant Martin's interview. As he explains that he is a snowboarding guy and when he gets to choose where to travel it always ends up being to a skiing resort of some kind, for example he has visited Chamonix at several times

and he comment that he is not unwilling to go there again. He has also been at several skiing resorts in Canada and next he is going to Chile because, as he comments:

"They have the best off-piste skiing opportunities in the world two months a year."

- Martin, 42

When the actual self-image and the ideal self-image are not that consistent with each other a larger gap appears and as Zinkhan & Hong (1991) state the consumer will try to reach the ideal self-image. When analysing the informant Hanna it becomes clear that she has an actual self-image that differs more from her ideal self-image than in the cases of Elisabeth and Martin. The conclusion that Hanna's gap indeed is larger can be drawn for example from this comment about her current situation:

"I would very much like to be this sporty skiing girl but that is not who I am today."

- Hanna, 33

Further on she continues to explain that skiing is something that she very much enjoys and that she wishes that there was more time and money for her to go on such journeys. This is in line with Maya, who explains that she dreams of getting to visit destinations like the Maldives. In her life situation today she is not yet at the point where she can make these journeys but when the opportunity appears she will most probably not think twice about taking it. In these two cases, Hanna and Maya, the conclusion can be drawn that they strive to reach their ideal self-image, which is in line with what Zinkhan & Hong (1991) argue, that the ideal self-image is a sort of motivator where the consumer strives to reach "higher levels" of themselves and ultimately their ideal self-image.

This gap that has been found among the informants has diverged from quite small to large, what we have not encountered during the interviews is a total consistency between the actual self-image and the ideal self-image which also strengthens the theory that Harrison & Gough (1983) state, that it is most unusual with a complete consistency between the actual self-image and ideal self-image. Furthermore when analysing the empirical data there has not been any sign of the gap between the actual self-image and the ideal self-image to be too large. In this case the informants might drop the willingness to visit a destination that corresponds to the ideal self-image. This is something that Zinkhan & Hong (1991) are implying, that if the gap is too large the consumer will realise that the ideal self-image is too different from the actual self-image and

therefor the consumer will not buy the specific product, but we have not been able to confirm this through our analyses.

5.3 Self-Congruity and destination image

In Consumer Behaviour, researchers suggest that consumers' self-concept is in line with a product's image to varying degrees. The better the match, the greater the satisfaction will be for the consumer, and consequently it is more likely for the consumer to buy the product concerned. (Sirgy 1991; Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000)

In the very same way consumers' self-concept should also most likely match a destination's image to varying degrees. This is to be investigated further in the following section.

As stated in the empirical data we remember how Elisabeth clearly describes her fondness for England, a destination she has visited countless times. She describes how she feels attracted to the culture, the people and the pub traditions and how it makes her feel "at home".

England as a destination is obviously something that appeals greatly to Elisabeth. Since she describes the destination in terms of feeling "at home" the conclusion is drawn that England serves as a destination image that appeals to Elisabeth's *actual self-image.* In this way, Elisabeth's impression of England's destination image corresponds very well with her actual self-image. Therefore, these two images are congruent and consistent with each other. As Sirgy (1991) stated, a consumer is more likely to buy a product if the product image matches the consumer's self- concept. This statement could also serve to explain why Elisabeth returns to England so frequently.

Among the informants a couple of cases appeared where you could understand a clear inconsistency between a destination image and an informant's self-concept. For example, Maya declares a clear reluctance to visit some certain places:

"There are places that I would call nightmares. Like Alanya or Ayia Napa. These are places that I simply couldn't go to. But that is because it doesn't fit my personality and my interests. Perhaps I'm not that kind of person who likes to drink and party in that way that it is the solely purpose of my trips. So it would have felt pointless for me to go on that kind of trip because I wouldn't gain anything from it. "

- Maya, 24

Maya's statement shows a clear inconsistency between the destination images of Alanya and Ayia Napa and her self-concept. She would really not want to be associated with these destinations at all. Therefore, she obviously does not visit these destinations because they do not, as she states, "fit my personality and my interests". Furthermore, Martin describes another incident where the same matter was occurring:

"...I can't stand going to places where all I can do is sunbathe. Then I panic! I have to do something whatever that might be. Go diving or something.. It has to happen something, or I get super stressed and panic. Eventually, you just might end up sitting in the hotel bar."

- Martin, 42

Here Martin describes how he feels uneasy and awkward when visiting these types of places. These destinations do clearly not match his self-concept since he prefers being active and it stresses him out if he was obliged to relax too much on a vacation. Both Martin and Maya feel awkward and uncomfortable if they behave in ways inconsistent with how they believe others see them.

Furthermore, since the self-concept of neither Maya nor Martin matches these destination images described, none of them is likely to return or visit these places. This corresponds with the idea of Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, (2000) that states that some dimension of the self-concept has to be in harmony with the product image in order for the consumer to buy the product concerned.

However, during the in-depth interviews, other instances were narrated where the ideal self-image is congruent with a destination image. An example of this would be Adam who clearly states his passion for vintage music, film and literature. Preferably, he wants to travel to places where the musicians and authors he idolises lived or were active. He states:

"I choose destinations because I want them to match my interests and my feelings.. For example I can choose places with an historical music scene. Even though I might be the palest Swede you could imagine, inside I'm an R&B artist from the early 60's. So I want travelling destinations to match the inside of me."

- Adam, 32

Ideal self-congruity refers to the match between a consumer's ideal self-image and a product image (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000). With that in mind, it is clear that the destination image of New York matches the ideal self-image of Adam. Visiting New York most likely serves to help Adam approach his ideal self-image of a musician from the 60's.

5.4 Travelling as a way of defining yourself

There is a clear, shared belief amongst the informants about the importance of travelling and the impact it has on you as a person. Like Grubb & Gratwhol (1967) declare, the individual will aim to show and present a "picture" of him self in the most favourable way possible. This statement corresponds with some of the informants' ideas about how travelling defines you as a person. For example Maya says:

"It is not visible outward that "I have been in the Caribbean", but still it adds so much to your everyday life and in your home. In some way you're showing pictures of the different destinations and it reminds you of everything you have been through."

- Maya, 24

Like Maya says, travelling is not something that is visible. But you carry it with you and it forms you in your everyday life. Consequently, she is of the opinion that travelling is an important factor in telling others who you are. As she tries to extend these travel experiences by having photos of them in her home, it functions as another dimension of telling others what destinations she has been to. Another interesting thing emerging from the interview with Maya is that she narrates about her travels to her friends and surroundings. She says for instance that all of her friends associate her with Italy because she has been talking so much about it and almost, as she states, been "nagging" about it. In this way it is clear that she has tried to create and build the person she wants to be perceived as by using her experiences of travelling.

Grubb & Gratwhol (1967) argue that consumers use products to influence the relationship and interaction between the consumer and his or her social circle. This could just as well be applied to travelling in the case of Maya.

6. CONCLUSION

This final section serves to summarise the purpose and the results of this study. Managerial implications and suggestions for further research will also be suggested.

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of which dimensions of the consumers' self-concept that match the choice of travelling destination. In order to fulfil the purpose, the following research questions were intended to be answered:

1. What part does travelling play for the consumer when it comes to defining himself?

2. When choosing travelling destination, how are consumers influenced by other people's opinions?

Firstly, one distress that were troubling us in the initial state of the study was whether it was at all possible to apply the self-concept model to destinations since it in previous research mainly has been used to understand consumers' relationship to brands or products. However, this distress could be dismissed quite undisputedly in the early process of the study. As the findings of this study suggest, the self-concept model can be used utterly well when applied to consumers' destination images. The results showed that the different dimensions of the consumers' self-concept were activated or triggered to the destination image in different situations. These situations were for example depending on the age of the consumers. Furthermore, situations appeared throughout the study when consumers' self-concept was *not* consistent with a destination image. These findings were of equal importance in evaluating the situations when the consumers experience self-congruity with a destination image.

The first research question was not difficult to answer. The result of the study showed that there exists a consistent and homogenous understanding that travelling plays an immense part for how the consumer is defining himself. The informants in the study described it in terms of

being the most important thing in telling others who you are. Therefore, the findings showed that travelling plays an invaluable part for consumers when defining themselves.

The second research question was formulated in order to understand *the ideal social self-concept* for consumers when travelling. An important finding of the study is the fact that the older persons being interviewed clearly seem to show less concern for their ideal social self-image than the younger persons being interviewed. The younger informants show an obvious concern for the way they are presented to their social circle, i.e. their *ideal-social self-image.* Hence, the age difference seem to play an important part to what extent the consumer is concerned about his or her *ideal social self-image.*

6.2 Managerial Implications

The managerial implication of the results of this study suggest that marketing managers should conduct research to identify the destination image and decide whether that image is congruent with the self-concept (actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-image) of the majority of consumers who have visited the destination in the past. Presuming such a research being managed, a promotion campaign should be conducted that shows consumers who have those personal characteristics reflective of the destination image and self-concept. This way, marketers would gain a competitive advantage since it is said that an activation of the self-image in a promotion campaign will trigger positive attitudes from the consumer (Evans et al, 2006).

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis has examined the relation between consumers' different self-concepts and the choice of destination when travelling to get a better understanding for the underlying forces that drive consumers to behave in certain ways, more specifically why they choose specific destinations over others. During the summary of the interviews one factor has shown to be especially interesting when analysing the self-concept in consumer behaviour and choices of destinations. This factor is age; the interviews conducted have revealed that there is most likely a connection between how consumers of different ages perceive themselves and the choice of travelling destinations. However, because of the relatively narrow timeframe only seven in-depth

interviews, with people in ages varying from 24 to 70, were allowed in this thesis. Therefore it would be interesting to investigate further, in a more extensive study, where a larger number of consumers would be interviewed in order to confirm the results from our study, that age plays a big part in consumers' choice of destinations.

In this study the self-concept and how it is reflected on destination images was investigated. However, an interesting aspect to add to this would be to examine how self-concept can be used in order to understand how individuals use social networking sites (SNS) such as Instagram or Facebook. As far as we understand, people to a large extent upload pictures when travelling. In this way the pictures are put up for display for their social circle. What is particularly interesting in this case is the fact that individuals *choose* what they upload. In other words, they have the option to control how they would like to be perceived by others, by solely uploading pictures that supposedly favours their ideal-social self-image. This would add an additional dimension to the already investigated study. The subject is also contemporary and perhaps there does not exist much thorough research on this subject.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1 Interview guide

Background questions

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where did you grow up?
- Were do you currently live?
- Do you live by yourself?
- What do you do for a living? / What are you studying?
- What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Would you like to tell us a bit about your travelling experiences?

Do you enjoy travelling?

What do you find exciting about travelling?

What appeals to you, when choosing a certain destination?

Do you travel by yourself or in the company of others?

Roughly, how often do you travel?

Where do you prefer to travel?

Is there a certain kind of trip you especially prefer doing?

Do you have certain interests or hobbies that influence your choice of destination?

Do you make plans for your trips, or are you somewhat more spontaneous?

Growing up, did you and your family travel often?

Do you feel influenced by your parents' travelling habits?

In what way do you think travelling has affected you as a person?

Guiding research questions used to understand the Actual self concept

Are there certain destinations that you find especially suited for you?

Are there destinations you gladly choose to return to? Been more than once?

Are there any destinations you do <u>not</u> wish to visit?

Are there any destinations or kinds of trips that you do not feel comfortable taking on?

<u>Guiding research questions used to understand the Ideal self-concept</u>

Is there a destination you truly dream about travelling to?

If so, how did you first become interested in this destination?

<u>Guiding research questions used to understand the Social self-concept</u>

What do you suppose others might think is a typical travelling destination for you?

Are there any destinations where you suppose your friends might be surprised if you went there?

<u>Guiding research questions used to understand the Ideal Social self-concept (how you want to be perceived by others)</u>

Are you influenced by other people's opinions about a certain destination?

Which destinations would you like your friends to associate you with?

<u>Combining guiding research question</u>

Would you argue that you are a person who prefers to travel to a place where no one in your social circle has ever been? Or would you rather travel to a destination that is popular amongst your friends?