

City branding for tourism: the power of image selection

A comparison of recent Dutch city branding strategies and images for the tourism market in The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam



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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze and identify the main similarities and differences in the city branding strategy for tourism in The Netherlands, with a particular focus on The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam.

The aspect taken into consideration was the selection of identities and images to be communicated to a desired target audience. The prospect chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of this process has been the selection of 10 pictures taken from the branding toolkit of each city.

This thesis is composed of three themed chapters, each of them dealing with different aspect of branding: the first clarifies which identities have been chosen, the second presents a reflection on how the target audience is treated, and the first contains the branding toolkits analysis. Every chapter is subdivided into three parts: an introduction, a theoretical framework, and an analysis linked to the chapter's main theme.

Findings indicated that even though the first two steps may be defined - by historical reasons, city's assets or more effective marketing strategy -, this does not automatically translate into coherent image selections. Conclusions are drawn at the end of the work. Finally, all approaches served as an example of destination branding, but do not represent an ideal model for online communication and tourism planning. However, this research may help building a holistic approach between destination planning and tourism scholarly literature.

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Introduction

“Your brand is what other people say about you when you’re not in the room.”¹

Traditionally, the word “brand” is associated with advertisement of a physical product. Indeed, the term can have various meanings², from indicating a particular product manufactured by a certain company, to a marquee or, even more interestingly, a particular identity or image associated with something.

The concept of brand comes from the traditional marketing of a physical product, which is something that started over 100 years ago. From the 1990s on, this term has been adopted in other areas, such as place branding (Moilanen, 4). Place selling is therefore a centennial concept and consists of the advertisement of a set of selected images of a place for a specific target audience. Selling a place was - and still is - done both for attracting working capitals and for tourism purposes.

Nowadays, our society feels like a global marketplace, and the competition is not only felt by companies, but also by destinations. Thanks to the rise of low cost traveling, we can now visit a new city in a country we’ve never been for the same price we use to take a train to a nearby location a few years ago. To promote destinations, marketers have adopted traditional marketing techniques and concepts - such as branding - for not only hotels or resorts, but also for countries, from a national to a municipal level. Destination branding can be done for various reasons from attracting workers in certain industries, to luring buyers to promote the urbanistic development of inhabited areas or, and this is what I will describe in my work, to promote tourism.

Tourism is the world’s largest and fastest-growing service sector industry and has been steadily expanding since World War II³. With traveling becoming more and more accessible, the majority of the population - at least from the developed countries - regularly spend their time traveling. As global competition among destinations increases, developing successful branding strategies can lead to differentiating places, influencing the tourist decision process of visiting for one city instead of another and the way the place visited is perceived. Despite the fact that we tend to identify globalization with levelling differences, the competition among destinations pushes places to distinguish themselves and promote their unique attractive elements - landscape, culture, local product and traditions.

Generally, when we think about a product, we don’t merely focus on its use, we experience it with a combination of features we may be more or less aware of, from the tangible

¹ Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, is credited with saying this first
Kate Torgovnick May, “10 brand stories from Tim Leberecht’s TEDTalk“, TED Blog, October 8, 2012. Accessed May 30, 2018
<https://blog.ted.com/10-brand-stories-from-tim-leberechts-tedtalk/>

² Accessed May 30, 2018
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brand>

³ Eric G.E., Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), 1

ones (f.e. touch) to the intangible ones (f.e. positive/negative memories). Due to the fact that the way we experience and perceive things is adapted to our experiences and mindsets, visual and psychological components play a big role in shaping our perceptions. In this thesis, I decided to focus on the effectiveness of identity selection and communication in city branding strategies for tourism. In particular, based on the work of Teemu Moilanen and Seppo Rainisto *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations. A Planning Book for Place Branding*, I will focus on three aspects related to place branding: identity, image and communication. The brand identity is how the owner of the brand wants it to be perceived, the brand image is how the consumer experiences the brand, while communication is how the chosen identity is transmitted to the target audience.

For my research, I decided to identify the main similarities and differences in the selection and communication of identities in the city branding strategy for tourism in The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. This entails that I will geographically focus on The Netherlands and, particularly, in the Randstad, excluding Amsterdam - which has been already largely used as a case study and is currently facing a different phase of tourism: overtourism. The Randstad is a metropolitan area that includes Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and several smaller cities. Almost half of the Dutch population lives here. Each one of the major Randstad cities has a complementary focus: Rotterdam, being the largest port in Europe, is a strong industrial pole, while Amsterdam has commercial value. The Hague is a coastal city with the headquarters of the government and several international institutions and embassies. Utrecht is a railway hub and location of several IT businesses⁴. The four cities are so well connected that each is within one hour of the other three.⁵

In a regional context, Amsterdam is now working together with 15 municipalities on an active spread of tourists. Over the past three years, the number of visits to attraction points in the Amsterdam region has increased by 30% as a result of this approach⁶, with Amsterdam still being the top attraction, as shown in the graphic⁷ at the end of this paragraph.

⁴ "Rotterdam Special - a city re-inventing itself", chapter "Metropolitan area", 4, Savills, Sept 2015. Accessed Apr 11, 2018
<http://pdf.euro.savills.co.uk/the-netherlands/commercial---dutch-other/rotterdam-special-september-2015.pdf>

⁵ "Meerjarenplan 2017-2020", Utrecht Marketing, 11, my translation, accessed Apr 11, 2018
<https://www.utrechtmarketing.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UTM-17-015-Meerjarenplan.pdf>

⁶ "Live like a local - Perspectief toerisme 2020", Gemeente Utrecht, 12, my translation, accessed Apr 11, 2018
https://www.utrecht.nl/fileadmin/uploads/documenten/bestuur-en-organisatie/publicaties/onderzoek-en-cijfers/Perspectief_Toerisme_2020_LiveLikeALocal.pdf

⁷ "Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016", Gemeente Den Haag, Sept 2017, 11, my translation, accessed Apr 12, 2018
https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/5927648/1/RIS298466_Bijlage_I_Monitor_Toerisme_2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Mutatie
Amsterdam	4.113	4.157	4.238	4.147	3.924	-5%
Den Haag	2.482	2.334	2.220	2.398	2.471	0%
Rotterdam	2.484	2.306	2.218	2.499	2.500	1%
Utrecht	2.345	2.186	1.981	1.812	1.928	-18%

Bron: Continu Vakantie Onderzoek (CVO)

Interestingly, not everyone is a fan of the Randstad and feels it monopolizes The Netherlands' image at home and abroad, such as the economist Mathijs Bouman, who declared that "The Netherlands is more than four big cities and some grassland"⁸.

The Dutch tourism and recreational sector has grown 2 percent in comparison to the year before, and the tourism expenditure amounted to 75.7 billion euros, 3.9 percent GDP⁹. The current national tourism strategy¹⁰ is based on three pillars: attracting more tourists, reducing regulations and costs for doing business, and promoting sustainability on an environmental level. One step below, regulations are managed on a regional level (provincie in Dutch); regional initiatives usually aim to connect tourism, recreation, cultural history, landscape, water and nature efficiently. The management of recreational areas is generally left to municipalities to maximize its performance. A municipality is, after the national government and the Dutch provinces, the third administrative layer in the Dutch government. Now that we have an understanding on the division of responsibilities, it comes as no surprise that I decided to mainly focus on the municipal level, referencing at the national guidelines when needed. The governmental decisions will be primarily presented on two occasions: first in chapter one in relation to the outline of nationwide identities (strategy and storylines), and second with the draft of tourist profiles - here called *persona* - in chapter two.

With my work, I am to research the impact that images and identities have on tourism. To do so, I will try to answer the following question: what are the main similarities and differences in the selection and communication of images/identities in the city branding strategy for tourism in The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht? To reply to this question, I decided to divide my work in three themed chapters, in order to approach the main question from different angles. Every chapter starts with a small introduction, followed by a theoretical framework and a specific research that, by answering to secondary inquiries, will help us answering our main question

⁸ Mathijs Bouman, "De kracht van de regio: Nederland is meer dan vier grote steden en wat grasland", *Financieele Dagblad*, my translation, accessed June 11, 2018
<https://fd.nl/beurs/1237566/de-kracht-van-de-regio-nederland-is-meer-dan-vier-grote-steden-en-wat-grasland>

⁹ "Tourism sees fastest growth in over ten years", published Apr 4, 2018, accessed Aug 13, 2018
<https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/14/tourism-sees-fastest-growth-in-over-ten-years>

¹⁰ "Strengthening the tourism industry", accessed May 3, 2018
<https://www.government.nl/topics/tourism-and-recreation/strengthening-the-tourism-industry>

step by step. I decided to proceed with this structure and divide the theoretical framework to better exploit the connection between tourism scholarly literature with contemporary branding strategies.

The first chapter will examine the process of identity selection on a national and municipal level. To do so, I will start with a reflection on the theory of tourist gaze developed by the British sociologist John Urry applied at city branding with the concept of image carriers by professor Gert-Jan Hospers. Then, by analyzing the official websites and policy papers for tourism designed by the institutions and agencies involved, I will classify identities for each city. At the end of this subsection, I will compare the main landmarks according to Tripadvisor, Lonely Planet and Capitool guidebooks to assess how they fit with the identities previously described. This final step will already put under the spotlight some of the communication challenges encountered.

The second chapter will concern the selected target audiences, both domestic and international, for the identities illustrated in the previous chapter. First, I will illustrate two canonical tourist profiles formulated by scholars, then, I will unveil how do cities see and classify their ideal tourist in relation to their selected identities. On one hand, I will present the persona created by NBTC, the national tourism marketing agency. On the other, I will compare the criteria The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam use to classify their ideal tourist profile (nationality, demographic, lifestyle).

The third chapter is based on communication strategies and will consist of a comparison of the online branding toolkits prepared by the cities here considered. Moreover, scholarly theories on images and power will be exposed to reinforce visual communication. Branding toolkits are websites that provide free materials (pictures, images, videos, text) that anyone can use, for example for advertisement and press promotion. Here, I will select 10 images for each toolkit of every city and with a reverse Google search I will discover where, how frequently and by whom are this images used. Remarks on the importance of offering a free a portfolio of different elements as an attempt to control and promote the cities identities will be illustrated. At the end, conclusions will be drawn.

1.Identity selection

Introduction

This chapter investigates the process of identity and image selection in place branding. This will be done first from a national perspective, and then from a municipal perspective focusing on The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam. To do so, we will try to answer the following questions: what does city branding have to do with the concept of identity? Who establishes the identity of a city? And what are the most common expedients to express it? Initially, a theoretical framework will be drawn based on the theory of tourist gaze by British sociologist John Urry and its adaptation to city branding strategies and image carriers presented by Gert-Jan Hospers in “City Branding and Tourist Gaze”, edited in “City Branding - Theory and Cases”. To proceed with our inquiry we will first have a look at the work of NBTC Holland Marketing, the agency responsible for branding and marketing the Netherlands nationally and internationally. In particular, the concept of storyline will be introduced. We will proceed by digging into the situation for each municipality based on the which image they have chosen based on their tourism policy and branding strategies. At the end, by comparing the sites mentioned on Tripadvisor, Lonely Planet and the Dutch version of a Capitool guidebook about the Netherlands, we will determine the landmarks of the three cities analyzed and establish how compelling they are with the identities previously selected, to evaluate what and who is left out of the tourism narrative.

Tourist gaze and image carriers

In the 1990s, the British sociologist John Urry - PhD in Sociology from Cambridge and professor at Lancaster University - theorized the groundbreaking concept of tourist gaze, which was mainly based on the visual nature of the tourist experience¹¹. His theory illustrated how people on holiday look around with a different eye, gazing at signs. These signs are linked to pre-constructed concepts that vary according to time and place. The tourist's curiosity towards the new environment is already anticipated and conditioned by his/her social class, gender, nationality, age and education¹². In addition, what makes us gaze is not only additionally conditioned by personal experiences and memories, but also by circulating images and texts of the places we find on several media. To use Urry's examples, seeing people kissing in Paris reinforces our idea that it is a romantic city, or looking at the Empire State Building reminds us of the American corporate power¹³.

¹¹ John Urry, "The Tourist Gaze "revisited".", *American Behavioral Scientist* 36, no. 2 (1992): 172, accessed May 1, 2018

<http://journals.sagepub.com.ru.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0002764292036002005>

¹² John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. 3rd Ed. ed. Theory, Culture & Society. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), 2

¹³ John Urry, "The Tourist Gaze "revisited".", 172

For my research, I decided to consider in particular the third and most recent edition of Urry's work, in collaboration with Jonas Larsen a senior lecturer in Geography at Roskilde University specialized in mobility, tourism and media. My choice lays on the fact that a lot has changed in the last decades, in relation both to tourism and to communication. The growing number of low-cost travel companies has contributed to the increase of trips, and therefore also intensified the competition among destinations. On the other hand, internet and the advent of related technologies tied tourism to digitalized images conveyed through new media that were not available in the 90s. In particular, we are now highly influenced by social media and we have rapid access to websites of information and recommendation sharing, such as Tripadvisor, tied into the construction of our future trips.

Urry's theory suggests that people mainly visit a city to gaze at signs, and both the tourist and the attraction are manipulated, because their images and associations transmitted by traditional media - newspaper, magazines, travel brochures, guidebooks, and new media - blogs, social media, photo sharing websites. This is an important concept for city branders because they can select identities and reinforce them with images of their choice, in order to influence the perception of the public of a determined place, and subsequently attract more visitors. As noticed by professor Gert-Jan Hospers, professor of economic geography at the University of Twente and Radboud University, the rise of mass tourism and the development of photography are intrinsically tied up together. The more photos tourists taken of a place, the more the place was visited and, as a consequence, the more the tourism industry started staging authenticity to meet the most the taste of the public.

Hospers's article revolves around the use of image carriers - the signs that make a city recognisable and push tourists to go and visit- and their application to city branding. The scholar identifies, based on further literature, three main image carriers for tourists:

- built environment, with physical elements such as streets, neighbourhoods, and landmarks;
- hallmark events, useful because the city can identify with the activities organized during the event and show hosting capacity (such as the film festival in Cannes);
- personalities, such as painters, musicians, writers (like the Beatles and Liverpool).

Other carriers may of importance throughout time or in history (Berlin = Cold War) or benefit from city-of-origin effect (Parma = Parma ham). The process of selecting the images that represent a place is delicate because there is the risk of producing of an overload of images (such as London) or of communicating a confused city image (like in Brussels).

They say a picture is worth a thousands words and some branding scholars agree. Among the most common expedients used in city branding, pictures are on top of the list, because they communicate the right message in the right way¹⁴. The visual impact of a city is something that tourism experts have to keep in mind. What makes the city identifiable? What can be done to improve the reputation of a city? For this reason, as we will better see in chapter 3, a growing number of cities are setting up free online database with material (photos, videos, texts) that can be downloaded by anyone, in the attempt of establishing the identity of a city by

¹⁴ Moilanen, Teemu, and Seppo K Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding* (Basingstoke England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1

controlling the images circulating online. On the other hand, messages and slogans are now considered generally risky¹⁵ - outdated, generic, old fashioned -, and while appearing on internal documents, they are usually not shared with the audience. Later on, we will see specific cases in the Netherlands.

Selecting identities

The Netherlands

On a national level¹⁶, the Dutch tourism strategy has three goals: attracting a higher number of tourists, reducing business regulations for entrepreneurs, and promoting sustainability. The overall ambition is to become in 2025 the destination offering the largest variety of experiences in the world per square kilometer. To reach this goal, the government created an agenda¹⁷ with 11 key projects. For my thesis, I will mainly focus on the attraction of tourist flows, therefore the marketing strategy.

To boost the number of visitors, since 1968 the tourism strategy in The Netherlands is managed by NBTC, Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, which is part of NBTC Holland Marketing. NBTC Holland Marketing, headquartered in The Hague, is responsible for the branding and marketing of the destination Holland, nationally and internationally¹⁸. This independent foundation is divided in a management team - responsible for tourism policies - and a supervisory board with five members, mainly in charge of the supervision of the tasks executed by the organisation¹⁹. Despite its key role in outlining the tourism strategy, it is also worth noticing that the policy itself is still the responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy.

Jos Vranken, general manager of NBTC, declared that "the growth of tourism is valuable for our country, but also requires a strengthened and accelerated effort to spread visitors". To reduce the tourist pressure, Amsterdam already took some measures such as increasing the city tax²⁰, and limiting tourism rentals to 30 days²¹, but to encourage long-term change NBTC

¹⁵ Moilanen, Teemu, and Seppo K Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding*, 75

¹⁶ "Strengthening the tourism industry", accessed May 3, 2018

<https://www.government.nl/topics/tourism-and-recreation/strengthening-the-tourism-industry>

¹⁷ "Eindrapportage - Actieagenda & Sleutelprojecten: vinden, verrassend en verbinden", my translation, accessed May 13, 2018

http://www.gastvrij-nederland.nl/EindrapportProjectteamFase2A_TopteamDEF.pdf

¹⁸ NBTC official LinkedIn Page, accessed Apr 27, 2018

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/netherlands-board-of-tourism-&-conventions/>

¹⁹ "Organization", accessed Apr 27, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/about-nbtc/organisation-1.htm>

²⁰ "Tourist tax (Toeristenbelasting)", accessed May 4, 2018

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/taxes/tourist-tax/>

²¹ "Amsterdam will reduce holiday rentals limit to 30 days", accessed May 4, 2018

has developed a national approach that involves several municipalities, storytelling and a series of events throughout the year: the HollandCity strategy.



Figure 1. Map of the HollandCity project with the current district (2018)²².

This policy²³, whose motto is “supporting the known, introducing the new”, consists of three parts: districts²⁴, storylines²⁵ and event strategies. This has been done in order to spread visitors in time and space in the long term.

The districts section is a concept used to promote the Netherlands as one large metropolis, on one hand to strengthen the fact that visitors can easily travel in different parts of the country due to short distances. On the other hand, it is used as an expedient to suggest that the country is multi-coloured and there is something that can appeal to everyone. Examples of Dutch districts are the Design District Eindhoven, the Architecture/Port District Rotterdam and the Lake District Friesland. On their website, NBTC stresses that this is done especially for intercontinental tourists that are more familiar with long distances and do not often realise how easy it is to move from one Dutch city to another.

In addition to the metropolis concept, several storylines have been created to suggest routes according to the visitors' main interests. At the moment there are 9 storylines, the first - Vincent van Gogh - was developed in 2015 and the last one - flowers - will be introduced this year. The other themes are: The Netherlands Waterland, Mondrian to Dutch Design, The Hansa towns, Dutch Cuisine, Castles & Country houses, The Golden Age, and the Liberation Route. They have been created by NBTC in collaboration with representatives from all of the Dutch

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/news/holiday-rentals/>

²² "HollandCity", accessed Apr 5, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/homepage/holland-marketing/hollandcity.htm>

²³ "HollandCity", accessed Apr 5, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/homepage/holland-marketing/hollandcity.htm>

²⁴ "Districts", accessed Apr 5, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/homepage/holland-marketing/hollandcity/districts.htm>

²⁵ "Storylines" accessed Apr 5, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/homepage/holland-marketing/hollandcity/storylines.htm>

provinces. As we will better see in the third chapter, various municipalities are negotiating with NBTC the development of alternative storylines, such as a royal one between The Hague and Delft²⁶.

In addition to this, the NBTC branding portal²⁷ presents a series of key elements that characterized the Netherlands:

- open-minded people
- welcoming
- inventive
- enterprising
- colourful

In a nutshell, here the Dutch are praised as tolerant, accepting people who are not afraid of facing challenges in ingenious ways. The fact that in the branding toolkit the locals are exalted as essential element for the promotion of the destination is important. As studies pointed out²⁸, having the support of the citizens is a fundamental element that guarantees the success of a tourism promotion campaign.

The Hague²⁹

The current tourism strategy of The Hague was introduced in the Kanskaart Toerisme (Opportunity Map Tourism)³⁰ for the medium term (2013-2020) as a product of collaboration among various tourist institutions. Its aim is to strengthen The Hague as a tourist destination with the aim of economic growth. The plan is disclosed through the metaphor of cards, to symbolize the fact that The Hague has good cards in house: city trips and coastal tourism, both growing.

Here, the municipality works side by side with The Hague Marketing Bureau³¹, which is the marketing and promotion organization for The Hague and its two beach resorts - Scheveningen and Kijkduin. Their work focuses on the promotion of The Hague on a national and international level as a destination for both business visitors and tourists. This agency is also responsible for the implementation of the city's marketing strategy focusing on visitors.

²⁶ "RIS297369 Voortgang toerisme Den Haag", my translation, accessed June 11, 2018
<https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/5500142/2/RIS297369%20Voortgang%20toerisme%20Den%20Haag>

²⁷ "Holland Brand Story", accessed July 30, 2018
<https://www.holland.com/global/brandtoolkit/holland-brand.htm>

²⁸ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 47

²⁹ "Den Haag Raadsinformatie", Nov 22, 2017, my translation, accessed Apr 6, 2018
<https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/5927195/2/RIS298466%20Voortgangsbericht%20toerisme%202017>

³⁰ "Kanskaart Toerisme", my translation, 2013, accessed Apr 6, 2018
<https://www.denhaag.nl/nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/beleid-en-regelgeving/kanskaart-toerisme.htm>

³¹ "Contact", accessed Jun 2, 2018
<https://denhaag.com/en/contact>

In the past years the city of The Hague has invested in tourism to increase both the number of visitors and spending, and the employment. The Hague has a strategic asset to attract visitors, because it is by the sea, with 11 kilometers of beach, but also has an historic city center with shopping streets and a rich cultural offer. Indeed, Scheveningen has been the first and largest seaside resort in the Netherlands since 1818. This city - the second most visited after Amsterdam - is increasingly ahead of the national trend: the number of overnight stays of domestic and foreign guests has grown faster here than in the rest of the country over the period 2012-2016³². (do you need a source here)

The Hague identifies itself with three images: international city of peace and justice, city by the sea, and royal character. The peace and justice identity is due to the presence of international institutions like the International Criminal Court and the NGOs, the Peace Palace and several events such as the Nuclear Security Summit in 2014. Despite being the first mentioned, this impression is the weakest among tourists and, as a consequence, the one that needs the higher investments. The second one is linked to beach and boulevard of Scheveningen. The third and strongest characteristic is being the traditional royal city of The Netherlands.

At the end of the policy paper, ten “cards” - the pillars to boost the tourism industry in The Hague - are put on the table:

1. Peace and justice for the tourist, such as the expansion of the opening hours of the Peace Palace, or a peace festival;
2. A strong seaside resort, by expanding the Scheveningen boulevard, promoting beach sports and beachlife;
3. Royal The Hague, with for example the creation of an exhibition on royal transport, or by further extending Prinsjesdag as an event;
4. Blockbusters - event such as museum opening that can potentially attract a high amount of tourists (i.e. the opening of the Mauritshuis in 2014³³)
5. A stronger offer, improving elements like Mauritshuis, Gemeentemuseum, Panorama Mesdag and the Escher Museum;
6. Quality of public space, focusing on the city entrances (access roads, stations) as a warm and informational welcome for visitors;
7. Joint marketing, with the distribution of the same marketing kit, a stronger communication and relationship with tour operators;
8. Online presentation, by the launch new tourist website with apps (2014), and touch screens that give on-site information;
9. Communicate experiences, by transforming guests in ambassadors of the city;

³² “Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016”, Gemeente Den Haag, Sept 2017, 16. My translation. Accessed Apr 12, 2018. https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/5927648/1/RIS298466_Bijlage_I_Monitor_Toerisme_2012-2016

³³ “Opening Mauritshuis 27 juni 2014”, Dec 13, 2013, accessed June 12, 2018 <https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/discover/news-archive/2013/opening-mauritshuis-27-june-2014/>

10. Better travel options, especially improving the accessibility to the city for internationals.



At the moment, The Hague is present in two NBTC storylines: “Mondrian to Dutch design” and “Golden Age Trial”. The Hague hosts the world's largest collection of Mondriaan paintings³⁴, which explains the first storyline. For the second one the reason is more historical, because during the Golden Age, it was the political and diplomatic center being the seat of the House of Orange, Stadtholders in the Dutch Republic³⁵. On the other hand, the set of images than The Hague is currently promoting are: city by the sea, city of peace and justice, and royal city.

To bridge the gap, The Hague is currently working together with Delft to develop a new storyline on the royal theme³⁶, which would be exploited in regular advertisement as well as with a storyline in collaboration with NBTC. The goal of the collaboration is to attract more tourists, to extend the average length of stay and, last but not least, to encourage a combination visit between the two cities. The royal theme can be exploited in combination with Delft because, among other reasons, it is the house of the Koninklijke Porcelain Fles³⁷, the only remaining factory, established in 1653, of the world-famous blue pottery. The willingness to strengthen the

³⁴ “Mondrian to Dutch Design”, accessed June 12, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/article/mondrian-to-dutch-design-2.htm>

³⁵ “Golden Age The Hague: art & power”, accessed June 12, 2018

<https://www.holland.com/global/tourism/holland-stories/golden-age/golden-age-the-hague-art-power.htm>

³⁶ RIS297369 Voortgang toerisme Den Haag, my translation, accessed June 12, 2018

<https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/5500142/2/RIS297369%20Voortgang%20toerisme%20Den%20Haag>

³⁷ “Royal Delft - History of Blue Delftware”, accessed June 12, 2018

https://www.royaldelft.com/en_gb/our-blue/royal-delft/item6274

bond between The Hague and Delft is a recurring subject, and appeared to be considered more relevant than with Amsterdam. However, in the media the latest is the most frequent association, being The Hague even advertised on the official Amsterdam websites as perfect example of day trip, with the description of “royal city by the sea” - a combination of two of the aforementioned images³⁸.

The Hague has several tourist areas - The Center, Scheveningen, the International Zone and Kijkduin are the most important tourist attractions. The Hague is actively working to strengthen these areas by clustering facilities that reinforce each other. There is also room for large-scale facilities on the outskirts of the city. However, initiatives such as Airbnb are already presented as ambiguous, because on one hand they may help the tourists experience to feel more authentic and in contact with locals, but on the other it may create excessive mass tourists³⁹.

Utrecht

In Utrecht, the Utrecht Marketing organization was established on 1 January 2017. This association was borne after the merge of Tourism Utrecht - focused on visitors - with Stichting Cultuurpromotie - focused on locals. All these associations united are cooperative partners of the tourist and business tourism branch, and the executive partner of the municipality of Utrecht.

For the tourism strategies adopted by the city of Utrecht I investigated two sets of documents: the “Perspectief Toerisme 2020 - Live like a local (2015)” by the municipality and the “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020” by Utrecht Marketing. Here it is presented that the interesting part of Utrecht as a destination is its variety, because it includes also Leidsche Rijn (Hoge Woerd and Kasteel De Haar) and regional municipalities such as Bunnik (National Water Control Center) and Soest (Soesterberg Air Base and National Military Museum).

The Meerjarenplan is a most recent document, created after the merge of Stichting Toerisme (focused on tourists) with Stichting Cultuurpromotie (focused on locals) in Utrecht Marketing (Jan 2017)⁴⁰. This organization operates in the fields of leisure (?) tourism and business tourism branch, and city branding⁴¹. The Meerjarenplan presents the identity of the city as “connecting creator” based on the Jungian archetypes, and four brand values that represent both the soul of the city and the criteria for its marketing strategies: bright, inspiring, welcoming and connecting⁴².

The general goal of the city of Utrecht for tourism is investing in leisure market, where central motifs for travel business related, such as congresses (especially scientific), meetings,

³⁸ “Visit The Hague”, accessed June 12, 2018

<https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/plan-your-trip/day-trips/netherlands/the-hague>

³⁹ “Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016”, 8

⁴⁰ “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020”, 22

⁴¹ “About us”, accessed Apr 12, 2018

<https://www.utrechtconventionbureau.nl/en/contact>

⁴² “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020”, 8

training courses and fairs. Indeed, Utrecht claims to be the most attractive city in the Netherlands for business meetings. Moreover, Utrecht wants to take advantage of surplus city trip and foreign day visits from Amsterdam. It is relevant to notice that in the Perspective of Tourism 2020⁴³ it is clearly stated the will to increase popularity abroad for the business and leisure market, but without becoming the new Amsterdam or competing with other highly overcrowded destinations such as Venice and Barcelona. In particular, it is stated that Utrecht differs from Amsterdam and other Dutch cities because of its personal and human scale⁴⁴.

Utrecht Marketing bases its strategy on four goals⁴⁵. The first one is stimulating the knowledge of conferences, i.e. improve the image of Utrecht as business destination with more conference visits and spending. Business visitors spend generally more money than the regular ones. The second topic is tourist use of heritage, since Utrecht has both Roman and (early) medieval elements, a Unesco World Heritage site, and has a section included in the national project of "Frontiers of the Roman Empire - The Lower German Lines". The symbol of Utrecht is its Dom Tower, but the city is also part of the Trajectum Lumen, the light art route along 14 locations in the historic city centre. In addition, DOMunder and Museum Oud Amelisweerd were opened in 2014 and the reconstructed Castellum Hoge Woerd in Leidsche Rijn opens its doors in mid-2015 and shows, among other things, a thirty-meter-long Roman ship. The third theme is about events, since the city hosts successful events cultural/niche events, such as the Holland Animation Film Festival, Le Guess Who and Summer Darkness. Large-scale events are also organized such as the Dutch Film Festival and the Cultural Sundays. In addition, there are three trade fairs, which are organized by the Jaarbeurs and attract many visitors: the Motor Trade Fair, the 50PlusBeurs and the Vakantiebeurs. Moreover, Utrecht organises themed years, i.e. 2017 was the 100 years anniversary of De Stijl - 100 • years of Dutch Design. The fourth theme consists in the transformation of Utrecht into a bicycle city. Big investments in the cycling infrastructure for years have guaranteed the construction and improvement of cycle paths and bicycle sheds in the station area and center with a high social return. It is no coincidence that now the city is home of the world's biggest bike parking garage⁴⁶.

In the attempt to attract visitors, residents, talent and companies, Utrecht Marketing has created a brand passport to better visualize the Utrecht city brand. The basic concept is that Utrecht is a connecting-creator, which means it connects people, ideas, projects and ambitions

⁴³ "Live like a local - Perspectief toerisme 2020", 15

⁴⁴ "Live like a local - Perspectief toerisme 2020", 17

⁴⁵ "Live like a local - Perspectief toerisme 2020", 18-21

⁴⁶ Daniel Boffey, "World's biggest bike parking garage opens in Utrecht – but Dutch dream of more", Aug 7, 2017. Accessed Apr 17, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/07/worlds-biggest-bike-parking-garage-utrecht-netherlands>

with each other⁴⁷. This identity is associated with 4 key words: bright, inspiring, welcoming and connecting. Each word is therefore linked to further umbrella associations as follows⁴⁸:

- Bright: clever, smart, innovative, sparkling, talent
- Inspiring: vital, young, creative, inspiration
- Welcoming: intimate, committed, friendly, hospitable
- Connecting: connect, central, meet, heart

With these terms, Utrecht wants to present itself as an inspiring place where people can be involved in innovative projects. The brand passport openly mentions that this is due to a combination of factors, such as the highly educated people, - Utrecht has one of the best universities in Europe - offers a high quality of life, is geographically appealing (historic city center, modern suburbs, metropolitan facilities, green areas). All of this, while still remaining perceived on a human scale, while economically strong.

Rotterdam

Analyzing the tourism strategy of Rotterdam is not an easy task due to the fact that the last tourism policy document was created in the year in 2007 and is unfortunately too outdated to be compared with the ones from The Hague and Utrecht. The municipality here has to deal with three organizations: Rotterdam Partners, Rotterdam Port Authority and Erasmus University Rotterdam. At the end of 2014, these four parties joined hands to attract locals, companies, students and visitors both in the Netherlands and abroad, launching a joint profile and the pay-off “Make it Happen”.

Responsible for branding and promotion of Rotterdam is the association Rotterdam Partner, that serves all target groups involved in the urban economy and city marketing, i.e. companies, (business) visitors and residents. In particular, this agency is internally divided into Convention Bureau, Tourism Board and International Trade & Investment. Not only does Rotterdam Partners work closely with the Rotterdam Convention & Tourism Partners, other networks also contribute to the result: Rotterdam Knowledge Partners. The Rotterdam Knowledge Partners are scientists, researchers and representatives from various (scientific) disciplines. The document analyzed is the “Partnerplan 2017 Convention Bureau & Tourism Board⁴⁹”, which offers a broad overview of leisure, hospitality, congress and marketing communication of the city. It also contains a brief list of the costs and advantages of being part of the association.

In the visitor market, Rotterdam Partners engages in content management, the development and realization of communication tools and campaigns aimed at (potential) visitors, purchasers of the tourism product, buyers of business events and other relations.

⁴⁷ Merkpaspoort Utrecht, Utrecht Marketing, 13

This document has been given to me by Max Trienekens, branding manager of Utrecht Marketing

⁴⁸ Merkpaspoort Utrecht, Utrecht Marketing, 14-15

⁴⁹ “PartnerPlan 2017 - Convention Bureau & Tourism Board“, Sep 13, 2016. My translation, accessed Apr 10, 2018

https://issuu.com/rotterdampartners/docs/ropa_partnerplan_2017_def

Examples include: www.rotterdam.info, www.rotterdampartners.nl, Rotterdam Tourist app for iOS and Android devices, Summer in Rotterdam campaign, Art & Culture in Rotterdam campaign, content in the Holland Herald and Erleb Holland, digital newsletters, Rotterdam City Map, Rotterdam Welcome Card and Rondje Rotterdam. The generation of positive free publicity plays an important role in strengthening the image of Rotterdam. Together with parties such as the Dutch Railways, RET and City Management, Rotterdam Partners works to improve the service provided by these services, with the aim of increasing the hospitable attitude towards visitors and residents. Distribution of leaflet material (local, national and international) and the supply of customized information packages to companies in the form of Rotterdam Welcome Kits are also part of the hospitality activities.

At the end of 2014, Rotterdam Partner joined forces with Rotterdam Port Authority (PoR), Erasmus University Rotterdam, Municipality Rotterdam to create a coherent promotion strategy called “Make it happen”. This campaign reflects on the city’s mentality: pioneering, pushing boundaries and practicing a no-nonsense approach⁵⁰. Pauline van der Meer Mohr, president of the Executive Board of Erasmus University, described this motto as a promise and an inviting invitation: it is possible here so come do it. The campaign also described Rotterdam’s DNA as internationally oriented, entrepreneurial and raw. There are also three central themes: connector, society and discover. We will look at the communication aspect of this campaign more in depth in chapter three.

The “Make it Happen” alliance has a dedicated website (https://www.rotterdammakeithappen.nl/home_en.pp) where philosophy, inspiration and the branding toolkit are presented. Interestingly, here Rotterdam is presented with pride as the least ‘Dutchified’ city in the Netherlands, to underline its uniqueness. The philosophy behind the slogan, however, is based on three key words, a strategy similar to the one adopted by Utrecht: connector (also used by Utrecht), society, and discover. The overall vibe sees the inhabitants as explorers, and the city has possessing an ever-changing soul. The city represents an innovation lab where entrepreneurs with ambition and ideas can make their dreams come true. The inspiration section is a collection of successful entrepreneurship examples in order to coherently strengthen the concreteness of the pragmatic role Rotterdam represents. The branding toolkit consists of downloadable free photos, texts, video, facts & figures about Rotterdam, promoting Rotterdam that can be used both for editorial and - interestingly - advertising purposes, which helps monopolize the city’s public image.

Rotterdams tourism strategy sees communication as crucial, leaving us with an outdated policy, but constant and prominent presence with precise images on different media. For example, in a youtube video⁵¹ realized by RotterdamPartner, the city is personified as a female

⁵⁰ “Make it Happen- Rotterdam mentality ties city, port and university”, Dec 15, 2017, accessed Jun 2, 2018

<https://en.rotterdampartners.nl/news/make-it-happen-rotterdam-mentality-ties-city-port-and-university/>

⁵¹ “Her Name is...Rotterdam”, produced by Rotterdam Partners, published on Apr 28, 2017. Video on Youtube, 1.02, accessed June 11, 2018

entity by the use of pronouns such as “she” and “her”, and states that “she is no illusion created by the camera”, with many personalities and a face that changes every minute, both connected and divided by the water. The city is not presented as ideal or perfect - she’s no picture perfect - and this is her strongest point, she is loved by the people because of her realness and sincerity.

It appears that focusing more on a marketing and communication campaign with an out-and-out policy has been extremely rewarding for Rotterdam, which in 2017 had a record year for overnight stays (more than 1.8 million). Despite depicting itself as a working city, numbers suggest that its image as cultural destination has also increased, since museums had a visitor numbers rise by 12% compared to the previous year⁵².

Communication challenges

Selecting the identity we want to be associated with is the first step, but effectively communicating it is the next one. A keyword here is coherency. To be effective a communication strategy should be desirable and have a specific target group in mind. While chapter two is the dedicated part to understanding the target audience, this chapter rotates around the images for planned messages, i.e. the images generally used in advertising, brochures and press releases.

For this part, I decided to compare the must see sites as indicated by three sources: Tripadvisor, Lonely Planet and traditional print guide books. The reason behind it is to establish a fair selection using a combination of media - online and offline - that can reach different ages (Lonely Planet is usually consulted by a young audience, Tripadvisor by a mixed one and the traditional printed guide books are generally used by an older audience). Moreover, I decided to use a Dutch guidebook - Capitoool Reisgids - because my work is not only related to international visitors, but also to domestic tourists. Please notice that the descriptions of type of attractions are given by each source.

Tripadvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) is a website founded in 2000 that provides travel information. It is not a travel agency, but works as partner of airlines, travel providers, and booking agents to list their services and the related - supposedly unbiased - reviews that every user can leave⁵³. Due to the large mole of contents, the site claims to be the “world’s largest selection of travel listings worldwide”. It is indeed currently considered one of the world’s most popular websites for travel destinations⁵⁴, and not only contains information and opinions in

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=57&v=r9kRAIPnBbo

⁵² “Toerisme in Rotterdam blijft stijgen”, my translation, accessed June 11, 2018

<https://rotterdampartners.nl/pers/persberichten/toerisme-in-rotterdam-blijft-stijgen/>

⁵³ Rob Law, “Internet and Tourism-Part Xxiii.” *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 22, no. 1 (2007), 95

https://www.tandfonline-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1300/J073v22n01_07

⁵⁴ “comScore Ranks the Top 50 U.S. Digital Media Properties for June 2017”, Jul 21, 2017, accessed Jul 3, 2018

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/comscore-ranks-the-top-50-us-digital-media-properties-for-june-2017-300491305.html>

regards to single services (accommodations, restaurants, etc), but also on the destinations themselves. The declared mission of Tripadvisor is “to unleash the full potential of every trip” and this explains the wide variety behind their listings.

Lonely Planet⁵⁵ is an American brand of guidebooks brand founded in the 1970s that traditionally targets backpackers and other low-cost travellers⁵⁶. The company nowadays provides content both printed and digital to inform and inspire. The content is usually written not by locals, but by experts who visited a certain destination. The online version hosts several services, among which emerges the Thorn Tree Forum⁵⁷, a forum established in 1996 to exchange tips and pieces of advice in a community of independent travellers.

The Capitool Travel Guide⁵⁸ is a Dutch brand existing for over 20 years and is characterized by strong visual elements - a combination of photographs and detailed illustrations. For this research, I used the 2000 edition, written by Gerard M.I. Hermans in my possession. Despite being an older version, I still considered it a valid point of discussion both because it is dedicated to domestic tourists - a guide in Dutch about The Netherlands - and because people do not usually buy more editions of the same guide book, therefore the printed tool will always be more updated? if compared to online versions that can be modified effortlessly at any time.

Tripadvisor

⁵⁵ "About", accessed Jul 3, 2018

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/about>

⁵⁶ Nic Fildes, "BBC gives Lonely Planet guides a home in first major acquisition". The Independent, October, 2, 2007 Accessed Jul 3, 2018

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/bbc-gives-lonely-planet-guides-a-home-in-first-major-acquisition-395739.html>

⁵⁷ Accessed Jul 3, 2018

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/welcome>

⁵⁸ "Over ons", accessed Jul 3, 2018. My translation

<http://www.capitool.nl/pagina/over-capitool>

The Hague ⁵⁹	Utrecht ⁶⁰	Rotterdam ⁶¹
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Mauritshuis Royal Picture Gallery 2. Louwman Museum The Hague 3. Panorama Mesdag 4. Escher in Het Paleis (Escher in the Palace) 5. Gemeentemuseum Den Haag 6. Landgoed Clingendael 7. Japanese Garden 8. Binnenhof & Ridderzaal (Inner Court & Hall of the Knights) 9. Haagse Bos 10. Peace Palace 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canals area (Historic Walking Areas) 2. Rietveld Schroder House (Architectural Buildings) 3. Botanic Gardens (Gardens) 4. Dom Tower (Historic Sites) 5. Bloemenmarkt, Janskerkhof, Utrecht (Gardens) 6. Museum Speelklok (Specialty Museums) 7. Railway Museum (Het Spoorwegmuseum) (Specialty Museums) 8. Wilhelminapark (parks) 9. DOMunder (Specialty Museums) 10. Museum Catharijneconvent (History Museums) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Huis Sonneveld (Historic Sites) 2. Stadion Feijenoord (De Kuip) (Arenas & Stadiums) 3. Rotterdam Centraal Station (Points of Interest & Landmarks) 4. Erasmus Bridge (Bridges , Architectural Buildings) 5. Wilhelminapier (Piers & Boardwalks) 6. Miniworld Rotterdam (Educational sites) 7. Destroyed City (Monuments & Statues) 8. Kop van Zuid (Neighborhoods) 9. Witte de Withstraat (Points of Interest & Landmarks) 10. Euromast Tower (Architectural Buildings)

Lonely Planet

The Hague ⁶²	Utrecht ⁶³	Rotterdam ⁶⁴
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⁵⁹ "Things to Do in The Hague", Tripadvisor, accessed Jul 3, 2018
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g188633-Activities-The_Hague_South_Holland_Province.html#ATTRACTION_SORT_WRAPPER

⁶⁰ "Things to Do in Utrecht", Tripadvisor, accessed Jul 8, 2018
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g188616-Activities-Utrecht.html#ATTRACTION_SORT_WRAPPER

⁶¹ "Things to Do in Rotterdam", Tripadvisor, accessed Jul 8, 2018
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g188632-Activities-Rotterdam_South_Holland_Province.html

⁶² "Attractions", Lonely Planet, accessed Jul 9, 2018
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/the-netherlands/the-hague/attractions/a/poi-sig/360849>

⁶³ "Attractions", Lonely Planet, accessed Jul 9, 2018
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/the-netherlands/utrecht/attractions/a/poi-sig/360853>

⁶⁴ "Attractions", Lonely Planet, accessed Jul 9, 2018
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/the-netherlands/rotterdam/attractions/a/poi-sig/360852>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mauritshuis (museum) 2. Binnenhof (palace) 3. Escher in Het Paleis (museum) 4. Gemeentemuseum (museum) 5. Vredespaleis (Peace Palace) 6. Haagse Toren (view point) 7. Panorama Mesdag (gallery) 8. Madurodam (amusement park) 9. Grote Kerk (church) 10. Museum de Gevangenpoort (museum) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domtoren (historic building) 2. Museum Catharijneconvent (museum) 3. Centraal Museum (museum) 4. Domkerk (cathedral) 5. Sonnenborgh Museum and Observatory (museum) 6. Rietveld-Schröderhuis (historic building) 7. DOMunder (archeological site) 8. Universiteitsmuseum (museum) 9. Nederlands Spoorwegmuseum (museum) 10. Miffy Museum (museum) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (museum) 2. Uit Je Eigen Stad (farm) 3. Kralingse Bos and Plas (park) 4. De Kuip (stadium) 5. Toko 51 (cultural center) 6. Showroom Mama (arts center) 7. Het Nieuwe Instituut (museum) 8. Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art (museum) 9. Overblaak Development (notable building) 10. Huis Sonneveld (architecture)
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Capitool Travel Guide

The Hague	Utrecht	Rotterdam
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Binnenhof 2. Mauritshuis 3. Gevangenpoort 4. Museum Bredius 5. Paleis Noordeinde 6. Vredespaleis 7. Passage 8. Panorama Mesdag 9. Gemeentemuseum 10. Omniversum 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Catherijneconvent 2. Oudegracht 3. Sonnenborgh 4. Het Centraal Museum 5. Armenhuisjes 6. Nederlands Spoorwegmuseum 7. Domtoren 8. Nationaal Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement 9. Universiteitsmuseum 10. Markten 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. De Verwoeste Stad van Zadkine 2. Schielandshuis 3. Paalwoningen 4. Willemswerf 5. Witte huis 6. Kubus paalwoningen 7. Het potlood 8. Station Blaak 9. Erasmusbrug 10. Blijdorp

While the first two websites present lists with numerous sites, the Capitool Travel Guide shows 3 must see attractions, with a dedicated page and illustration, followed by seven minor spots.

From a first look, we can immediately tell that the landmarks never fully coincide, some appear frequently - like the Domtoren of Utrecht, while other are mentioned only once, such as the Omniversum in The Hague. Interestingly, we can observe that some identities are easier to convey than the other - such as the royal identity in The Hague which is easily represented due to the rich history of the city. This brings us to a state of reasonable doubt: can we really influence the tourist preconcept of a city by choosing completely new identities?

Probably, for an identity to work we will need to have cultural and historical references that we can reasonably stretch. Another example is the fact that Utrecht wants to emerge as a modern metropoli away from the stereotype of Dutch destinations with canals and typical architecture. However, from the landmarks selected it is clear that the Utrecht in front of our eyes has nothing to do with the idea of a busy and contemporary city - that we can much more easily relate to Rotterdam - but instead recalls the cliché Dutch image.

Another interesting element emerges in relation to The Hague. Looking at the recommended monuments, we can see that the majority of elements are linked to the identity of city of peace and justice, and to the royal one. However, we cannot say the same for city by the sea. A possible explanation is the fact that Scheveningen often appears as a separate destination on its own⁶⁵. Further studies which take these variables into account will need to be undertaken.

I would like to conclude this section with a remark on the city of Rotterdam. Uniquely, the destruction of the city during WWII allowed for the contemporary and groundbreaking aesthetic that followed with its reconstruction, perfectly illustrating the concepts of pragmatism, hard work and innovation that gather under the “make it happen” slogan. It should therefore come as no surprise that many unconventional buildings such as the cube houses (Kubus paalwoningen) are a predominant presence in the list of must see sites.

In chapter three, we will continue the investigation between the identity selected and confirmation - but also validation - of its presence in reality by comparing the images presented in the branding toolkit and their acknowledgement by the media. Clearly, wanting people to connect a city with specific images is no easy task, especially because it requires a reshaping of space and cutting out other pre-existing icons. Moving on, we will now look at who do we want to attract, and why.

⁶⁵ "Scheveningen, The Netherlands", Tripadvisor, accessed Jul 3, 2018
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g668848-Scheveningen_The_Hague_South_Holland_Province-Vacations.html

2. Target identification

Introduction

In chapter one we became familiar with the concept of images for branding and we are now able to recognize the identities of The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam. In this chapter we will now focus on the desired audience that those identities are meant to reach. Indeed, the success of a brand depends on a well-established identity of the product and on target audience identification⁶⁶. Moreover, we will investigate if the target audience for tourism is a process that precedes or follows the image selection. It is important to keep in mind that a target audience in relation to city branding may be an extremely broad topic since it can be considered in relation to residents, investors, stakeholders and tourists⁶⁷. For this reason, some people even look at the idea of branding a target group for a city with skepticism because of its multidimensional potentials⁶⁸.

In this work, we will exclusively concentrate on how electing a target may be beneficial to tourism branding campaigns. Then, we will generally reflect on the criteria we may use to classify tourists (age, gender, nationality and lifestyle). To facilitate this concept, two examples of classifications elaborated by scholars Erik Cohen and Eugenia Wickens will be given as a recognized example of possible categorization. As noticed by Keith Dinnie, often the brand of a city is bonded with the one of the nation it belongs to⁶⁹. Accordingly, I will first present the broad target segmentation created on a national level, to then shift on what has been done on a municipal one.

Interestingly, the NBTC developed five fictitious personas with a passport to make explicit their vision on tourists. However, this macro division is often criticized as too restricting, for example by the municipality of Rotterdam that decided to develop its own classification (frontrunner). At the end of the chapter, descriptions of target audiences for each city based on the official policy papers will be displayed. What is the main criteria used? How does the target audience fit with the identity of the city? Is the target audience selected based on identities or it could be that the identities are actually selected based on the visitors a city wants to attract?

⁶⁶ Moilanen Teemu and Seppo K Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding*, 13

⁶⁷ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 15

⁶⁸ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 17

⁶⁹ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 5

Tourist profile(s)

There have been many studies⁷⁰ investigating tourist behaviour in the attempt to better understand how to classify and attract visitors. The identification of tourist targets has several advantages, such as helping manage expectations, understanding in which facilities to invest in order to create a more coherent and comprehensive experience, and planning promotion strategies.

Research on different types of tourists in a given destination are generally conducted by social and tourism marketing studies and are based on the analysis of data collected from tourists⁷¹. The understanding of behavioural patterns - such as identifying tourist typologies - which deepens the understanding of consumer behaviours and is applicable also in fields different from tourism, for example marketing. Knowing who we want to reach with our strategies enables us to adapt and adjust, when needed, resulting in staying more competitive on the market⁷².

For example, in 2005 the city of Toronto developed a new tourism campaign with the slogan "Toronto Unlimited". This campaign was widely considered too generic and, as a result, not only failed to connect even with the locals, but got publicly criticized and ridiculed⁷³ to the point that even on the official website it is mentioned that it was replaced by a more specific action⁷⁴. Some have described the Toronto Unlimited tourism strategy as "a bad logo coupled to a meaningless phrase"⁷⁵, "cringe-inducing look"⁷⁶, and generally criticised it for its lack of coordinated message and target.

⁷⁰ Robert Inbakaran, and Mervyn Jackson. "Marketing Regional Tourism: How Better to Target and Address Community Attitudes to Tourism." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 11, no. 4 (2005): 323

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356766705056629?journalCode=jvma>

⁷¹ Adam Weaver, "Target Markets As Working Archetypes: Classifying Consumers at Tourism New Zealand." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 21, no. 2 (2015):164

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356766715571391?journalCode=jvma>

⁷² Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 4

⁷³ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 24

⁷⁴ "Toronto Unlimited", accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/economic-development-and-culture/program-support/toronto-unlimited.html>

⁷⁵ John Barber, "There's no limit to nasty turf war over Toronto Unlimited slogan", *The Globe and Mail*, published Jul 29, 2005, updated apr, 22, 2018, accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/theres-no-limit-to-nasty-turf-war-over-toronto-unlimited-slogan/article737808/>

⁷⁶ Jamie Bradburn, "An occasionally cringe-inducing look at Toronto's past tourism-boosting videos", *Torontolife.com*, published Mar 7, 2017, accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://torontolife.com/city/life/occasionally-cringe-inducing-look-torontos-past-tourism-boosting-videos/>

Selecting only a portion of the market might seem limiting but it actually offers several advantages. Market identification is what really allows us to establish effective ways to communicate our values to the audience and make the best of the available resources. As previously mentioned in the introduction, the brand image is how consumers really experience what was created behind the scenes⁷⁷ and to attract a customer, we need to know what is behind his/her emotions and motivations.

There are many ways we can consider dividing our target audience, such as:

1. By product (f.e. mass tourists with package tours vs spontaneous tourist)
2. By nature of the activity (f.e. sightseeing, volunteering, etc)
3. Location
4. Duration of the trip (f.e. day trip vs annual holiday)
5. By purpose (f.e. culture, personal development, visiting friends and family)
6. By age

As observed by Alan C. Middleton⁷⁸, to be effective a brand has to be communicated in a clear coherent way across all media with long term strategies. In addition, a city brand should be in dialogue with shared value of its own people, and market a specific target group⁷⁹. The reaction of the residents itself to the branding of the place they live it's important because their reception, attitude and perception of that place constitutes part of the local charm. Citizens are therefore important ambassadors of an area, because what they consider home is what others see as a possible destination for their holiday⁸⁰.

Having the support of the locals in regards to tourism promotion is becoming a hot topic. Since in destinations affected by overtourism protests are taking place, locals are becoming unwelcoming and hostile to visitors to the point that tourists are actively discouraged not to visit anymore. An example of this is the city of Barcelona.

⁷⁷ Moilanen Teemu and Seppo K Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding*, 7

⁷⁸ Executive Director of the Schulich Executive Education Centre and Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto, Canada.

Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, XXV

⁷⁹ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 20

⁸⁰ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 8



Fighting back ... a placard on the beach at La Barceloneta, Barcelona. Photograph: Josep Lago/AFP/Getty Images⁸¹

It can also happen that a city has various target groups, because intentioned to advertise different cultural aspects or historical period, for example, but this does only imply that all identities have to have a core common point linked to the overall brand.

Another important point to consider is that no matter how a city wants to classify its tourists, there will always be at least one macro division in target groups: domestic and international tourists⁸².

Erik Cohen was one of the first sociologists to investigate the definition of tourist. With his publication in the 1972 of "Towards a Sociology of International Tourism", he presented a study that deals with the phenomenon of international tourism and, in particular, contains a classification of tourist typology based on the relationship between visitors, businesses and destination. The scholar determined four tourist roles based on how comfortable with unfamiliar situations they were: organized mass tourist, individual mass tourist, drifter, and explorer. The organized mass tourist is the least adventurous role and feels at ease in a tourist bubble (f.e. resorts, package/guided tours). The individual mass tourist avoids big groups, plans in advance and uses travel agencies. The explorer plans for him/herself allowing for and prioritizing comforts such as reliable accommodation or transports. The drifter goes off the beaten track, doesn't plan and looks for authentic local experiences⁸³.

⁸¹ Suzanne Moore, "I don't mean to ruin your holiday, but Europe hates tourists – and with good reason", The Guardian, published Aug 7, 2017, accessed June 14, 2018
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/16/dont-mean-ruin-your-holiday-but-europe-hates-tourists-with-good-reason-suzanne-moore>

⁸² Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 67

⁸³ Solène Prince, "Cohen's Model of Typologies of Tourists", The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Travel and Tourism, Sage Publications (2017)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318672642_Cohen's_Model_of_Typologies_of_Tourists

A different, more contemporary division of tourist roles is instead given by Eugenia Wickens, in her 2002 article "The Sacred and the Profane - a Tourist Typology". Based on the analysis of three elements - choice of holiday, types of activities, and views about the host community - she describes five types of tourist: the Cultural Heritage, the Raver, the Shirley Valentine, the Heliolatrous, and the Lord Byron⁸⁴. The Cultural Heritage tourist seeks a cultural/historical holiday, contact with locals and usually travels with family. The Raver is a party animal who wants a cheap holiday with friends. Similarly, the Heliolatrous type looks for fun, but in a more relaxed way (f.e. Tanning on the beach) and always travels to new destination, but lacks of interest in local culture and surroundings. The Shirley Valentine type are people (mainly women) looking for a summer crush (or romance), hopefully with a local. The Lord Byron is traditional and tries to build a routine also on vacation. They look for a sort of second home, and immerse themselves in local life and customs, adopting the culture.

Personalizing the target

We will now first see how NBTC intends the national target audience for the Country with an analyses of its persona profiling, to then focus more specifically on the cases of The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam. Do they adopt the same division? Is lifestyle also for them the predominant segmentation or are other factors, such as age or nationality, composing a major role in planning their strategy? Moreover, do any of the stakeholders involved in the tourism strategy conduct this type of consumer behaviour research or do they all turn to external marketing agencies?

The Netherlands

NBTC has developed a visitors divisions in target groups⁸⁵ based on lifestyle, motivation and travel needs. The clusters of tourists created are based on the lifestyle segmentation-model 'Mentality International'⁸⁶. This division has been created by Motivaction⁸⁷, an independent research and consultancy agency founded in 1984 and specialised in customer behaviour. Their international segmentation can be used for Western Europe and the US.

It is possible to find the five types of tourist interested in the Netherlands on the official NBTC website (<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/article/visitor-target-groups-3.htm>). These are presented in the form of user profiles, with a descriptive profile containing name, picture,

⁸⁴ Eugenia Wickens, "The Sacred and the Profane - a Tourist Typology." *Annals of Tourism Research* 29, no. 3 (2002), 836-842

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0160738301000883>

⁸⁵ "Visitor target groups", accessed June 14, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/article/visitor-target-groups-3.htm>

⁸⁶ "Mentality," accessed June 14, 2018

<https://www.motivaction.nl/en/mentality/mentality-segmentation>

⁸⁷ Accessed June 14, 2018

<https://www.motivaction.nl/en/>

motivations, desires and life goals. These pieces of information are explained through fabricated, promotional passports. The profiles, in my opinion all easily understandable and relatable, are:

1. Michael: Achiever
2. Mary: Traditional
3. Paul: Upper-class
4. Nora: Postmodern
5. Peter: Mainstream

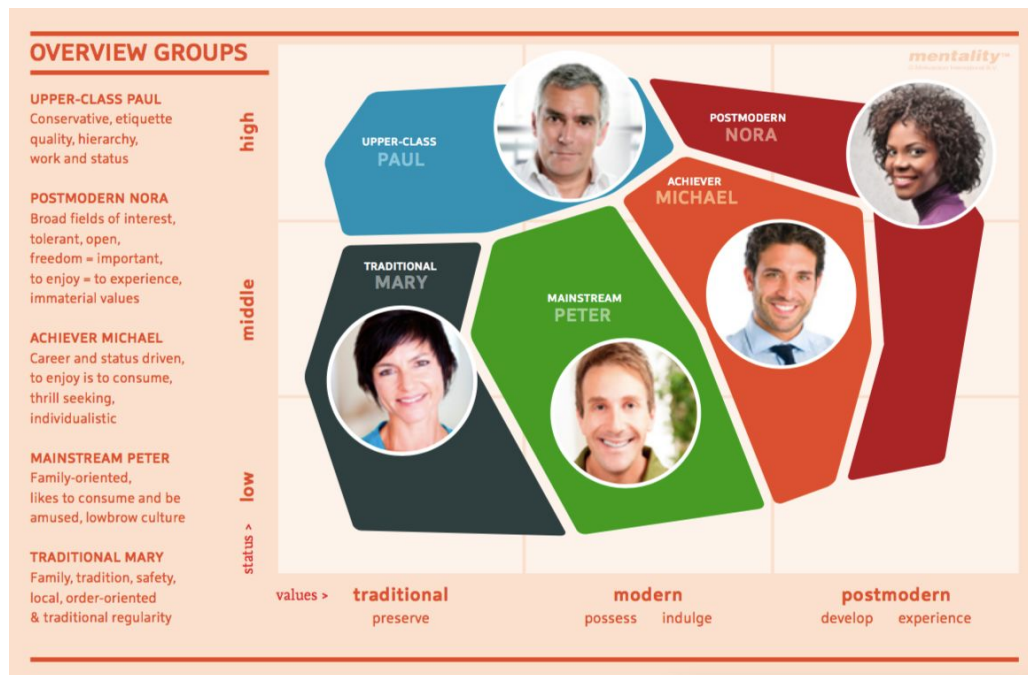


Image taken from NBTC official website⁸⁸

The five portraits are profiles to visualize the consumers' approach and they are based on socio-demographic data, such as gender, age, and education level, as well as on lifestyles. It seems they have been developed and adopted since 2013⁸⁹. No studies on their effectiveness have been found. The passports are around 27 pages, covered included, and present the same structure:

- general information
 - main ten nationalities that contain the profile expressed in percentage,
 - seven keywords linked to the identity,
 - percentage of coverage for The Netherlands in terms of tourists,
- Information

⁸⁸ "Visitor target groups", accessed June 13, 2018

<https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/article/visitor-target-groups-3.htm>

⁸⁹ "NBTC ontwikkelt paspoorten voor doelgroep", published Oct 24, 2013, my translation, accessed June 13, 2018






<https://www.nbtc.nl/nl/homepage/artikel/nbtc-ontwikkelt-paspoorten-voor-doelgroep.htm>

- name, age, place of birth, civil state, place of residence, children, profession, hobbies and interests,
- house and favourite car,
- fictitious page of a weekly planner,
- Hobbies and free-time, divided in four sections with linked photos,
 - My hobbies and leisure activities
 - In my leisure time I like to go to
 - My music is
 - If I were given two free tickets and could choose what they were for,
- General information
 - Age, family composition, gender, income, education
- perception of Holland and the Dutch (positive and negative),
- holidays in general
 - I go on a long holiday on average
 - I go on a short holiday on average
 - Holiday Top-5
 - Accommodation Top-5
 - Information channels for holidays and trips (Top-5 channels used)
- holiday in Holland
 - I think Holland is an attractive destination for a short trip or holiday
 - Intention to visit Holland in the next three years
 - Visits paid to Holland in the past 3 years
 - Top 3 visits to Holland
- weekend trip,
- what is in my luggage,
- media usage
 - I read the following magazines
 - I read the following newspapers
 - Internet and social media hours per week
 - You can find me on ...
 - On television I watch
 - On the radio I listen to
 - Smartphone & tablet ownership
- get me to Holland (do's and don'ts)
- communication
 - style of communication, content, desired tone,
- brand experience,
- example of tone of voice brand experience

Each passport is highly graphic and has a different background colour, matching their persona: orange for Michael, grey for Mary, blue for Paul, red for Nora and green for Peter. The back of each passport contains a short description of target groups and related personas. As

demonstrated, the personas are comprehensive to provide as intimate a portrait as possible into the identities created.

I hereby present two tables with comparison of the main characteristics of the profiles to help us distinguish the main qualifying features. The first table focuses more on the socio-demographic data. Due to the extensive content of the profiles, I decided to only mention the first three countries of origin for each persona with correlated percentages, and to report the lists of positive and negative characteristics related to the perception of “Holland” and “Dutch”. I believe reporting these portions of data demonstrates the priorities each one of them has. Moreover, these aspects are already simplified in the text by the use of five keywords for each block (for example, in a random order, the top-5 list for positive characteristics linked to Holland are 1. Amsterdam 2. Country for cyclists 3. Cheese 4. Beautiful landscape 5. Friendly people). Please notice that the terminology here used corresponds to the one adopted by NBTC.

Name	Michael	Mary	Paul	Nora	Peter
					
Age	34	55	52	36	40
Nationality	Spain (28%), France (25%) and Italy (23%)	The Netherlands (35%), Denmark (34%), Italy (27%)	France (26%), Belgium (23%), Germany (22%)	Spain (25%), Italy (24%), Denmark (23%)	USA (29%), Sweden (27%), The Netherlands (24%)
% of tourist	22%	22%	17%	22%	17%
Category	Achiever	Traditional	Upper class	Postmodern	Mainstream
Key words	Status oriented, hedonism, individualist, thrill seeking, materialist, career oriented, lowbrow culture	Family-oriented, hold on to traditional norms and values, acceptance of authority and rules, value order, regularity and discipline, local orientation, avoids risks, lives soberly	Holds on to traditional values, highbrow culture, family orientation, protection of social status, thinks hierarchically, work and status are important,	Individualists Mix high- and lowbrow culture, immaterial values, open minded, tolerant, freedom and independence, breaks moral boundaries, self actualisation, experience	Balancing between traditional norms, values and change Family oriented Wants status and respect Law and order Feels let down by society

			etiquette is important	seeking, hedonism	Longing for authority, leadership and rules Likes to consume and be amused Lowbrow culture
Positive characteristics of Holland	1. Amsterdam 2. Beautiful landscape 3. Country for cyclists 4. Cheese 5. Culture	1. Country for cyclists 2. Amsterdam 3. Cheese 4. Beautiful landscape 5. Friendly people	1. Country for cyclists 2. Amsterdam 3. Beautiful landscape 4. Cheese 5. Friendly people	1. Amsterdam 2. Cyclists 3. Open country 4. Freedom 5. Beautiful landscape	1. Amsterdam 2. Country for cyclists 3. Cheese 4. Beautiful landscape 5. Friendly people
Positive characteristics of Dutch	1. Liberal, free-thinking 2. Open 3. Hospitable 4. Social 5. Tolerant	1. Liberal, free-thinking 2. Tolerant 3. Hospitable 4. Speak many other languages 5. Welcoming, friendly	1. Liberal, free-thinking 2. Tolerant 3. Speak many other languages 4. Social 5. Open	1. Liberal, free-thinking 2. Tolerant 3. Speak many other languages 4. Open 5. Social	1. Liberal, free-thinking 2. Open 3. Hospitable 4. Welcoming, friendly 5. Speak many other languages
Negative characteristics of Holland	1. Drugs, 2. Prostitution 3. Language 4. The weather 5. Expensive	1. Drugs, 2. Prostitution 3. Language 4. Expensive 5. The weather	1. Drugs, 2. Weather, 3. Prostitution 4. Language, 5. Expensive	1. Drugs 2. Prostitution 3. Language 4. Expensive 5. The weather	1. Drugs 2. Prostitution 3. Language 4. Expensive 5. The weather
Negative characteristics of Dutch	1. Use of drugs 2. Language 3. Noisy 4. Arrogance 5. Prejudice	1. Use of drugs 2. Language 3. Noisy 4. Prejudices 5. Arrogance	1. Use of drugs 2. Language 3. Reserved 4. Arrogance 5. Prejudices	1. Use of drugs 2. Language 3. Noisy 4. Reserved 5. Prejudices	1. Use of drugs 2. Language 3. Noisy 4. Arrogance 5. Stingy

The second table here presented concentrates on media usage, information channels for holidays and trips, and the three communication subsections. Due to the lengthy description of this last part, I will only use keywords and do not report the entire section. For what concerns media usage, I will show data regarding internet and social media, due to the nature of the next chapter that will more focus on online communication. The elements reported in this last table

better fit with my work's purpose and provide a general overview on what are the important elements to keep in mind when establishing to whom we want to communicate our brand identity.

	Michael	Mary	Paul	Nora	Peter
Media usage (hours per week)	19 hours internet, 6 hours social media (facebook, youtube, twitter)	14 hours internet, 3 hours social media (facebook, youtube)	18 hours internet, 3 hours social media (facebook, youtube, twitter)	21 hours internet, 6 hours social media (facebook, youtube, twitter)	15 hours internet, 6 hours social media (facebook, youtube)
Top-5 information channels	1. Informative websites 2. Review websites 3. Weblogs 4. TV travel programmes 5. Newspaper articles / travel supplement	1. Informative websites 2. Newspaper articles / travel supplement 4. Review websites 5. Weblogs	1. Informative websites 2. Review websites 3. Newspaper articles / travel supplement 4. TV travel programmes 5. Weblogs	1. Informative websites 2. Review websites 3. Newspaper articles / travel supplement 4. TV travel programmes 5. Weblogs	1. Informative websites 2. Review websites 3. TV travel programmes 4. Newspaper articles / travel supplement 5. Weblogs
Style of communication	Fast, ICT, interactive	Need for simple and clear message Less internet-minded	Both on internet as well as more passive news Sources (TV, magazines and newspapers) Values status, politeness and etiquette	Critical approach Provocation is appreciated Allergic to patronising or moralising style	Passive news sources (TV, magazines) Entertainment and convenience, avoids complicated issues
Desired tone	Concisely informative, optimistic Trendy and informal	Practical Local Clear With authority and morality	Informative and explanatory Open Inviting, intellectual	Informative and explanatory and evidence-based. Direct, straightforward. Inspiring and surprising No slogan	Practical and concise, accessible. Emphasizing convenience, fun and individual advantage

Content	Excitement and sensation: fast cars, career, film, going out, clothing, sex Individualistic attitude (what's in it for me?)	Social involvement, additional views on roles and self-awareness of health Preference for small-scale and security Environment-minded lifestyle	Finance, houses, news, politics and government. Interested in history and the background to current issues. Likes luxury and elegance, calmness and nature, culture, architecture and art	Worldwide perspective (curious about other cultures and customs) Likes culture, architecture, art and design, but also quiet and nature	Focus on family and coziness, low environmental awareness
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As mentioned before, knowing your target audience helps in establishing an efficient communication campaign. Looking at the data above reported, it is now evident that targeting a Mary would involve more advertisement on passive segments and printed media, while a Nora would rather look for similar type of information (f.e. nature) online. Moreover, despite having a common interest, the style of communication and tone of voice would be diametral opposite, having a more authoritative tone in the first case and a more inspiring one for the second. Adopting a compromise among the two would result in an inefficient campaign, because neither of them would feel attracted or recognise her values in it. Similarly, a Micheal and a Peter both appreciate concrete and practical tone, but diverge in the content - individualistic in the first place, family oriented in the second.

Interestingly, NBTC claims to focus on all five personas. For this reason and for the lack of dialogue in regards to this methods I would suggest that further studies would be needed to highlight the different communication campaign based on each individual, to finally establish the effectiveness of this division.

The Hague

When presenting its target audience⁹⁰, The Hague declares to have based the selection choice on the ones with the most growth potential and whose profiles fit in well with the city's supply. The first distinction is based on the geographical provenience of larger groups of tourists - international and domestic - with a brief motivation of their interests.

International tourists mainly come from Germany, Belgium and England are attracted by the combination of urban surroundings, beach and the royal character of the city. The three main Southern European Countries are France, Italy and Spain, and they typically choose The Hague for its cultural offerings. The same two reasons are applicable also to intercontinental tourists, which appear to be mainly Americans.

⁹⁰ "Kanskaart Toerisme", my translation, 7

More elaborate is instead the description and division of domestic visitors, who are further clustered in four groups:

1. Enterprising adults, interested in culture and history, want to be inspired;
2. Stylish and luxurious elderly, smart and classy, they visit the city relatively often and have a high expenditure rate;
3. Creative and inspiring adults, they are trendsetters and open-minded;
4. Exuberant families, active and sociable, they travel with family or friends.

Ondernemende volwassenen (paars)	Houden van cultuur, historie, verrassing, inspiratie
Stijlvolle en luxe ouderen (blauw)	Zijn intelligent, hebben klasse, hebben een belangrijk sociaal netwerk en een zakelijk inzicht, bezoeken de stad relatief vaak en besteden veel per bezoek
Creatieve en inspirerende volwassenen (rood)	Zijn zelfbewust, artistiek en ruimdenkend, zijn trendsetters en trekken andere groepen aan
Uitbundige gezinnen (geel)	Zijn actief, sportief, gezellig, komen met familie of vrienden

Segmentation of domestic target⁹¹

This segmentation is based on their willingness to visit the city, frequency of visits, group size and the expenditure capability. While for the international tourists the city is actively trying to attract more Chinese tourists, for the national audience the desired outcome is to attract visitors from the region. The main usage of this classification seems to be used when organizing and advertising events in the city⁹².

The Dutch market division is based on the BSR®⁹³ (Brand Strategy Research) model of The SmartAgent Company⁹⁴, an agency specialized in lifestyle segmentation of The Netherlands to explain customer behaviour. Their method consists in having divided the Dutch market in four primary lifestyles, each one characterised by one colour: red (creative), yellow (harmonious), blue (controlling) and green (safe). Other minor profiles characterised by milder shades followed. In the case of The Hague, the so-called “enterprising adults” are purple, “stylish and luxurious elderly” are blue, “creative and inspiring adults” are red the “exuberant

⁹¹ “Kanskaart Toerisme”, my translation, 7

⁹² “Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016”, 27

⁹³ “Motivational segmentation (BSR™)”, SAMR Solutions, accessed June 15, 2018 <https://www.samr.nl/en/product/bsr-brand-strategy-research/>

⁹⁴ “Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016”, 15

families” are yellow. This last group is considered the most promising one for The Hague⁹⁵. The agency promises to better understand a target audience and suggests proposition, message, tone of voice, and communication channel for a marketing campaign.

Utrecht

For its tourism and branding strategy, Utrecht Marketing focuses on four target groups: residents, visitors, businesses and talent⁹⁶. While the documentation found during my research clearly shows what are the objectives for each category, it is not that obvious how the city came up with the above mentioned division. In particular, the difference between business and talents seems, in my opinion, quite ephemeral.

Residents are seen as particularly vital for the branding strategy, because by being satisfied with living in the city, they become ambassadors of it. Overall, to preserve the well-being of the residents, the city keeps them up-to-date about the cultural offer with various media, such as *Uitagenda Utrecht*, a free magazine distributed all over town. For this reason, residents are the main target audience of a series of initiatives under the name “*Culturele Zondagen*”⁹⁷ (cultural sundays). Due to the large amount of international residents, Utrecht also distributes for free a magazine completely written in English, called *MAG*⁹⁸.

Visitors interested in visiting Utrecht are attracted for various reasons, like its diverse cultural offerings, combined with the historical, religious and natural heritage. Utrecht is willing to attract more internationals both in the field of leisure and business / economy. Utilizing regional as well as (inter)national media.

For Utrecht, attracting companies and investors is a central theme, therefore businesses are considered a target. They are interested to come to Utrecht, because they want to be part of one of the most dynamic European regions. On a similar note, it is in the knowledge institutions’ and companies’ best interest to attract talents, especially the young ones.

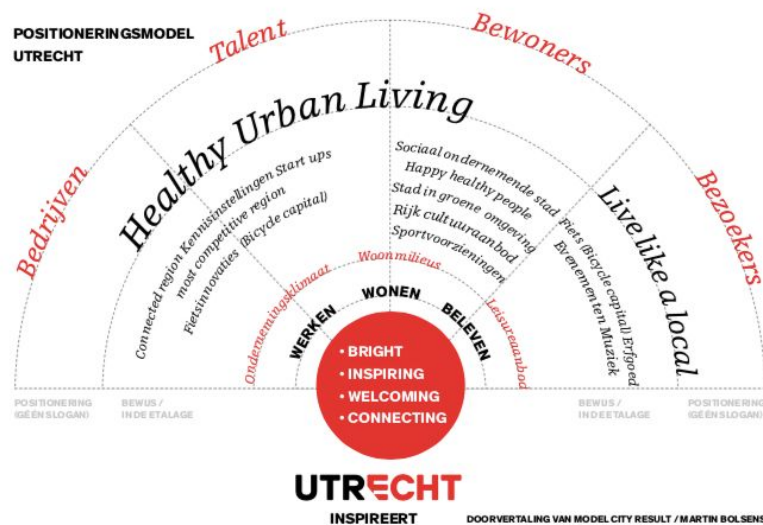
⁹⁵ “Onderzoeksrapport / DSO Programmamanagement, Strategie en Onderzoek. Monitor Toerisme 2016”, 15

⁹⁶ “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020”, 12

⁹⁷ Accessed June 15, 2018

<https://www.culturelezondagen.nl>

⁹⁸ “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020”, 14



Target segmentation - Utrecht Marketing⁹⁹

The above image comes from the ambition document of the city of Utrecht and it shows the areas of interests of each group. At the very bottom of the scheme, we have the expression “Utrecht inspires”, which is connected with its identity of connecting-creator. At the center of the semicircle, we find the four keywords that constitute the pillars of the Utrecht branding strategy, as we saw already in chapter one. The first subgroup is divided in working (*werken*), living (*wonen*) and experiencing (*beleven*). The second semicircle with terms written in red consists in business environment (*ondernemingsklimaat*), living environment (*woon milieus*), and leisure offer (*leisureaanbod*). As previously supposed, some of the targets belong to the same macro areas. For example, business environment involves both businesses (*bedrijven*) and talents, and the living one concerns talents and residents. One level up, we find clusters of keywords, as follows:

- Businesses and talents
 - connected region knowledge institutions startups (*connected region kennisinstellingen startups*);
 - most competitive region;
 - bike innovation (*fietsinnovatie*) (bicycle capital);
- Residents
 - social entrepreneurial city (*sociaal ondernemende stad*);
 - happy healthy people;
 - city in green surroundings (*stad in groene omgeving*);
 - rich cultural offer (*rijk cultuuraanbod*);
 - sports facilities (*sportvoorzieningen*);

⁹⁹ “Het verhaal van Utrecht - Ambitiedocument Utrecht Marketing”, accessed June 12, 2018, 12 <http://www.bezoek-utrecht.nl/uploads/media/57fb65b424344/2016-ambitiedocument-utrecht-marketing.pdf?v1>

- Visitors
 - bicycle heritage (bicycle capital);
 - Music events

The last semicircle is then divided in two slogans: “healthy human beings” for businesses, talents and residents, “live like a local” for tourists. In most recent documents, the slogans have been abandoned.

Interesting to notice is also the fact that despite having these four target groups in their multi-year plan, Utrecht marketing is also willing to promote activities that can have as many effects on non-primary target groups as possible, by claiming that everything that contributes to the Utrecht brand is indiscriminately good for all target groups (residents, visitors, talent, companies)¹⁰⁰. This seems to be highly contradictory and defeats the purpose of having target groups at all. By wanting to be attractive (in Dutch *aantrekkelijk*) to anyone without having in mind a more specific segmentation, Utrecht seems to me to be the city with the higher risk of creating an incoherent branding strategy.

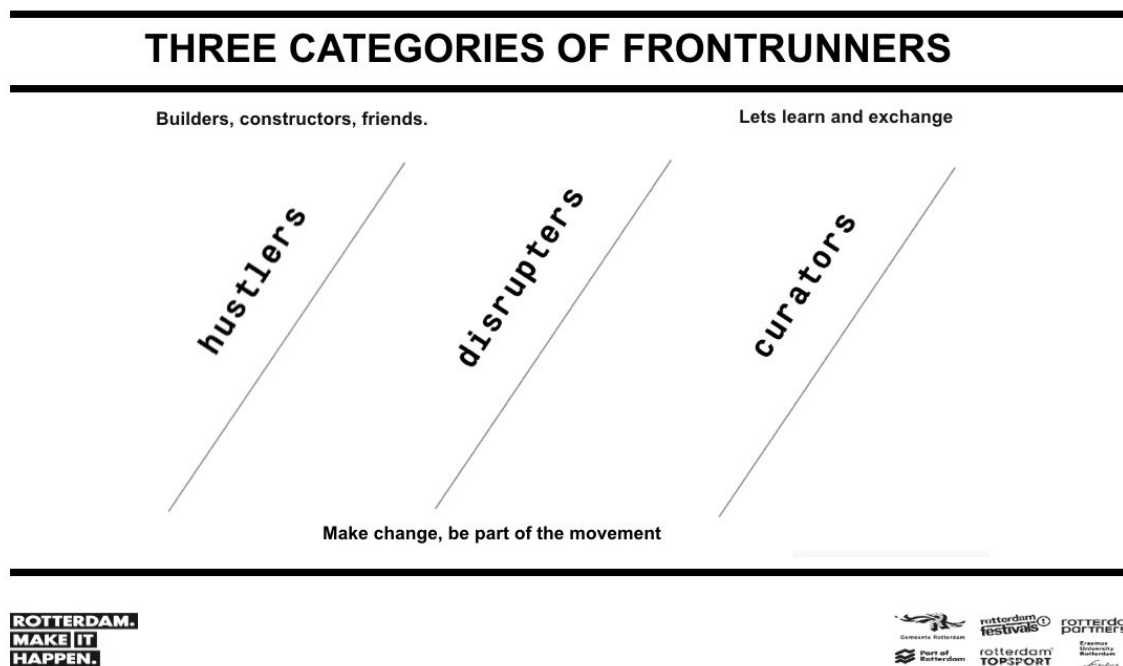
Rotterdam

According to Rotterdam, if we look at target groups with the NBTC model, their ideal target should be Nora. This type of person has an average age of 43 years old, is probably a woman (60%) than in 50% of the case is either single or in a relationship, but prefers to travel with friends. Nora is well educated and likely to work in communication, healthcare/ social, business services or (semi-)government. Daily trip and cultural holidays are her preferred type of vacation and goes on holiday around 2,4 times per year. She travels possibly outside the main holiday season, for an average of 4 overnights and does not like big hotel chain. She’s also interested in other people’ culture and customs.

However, this profiles is considered restrictive both in terms of age - the city wants to attract a younger audience as well - and for the economic possibilities. To create the “Make it Happen” brand and consecutive tourism marketing strategy, an union of Gemeente Rotterdam, Port of Rotterdam, Rotterdam Festivals, Rotterdam Topsport, Rotterdam Partners and Erasmus University, developed eight personas types of people based on general internationals consumer trends. The eight characters were then divided into three categories, and one - the frontrunners - matched with the image the city wants to advertised. An important consideration is that a person can also not perfectly correspond to one precise category, but have a mix of attributes. Frontrunners are also internally divided in three types:

- Hustlers → Builders, constructors, friends
- Disrupters → Make change, be part of the movement
- Curators → Let’s learn and exchange

¹⁰⁰ “Meerjarenplan 2017-2020“, 16



Picture taken from an internal presentation¹⁰¹ of RotterdamPartner

The creation of the frontrunner profile is part of the alternative-Holland vibe that the city wants to communicate, a space for people who want to engage, learn, build, exchange, and be inspired. The quote reported in the brand passport of Utrecht marketing in relation to the target groups is, in this sense, revealing: “If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results.”¹⁰²

In conclusion, it appears that none of the cities here considered decided to adopt the same segmentation of NBTC, even though in every case the target audience classification used to understand consumers’ - in our case tourists’ - behaviour is also based on lifestyle . The Hague sought the help of an external marketing agency, while Rotterdam appears to have developed its own classification. More emblematic is the case of Utrecht, where a division is mentioned, but no further elements to dig into the differences among each group is provided. If we consider the process of image selection observed in chapter one, we still do not have enough insights to suppose if the selection of a target audience is something that happens independently, or if it is influenced by the storyline conveyed by the identity of a city. In some cases the terminology used helps us connecting target audience and identity - for example in the case of Utrecht, while in others - like The Hague - it appears the name of the subgroups do not have anything to do with the images and identities previously expressed. To further clarify how these components work together, we will now proceed further by looking at the branding toolkit and overall

¹⁰¹ This presentation has been given to me by RotterdamPartners when contacted in regards to my thesis research

¹⁰² Merkpaspoot Utrecht, Utrecht Marketing, 23

communication strategy. As a final note, it is interesting to notice the style of communication that these images - intended for internal communication - transmit. From the sober styling utilized by The Hague, passing from the artistic graphic layout of Utrecht to the minimalistic style of Rotterdam, we will now see in the next chapter how each city intends to present itself via online communication offering free images in branding toolkits.

3. Branding toolkit

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses a final and fundamental aspect of city branding strategy: communication. In the previous parts we observe how The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam select their identities and who is their main target audience, we will now see how do these elements come together in practise. To which extent can a city control the pictures circulating online? What do we consider as a memorable photograph? How can we ensure that a tourist recognizes a certain meaning beyond an advertisement campaign or recognize a city from quick frames on the tv? For my research I decided to consider the online distribution of images. Nowadays online communication has taken over the role of influencer that previously offline media used to have.

For theoretical parts related to city branding theory I will mainly use two books from the same publisher:

- Dinnie, Keith. *City Branding : Theory and Cases*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011
- Moilanen, Teemu, and Seppo K Rainisto. *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding*. Basingstoke England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

They have both been published in the last decade, which demonstrates once more that place branding hasn't been systematically studied till recent years - but there is now an increasingly growing interest towards the subject. Moreover, the majority of published research in this area has been done by experts in marketing and urbanism, more than in the tourism field (Dinnie, 3). Thanks to the above mentioned books, I will outline the importance of images in tourism promotion and the necessity of a branding toolkit. Consequently, limits and challenges related to visual communication will arise.

In addition, I will reflect on theories regarding images and power in tourism using two chapters from the studies of Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette - "Creating and consuming the image" and "Reading the image" - in their "Creating images, creating identities"¹⁰³. A final evaluation of the official online branding toolkits, starting from the national one and proceeding with The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht, on the nature of their content and their use will be presented. To do so, I decided to select 10 images from each branding toolkit and run a reverse Google image search in order to identify the frequency and context pictures are used. By looking at those two elements we will be able to understand the success of the branding tools and, if not, to speculate on possible causes and formulate useful suggestions.

This section represents an important and final step in my research. If in chapter one the concepts of image carrier and identities were introduced, and in chapter two we clarified to whom these elements are meant to be communicated, here we will take the final step and look how everything merges together. More importantly, we will try to establish the effectiveness of

¹⁰³ Nigal Mogan, and Annette Pritchard, "Creating and consuming the image". *Tourism Promotion and Power. Creating images, creating identities*, Chichester, Wiley, 1998, 43-62
Nigal Mogan, and Annette Pritchard, "Reading the image". *Tourism Promotion and Power. Creating images, creating identities*, Chichester, Wiley, 1998, 25-42

this process looking at online media. Do the most frequently used images reflect the cities' identities? Are they able to reach their target audience? If not, what is missing?

Images, power and communication

As reported by the UN¹⁰⁴, for the first time in history half of the population lives in urban settings and, being its growth registered in Asia and Africa, as a consequence a further increase in urban development in those areas is inevitable. Cities of all sizes are now more than before in a global competition with each other to attract talents, investors, visitors and students. At the same time, a higher number of tourists is now looking for unbeaten tracks, increasing the chances of tourism in lesser known destinations (Dinnie, XIII). City branding is becoming therefore more and more relevant, because it helps cities to present themselves as their best to a broader audience (Dinnie, XIII). In addition, applying different city branding techniques helps in differentiating a destination, while also underlining its inherent uniqueness¹⁰⁵.

To communicate their brand identity, especially for online communication, many city branding marketers have decided to develop a branding toolkit, i.e. a website containing a collection of data (images, videos, text) available to everyone for free. In some cases it is necessary to register on the platform in order to download the material, including agreement to the terms and conditions of usage. The use and distribution of the material chosen by the marketers helps shape the way a city is perceived. Indeed, it has been proven that online communities - blogging, virtual environment, email campaigns, social media - can strongly influence consumer behavior and decision (Dinnie, 87). Each municipality has a branding toolkit to present the city's distinguishing characteristics. This tool can usually be accessed by anyone - from professional marketers and communicators to students for instance and may be used for a variety of purposes, such as press releases, promotions and research.

Every city generally has an official online portal to convey reliable and relevant information (such as activities, events calendar, advice) where the brand is shown. In some cases the official city's website hosts the branding toolkit, while in others there may be a second website fully dedicated to promotional material. For the cities considered in my work, the latter option is used:

- The Hague → www.brandthehague.nl
- Utrecht → www.utrechtmarketing.nl
- Rotterdam → <https://rotterdammakeithappen.nl>

¹⁰⁴ "2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, published on May 16, 2018, accessed Jul 7, 2018
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospect-s.html>

¹⁰⁵ Moilanen Teemu, and Seppo K Rainisto, *How to Brand Nations, Cities and Destinations : A Planning Book for Place Branding*, 3

Websites are nowadays an essential and advantageous branding means, as they can be constantly updated and tailored to targets and needs, and can be virtually reached by everyone, everywhere, at any time¹⁰⁶.

As we already saw in chapter one, scholars pointed out¹⁰⁷ how in contemporary society the line between reality and a staged image is somehow fleeting. We often fall into traps and perceive as real something that was constructed for advertisement purposes and distributed by a variety of media. Even worse, we get disappointed where the reality does not meet our expectations¹⁰⁸. Just a few seconds on Instagram are enough to cast the light on the myriad of profiles related to travel that offer pictures perfect in the colors, in poses and surroundings. The importance of the visual impact in relation to tourism is under everyone's eyes, and this is why destinations are spending increasing amounts of money in trying to reinforce those images through branding¹⁰⁹.

In relation to promotion and publicity, photographs are frequently used to convey sensations and values that they recognize being linked to the lifestyle they want for themselves¹¹⁰. People, and especially teenagers, tend to opt for those brands that reinforce their self-image¹¹¹. These images used aim to suggest desires and goals, but also hint at culture and history, and the people who live in a certain destination. For this reason, they are never randomly created, but are the fruits of historical, social and political events¹¹².

It is no surprise that reflecting on the use of images in tourism helps us realizing how we can influence the perception we have of society¹¹³. However, tourism activities involve different stakeholders - such authorities, residents, musea and restaurants- , and that marketing a place may have consequences on the perception not only of the destination itself, but also of all the different products located there¹¹⁴. Hence, conflicts among collaborator may arise. Especially for well-established institutions, such as a concert hall or a theater, that already have their own brand identity, compromising their pre-existent communication strategy to the one of their city can be challenging. For instance, as we saw in chapter one, the city of Utrecht based its strategy on the connecting creator and expects the stakeholders involved (such as TivoliVredenburg or De Bijenkorf) to incorporate this element in the advertisement campaigns of the product they offered in the city¹¹⁵.

There are many parties involved in the procession of creation of the imagery, that often ends up reproducing stereotypes and clichés¹¹⁶. Consumers are not only a passive target

¹⁰⁶ Keith Dinnie, *City Branding : Theory and Cases*, 84

¹⁰⁷ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 26

¹⁰⁸ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 26

Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 32

¹⁰⁹ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 25

¹¹⁰ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 30

¹¹¹ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image" 25

¹¹² Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 38

¹¹³ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Reading the image", 30

¹¹⁴ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Creating and consuming the image", 44

¹¹⁵ From my interview to Max Triekens

¹¹⁶ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Creating and consuming the image", 48

audience, but are now more than ever active participants of the recommendation and image circulation process. By spreading photos and travel advice with posts on social media such as Instagram and Facebook, the word of mouth process influences our decision process in selecting destinations, and heavily impacts our holiday expectations. If before, traveling was characterized by a strong seasonality - winter and summer holidays - we now tend to travel more times per year, usually for shorter periods¹¹⁷. This is important, because we are travelling more, and therefore sharing more.

Branding toolkit analyses

As showed in chapter one, The Hague wants to be associated to three imagines: city by the sea, royal city, and city of peace and justice. The Branding Book The Hague¹¹⁸ was created by the Bureau City Branding, the agency that coordinates the city marketing policy and that implements the The Hague Branding 2020 project. Interestingly, the two identities conveyed are International City of Peace and Justice and City by the Sea. The material is separated for each target group: business, tourism¹¹⁹, conferences, young professionals, students, international organizations and investors. What could be the reason behind the decision of not conveying the royal theme? We previously saw that The Hague is actively working with Delft to strengthen the royal image. Moreover, even not openly mentioned in the branding tool description¹²⁰, in the set of pictures meant for tourism purposes a portrait of Queen Máxima appears¹²¹. In addition, when asked about the most noticeable achievement obtained after the creation of The Hague's latest tourism policy was the overall acceptance among the stakeholders of the three aforementioned identities and especially the consolidation of the royal identity among the German market. A further study with more focus on the reinforcement of the royal image of The Hague in Germany is therefore suggested.

The Utrecht Toolkit¹²², created by Utrecht marketing, contains images and stories about icons of the city of Utrecht that help to tell its story. They are divided into the following categories:

- Inside in Utrecht locations
- Inner city Utrecht
- Business and talent
- Events (culture)

¹¹⁷ Mogan, Nigal and Pritchard, Annette, "Creating and consuming the image", 45

¹¹⁸ "Brandbook The Hague", accessed June 17, 2018

<https://www.brandthehague.nl>

¹¹⁹ "Footage tourists", accessed June 16, 2018

<https://www.brandthehague.nl/footage-tourists>

¹²⁰ "Bureau City Branding", accessed June 17, 2018

<https://www.denhaag.nl/en/in-the-city/business/bureau-city-branding.htm>

¹²¹ "Footage tourists", accessed June 17, 2018

<https://www.brandthehague.nl/footage-tourists>

¹²² "Toolkit", accessed June 18, 2018

<https://www.utrechtmarketing.nl/merk-utrecht/toolkit/>

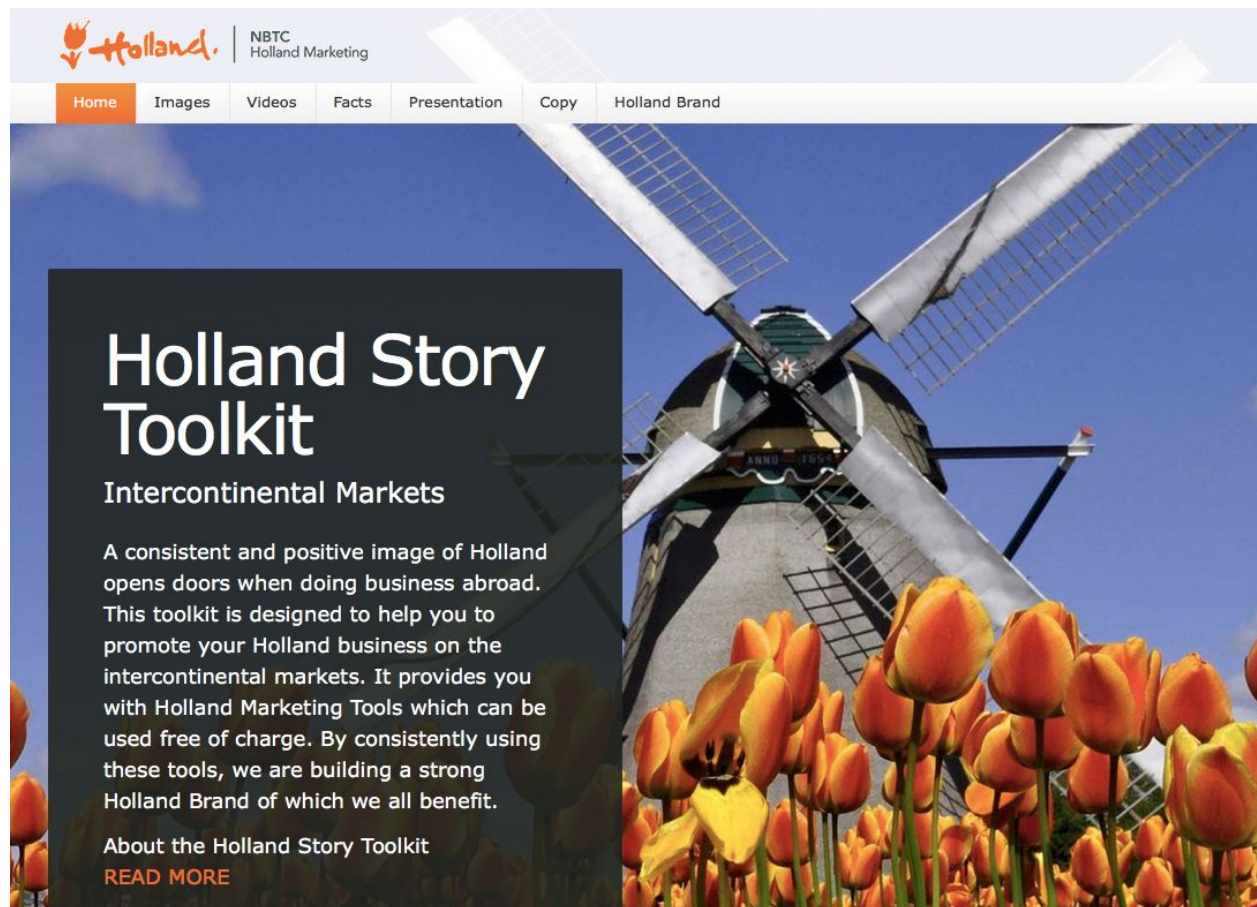
- Green, healthy, urban life
- Autumn and winter in Utrecht city center
- Mobility and sport

This kit, exclusively focused on images at the moment, is justified as a means to reinforce a strong and recognizable brand in order to have a good competitive position as a city. Despite being considered the most traditional looking out of the three cities, the main image that Utrecht wants to convey is the one of connecting creator. This means that the city wants to underline its laborious side and with those images Utrecht is portrayed as a place where people get inspired and can make things happen. All of these 11 pages of stock images follow the 4 key terms announced in the tourism policy paper: bright, inspiring, welcoming, and connecting.

On the other hand, as we well know by know, another city made this slogan their trademark: Rotterdam. The Rotterdam Branding Toolkit is an initiative of the Municipality of Rotterdam, Rotterdam Port Authority, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Rotterdam Partners. Not only it contains free photos, texts (such as facts of figures on visitors), videos, but also a recently added section to stress the constantly changing spirit of the city. The overall material was divided before July 1, 2018 into the following 21 detailed categories: architecture, attractions, festivals & events, economy, cleantech, maritime & offshore, food, medical & life sciences, transport & logistics, energy, water & welta technology, creative industries, art & culture, durability & green, maritime & port, history, sport & exercise, education & study, going out, transport, health, and living. This list testifies the functioning industry that is the pulsing heart of the city. However, starting from July 2, 2018, RotterdamPartners updated the branding toolkit by expanding the material and opting not anymore for a themed division, but a media one. At the moment, the Rotterdam branding toolkit presents a total of 973 files, divided in 739 photos, 177 videos, 2 facts & figures, 55 texts, 8 collections, 28 showcases and 17 brandpartners. The images present watermark and are divided in only 8 categories: port and river, recreation and shopping, going out & terraces, attractions, entrepreneurship & innovation, arts & culture, architecture, and Rotterdam in 50 images.

To analyze the use of the images presented in the various branding toolkits, I will use Google image search. This part of the website allows me to research where an image appears starting from the URL or the upload of an image downloaded. By doing so, I will be able to determine the frequency an image has been used online, and on which sites. It will also be relevant to notice where the websites originate and in which languages they are written, to prove if indeed the pictures are successfully used in any more local or international context.

The Netherlands



NBTC Holland Marketing has developed a Holland Story Toolkit¹²³ to distribute images, videos, facts, a presentation, and free texts and press releases (under the term “copy”). The material is meant for Dutch partners, intercontinental trade partners, embassies, consulates and all other stakeholders of the Holland Brand¹²⁴. It is supposed to be used for the promotion of The Netherlands both as a destination for business and for leisure.

Images¹²⁵ are divided in ten different themed folders, containing nine pictures each:

- Amsterdam
- Water
- Flowers

¹²³ “Holland Story Toolkit. Intercontinental market”, accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://www.holland.com/global/brandtoolkit.htm>

¹²⁴ “Holland Brand Story”, accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://www.holland.com/global/brandtoolkit/holland-brand.htm>



¹²⁵ “Images”, accessed Aug 1, 2018

<https://www.holland.com/global/brandtoolkit/images.htm>

- Traditional Dutch
- New Dutch
- Dutch masters
- Rotterdam
- The Hague
- Events
- Meetings

Noticeably, while Rotterdam and The Hague have their own category, Utrecht is missing. In addition, Rotterdam's pictures also twice appear under "New Dutch". A possible explanation could be that to be promoted by Holland.com, these cities have to pay a fee, and maybe Utrecht is currently paying a lower contribution for the sponsorship if compared to the other two cities.

For the reverse Google search, I decided to select the first picture in each folder. Looking at the first column, I will first mention the name of the folder and then the title of the picture.





	Frequency	Description	Remarks	Languages
Amsterdam - Amsterdam at night ¹²⁶ 	2 pages	View of an Amsterdam's canal at night	This picture has been used in the flyer for the 2019's 32nd World LPG forum & congress and all the results beside two are linked to this via different twitter accounts. The other two are from a stock image website and a chain of supermarket as photo in a frame on sale	English
Water - Kinderdijk windmills ¹²⁷ 	4 pages	Aerial view on Biesbosch National Park	All the pictures either come from stock images website, or (most of them) from blogs and articles that recommend visiting this	Dutch, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian

¹²⁶ Accessed Aug 2, 2018

<https://goo.gl/RNN7SZ>

¹²⁷ Accessed Aug 2, 2018

<https://goo.gl/Fkk5RT>

			attraction	
<p>Flowers - Girl in tulip field¹²⁸</p> 	6 pages	Young girl standing in a field of yellow tulips	Most of the results are articles promoting visiting the Dutch tulip fields, some of them come from the website of travel agencies in relation to honeymoon	Dutch, English, Filipino, Spanish, Japanese, French, Chinese, Italian, Persian
<p>Traditional Dutch - tulips and windmills¹²⁹</p> 	3 pages	Sunny picture of a windmill in a tulip field	The first page of results is all to promote cheap flights to The Netherlands. Tourism blogs and stock images websites follow.	Dutch, English, Chinese, German, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese,
<p>New Dutch - Vintage design¹³⁰</p> 	0 pages	Interior design with several chairs	No result is linked to this particular picture, but to the Google suggestion "chair"	/
<p>Dutch masters - Rijksmuseum Amsterdam¹³¹</p> 	4 pages	Picture of one of the internal hall of the Rijksmuseum	Most of the results are websites that sell entrance tickets or recommend visiting the museum as one of the top attraction in the country	English, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, German, Finnish, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian

¹²⁸ Accessed Aug 2, 2018

<https://goo.gl/3WgvmU>

¹²⁹ Accessed Aug 2, 2018





<https://goo.gl/QJtLhU>

¹³⁰ Accessed Aug 2, 2018

<https://goo.gl/G77FsR>

¹³¹ Accessed Aug 2, 2018

<https://goo.gl/4TtiUS>

Rotterdam - Markethall ¹³² 	1 page	Photo of the colourful interior of the Markethall, the cover market of Rotterdam	One result is from Wikipedia on Rotterdam, while the other are from articles either of Rotterdam's official website for tourism information or Holland.com	English, Portuguese
The Hague - Golden carriage ¹³³ 	2 pages	Queen Máxima waving from a golden carriage	Most of the results are in Arabic. This picture is mainly used to promote The Hague	English, Japanese, German, Arabic
Events - Pacha festival ¹³⁴ 	1 page	Crowd at a festival	The first two results are generally related to "crowd", while the last three are generally linked to the promotion of tourism in Amsterdam or The Netherlands	English, Dutch
Meetings - World forum The Hague 	1 page	Crowd at a convention	The first two results are generally linked to "meeting" and the other two are article to promote Amsterdam and The Hague	English

Looking at the Holland brand, pictures related to traditional images such as windmills and tulips are the one with the broader range and more international results. The picture of Queen Máxima will also appear on the branding toolkit of The Hague. If we do a comparison between the plurality of identities from storylines enunciated in chapter one and the categories of the toolkit,

¹³² Accessed Aug 2, 2018
<https://goo.gl/yTT17J>

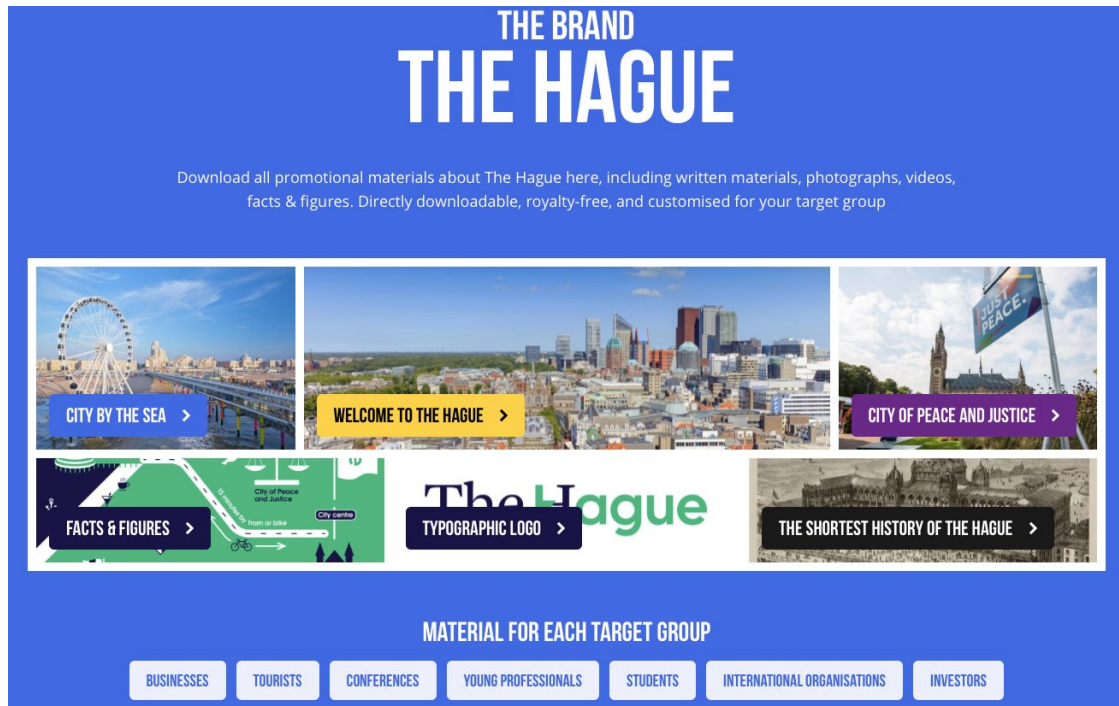
¹³³ Accessed Aug 2, 2018
<https://goo.gl/cwfhcu>

¹³⁴ Accessed Aug 2, 2018
<https://goo.gl/6pbNVP>

we can easily notice that only a few of the themes emerge. In particular, the identities that have a correlative image folders are four out of nine:

- Water → The Netherlands Waterland
- Flowers → Flowers
- New Dutch → Mondrian to Dutch Design
- Dutch masters → The Golden Age

The Hague




Brandbook homepage¹³⁵

The city of The Hague presents its material through a brandbook available at <https://www.brandthehague.nl>. The website introduces in its homepage already two out of the three identities analyzed in chapter one - city by the sea and city of peace and justice - cutting out the narrative of royal city. At the bottom of the page, the user can gain access to the database filtering by the following target audiences: business, tourist, conferences, young professionals, students, international organizations and investors. This means that the nomenclature used in the official documents (see chapter two) are not adopted as everyday labels.

To proceed with my investigation, I decided to select the dossier presented under the category “tourists”, which consists of 11 images, and exclude the rest - 1 video and 1 text. An important remark in relation of obtaining this material is necessary. The website offers the opportunity to download the material in two ways, either obtaining everything by clicking on the

¹³⁵ Accessed Jul 4, 2018
<https://www.brandthehague.nl/>

button “download all images & videos (64.31 MB)”, or download each file separately, via the link on the bottom left corner of each image. Despite having this last option, it is not possible to take advantage of it, since the download fails each time - I tried myself on different devices - probably due to a programming error on the server. The titles of the images here reported are the one that appear from the downloaded files of the complete portfolio.



	Frequency	Description	Remarks	Languages
<p>Selfie Pier¹³⁶</p> 	1 page of results	Four young people taking a selfie in front of a ferris wheel.	The matching image has been found in 4 results all from the same website takethehague.nl ¹³⁷ , in 4 articles. Looking more carefully, the number of articles decreases to 2, because they are the same, but in English and Dutch version as The Pier/De Pier, Beach and Boulevard/Strand en Boulevard.	English, Dutch
<p>Largest Mondrian painting city hall The Hague¹³⁸</p>	10 pages of results	The city hall building that has been decorated in the style of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian ¹³⁹ , in honour of the dedicated theme	Google alert: some results may have been removed under data protection law in Europe. In the first page of results we can immediately notice that	

¹³⁶ Accessed 4 July
<https://goo.gl/MD3qv4>

¹³⁷ The aim of this website is to promote The Hague as a film set destination

¹³⁸ Accessed 4 July
<https://goo.gl/HttF3L>

¹³⁹ Interestingly, Mondrian was originally from Amersfoort, but The Hague’s Gemeentemuseum contains about 300 other Mondrian works, making it the world’s largest collection “Mondrian”, accessed 5 Jul, 2018
<https://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/en/collections/mondrian>

		<p>year in 2017¹⁴⁰.</p>	<p>the newspaper The Guardian appears twice, one with an article entitled “Dutch city celebrates Mondrian with sky-high replica on city hall¹⁴¹” and one “De Stijl turns 100 – but still cannot touch the greats of abstract art¹⁴²”. The other first results are from Dezeen, an online magazine specialised in architecture and design, Getty Images, an image stock website, and kineticww.com, a communication agency.</p>	
<p>Madurodam¹⁴³</p> 	<p>4 pages of results</p>	<p>An international family visiting Madurodam, a miniature park of famous Dutch landmarks opened in the 50s.</p>	<p>The first two results are in Russian, where the term достопримечательности (attractions) appear. 3 results are linked to the Crown Plaza Hotel The Hague, and other 2 to the website Expedia.com, when describing the attractions in town.</p>	<p>English, Dutch, Russian</p>

¹⁴⁰ “Mondrian & The Stijl”, accessed 5 Jul, 2018

<https://denhaag.com/en/mondrian>

¹⁴¹ “Dutch city celebrates Mondrian with sky-high replica on city hall”, The Guardian, published Feb 3, 2017, accessed Jul 6, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/feb/03/dutch-celebrate-mondrian-cladding-the-hague-city-hall>

¹⁴² Jonathan Jones, “De Stijl turns 100 – but still cannot touch the greats of abstract art”

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2017/mar/01/de-stijl-turns-100>

¹⁴³ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/V5UfbK>

<p>Couple at Girl with Pearl Earring, Mauritshuis¹⁴⁴</p> 	<p>2 pages of results</p>	<p>A couple admiring the Girl with a Pearl Earring, the famous painting from Johannes Vermeer, stored in the Mauritshuis in The Hague.</p>	<p>The first result is from takethehague.nl, while the others are only generic minor stock images website and an interior design blog.</p>	<p>English, Dutch</p>
<p>Lounging at the beach¹⁴⁵</p> 	<p>4 pages results</p>	<p>People enjoying a sunny day at the Zwarte Pad, one of the less touristy beach on the Scheveningen coast¹⁴⁶.</p>	<p>Mainly used in both local and international travel blogs for articles on day trip in The Hague, such as in touristdayticket.nl and dagjedenhaag.nl</p>	<p>English, Dutch, German, Japanese, French, Chinese</p>
<p>Hofvijver Summer¹⁴⁷</p> 	<p>3 pages of results</p>	<p>A couple in front of the Court Pond, an artificial lake in the city centre surrounded by historical buildings</p>	<p>Main results are to promote hotels (Marriott The Hague), cheap flights to Holland (flybe.com), and studies (Hogeschool De Haag). The first result is from takethehague.nl.</p>	<p>English, Dutch</p>
<p>Queen Máxima¹⁴⁸</p>	<p>2 pages of results</p>	<p>Dutch queen, wife of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.</p>	<p>The first 4 results are all from the website holland.com, managed by NBTC, for different articles: The Hague, Meetings, Water, and</p>	<p>English, Dutch, Japanese, French, Arabic</p>

¹⁴⁴ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/gi6vku>

¹⁴⁵ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/4Vz6Mq>

¹⁴⁶ "Zwarte Pad", accessed Jul 5, 2018




<https://denhaag.com/en/location/24182/zwarte-pad>

¹⁴⁷ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/u7yLqb>

¹⁴⁸ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/D7UVaW>


			<p>Rotterdam. The following 3 results are in Japanese from a blog called hollandflanders.jp, and 7 results in arabic from the blog shooosh2010.wordpress.com follow.</p>	
<p>Sports activities at sea¹⁴⁹</p> 	<p>2 pages of results</p>	<p>A couple of surfers with longboards</p>	<p>Among the first results there is the same article - A surfer's paradise/Paradijs voor surfers - in English/Dutch from a blog called behague.com. Other blogs for day trips such as yourdutchguide.com and coolsuggesties.nl appear.</p>	<p>English, Dutch</p>
<p>Victory Boogie Woogie¹⁵⁰</p> 	<p>2 pages of results</p>	<p>Six people observing the last (unfinished) painting of Piet Mondrian</p>	<p>Some results may have been removed under data protection law in Europe. Father and daughter looking at a Piet Mondrian's painting 3 out of 5 first results are linked to the Marriott Hotel The Hague. The only non-blog results is an article from 2016 published by the Volkskrant titled "Bijzondere persoonlijke brieven"</p>	<p>English, Dutch</p>

¹⁴⁹ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/dphSf6>

¹⁵⁰ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/pc9C35>

			van Piet Mondriaan opgedoken ¹⁵¹ ". Two articles from Holland.com appears as well, one in French and one in Dutch.	
<p>Tourists in front of peace palace¹⁵²</p> 	4 pages of results	Three female tourists taking a selfie in front of the Peace Palace	2 out of 4 results are from the website of the tourist information VVV Delft delft.com, which reinforces our previous findings on the active cooperation that The Hague seeks with the city of Delft to strengthen the royal storyline. The fact that one article is entitled "The Hague - City by the sea", further serves as a proof of dialogue between the two municipalities, because it used the image city by the sea, which is one of the key elements that determine the identity of The Hague as a tourist destination. The last result is from the VVV office of The Hague itself.	English, Dutch, French

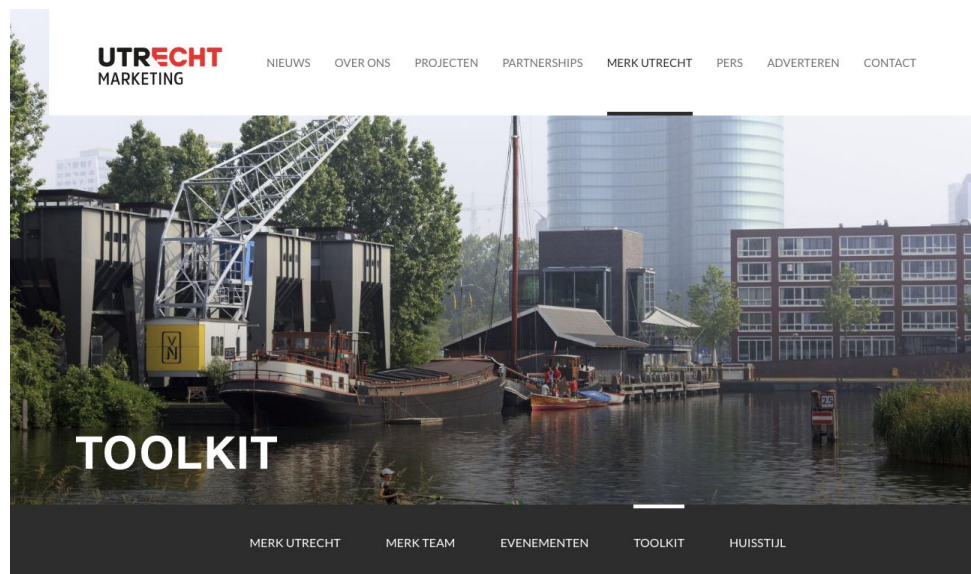
If we look at the pictures selected for the Hague, the identity more used is "city by the sea", which clearly appears in three images: "selfie Pier", "lounging at the beach", and "sports activities at sea". It is also relevant that it appears the pictures have been shot in different

¹⁵¹ Anna van Leeuwen, "Bijzondere persoonlijke brieven van Piet Mondriaan opgedoken", de Volkskrant, published 17 Mar, 2016, accessed Jul 6, 2018
<https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/bijzondere-persoonlijke-brieven-van-piet-mondriaan-opgedoken~bd301a88/>

¹⁵² Accessed Jul 4, 2018
<https://goo.gl/qRQYgu>

periods - we can assume “selfie pier” was taken in a colder period than “lounging at the beach” looking at the clothes people are wearing. Also, activities at the beach are presented both as relaxing (lounging) and as active (sports activities). The “city of peace and justice” is represented by the picture “tourists in front of peace palace”, while the “royal city” is communicated by “hofvijver summer” and “Queen Máxima”. While “couple at Girl with Pearl Earring, Mauritshuis” depicts visitors admiring a painting, we could also insert it in the royal theme, because the Mauritshuis - now art museum - used to be the residence of John Maurice, Prince of Nassau-Siegen¹⁵³.

Utrecht



Utrecht's toolkit¹⁵⁴ is the only one from the cities selected to be hosted in a website in Dutch only. In my opinion, this can highly limit the number of users. The research bar consists of brand Utrecht (*merk Utrecht*), brand team, events (*evenementen*), toolkit and corporate identity (*huisstijl*). Pictures can be filtered in seven categories¹⁵⁵:

1. Inside in Utrecht locations

¹⁵³ “Mauritshuis”, Wikipedia, accessed 6 Jun, 2018

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritshuis>

¹⁵⁴ “Toolkit”, Utrecht Marketing, accessed Jul 7, 2018

<https://www.utrechtmarketing.nl/merk-utrecht/toolkit/>

¹⁵⁵ Original titles in Dutch: Binnen in Utrechtse locaties

Binnenstad Utrecht

Business en talent

Evenementen (cultuur)



Groen, gezond, stedelijk leven

Herfst en winter in Utrecht binnenstad

Mobiliteit en sport

2. Inner city Utrecht
3. Business and talent
4. Events (culture)
5. Green, healthy, urban life
6. Autumn and winter in Utrecht city center
7. Mobility and sport




The branding toolkit of Utrecht is managed by Utrecht marketing and consists of 11 pages of material, for a total of 63 photos. For my comparison with the other cities, I decided to analyze 10 of the ones presented under the second section - city center of Utrecht. Since this subcategory has 29 photos, I decided to analyze 1 every five of them. Interestingly, the images from Utrecht were the one for which Google had the most accurate guess, suggesting that out of the three cities, Utrecht is the one with the most recognized and researched landmarks.

	Frequency	Description	Remarks	Languages
Drift - Studenten - Jurien Drenth ¹⁵⁶ 	0 pages	Students studying in a red room	The only two results have nothing to do with the city itself, but to the word "table"	/
Stadhuis - Ramon Mosterd ¹⁵⁷ 	1 page	Town hall of Utrecht at night	All the results are linked to Facebook pages of the SP Utrecht - the base in Utrecht of the socialist political party in the Netherlands.	Dutch, English, Spanish, German, and Chinese
Roost - Juri Hiensch ¹⁵⁸	1 page	People chilling during a sunny day in front of Roost, a bar close to a canal	3 results out of 4 are from the website of Utrecht Marketing, while the last one is an article that	Dutch

¹⁵⁶ Accessed Jul 4, 2018
<https://goo.gl/auqYX8>

¹⁵⁷ Accessed Jul 4, 2018
<https://goo.gl/AKD4iv>

¹⁵⁸ Accessed Jul 4, 2018
<https://goo.gl/xpkbR6>

			advertise a book on buildings the station area of Utrecht	
<p>Nieuwegracht - Ramon Rosterd¹⁵⁹</p> 	2 pages of results	Sunny picture of one of the most famous canals in the city center of Utrecht	Most of the results are from pages of the website of Utrecht Marketing, while one is from the international school of Utrecht. Two results are from article that promote tourism - one from the city itself (visit-utrecht.com) and one from NBTC (holland.com)	English, Dutch
<p>Ledig erf varen - Juri Hiensch¹⁶⁰</p> 	1 page	Sunny picture of an old street of Utrecht close to a canal	Only one result is related to this picture and it's from Utrecht Marketing, while the others are pages that Google shows in relation to the term "tree"	Dutch
<p>Dom staand (2) - Ramon Mosterd¹⁶¹</p>	4 pages	Sunny picture of the Dom Tower seen from Mariastraat	The first result is from the official website of this landmark. In addition, this picture has been used on a broad range of websites, from minor image stock database to blogs that suggest	English, Dutch

¹⁵⁹ Accessed Jul 4, 2018




<https://goo.gl/BnnPbW>

¹⁶⁰ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/k5ihGM>

¹⁶¹ Accessed Jul 4, 2018

<https://goo.gl/W89HFt>

			to visit this city. Moreover, we can find the photo on the website of conferences about different subject (f.e. psychology, biology), student associations, estate agencies. It even appears on LinkedIn profiles of a freelancer.	
Daktuin - Ramon Mosterd ¹⁶² 	5 pages	View on the Utrecht Science Park Café terrace	Results are mainly linked to the University of Utrecht scientific campus - De Uithof. The photo also appears linked to blogs on Utrecht, Hotels (f.e. Holiday Inn) in the city, and 9292, the provider of travel information on public transport in the Netherlands.	English, Dutch,
Soia - Juri Hiensch ¹⁶³ 	0 page	People chilling at the city beach	No result connected to this photo, but only 2 pages in relations to Google guess "leisure"	/
Oudegracht terras - Ramon Mosterd	3 pages	View on the Oudegracht, the	This picture is used in several	Dutch, English, Arabic ¹⁶⁵ .

¹⁶² Accessed Jul 4, 2018



<https://goo.gl/axSKX1>

¹⁶³ Accessed Jul 5, 2018

<https://goo.gl/GSidch>

¹⁶⁵ Accessed Jul 5, 2018

<http://mashregh-zamin.com/هلند-،-كانال-oudegracht/>

164 		main and most famous canal in the city, at sunset. Some people are on boats, while all the terraces of bars and restaurant on the canal are full	minor blogs that talk about what to see in Utrecht. In addition, it appears in an article about terraces in the magazine ELLE, and one in DUIC (De Utrechtse Internet Courant). Interestingly, this image is also used to promote events such as the music festival Le Guess Who?, the 18th European Conference on Developmental Psychology and De Nederlandse Pensioen Associatie (in english The Dutch Pension Association)	
Lombok Moskee - Juri Hiensch ¹⁶⁶ 	1 page	Picture of the Mosque in the intercultural neighbours Lombok	The only result related to this photo is from the website it was taken from, while the other 2 results are linked to the Google suggestion "mosque)	Dutch

Here, most of the pictures were linked to promotional articles related to congress and music events, which is in line with the tourism strategy of the city. The fact that many photos appeared on hotel's websites is coherent with the attempt to attract more business travelers, since they are the ones generally staying in this type of accomodation for shorter / often frequent - periods.

¹⁶⁴ Accessed Jul 5, 2018

<https://goo.gl/6NEfCK>

¹⁶⁶ Accessed Jul 5, 2018

<https://goo.gl/pRaZST>

Picturing students or part of the university campus contribute to the connecting-creator role, even though most of the icons are stereotypical (canals, Dom Tower).

Rotterdam



The branding toolkit of Rotterdam is the biggest one in dimension, with 973 media files, divided in 739 photos, 177 videos, 2 facts & figures, 55 texts, 8 collections, 28 showcases and 17 brandpartners. During the course of my research, this is the only branding toolkit that has been considerably changed. First, the material was divided into 21 themed categories: architecture, attractions, festivals & events, economy, cleantech, maritime & offshore, food, medical & life sciences, transport & logistics, energy, water & welta technology, creative industries, art & culture, durability & green, maritime & port, history, sport & exercise, education & study, going out, transport, health, and living.

However, during summer the categories have been removed and for a brief time the website was unreachable. This is due to the fact that the branding toolkit platform has been merged with the Rotterdam Make It Happen website (www.rotterdammakeithappen.nl). I think it is also interesting to notice the language used to communicate this change, characterized by abbreviation (“u” instead of “you”) and assuming that the user is a recurring one:

*As returning visitor of the Rotterdam Branding Toolkit (www.rotterdambrandingtoolkit.nl) or Rotterdam Make It Happen website (www.rotterdammakeithappen.nl) u have probably noticed already: both websites have undergone a complete make-over and have been integrated into this one new website!*¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ “New Rotterdam branding toolkit and Rotterdam make it happen website”, accessed Jul 17, 2018

<https://rotterdammakeithappen.nl/en/new-rotterdam-branding-toolkit-and-rotterdam-make-it-happen-website/>

The Rotterdam branding toolkit currently¹⁶⁸ presents a total of 973 files, divided in 739 photos, 177 videos, 2 facts & figures, 55 texts, 8 collections, 28 showcases and 17 brandpartners. The images present now watermark and to download the material it is necessary to indicate the following mandatory field: full name, email address and organization. This database is frequently updated and out of the three cities is the one that add the most material. For examples, the number of pictures in July was 739, but at the beginning of August¹⁶⁹ they were 757.

Now the website opens up the research field inviting to search from hundreds of beautiful media through Rotterdam. Under the search bar, there are the following popular search terms: Erasmusbrug, Markthal, skyline, festival, park, architecture, port. Below, three main branches appear: highlighted, collections, and showcases. Interestingly, by clicking on collections, users can see a preview of few themes: port and river, recreation and shopping, going out & terraces, attractions, entrepreneurship & innovation, arts & culture. However, when clicking on more, the page generates an error and it is impossible to access further information. On the other hand, if we consider the showcases section, we can access to 26 different examples of inspiring stories that took place in Rotterdam and represent its spirit. Each showcase also has a final part when it allows to download the images used for the narration of the story portrayed.

To be more neutral, I decided to select the 10 pictures to be analyzed by picking 1/10. In this way, I will avoid selecting unconsciously famous pictures or that naturally result familiar to me as a tourist. Since the data collection is constantly increased, I would like to specify that I selected the analyzed images on 30th July, 2018. The order was immediately different in the next 24 hours. Moreover, the dimension of the photos was not only too big to be used on Google reverse search, but also to be connected via free online tools. As a workaround, I took screenshot of the pictures, automatically reducing the size. However, I think this is a major impediment in the possible use of the files and I would recommend to have different format, in order for the users to select images compatible with their platforms.

	Image	Description	Remarks	Languages
1565 Gemeente Rotterdam Editorial ¹⁷⁰ -	1 page of results	Two young students building a technical experiment at RDM Rotterdam ¹⁷¹ , a campus near the	The image appears mainly on Rotterdam Make it happen website, beside two result from	English, Dutch

¹⁶⁸ Up to July 15, 2018



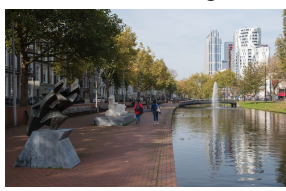

¹⁶⁹ 2 august 2018

¹⁷⁰ Accessed Jul 15, 2018

<https://goo.gl/tX1G69>

¹⁷¹ "About RDM Rotterdam", accessed Jul 15, 2018

<https://www.rdmrotterdam.nl/en/about-rdm/>

<p>Maarten Laupman</p> 		port used for research in the manufactory field	marketingfuel.nl, a dutch website specialized in marketing. One article refers to a student competition in marketing, the other to foreigner investors.	
<p>2017 Herfst Van Olderbarneveltstraat Zomers 1 - Tino van den Berg¹⁷²</p> 	0 results	Street art	The only two articles in relations to this image are two pages - one from Wikipedia and one from the encyclopedia Britannica.com - generically related to painting.	/ (english?)
<p>2017 Herfst Westesingel Beeldentoonstelling - Tino van den Berg¹⁷³</p> 	0 results	Street of Rotterdam close to water	The only two results showed are unrelated to this image, but fall into the wikipedia definition of three	/
<p>2017 PC16897 - Guido Pijper¹⁷⁴</p> 	2 pages of results	Two girls approaching the cube houses designed by Dutch architect Piet Blom during winter	The picture appear on Holland.com and on one online swedish travel guide - ArrivalGuides.com - translated in several languages.	English, French, Danish, Italian, Chinese, German- Interestingly, no result is in Dutch.

¹⁷² Accessed Jul 15, 2018


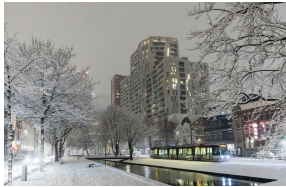
<https://goo.gl/CNktUj>

¹⁷³ Accessed Jul 15, 2018

<https://goo.gl/t2gbKw>

¹⁷⁴ Accessed Jul 15, 2018

<https://goo.gl/9uxKQB>




2017 PC17276 - Guido Pijper ¹⁷⁵ 	0 pages	Shopping mall in winter time	No results related to this picture, but only Wikipedia page on “commercial building”	/
2017 PC17559 - Guido Pijper ¹⁷⁶ 	0 pages	Westersingel in winter time	No results related to this picture, but only two Wikipedia page on “tree”	/
2017 SusanBijl_3584 - Shelley Trustfull ¹⁷⁷ 	0-1 page	Pictures of urban manufacturing produced in Rotterdam	The first two results (Wikipedia and Youtube) are generically connected to the word “design” suggested by Google, while the last one belongs to an article on Rotterdam Make it Happen related to innovative design in the city	English
2018 PC10109 - Guido Pijper ¹⁷⁸	0 pages	Street view of the Erasmus bridge	No results are connected to this well-known landmark. The only two results showing - Wikipedia and National Geographic - are connected generically to “urban area”	/

¹⁷⁵ Accessed Jul 15, 2018
<https://goo.gl/Wnu6UX>

¹⁷⁶ Accessed Jul 15, 2018
<https://goo.gl/d86QVN>

¹⁷⁷ Accessed Jul 15, 2018
<https://goo.gl/DaojA2>

¹⁷⁸ Accessed Jul 15, 2018
<https://goo.gl/s2Eh3A>

				
2018 PC108770 - Guido Pijper ¹⁷⁹ 	0 pages	Inside of Rotterdam's Central Station	Only one Wikipedia results connected to "commercial building" appears	/
GvR2018 Katendrecht - Gerhard van Roon Kunst en Vliegwerk RP 	0 pages	Aerial photography of Rotterdam	Only two results - Wikipedia and Britannica.com - linked to the definition of aerial photography	/

Despite having a prolific portfolio, Rotterdam still has to work on the quality of the subject - often uninteresting or poorly shot - and on the SEO¹⁸⁰. This is demonstrated by the fact that 7 pictures out of the 10 selected showed no results connected to the image itself. The fact this these photo are not used, especially when in relation to famous landmarks such as the Erasmus Bridge - may be due to the restoration of the website. Choosing to include the inside of a shop, the shopping mall and young people building experiments transmit the hard working/pioneering vibe Rotterdam wants to have.

¹⁷⁹ Accessed Jul 15, 2018

<https://goo.gl/3Uo9sx>

¹⁸⁰ "Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of affecting the online visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine's unpaid results [...] As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work, the computer programmed algorithms which dictate search engine behavior, what people search for, the actual search terms or keywords typed into search engines, and which search engines are preferred by their targeted audience."

"Search engine optimization", Wikipedia, accessed Jul 16, 2018

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization

In general, the NBTC portfolio seems to be the most widely used and it has only one picture with zero relevant results, while the Rotterdam branding toolkit has the most generic and therefore least used photos. Every portfolio contains images that corresponds to their identity, but also photos that stand back, f.e. The canals of Utrecht give more an idea of traditional, stereotypical Dutch vibe rather than modern incubator hub.

For what concern the target audience, being this analyses in regards to photographs used by third parties, I do not consider having material to evaluate a correspondence with the government's targets.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to determine the main similarities and differences in tourism city branding strategies in the cities of The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam. To do so, I have divided the research in three main stages: identity selection, target audience and visual communication.

In the first chapter, with the help of tourism policies and official website we determined the core identity - or combination of identities - that each city would like to embody and be linked with. On a national level, storylines have been used as an escamotage to present a plurality of narratives in order to attract, according to interests, different segments of tourists throughout the country and the year. For The Hague it resulted in the combination of three souls justified by historical reasons: city by the sea, city of peace and justice, and royal city. For Utrecht, it was the identity of connecting-creator and the willingness to inspire bright minds and promote innovations. Similarly, the city of Rotterdam with its “make it happen” campaign wants to be considered a modern city of pioneers, raw in its essence, but concrete in its actions. We established the importance of this process through Urry’s tourist gaze theory, which pinpoints the importance of image carriers and anticipation. We then compared the suggestions of different sources - both for domestic and international tourism, printed and online - to see if the most recommended landmarks convey the same images at the base of the various tourism strategies. At the end, The Hague’s identities are backed up by the history of the city, and therefore offer

In the second chapter, we focused on tourists classification in order to establish a connection between identities and target audience of the tourism promotion strategies. We started by undergoing the extensive NBTC classification that ended up not being used by any of the municipalities involved in this research, which are also the main ones of The Netherlands. We then discovered that The Hague looks separately at locals and internationals - the first divided by behaviour and expenditure capability, the second geographically - but it is not clear how this reflects in a differentiation of the offer. At the same time, Utrecht’s city branding strategy is more holistic and aims at attracting equally residents, workers and tourists. This appears to be done especially considering the involvement of the local population as ambassador of the Utrecht brand. Ultimately, Rotterdam’s purpose is to attract frontrunners, people who can be considered hustlers, disrupters and curators. One aim was to understand how each city would classify tourists, which resulted in predominant segmentations based on lifestyles. A second goal was to establish if the process of target selection was preceded by the identity one, or if one understanding their assets the cities would reflect on the segmentation that would fit the most. Based on my results, I believe the process of target selection happened after identity determination. Another important point that emerged is that the classification was done in most of the cases by external marketing company specialised in consumer behaviour. One more remark was that the majority of segmentations were more detailed when in relation to domestic tourists, while more generic in regards to the internationals. Just think about The Hague, who had a lifestyle color-coded classification for Dutch tourists, but looked at the internationals with a not extensive geographical division.

In the third chapter, we investigated the use of visual communication in branding via online branding toolkits. By offering free material to anyone for any purpose, branding marketeers attempt to control the selection of images circulating online. However, even though the photos chosen should depict the city in line with the city branding strategy, in particular they should communicate the selected identity to the desired target audience in order to enhance the visual communication, we discovered that this is not always the case. In practice, the national toolkit created by NBTC was revealed to be the most efficient one, both for number of results than for broader variety of languages and platforms the images from it appeared. By looking at the storylines, however, few topics correspond (mainly flowers). The most successful pictures were the one depicting stereotypes, such as tulips and windmills. On the other hand, Rotterdam's pictures had almost no results and resulted too generic to communicate the disruptive creativity the city would like to be associated with. Utrecht aims at attracting more business travelers and coherently its pictures are shown on hotel's websites to promote what to visit during short stays. For The Hague, the pictures with most results were the one depicting the city hall, the beach and the Peace Palace, which we can connect to the themes city of peace and justice and city by the sea. The royal theme is therefore missing.

In my opinion, the cooperation with NBTC can give high visibility to each municipality and should be considered an added value in the city branding strategy (higher appearance on articles, higher amount of professional photos, etc). For what concerns identity, I believe a better characterization would be beneficial for both Utrecht and Rotterdam. In fact, both cities want to be considered an innovation lab and take the distance from the traditional Dutch. However, they both still have to redefine this process: on one hand, it is unthinkable to Utrecht to be completely dissociated with the old Netherlands vibe due to the conformity of its territory (canals) and its architecture (old buildings, Dom): on the other, Rotterdam's material general nature is counter-productive to convey elements such as concreteness, pragmatism, inspiration.

In a nutshell, this study has identified The Hague with having the most effective identity selection, because it uses its historical assets to develop the long term tourism strategy, instead of rejecting it to build something new. The research has also shown that in relations to target selection, Utrecht has the more inclusive branding strategy, since it incorporate also locals and workers as added value (ambassadors) to the tourism field. By doing so, I believe the city will avoid in the long run to collide with the residents' interest and will build solutions that can be enjoyed by a broader audience. Comparing the branding toolkits was a useful experience that helped us understanding the relation between identities and visual communication. Looking at The Hague and Utrecht made no significant difference in the amount of results. However, the most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that Rotterdam has an exceeding amount of material that damage the overall strategy and I would advice to reduce the quantity of content to favour images that are more in line with modern and working vibes. The current data also highlight the importance of SEO optimisation, which may cause the lack of use in official sources such as national newspapers.

The insights gained from this study may be of assistance to develop further city branding strategies, in particular I hope it will highlight how scholarly literature may contribute in understanding contemporary phenomenons and prioritizing actions. Especially, the need to promote identities linked to culture and history and recognize the relevance of the tourist gaze

may give a considerable advantage in the promotion of a city. The small sample size of the photos did not allow us to further identify the efficiency of the entire portfolios. Moreover, this study was limited by the absence of data on number of travel visitors after adopting the identities and segmentations we saw in chapter one and two. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that a better correlation between identities and communication is needed.

The issue of city branding and scholarly literature is an intriguing one which could be usefully explored in further research, and it could be beneficial in developing methods to solve contemporary tourism issues such as overtourism. Another important practical implication is that foster effective branding strategies may help minor cities to increase their visibility and stimulate the tourism industry, in order to create more jobs and prosperity.

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