

**Tim Egidius Carolus van der Linden**

**The (mis)match between the perceived and  
projected images of tourist destinations**  
From the perspectives of Catalan DMOs and Dutch tourists

**FINAL MASTER PROJECT**

**Academic tutor prof. Yury Ustrov, PhD**



**UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI**

**Vila-seca**

**Date of presentation: September 14, 2021**

# Preface

Following a master's study outside of The Netherlands was a personal wish but also a challenge, not only personally but professionally: Surrounding yourself with a new (academic) culture, making new friends, learning about new disciplines. However, it turned out to be an amazing time. During this academic year I have learned more about Catalonia and Spain as a tourist destination itself in addition to managing tourism destinations.

The subject of my master's thesis has been very interesting to work on. I knew I wanted to incorporate a little bit of the both worlds that I have gained academic experience in: The Netherlands and Spain. Following the life I really want to achieve professionally after this master, bridging the Netherlands and Spain, in any way, I found this master's thesis subject the perfect fit for this time in my life.

With my background in Landscape Architecture and Land Use Planning (Wageningen UR) and Leisure and Tourism (Breda University), in combination with everything that I have learned during my time at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, I felt like everything comes together in this final master's thesis. I would like to thank all the friends and classmates that made me feel at home during my time abroad, my family for supporting me to follow this opportunity, and the supervision of professor Yury Ustrov, Phd. At last but not least, I would like to thank the Dutch tourists that gave me a chance to share their experiences of Catalonia with me, and of course, Inma Ballestín from the Catalan Tourist Board.

Hopefully, we can all read this thesis with a certain amount of curiosity and gain new insights into how people perceive and project images of tourism destinations all around the world, and if and how these images differ or are the same. Writing this thesis made me aware of the different stories that the Dutch tourists were able to draw up and speak about. I hope that each reader of this thesis can re-experience their holidays in Spain, especially in Catalonia, and that this will be a contribution to all of us who are interested in (tourism) destination management, cultural studies or tourism.

Tim van der Linden

9 September 2022, Helmond.



# Summary

## English

The phenomenon of tourism and the actions of tourists are driven by image to a certain level. This has direct implications for tourist destinations, as well as their destination management organizations. These so-called tourist destination images are social constructs that should be understood as complex ones. In the context of this study, tourist destination images are seen as an interaction between the perceived image, how tourists have expectations and experiences about a certain destination, and the projected image, which is mostly constructed by the organizations that want to sell the destination. The closer the gap between the perceived and projected image, the better it is. This study seeks to find if there is a (mis)match between the perceived and projected image, from the context of Catalan DMOs and Dutch tourists.

To capture the broad image of tourism destinations, this study uses the qualitative method of mental mapping as a useful way to reveal how tourists perceive tourism destinations in a spatial dimension. Mental maps can be used as helpful tools to reveal the dynamics between people and the environment they live in. To find out if the perceived images of the tourists coincide with the projected image constructed by the Spanish region of Catalonia, a content analysis on the official website of the Catalan Tourist Board is conducted.

The tourist destination image that is projected to the Benelux market is rather normative, as this message of the Catalan DMO is what they desire themselves for the sake of the Catalan tourist industry and to stimulate sustainable tourism within its territory. The perceived image, in contrast to the projected and biased image of the DMO, is rather a descriptive perception, based on the experiences of the tourists and what they sense during their holidays to a tourist destination. Because these two images are, as this study concludes, different, DMOs are having a challenge to find a better match between those images.

## Castellano

El fenómeno del turismo y las acciones de los turistas se rigen por la imagen hasta cierto punto. Esto tiene implicaciones directas para los destinos turísticos, así como para sus organizaciones de gestión de destinos. Las llamadas imágenes de los destinos turísticos son construcciones sociales que deben entenderse como complejas. En el contexto de este estudio, las imágenes de los destinos turísticos se consideran una interacción entre la imagen percibida, la forma en que los turistas tienen expectativas y experiencias sobre un determinado destino, y la imagen proyectada, que en su mayoría es construida por las organizaciones que quieren vender el destino. Cuanto más estrecha sea la diferencia entre la imagen percibida y la proyectada, mejor será. Este estudio pretende averiguar si existe una (des)correspondencia entre la imagen percibida y la proyectada, desde el contexto de las OMD catalanas y los turistas holandeses.

Para captar la imagen amplia de los destinos turísticos, este estudio utiliza el método cualitativo de los mapas mentales como una forma útil de revelar cómo los turistas perciben los destinos turísticos en una dimensión espacial. Los mapas mentales pueden utilizarse como herramientas útiles para revelar la dinámica entre las personas y el entorno en el que viven.



Para averiguar si las imágenes percibidas por los turistas coinciden con la imagen proyectada construida por la región española de Cataluña, se realiza un análisis de contenido en la página web oficial de la Agencia Catalana de Turismo.

La imagen de destino turístico que se proyecta al mercado del Benelux es más bien normativa, ya que este mensaje de la DMO catalana es el que ellos mismos desean para el bien de la industria turística catalana y para estimular el turismo sostenible en su territorio. La imagen percibida, en contraste con la imagen proyectada y sesgada del DMO, es más bien una percepción descriptiva, basada en las experiencias de los turistas y en lo que perciben durante sus vacaciones a un destino turístico. Dado que estas dos imágenes son, como se concluye en este estudio, diferentes, las OMD tienen el reto de encontrar una mejor correspondencia entre dichas imágenes.

## Català

El fenomen del turisme i les accions dels turistes es riguen per la imatge fins a cert punt. Això té implicacions directes per als destins turístics, així com per a les seves organitzacions de gestió de destinacions. Les trucades imatges dels destins turístics són construccions socials que han d'entendre com a completes. En el context d'aquest estudi, les imatges dels destins turístics es consideren una interacció entre la imatge percebuda, la forma en què els turistes tenen expectatives i experiències sobre un determinat destí, i la imatge projectada, que en la seva majoria és construïda per les mateixes organitzacions que volen vendre el destí. Quant més estrecha sea la diferència entre la imatge percebuda i la projectada, millor serà. Aquest estudi pretén averiguar si existeix una (des)correspondència entre la imatge percebuda i la projectada, des del context de les OMD catalanes i els turistes holandeses.

Per captar la imatge amplia dels destins turístics, aquest estudi utilitza el mètode qualitatiu dels mapes mentals com una forma útil de revelar com els turistes perceben els destins turístics en una dimensió espacial. Els mapes mentals poden utilitzar-se com a eines útils per revelar la dinàmica entre les persones i l'entorn en el que viuen. Per averiguar si les imatges percebudes pels turistes coincideixen amb la imatge projectada construïda per la regió espanyola de Catalunya, es realitza una anàlisi del contingut a la pàgina web oficial de l'Agència Catalana de Turisme.

La imatge de destino turístico que es proyecta al mercado del Benelux és més ben normativa, ja que aquest missatge de la DMO catalana és el que ells mateixos volen per al bé de la indústria turística catalana i per estimular el turisme sostenible al seu territori. La imatge percebuda, en contrast amb la imatge projectada i sesgada del DMO, és més bé una percepció descriptiva, basada en les experiències dels turistes i en el que perceben durant les seves vacances a un destí turístic. Donat que estàs dues imatges son, com es conclou en aquest estudi, diferents, les OMD tenen el reto de trobar una millor correspondència entre dites imatges.

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	2
Summary .....	3
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	7
1.1. Problem Definition & Research Objective .....	7
1.2. Relevance of the Study .....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	10
2.1. Destination image construction .....	10
2.1.1. Destination images and its multidimensionality.....	10
2.1.2. Destination images and pre-conception.....	11
2.1.3. Destination images and information .....	11
2.2. Perceived tourist destination image.....	12
2.2.1. Perceived image and conceptualization .....	13
2.2.2. Perceived image and the construct “perception” .....	14
2.2.3. Perceived image and the construct “image” .....	15
2.3. Projected image of destinations.....	15
2.3.1. Projected image and DMOs.....	15
2.3.2. Projected images and official tourism websites .....	16
2.4. Conceptual framework and research questions.....	17
Chapter 3: The Destination (Management) of Catalonia.....	19
3.1. Catalonia and its (international) markets .....	19
3.2. Catalonia as a destination management organization .....	21
Chapter 4: Research Methodology.....	23
4.1. Research Design .....	23
4.2. Study Population and Sampling.....	24
4.3. Data Collection .....	25
4.4. Data Analysis .....	27
4.5. Research Validity & Limitations .....	29
Chapter 5: Results .....	30
5.1. Perceived tourist destination image.....	30
5.1.1. Mental Mapping Catalonia as a Tourist Destination.....	31
5.1.2. Mental Mapping the Components of Tourist Destination Image .....	36
5.2. Projected tourist destination image.....	42
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion.....	47



6.1. Conclusion.....	47
6.2. Discussion.....	50
References .....	53
Appendices.....	62
Appendix A. Interview Guide Dutch Tourists.....	62
Appendix B. Interview Guide Experts DMO.....	64
Appendix C: Consent Form Privacy and Use Statement .....	65
Appendix D: Questions short survey to Dutch tourists.....	67
Appendix E: Codes MAXQDA Interviews .....	68
Appendix F: Mental Maps Perceived Tourist Destination Image.....	69



# Chapter 1: Introduction

Tourist destinations, such as towns, cities, regions or countries, have particular characteristics that identify them (Marine-Roig, 2014). These characteristics can range from natural and urban ones to characteristics that are more found in the destination's intangible heritage. To illustrate, according to Thompson (2000), the Eiffel Tower is seen as the symbol of the French capital Paris and plays a prominent role in the image construction and symbolization when people hear about or travelling to Paris. On the other hand, intangible characteristics are more representative of a local community and their culture and identity, such as traditions or the Parisian cuisine.

In the last decades, society has become overcommunicated, and the tourism marketplace more crowded due to the emergence of (new) tourist destinations (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004; Moufakkir, 2008). In addition to these developments, tourist destinations that have no image, or a weak image, face greater challenges in the creation of a strong and positive associated destination image (Kotler & Gertner, 2004).

In this context, the relationship between place identity, its representation on people and tourism is formed by the tourist image (Marine-Roig, 2014). This concept is a complex one which *"intermediates the relationship between the destination, its elements of identity and the tourists through the representation, communication and perception of these elements in image"* (Marine-Roig, 2014, p.19). By providing an understanding of tourist image, valuable information can be given to the destination's dynamics and processes taking place, as well as the formation and evolution of destinations in past, present and future.

## 1.1. Problem Definition & Research Objective

For a long time, the image of tourist destinations has been subject to research in the fields of hospitality, tourism, and travel (Marine-Roig, 2014; Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018; Pike, 2002). Concepts that often are related to the nature of tourist destination images are "perception," "idea," "representation," and "impression" (Lai & Li, 2016). According to Urry (1990), this is not strange at all, as being visible has become the most significant intermediate of cognition and representation in postmodern destinations and their societies. In addition, according to several scholars (Boulding, 1956; Martineau, 1958), the behavior of humankind is reliant on images rather than the objective reality. As of that, the phenomenon of tourism and the actions of tourists are driven by image to a certain level, which has tremendous implications for destinations, as well as their destination management organizations.

Over time, numerous scholars have defined the tourism destination image extensively, such as the thorough definition of Lai & Li (2016), in which tourism destination image is defined as:

*"a voluntary, multisensory, primarily picture-like, qualia-arousing, conscious and quasi-perceptual mental experience held by tourists about a destination. This experience overlaps and/or parallels the other mental experiences of tourists, including their sensation, perception, mental representation, cognitive map, consciousness, memory, and the attitude of the destination (p. 1074)."*

However, like many other social constructs (Poljanec-Boric, Wertag & Sikic 2018; Jarrat, Phelan, Wain & Dale, 2018) tourist destination image must be understood as a complex one, which is incorporated within wider tendencies and processes in society. Tourism itself is explained and transmitted as a social phenomenon where different narratives convey arrays of images and representations that withhold several identity elements. These narratives can be understood by approaching them as socially constructed structures of both symbols and meanings (Marine-Roig, 2014).

Regarding the actors' narratives and their perspectives of the destination image building process, two types of tourism destination images can be distinguished in literature on place marketing: perceived image and the projected image, and in turn, the relations between the two types (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). In short, perceived images can be seen as the impressions, expectations and ideas people have of a place to consider. The projected type of image is more a result of the interaction between the people's personal characteristics and how they perceive the projected image (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996).

It is accepted that the closer the gap between perceived and projected images, the better it is. As a result of that, marketers and other actors in the destination image formation and projection intend to match both sides of the destination image (Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997). In addition, Kim & Lehto (2013) claim that a strong relationship between image perception and projection is necessary to create and maintain a strong relationship between the destination brand and its visitors. In that sense, the aim can be to achieve congruency between the images of tourism destinations. Therefore, the research objective is to find new insights that can be used for destination management and marketing organizations to narrow down the gap between the perceived and projected images of tourism destinations.

In line with the previous paragraph, the following research question is proposed:

*Does the perceived image held by tourists who have visited a destination (mis)match the projected image of that certain destination?*

## 1.2. Relevance of the Study

The relevance of this study is twofold, as it contributes to both academic literature and society. This study contributes to the academic field of tourism and marketing studies by elaborating on the concepts as destination image and its construction and perceptions. The relationship between the perceived and projected tourism destination image has mostly been based on quantitative research. In relation to the perceived image, data has been collected through visitor surveys to capture the perceived destination image (Andreu, Bigné, & Cooper, 2000; Bui, 2011; Farmaki, 2012; Grosspietsch, 2006; Ji & Wall, 2015; Meneghello & Montaguti, 2016; Önder & Marchiori, 2017). Traditional research methods on the projected image have been analyzed by obtaining data through secondary information sources such as official information of national tourism organizations, as well as promotional sources by destination marketing organizations (DMOs).

Furthermore, in the sense of the rising use and opportunities of user-generated contents through platforms as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, many researchers have studied the *perceived* image by analyzing online sources that are travel-related (Chen & Law, 2016;

Stepchenkova & Khan, 2013; Khan, 2013; Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2016). Nevertheless, several studies claim that mainly *organic* sources as friends, colleagues and family (Llodra-Riera, Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015; Eurobarometer, 2016; VisitBritain, 2017), and physical travel guidebooks (Llodra-Riera, Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015; Tsang, Chain & Ho, 2011) are most influential information sources, next to web pages and other user-generated content. In general, in line with the previous paragraph, most of the research on tourism destination image was conducted quantitatively, using statistical analyses (Jalilvan, Samiei, Dini & Manzari, 2012; Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou & Apostolopoulou, 2015).

To capture the broad image of tourism destinations, this study will use the qualitative method of mental mapping as a useful way to reveal how tourists perceive tourism destinations in a spatial dimension. Mental maps can be used as helpful tools to reveal the dynamics between people and the environment they live in (Jansen, 2011). Also, Lee, Hitchcock & Lei (2017) state that mental maps “*are used for comparing, analyzing, displaying and eliciting mental models, providing many interpretations of people’s spatial perceptions*” (p. 307). Most studies using mental mapping focus predominantly on place representations from a specific discipline such as visual communications and media (Gutsche, 2014), or on the methodology of mental mapping as an instrument for urban research in general (Sulsters, 2005). According to Lee, Hitchcock & Lei (2017), studies like these are under-represented within the field of tourism. In their research, they used the method of mental mapping to investigate how tourists of the city of Macao spatially perceive the city’s World Heritage Sites. However, in *this* study, mental maps will be used and analyzed to visualize tourists’ representations of tourist destinations, which provide a lens in displaying their production, experience and perception of place, and the relationship between tourists and the environment they visit (Gieseking, 2013).

From a societal perspective, this study provides relevant information for destination managers and planners, marketers and other organizations within the tourism industry. According to Marine-Roig & Ferrel-Rossel (2017), gaining knowledge of the relationship (and (in)congruence) between the perceived and projected image can be useful for national tourism organizations and destination management/marketing organizations. For national tourism organizations (NTOs) and DMOs it is needed to conduct calculations on the incongruence between projected and perceived images, so that these destination organizations can improve the promotion of the destination. These organizations can use this knowledge to strengthen the promotion and positioning of the tourist destination, as well as improve planning and branding processes that help in building a comprehensive and congruent image of their tourism destination.

In the next chapter, a literature review will be presented that discusses several contributing literature in the fields of place, identity, image, and tourism. In chapter 3, a brief explanation of the case for this study, being the Spanish state of Catalunya, will be elaborated. Afterwards, the scientific methods used in this study will be presented in chapter 4, followed by the results in chapter 5 and the conclusion/discussion in chapter 6.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As presented in the previous chapter, this study emphasizes the (mis)match between a destination's perceived and projected image. In the next sections, key publications considering destination image, which is comprised into both the perceived and projected image, and other relevant related concepts are presented.

### 2.1. Destination image construction

Destination image itself is a social construct that is complex and a result from both the perceived (demand) and projected (supply) images, as introduced in the previous chapter. Both perceived and projected images mutually influence each other and are part of a hermeneutic cycle of image (Marine-Roig, 2015; Caton & Almeida Santos, 2008). The supply-sided part of this complex construct, the projected image, embodies with specific representations which are mostly established by diverse types of stakeholders such as destination marketing or management organizations. These are specifically mostly intended for (potential) visitors of the destination and are perceived by them. On the other hand, these visitors have an influence on the construction of image by reproducing those (projected) images or creating new images, which is referred to as the perceived image. As a result, the complete destination image is compromised of the interaction of all these images, according to Marine-Roig (2015).

Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell (2018) claim that the assessment of congruence between perceived and projected images is to become a basic task for destination management organizations. In several studies, the basic dichotomy of perceived and projected images has been used for analyses on tourism image congruency based on quantifiable tourist surveys. Especially DMOs are extensively gathering information found online, and in specific customer feedback, to compete within the huge supply of tourist destinations around the world. User-generated content can, in this respect, be seen as a 'free' window to the perceptions of tourists after a travel to a certain destination to assess congruency.

Some studies have investigated the analyses of visitors' perceived and projected images at the same time, such as the one conducted by Stepchenkova & Zhan (2013): They have compared official photos of the national DMO of Peru, which is the projected image, and of visitors, which is perceived image. The study has found out that there exists a mismatch in the topics tourists are more interested in (being the local's daily lives) and the topics promoted by the DMO (being different images of the Peruvian gastronomy and its traditions). Other studies have analyzed the same matter but with textual content analysis of travel blogs or other online information sources (Mak, 2017; Chen, Yung & Wang, 2008). In these cases, it also appeared that the images that are supplied/projected by DMOs do not per se coincide with the images that are perceived by the visitors of the destination (Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018).

#### 2.1.1. Destination images and its multidimensionality

In line with the statements on destination image and its complexity, many authors have supported the view that the construct of "image" is multidimensional. According to Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Ayyildiz & Turna (2013), the image of tourism destinations is a result of two components which are interrelated: The first component, the cognitive, involves basic processes in individuals where they know their environments. The second component is the

affective component, which involves the environment and the emotions and feelings attached to it. According to Kim & Perdue (2011), most scholars have considered this dichotomy of the cognitive and affective components to analyze the tourism destination image. Due to the interaction between the two described components, a third component can be identified which is the component that involves action, doing or striving as a response to the previous two components (Agapito, Oom do Valle, & da Costa Mendes, 2013; Gartner, 1993). This component is referred to as the “conative” component.

In literature, these above-mentioned components can be found back in other concepts in the fields of geography and tourism, such as place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992) and Genius Loci (Khettab & Chabbi-Chemrouk, 2017; Poljanec-Borec et al., 2018; Norberg-Schultz, 1991; Jiven & Larkam, 2003). In the latter one, Genius Loci has been studied as an overarching concept that comprises, also, cognitive, conative, and affective dimensions (Khettab & Chabbi-Chemrouk, 2017).

### 2.1.2. Destination images and pre-conception

Another contributing statement on tourism destination images has been introduced by Ryan (2003), who advocates that tourists have pre-conceived images (expectations) when arriving at a destination. In line with that statement, an image of a destination is linked in a direct way to a tourist’s satisfaction level and its expectations before visiting the destination (Chon & Olsen, 1991). In that way, the question that should be asked is on what level the projected image coincides with the actual experience during the visit (Farmaki, 2012). For destinations and their management organizations, this insight is key because satisfaction may result in intentions to revisit the destination, and intention to recommend the tourist destination to other people (Gitleson & Kerstetter, 1994). In Qu, Kim & Im’s research (2011), it is also agreed that destination images have a direct influence on the tourists’ intention to revisit a specific destinations, and in turn, recommend the destination to others.

### 2.1.3. Destination images and information

In addition to the research on discovering the different components of tourism destination image, much research has been conducted on how these images of destinations are displayed in different information sources, both online and offline. As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, information sources on tourism destination image can be distinguished in many ways. In 1986, Phelps was able to distinguish place images in both primary and secondary sources. These primary images come from a visitor’s (or resident’s) own experience when visiting (or living) in the destination itself. Secondary images, however, are a result of the work of stakeholders in the destination and visitors that have visited in the past.

Regarding the information sources tourist destinations have the most control over, Gartner (1993) expresses that the most credible and influential information to tourists is the information that is least controlled by the destination stakeholders that are involved. Gartner introduces in his study (1993) a thorough classification of tourist information sources, making use of the components of both the control of the destination and credibility/influence on tourists: These range from overt induced and covert induced information sources, such as traditional forms of advertisement from DMOs and travel agents, to autonomous (travel guides, news, films, magazines) and organic (word-of-mouth from friends and relatives)

information sources. Lastly, as the least controlled and most credible information source, Gartner introduces the information source of a tourist itself, being his or her own experience in the destination.

However, in literature, findings considering tourist destination image information sources and its distribution among tourists vary (e.g., Camprubí & Coromina, 2016; Choi, Lehto & Morrison, 2007). Beerli & Martín (2004) even indicated that certain induced sources as tour operators and the internet had no noteworthy influence on the cognitive component of destination image to first-time tourists to particular destinations. On the other hand, they investigated that organic and autonomous sources did have significant influences on the image of the destination. Taking a side-step towards consumer decision-making processes, Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan (2008) also claim that information sources as word-of-mouth and interpersonal influences are most important in credibility.

Over the last years, the information source of word-of-mouth has been subject to technological developments, as the importance of the internet as an information source for tourism has risen (Llodrá-Riera et al., 2015). This so-called electronic word-of-mouth has resulted to be credible trustable (Dickinger, 2011). Jalilvand & Samiei (2012) even claim that electronic word-of-mouth has a positive influence on the tourism destination image and the tourist's attitude, intention and decision-making behavior towards tourist destinations. As a result, most DMOs have been creating their own websites and social media accounts (web 2.0) on which users can rely on the appropriate content of the tourist destination (Zhang, Fu & Lu, 2014).

A general agreement is made on the fact that tourist image is a complex construct that needs more attention in its comprehension and explanation (Kim & Richardson, 2003). With the rising appearance of internet, social media, new forms of tourism and a more dynamic and interconnected world, the concept of tourism image and its disciplines are becoming more complex too (Marine-Roig, 2014).

In the next two sub-chapters (2.2. & 2.3.), a more thorough literature review will be presented on both the perceived and projected image of destinations.

## 2.2. Perceived tourist destination image

The more demand-sided destination image, the perceived image, is a mental construct of a specific destination that is constructed through interactions between both the projected image and external stimuli (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In addition, characteristics of each individual have an influence on the perception of destination image. The perceived image of destinations is interesting to destination management organizations, because it gains insights into the decision-making behavior of tourists and, as of that, helps in selling the appropriate image to its consumers (Jenkins, 1999).

Perceived images can be split into two categories (Gunn, 1972): Organic and induced. Organic images are formed from sources of information that are not associated to a destination directly. In this case, word-of-mouth, documentaries, movies, and magazines can be examples of organic sources of information. Induced images are results of exposure to materials of

promotion that are formed and broadcasted by the destination and its organizations itself, such as brochures and posters.

In a study conducted by Ayyildiz & Turna (2013), the perceived image of the countries Spain and Germany as a tourist destination for Dutch travelers was analyzed. They concluded that the weather has a significant impact in the travel choice of Dutch tourists, as it is warmer in Spain than in their respective home countries, especially in the summer months. Respondents showed that the nice weather and beaches on the Spanish costas, mainly while mentioning Barcelona and Madrid, were emphasized. It is proven that the destination image of countries plays important roles in choosing a destination, but also that image has become a tool in a country's strategic development. On top of that, Ayyildiz & Turna (2013) have found that destination images are a mix of both positive and negative perceptions. Other studies have found that being familiar with a destination can be a factor on the (positive) perception of a destination (Bologlu, 2001).

### 2.2.1. Perceived image and conceptualization

Its conceptualization has been a research focus for many years, and several components and dimensions have been found and studied as of today. As described in paragraph 2.1., the cognitive and affective components have been widely approved by scholars across different disciplines. These two components are mostly associated with the perceived image, as this consists of mental representations of a destination (Ji, 2011). The cognitive image refers to the beliefs and knowledge of individuals of a destination and its attributes. Transportation, attitudes of locals, physical environment or weather can be cognitive attributes. Considering the affective component, people's emotions are put to the front: It gives insights into how strong or weak individuals emotionally evaluate the destination and its attributes. Examples of those affective images can be feelings, such as boring, vibrant, happy or dangerous. Many researchers claim that the cognitive and affective images are interrelated and interdependent (Anand, Holbrook & Stephens, 1998; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993; Stern & Krakover, 1993). As a result of that interrelation and interdependence, several scholars have conceptualized a third component being the conative image (Gartner, 1993; Manstead, 1996; Pike & Ryan, 2004). This component in destination image is associated with the decision-making process, as a result of the cognitive and affective 'phases': The interaction between the cognitive and affective images builds an overall image of the destination, which leads to the construction of the conative image that, in sequence, results in the decision-making process.

Nevertheless, several authors have claimed a lacking in/of the spatial dimension in previous research, as tourists and their activities tend to orient in destinations spatially (Lee, Hitchcock & Lei, 2017). In the field of tourism geography, the spatial dimension of the image of destinations is important to take along in research. Lynch (1960) is one of the scholars that advocates that the spatial dimension and its patterns of the observer or any other objects should be included in images. In addition to Lynch, Pocock & Hudson (1978) proposed a designative component instead of a cognitive component. This fourth-mentioned component contains information considering the description and classification of a destination. Furthermore, the designative component considers both the structural/physical attributes of the cognitive image (e.g., texture, color, size), and the attributes related to space (e.g., distance, location, relativity). Examples of studies incorporating the spatial component of the

image is illustrated by Son (2005) and Stephchenkova & Zhan (2013), in which they used the technique of mental mapping to measure the tourism destination image and geo-maps that represent both perceived and projected images.

Paül i Agusti (2021) advocates that the spatial dimension in which tourists locate in tourism destinations can be a challenge. In his study, cartographic analysis is used to analyze the differences or similarities between hundreds of posted images (Instagram) by tourist boards (projected image) and tourists (perceived image) in Barcelona. The findings of his research show that tourist boards merely focus on a small number of specific locations. However, the images that are user-generated show, in contrast to the projected images, a different spatial distribution. Another study, conducted by Lee, Hitchcock & Lei (2017), used the method of mental mapping to reveal how much spatial knowledge of World Heritage Sites visitors of Macao have. In this study, the way how visitors perceive tourism destinations can be revealed spatially.

### 2.2.2. Perceived image and the construct “perception”

As the perceived image is derived from the construct “perception”, scholars have been using this construct in their research in relation to the tourist destination image. According to Reich (1999), images of tourist destinations are based on perceptions. It is necessary for tourist destinations and all its actors that are involved to understand the perceptions of tourists clearly, so that tourist destinations can be developed sustainably with successful strategies on positioning the destination (Reich, 1999; Sirakaya, Teye & Sonmez, 2002). Besides perceptions, the image of destinations is affected by the stereotypes and attitudes that (potential) tourists have on a specific destination. This includes the perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes on both physical and social attributes of a certain destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Perceptions are one of the conditions for people to travel, so tourist destinations should position themselves so that (potential) tourists desire to visit the destination in the future (Reich, 1999). In any way, Reisinger & Turner (2003) stated that the tourists’ perception on a destination influences the decision choice of travel. In addition, understanding tourists’ perceptions helps understanding target markets (Reich, 1999). Several studies on tourism perceptions have been conducted over time which are mostly focused on the perceptions and attitudes of host communities, perceptions of tourists in relation to diasporas and space and the complexity of destination images (Moufakkir, 2008).

Definitions on *perceptions* can be defined in various way. For example, Moutinho (1987) explains in his paper that perceptions shape the way people have relations with each other. Reisinger & Turner (2003) express that perceptions can be defined as a process in which meanings are attached to objects, events or persons. Experience or knowledge of the destination is not required to create perceptions, including the typical characteristics of a destination such as its host communities. On top of that, perception has a profound influence on the attitude whether people travel to a destination because this decision-making process is related to people’s sentiments and cognition (Moutinho, 1987). As a result of that, perceptions differ among individuals because of their distinction in personal views and values, relationships, experiences and (direct) environments (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Lastly,

perceptions differ in strength and sensitive direction (positive/negative), which are, again, subject to environmental influences about the destination.

### 2.2.3. Perceived image and the construct “image”

Considering the concept of *Image*, many studies have been conducted in disciplines as consumer behavior, (tourism) marketing and environmental psychology. In the seventies, Hunt (1971) and Gunn (1972) have introduced the concept of image into the realm of tourism studies, and as a consequence, it has become one of the most studied topics in the discipline of tourism (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). The construct image is a sum of attitudes, impressions and beliefs that an individual or group of people have of a place, person, company, brand or product. Impressions of these can be based on the truth or imagined. For instance, the image of a destination (e.g., the country of Germany), is the sum of attitudes, impressions, and beliefs that someone has on Germany. One of the streams in which destination image has been studied is that of tourism destination image, the other being product-country image.

According to Hunt (1971), the image of a tourist destination has a significant impact on people’s travel behavior. Mostly, the place or country where a tourist is living determines its perception of image of a tourist destination. In the past, research has also been conducted on the effects of image on tourists (Pearce, 1982; Woodside & Lyonski, 1989), how image can be measured (Eichner & Ritchie, 1993; Phelps, 1986), and how it can be constructed (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Some of these studies (Pearce, 1982; Phelps, 1986), among others, have elaborated that the visitor experience has a remarkable effect on revisiting the destinations tourist have been to. One of these researchers, Pearce (1982), has found that shopping, locals, culture, and beaches can be seen as the most crucial factors in tourist destination image. In addition, the socio-cultural background of people has a significant impact on the way of perceiving the destination (Therkelsen, 2003).

## 2.3. Projected image of destinations

As mentioned before, an image of a tourist destination is not only constructed by the perceived image, but also by the projected image. The search for being different is one of the drive factors of the tourist phenomenon, and in addition, that search for being different is based on the conditions that different geographical territories have each their own inherent identities, characteristics and cultures that are part of them. These can only be acknowledged when travelling to these territories. The tourist image plays a key role of reflection on these identities and can be subject to (re)presentation, transformation, and adaption to different purposes in each their different contexts (Mariné-Roig, 2014).

### 2.3.1. Projected image and DMOs

The ones that play a significant role in the promotion of tourism destinations and its image creation towards its markets are destination management organizations (DMOs) (Loncaric, Basan & Markovic, 2013). In most of these countries, DMOs consist of tourist offices on national and/or regional and/or local levels. According to the World Tourism Organization (2007), DMOs should anticipate on new trends that may influence the choices and behavior of their consumers, as DMOs have a role of importance in marketing the tourism product of that certain destination. Especially with the rise of technology, internet and social media platforms,

visual content is becoming more important in the communication of tourism (Leung, Law & Van Hoof, 2013). As an outcome of the study conducted by Picazo & Moreno-Gil (2017), it is found that brochures and digital contents such as websites have a predominant role in the projected image. In addition, an increasing influence has been found in image-sharing social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. Projected images are the impressions and ideas that are created about a certain destination, which originate from one of these above-described sources (Ji, 2011). These images reflect what the producers of that image, in this case being DMOs or marketing agencies, expect tourists to experience or perceive when being at the destination (Van Gorp & Beneker, 2007). In that sense, the projected image can both be planned intentionally or unintentionally (Kozma & Asworth, 1993).

Planned and intended projected images are created by DMOs or other destination organizations and appear in materials of tourism advertisement such as brochures, video commercials or billboards. In this case, selected attributes of the destinations are used aiming at attracting potential visitors (Albers & James, 1998). On the other hand, projected images can be created unintentionally, not being created by destination marketers (Andreu, Bigne & Cooper, 2000). These unintentional projected images can be seen in travel guides, movies, television programs, series and news programs (Gartner, 1993). Gartner (1993) also states that these projected images are highly credible and penetrate the market well. Both intentional and unintentional projected images of destinations are studied in the academic literature (Ji, 2011).

With the rise and advantages of the usage of Internet, DMOs are using the advantages of this technology to steer and improve their orientation towards their consumers (Loncaric, Basan & Markovic, 2013): Using the advantages that are provided by Internet, social media, and other new trends within the tourism industry, DMOs can reach a greater number of (potential) tourists all around the world without spending relatively too much money to market their product (destination). Also, consumers are provided with rich and extensive information on the destination they would like to go to, in an easy and inexhaustive way. As of that, DMOs can nowadays reach potential tourists in multiple markets of interest. In turn, gaining insights into the importance of sources of information of tourists is important for destination marketers. In this manner they learn how and when tourists appreciate to search for information that helps them in making their travel decisions.

### 2.3.2. Projected images and official tourism websites

Even though user-generated content on the internet is becoming more and more important for the image formation of tourists for a specific destination, Mariné-Roig (2014) claims that official tourism websites should be considered in the process of tourism destination formation too. These websites are fundamental for the dissemination of the tourist image, but also for the promotion of the brand and marketing and communication purposes concerning the destination (Fernández-Cavia & Huertas-Roig, 2009). One reason for that is, in most cases, the websites' significant quantity of information concerning the destination, their interactive and virtual design, and its content that is regularly updated (Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010). Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger (2010) also state that official tourism websites provide content for their (potential) tourists before (Transportation and decision-making), while (information concerning the destinations), and after (Experiences and reviews) their stay in the destination.

On top of that, besides the websites containing information about the specific destination, it also transmits the destination's attributes and whole identity to tempt potential tourists to visit that destination.

The difference between official tourism websites is their distinct content or theme where they lay focus on to transmit a certain image of their specific destination (Mariné-Roig, 2014). In research conducted by Pitt, Campbell, Berthon, Nel & Loria (2018), main themes such as "country", "passengers", "culture" or "city" were identified in different official tourism websites in Central America. Some of those websites focus on their cultural heritage, while others provide more factual information about the destination (e.g., facts and figures). Huertas (2008) studied several official tourism websites within the region of Costa Daurada (Spain) and found information about the similarities and differences between the websites' information provided: As an example, more than 80% of the websites provided information on the destinations' geography and almost 95% of the websites introduced maps and guides. However, only 11% included accommodation lists on their websites. In any way, Fernández-Cavia & Huertas-Roig (2009) discovered that the functional conceptual brand of destinations is best projected through official tourism websites, but no emotional and personal values ascribed to the destination. In general, official tourism websites, including their content, varies greatly and is highly dependent on the destination itself (Mariné-Roig, 2014).

The research of Loncaric, Basan & Markovic (2013) also dove into the importance of DMO websites in the tourists' selection process when choosing a destination to travel to. In their findings, it is clear that textual and visual images of a destination are important for potential tourists that consider going to that certain destination: These give insights into and descriptions of the experiences that can be 'purchased' when visiting that destination. Mackay & Couldwell (2004) also underlined the importance of using pictures in the creation and communication of destination images, so that tourists gain a good first impression. According to Bell & Davidson (2013), content that is transmitted visually to (potential) tourists is the only way to make a good first impression. When promoting a specific product, such as a tourist destination, using textual and visual images is more effective and easier than solely words: These images are rememberable and recognizable for consumers of the product. This phenomenon is called "the effect of the superiority" (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2017, p.3) by Singh & Formica (2007). However, in academic literature, the perceived image of tourism destinations has been analyzed the most in relation to the projected image (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2017).

Besides textual and visual images of destinations on DMO websites, Loncaric, Basan & Markovic (2013) claim that the provision of information about the destination's activities, events and attractions, as well as its hotel and restaurant venues, are important to tourists and their decision-making process. Moreover, they provide information on the fact that DMO should make use of multilingual websites, enhance the website's tangibility of its experiences, and lastly, enable online booking and options to pay online.

## 2.4. Conceptual framework and research questions

In this chapter, several key publications considering tourist destination image have been presented. Images of specific tourist destinations are complex social constructs and result from

interactions between both projected (supply) and perceived (demand) images, with the latter one being the reproduction of those projected images or creation of new images. Different authors have viewed that the construct of “(destination) image” is a multidimensional one, as a result of two interrelated components: cognitive and affective. Due to the interaction between these two components, a third component can be identified which involves action, doing or striving, being the conative component.

In summary, from the literature review, it can be accepted that the closer the gap between perceived and projected images, the better it is. As a result of that, marketers and other actors in the destination image formation and projection intend to match both sides of the destination image. In addition, it is claimed that a strong relationship between image perception and projection is necessary to create and maintain a strong relationship between the destination brand and its visitors.

As of the literature introduced in this chapter, the societal and scientific relevance of this study, and the main research question, the following sub-questions are presented:

*Sub-research question 1: How is a tourist destination perceived by tourists in both the affective, conative and cognitive components?*

This first sub-research question is proposed to find out how tourists perceive a specific destination image, considering three components scholars claim are important in studying the tourist destination image. In this research, tourists from The Netherlands are chosen to be the market of origin.

*Sub-research question 2: How does a tourist destination sell itself, and in turn its image, to specific markets?*

The second sub-research question is proposed to decipher how destination management organizations project tourist destination images to specific markets, in this case the Dutch market. Concerning this research, the Spanish region of Catalonia is chosen as the tourist destination. In the next chapter, “The destination (management) of Catalonia”, these choices will be further explained and substantiated. In figure 1, the theoretical background behind this research is briefly visualized.

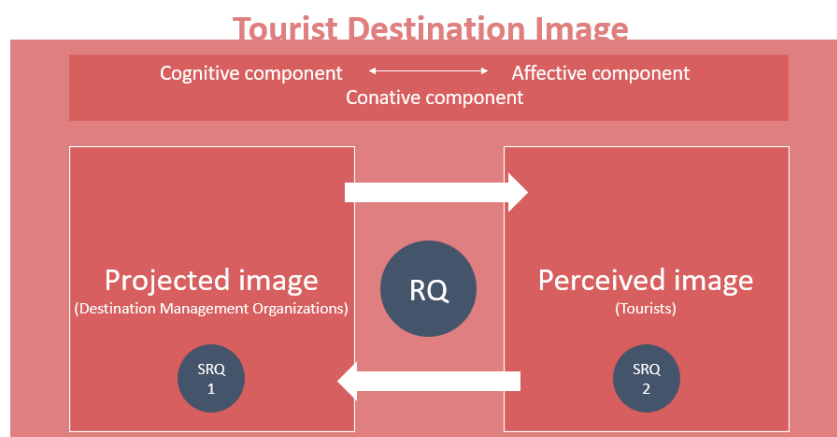


Figure 1: Basic visualisation of the theoretical background of this research.

## Chapter 3: The Destination (Management) of Catalonia

In this chapter, an extensive presentation of the chosen tourism destination, and how the destination is managed, is presented. For this study, the destination of Catalonia (Spain) has been chosen because it is a well-known and well-promoted tourist destination within Europe (Eurostat, 2016). Eurostat even claims (2016) that Catalonia is the second favorite tourist destination within the European Union, just beyond the Spanish Canary Islands. That year (2018), more than 19.2 million tourists have brought a visit to the Spanish region of Catalonia. In the years after (2020-2021), these numbers drastically decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, according to Statista (2021), Catalonia has seen an increase of over 50% in total expenditure of international tourists in 2021 after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As of that, Catalonia has become the most visited region of Spain, probably due to its accessibility by car in relation to the further laying Canary Islands.

### 3.1. Catalonia and its (international) markets

Catalonia has been welcoming numerous amounts of (international) tourists annually. Considering the market share of those international tourists, COVID-19 has made an impact on the composition of the tourists by their countries of residence: The tourist amounts of 2020-2021 differ remarkably to the previous years, pre-COVID-19, following the data presented by Idescat (2021). Over the last decades, French tourists have taken the first place considering their market share within Catalonia's tourism industry. In the period of 2016-2020, the top five nationalities visiting Catalonia consisted of French (1<sup>st</sup>), British (2<sup>nd</sup>), German, Italian and American tourists (ranging positions over the years).

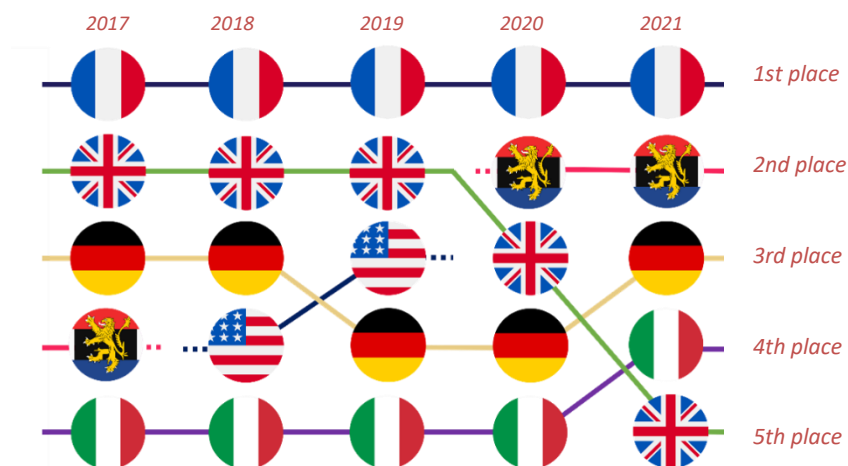


Figure 2: International tourists. By market of origin, Catalonia. (Idescat, 2021).

However, last year (2021), The Netherlands reached/entered the top five ranking fourth with 357.600 tourists visiting the region of Catalonia. The Dutch, Belgian and Luxemburg market combined, which is culturally often associated together, is ranked in second place over the last two years (2020-2021) due to COVID-19 and the relative proximity by car (in comparison to the UK and USA markets). In the figure below, the five most important markets of Catalonia's tourism industry are presented over the period of 2017-2021, according to the data of Idescat (2021). As a sidenote, the flag of the Benelux is not official, but it is often seen as *one* market of origin. For example, in a report of Generalitat de Catalunya in 2005, a similar observation

was made regarding the leading sending countries to Catalonia in its peak period July: France (34.7%), UK (10.8%), the Benelux (10.3%) and Germany (9.8%).

The Catalan Tourist Board provided a brief information chart considering the travel behavior of the Dutch market specifically (see data package) as of 2020, and introduced that Catalonia is the principal destination of the Dutch tourists that visit Spain (20.5%). The main factors of deciding whether or not to go to Catalonia as a holiday destination are security, hygiene, interesting natural environment, good gastronomy and hospitality. 18% of the Dutch tourists goes to Catalonia to visit the beach, 16% visits normally cities such as Barcelona or Tarragona, 12% goes to Catalonia to relax, and only 9% for activities that are related to the Catalan outdoor or sports. The Catalan Tourist Board also introduces that more than one third visits Catalonia with their respective partner, 22% and 21% with their families respectively with kids between 13-17 years and 6-12 years, and lastly, 13% of Dutch visitors comes to Catalonia alone. Most of the Dutch tourists enter the Spanish region by plane (53%) and 38% by car.

Besides the Dutch market (or in a stronger position, the Benelux market) taking a strong position in Catalonia's tourism market share (figure 2), the Catalan government incorporates this market in their tourism policy strategy. In figure 3, the Generalitat's focus markets are presented as introduced in their 2018-2022 Tourism Marketing Plan. As can be seen from the figure, markets such as France, Germany, Italy and Russia are prioritized in ways of both attractiveness and competitiveness, with the first markets as being most prioritized (Priority A). In these markets, the Generalitat sees the urge to invest. However, countries such as The Netherlands, Switzerland, USA and Portugal are also priority markets, as they are seen as markets to be *managed* by the Catalan Tourism Board.

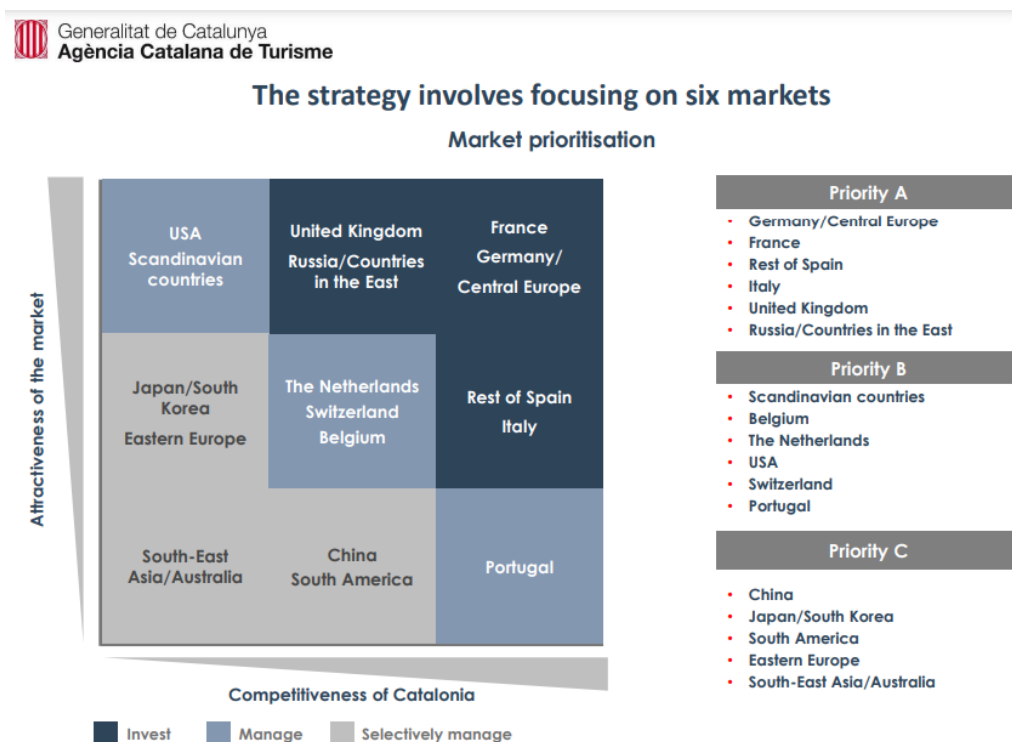


Figure 3: Market prioritization according to the 2018-2022 Catalonia Tourism Marketing Plan (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2020).

### 3.2. Catalonia as a destination management organization

Catalonia itself has a lot to offer, ranging from its attractions of culture, nature, family holidays, sports, business, and relaxation (Catalan Tourist Board, 2022) to its cultural uniqueness and diversity (Marine-Roig, 2011). Tourists can immerse themselves in the unicity of its history, Catalan language, and traditions that shape this Spanish region, known as the “Generalitat de Catalunya.” On top of that, Catalonia has a great infrastructure and facilities to welcome a substantial number of tourists. Its capital city Barcelona is known worldwide as a leading smart city and a significant tourist destination on the map. According to IdesCat (2021), it even had the major weight speaking of tourism influx (7.5 million) and numbers of inhabitants (2.2 million), making Barcelona a small but major brand within Europe.

Considering the promotion of Catalonia, which, as described in the literature review, relates to the projected image, the management of Catalonia as a tourism destination is constructed on various scales. As a result of the return of democracy in Spain in 1979, the Generalitat de Catalunya started to develop its own region-wide tourism policy and board: Catalan Tourist Board (CTB). Within that public authority that is responsible for all tourist activities and products, and its promotion and legislation around the world, connections with the private sector are increasing to be found. The Catalan Tourism Board is part of the Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social. It represents both the private sector by the tourism boards of the provincial councils of Catalunya and the public-private tourism board of the capital’s Turisme de Catalunya. The aim of the Catalan Tourism Board is to create and maintain a strong Catalan brand around the world.

As of its regional tourism organization structures, the territory of Catalonia is promoted and divided into nine tourist brands, as can be seen in figure 4 (Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2016; Amposta, 2015). As can be seen, most of these geographical brands do not overlap the four administrative provinces of Catalonia, being Tarragona, Barcelona, Lerida and Girona. These brands “assess the spatial impact of the TDI [tourism destination image] which collected brand name, counties, cities, towns, and other places considered destinations such as Montserrat [...]” (p. 9), according to Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé (2016). The Catalan Ministry of Business and Labor (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2021) also published a press pack on their website to introduce the nine distinct tourist brands that are “gathered under and promoted by tourism boards”. However, Catalonia is a tourist brand on its own and serves as an overarching brand for its sub-brands on different territorial levels. These brands on sub-Catalan level differ in tourist flows, infrastructure and accommodation structure (Marine-Roig, 2011). As an example, the coastal tourist brands (the *costas*) have a large and concentrated tourist infrastructure among the 600 km coastline, with leading tourist destinations such as Salou, Lloret de Mar and Sitges.

In this study, as proposed in the previous chapter, that projected image of Catalonia as a tourism destination will be compared to the perceived image of Dutch tourists visiting Catalonia. In the next chapter, it will be explained how and when this will be studied.



Figure 4: The nine tourist brands in Catalonia that are promoted by the Catalan Tourism Board (Gencat, 2021).

# Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the procedures of the scientific method with the presented literature review in mind.

## 4.1. Research Design

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of people's perceived image in tourist destinations related to the projected image transmitted by management and marketing organizations in those certain destinations. This specific research took place in the region of Catalonia (Spain) and The Netherlands (Dutch tourists). The concepts and constructs that are discussed in the literature review were used to analyze the perceived image of tourist destinations among tourists, and related to the projected image to find coincidence or not. This study used a qualitative approach, so that insights into participants' understanding and experience of the world could be gained. In this first section, the research design of this study is described.

Qualitative research aims to provide an accurate understanding of the social world by involving participants. Ritchie & Lewis (2003) introduce that qualitative research methods makes the researcher learn about participants' social conditions, experiences, perspectives and histories, and provide us with information that is rather descriptive. It allows the researcher to understand and investigate multiple perceptions and perspectives from its participants. Within qualitative research, multiple research approaches are available in answering formulated research questions. Qualitative research methods includes tools that help the researcher gain insights into people's perceptions and experiences on a certain topic (Armstein & Ward, 2020). Some of these tools help to visualize the understanding of these perceptions and experiences of participants. Examples of qualitative research methods can be mental mapping or in-depth interviews. In this case, according to Oufakkir (2008), studies on destination images are unique to the certain destinations being studied. As of that, proposed methods are not as cookbooks that fit to all destinations and their images: Each destination, how similar they might be, has its unique attributes and features.

This study, considering tourists' mental representations/perceived images in relation to the projected image of a tourist destination, was based on the visual qualitative research tool mental mapping. This research tool helps visualizing how people experience a place, and gain insights into the collectivity of the identity of that place (Sulsters, 2005). According to Lee, Hitchcock & Lei (2017), mental mapping is also a useful method for researchers to reveal how tourists perceive tourism destinations spatially. Tourists can express their knowledge, preferences, wishes and experiences without constraints (Young, 1999), and without being influenced by the researchers' intentions.

Mental maps are the visual outcomes of the mental mapping tool and carry not only information and interpretation of people's knowledge of a place, but also their feelings towards that certain place (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt & Watts, 1986). Mental experiences differ between local community members. Nevertheless, the origin of these imaginaries is to be found in the same physical environment being the tourist destination (Sulsters & Schubert, 2006). A mental map can be seen as a personal archive of an individual's experience towards a certain place, including the frequently used practices, perceptions, appreciations, and

associations. People use their mental imaginaries to orientate and behave in a certain place. Mental maps of individuals can be compared to each other, and similarities will always occur (Sulsters & Schubert, 2006). These common grounds are the ingredients of a collective mental urban landscape.

However, the use of the mental mapping approach has not often been used in the discipline of tourism (Lee, Hitchcock & Lei, 2017). Nevertheless, mental maps can be of use to understand tourists' spatial behavior and their experiences when visiting tourism destinations. People tend to draw what knowledge they have, or not have, about a specific tourist destination. Also, depending on the research context and the researcher's decisions, the process of mental mapping can vary: mental maps can be sketched by hand or computer-assisted, labeling or adding to an existing map, or drawn by the researcher by interviewing a participant (Gieseeking, 2013). Gieseeking also remarks that mental maps are often used in combination with verbal (qualitative) methods as ethnography, focus groups, or in-depth interviews. The researcher can explore and get a more thorough understanding of how participants experience social dimensions within a place. Moreover, Khettab & Chabbi-Chemrouk (2017) also acknowledge the necessity of additional interviews, or questionnaire surveys (Lee, Hitchcock & Lei, 2017).

To find out if the perceived images of the tourists coincide with the projected image constructed by the Spanish region of Catalonia, the official website of the Catalan Tourism Board (Catalunya Experience) has been analyzed (content analysis). In addition, an additional expert interview was held with the director of the Benelux department of the Catalan Tourism Board. In the next paragraphs, this will be more thoroughly explained.

## 4.2. Study Population and Sampling

To analyze how Dutch tourists have experienced Catalonia and get insights into their perceived image of the tourist destination, 9 mental map sessions, including complementary semi-structured in-depth interviews, have been conducted. According to Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006), 10 to 15 sessions would satisfy due to the large time span of the qualitative research. However, data saturation was reached after the eight mental mapping session. As of that, one more mental mapping session was held to confirm the data saturation point.

Potential participants of this research were approached by a post on Instagram (@timvdl97) and LinkedIn (Tim van der Linden), and, in turn, snowball sampling occurred by sharing the link. In any case of willingness to participate in this research, participants were reached by e-mail and/or phone to set an appointment. This created a self-selecting mechanism. The requirements to be able to participate in this study were to be living in The Netherlands as a resident, and as a second requirement, to have visited Catalonia in the last 15 years. This study strived for a maximal variation, or so-called heterogeneous sampling, as different background characteristics lead to different findings. To obtain participants with different backgrounds in neighborhoods, age, household, background knowledge about the destination, and because of that, their perceived image on Catalonia as a tourist destination, heterogeneous sampling was chosen to be a fit for this study. In addition, a short questionnaire was sent when reaching out to participants to draw significant conclusions on people's perceptions on Catalonia. This questionnaire was answered by 143 respondents.

Besides contacting Dutch tourists that have visited Catalonia, an expert of the Benelux department of the Catalan Tourist Board was approached to conduct an interview with.

### 4.3. Data Collection

First, the data of Dutch tourists that visited Catalonia were collected through the qualitative research tool mental mapping with complementary semi-structured interviews. During the drawing session, participants were asked to draw all places in Catalonia (and Spain) they considered themselves knowledgeable about. This drawn mental map served as a conversational tool to visualize the participants' experience of sense of place. In this study, participants were provided with a single blank paper, accompanied with a brief written introduction to outline the task (See appendix A), and colored pens. Gökten & Südas (2014) claim that "freely drawn mental maps" have multiple advantages in relation to already outlined maps with roads or area names: *"Imaginary [mental] maps may lead us to understand the place-related experiences of people and how they perceive a region better than the formal representations and boundaries which are reflected more in the outline maps"* (p. 91). A mental map as a research tool enables the researcher to explore geographical components of environmental representations. In Johnson's (2007) study, he asked his participants to draw mental maps more like drawings than objective representations of place, regarding scales and proportions. Participants in this study were also asked to create mental maps in line with Johnson's study. There were no time restrictions being placed on any of the local community members. After the drawing session, a picture of the specific map was made.

To gain a better understanding of the participants' perceived image of Catalonia in mental maps, the drawing session was followed by a semi-structural in-depth interview. Jung (2014) advocates that her experience of mental mapping had gained benefits by observing the mapping exercise and asking her participants to explain their mental maps as they were drawing. The participants of this study were not interrupted by the researcher as that could have distracted the participants. This resulted in more objective visual information derived from the mental maps. The observing researcher emphatically interviewed his participants after the drawing session, to avoid distracting the participants during the creation of the mental maps. It is also necessary to conduct interviews with the participants after the drawing session to apprehend interpretations of these mental maps. Mental maps answer the question of whose (visual) story is told. In addition, mental maps visualize the stories and experiences participants have access to, and the ones they do not have access to (Sulsters, 2005): Which artefacts within Catalonia are seen as something meaningful? Which places are visited frequently among Dutch tourists and which not?

The questions asked to the participants were divided into the three different components of tourism destination image, as described in the literature review. These components summarized how participants perceive Catalonia as a tourist destination image. Questions concerning the cognitive component were referred to the socio-cognitive (or environmental) representation, as a result of both cognitive (the individual) and socio-cultural constructs (Which words do you associate most when thinking about Catalonia?). The conative component was investigated by asking place-oriented questions to participants regarding their most preferred places within the Spanish region. These places were related to expected experiences and recommendations to others (Which places do you visit most within Catalonia?)

Which places would you suggest to your family and friends?). Considering the affective component, participants' affective relationships with the physical environment were investigated. These questions enable the researcher to investigate the places participants are most attached to (What are the places you (dis)like most when visiting Catalonia?).

In addition to asking questions to investigate the three components of tourist destination image, participants were asked why they remember certain places and why they drew them or not. In that way, participants would focus on their version of their mental representation of the neighborhood. Gieseeking (2013) claims that "these initial, brief "grand tour" question allowed participants to open up and express everyday life" (p. 715) having their mental map in front of them as a conversational tool. By conducting semi-structural in-depth interviews, a wider exploration of the topic was allowed by both the researcher and participant. In this way, new significant information emerges from the participants that may not have seen as something relevant by the researcher himself (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). During this second (interviewing) phase, participants were free to add anything they liked to their mental map. This mental map is rather subjective or steered by the researcher, because the participant is likely to have drawn elements on their map that they did not find knowledgeable at first. These subjective mental maps were photographed too, making it possible for the researcher to find differences between objective and steered maps. These additional interviews were led by the drawn mental maps and the topic lists, both for the participants and the expert, were used as handles for the conversations (See Appendices A-perception and B-projection).

To confirm the data collected by the mental mapping sessions and the additional in-depth interviews, a short survey was sent too, in line with Lee, Hitchcock & Lei's (2017) statement of necessity. Respondents were asked if they have visited both Spain and Catalonia, and if yes, what words they associate most to their visits to this specific Spanish region (cognitive component). Also, the conative and affective components were asked, following with several descriptive questions (age, gender, mode of transportation, information sources, travel company). The short survey is introduced in appendix D.

To find out if the perceived images of the tourists coincide with the projected image constructed by the Spanish region of Catalonia, a content analysis of the official Catalan DMO's website was conducted. The data is derived from the official website of the Catalan-wide DMO, directed to the Benelux market: <https://www.catalunyaexperience.nl/>. Typically, the method of content analysis is used to investigate projected images (Ji, 2011). Neuman (2003) stated that:

*"Content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. (p. 310)."*

In these analyses, frequency analysis is often used to investigate how frequently a certain symbol, phrase or word appears within a website or brochure, or whether it contains a specific theme (Babbie & Halley, 1994). These can be conducted in both qualitative (e.g., using coding frames to construct themes) and quantitative ways. Also, Kohlbacher (2006) explains that

content analysis can often be combined with qualitative or expert interviews. In research (Gläser & Laudel, 1999; Mayring, 2003), applying such interviews to qualitative content analysis are common and rich in information as they gain insights into the open-ended nature and subjective art of interviews (Yin, 2003).

By asking permission (See appendix C) to the participants to record and transcribe the interviews, several advantages occurred. The transcription helped the researcher in correcting the natural limitation of one's memories and the misinterpretations the researcher perhaps placed on the interviewees' answers. In addition, it made more detailed examination of the conducted interviews possible, and the collected data could be made accessible for further (follow-up) research (Heritage, 1984). Lastly, while transcribing, the researcher became more familiar with the collected data. This provided new insights for the next step: Data analysis. The analysis of these transcribed interviews will be explained in the next section.

Because the statements of the content analysis were all taken from the official tourist website of Catalunya Tourism, no issues of anonymity of results applied.

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

After completion and collection of all data, both the transcribed interviews and mental maps were analyzed. Mental maps visually revealed how Dutch tourists perceive the tourist destination image of Catalonia. However, according to Crang (2003), meaning can be misinterpreted easily with just visual data. Therefore, the analysis of mental mapping was accompanied by the conversations during the mental mapping sessions to allow the researcher a deeper understanding of the complex visual stories that the participants tell. Because of this, the interviews and mental maps were developed as complementary methods to visualize the stories of local community members. As such, each map is analyzed as a whole with its interview. The transcriptions derived from the interview were closely read, reviewing the attached mental map simultaneously. Giesecking (2013) also approached mental mapping analysis in this way, in combination with additional interviews. In his research, he reflected on many theories concerning mental mapping and created a list of 57 different analytic techniques and components. He used different ways to examine a map as "techniques", while the elements of the production of a map are defined as "components". In this study, the researcher was able to group their own analytics together during the data analysis procedure, as mentioned by Giesecking (2013) himself: *"I encourage other scholars to group their own analytics together as best supports their study's objectives and outcomes"* (p. 716).

The choice of use of these analytic tools was based on a quick analysis of the mental maps and the transcribed interviews. The following analytic tools came to the forefront during the mental mapping analysis that would help in providing a context for the interpretation of the 9 mental maps. These are presented in the table below.

Analytic	Original citation
<b><i>Mechanics of Method</i></b>	
Drawing anxiety	Saarinen (1974-b), Winnicott (1992)
Drawing skills	Kitchin & Freundschuh (2000)
Enjoyed mapping process	Giesecking (2013)
Mirror the physical space	Lynch (1960), Downs & Stea (1974), Devlin (1976)
Time	Added



<b>Drawing elements</b>	
Orientation	Giesecking (2013)
Scale of elements	Giesecking (2013)
Confusing if part of Catalonia	Added
Center, borders, use of color	Monmonier (1996)
Symbols, legend	Monmonier (1996), Giesecking (2013)
<b>Narratives of place</b>	
Built environment elements	Saarinen (1974-b)
Physical environment elements	Giesecking (2013)
Social environment elements	Added
Personal paths	Giesecking (2013)
Landmarks/popular elements	Lynch (1960), Devlin (1976), Saarinen (1974-b)
<b>Personalization</b>	
Includes what possesses/lacks personal meaning	Milgram & Jodelet (1976)
First- and last-drawn element	Kitchin & Freundschuh (2000)

Table 1: Analytic tools used in this study to analyze the mental maps drawn by the participants.

Furthermore, an analysis was carried out using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA regarding the transcriptions. Using thematic analysis, the data was summarized and ordered into specific and meaningful patterns and themes. It is also supported to interpret the distinct aspects of the collected research data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). According to Braun & Clarke (2012), a thematic analysis (TA) is a flexible and accessible data analysis for the researchers, because they are able to identify certain patterns of meaning within the interviewee's responses. Moreover, Braun, Clarke & Weate (2016) state that a TA is not bound to a theoretical framework and provides great flexibility for the researcher in interpreting and analyzing this research tool. Therefore, The themes/categories that are classified were defined, and then collected by coding and labelling. Cassel & Symon (2004) state that coding is a process in which the data can be fragmented into different categories with the help of thematic charts. These themes followed from the literature review, and in addition, came from the data collected in this research.

In addition to thematic analysis, a content analysis and an additional expert interview was conducted to analyze the projected image. Content analysis can be widely used as a qualitative research method that can be conducted in different ways: Conventional, directed or summative (Kohlbacher, 2006). These three approaches to content analysis all provide interpretation of the meanings derived from the content of text data. Kracauer (1952) is the first one that claimed that content analysis should be collected qualitatively besides quantitatively, as the quality of texts and the importance of context, patterns and interpretation should also be considered, instead of just counted and measured. In this case, a conventional content analysis was used. In this approach, categories are directly obtained and interpreted by the researcher from the text data of the website of the Catalan DMO (<https://www.catalunyaexperience.nl/>) to investigate the visual representation of the projected destination image of Catalonia. The additional expert interview was analyzed as the interviews of the tourists that expressed their perception of the destination image of Catalonia.

In appendix E, the codes derived from the data analysis in MAXQDA are presented. The use of open coding involved information that is not suited to a specific theoretical concept but could be of importance for this study. Gibbs (2007) states that researchers should be able in

amending the list of codes during the process of data analysis as new insights could be gained into this study. After coding the transcriptions fully, the data was collected in a data matrix in Microsoft Excel (Data package), so that the relation between the perceived image of Dutch tourists to Catalonia could easily be related to the data of the content analysis of the projected image from Experience Catalunya. In chapter 5, the results of this data analysis procedure are introduced.

#### 4.5. Research Validity & Limitations

Even though the chosen research methods are deemed as the most suitable for this research, there are several remarks considering research validity. All conducted interviews were recorded in order to increase reliability of the quality of data analysis. The participants signed a consent form (See appendix C), regarding academic usage of their drawn maps and the conducted interviews. On top of that, transcription of the interviews occurred as soon as possible after the conduction of the different interviews, to prevent loss of misinterpretation. Afterwards, the transcripts were used for the data analysis, and a thematic analysis was conducted for both parts of the research process.

Considering the content analysis of the official tourism website of the Catalan Tourist Board, a limitation must be mentioned such as the interpretation of the website's content without any other human validation .

## Chapter 5: Results

This chapter presents the results gathered from the data analysis of the qualitative research methods mentioned in the previous chapter. In the first part, the results of the perceived image of Catalonia from Dutch tourists will be presented. Afterward, the results of the projected image in both the content analysis and expert interview will be presented. Finally, results from both the perceived and projected image will be compared, and in continuation, the research questions will be answered in the next chapters.

### 5.1. Perceived tourist destination image

In total, nine different Dutch tourists that have visited the Spanish region of Catalonia over the last fifteen years were interviewed to find out what their perceived images were of the tourist destination. This research's sample is diverse by observing the different background information, presented in the table below: different residencies, ages (21-58), genders (female: 5, male: 4), travel behaviors, times visited Catalonia and Spain, and at last, the company the participants travelled with to Catalonia. It can be highlighted that participant 5 lived in Catalonia himself, participant 6 provided insights on visiting Catalonia as for business purposes, and participant 9 lived in Andalucía, Spain, herself. In table 2, all the background information of the interviewed participants can be found.

Participants							
Participants	Residency	Gender	Age	Travel Behavior	Times visited Catalonia	Times visited Spain	Travel company Catalonia
Participant 1	The Hague	Female	26	4-5 times a year	1 time	2 times (Basque Country)	Friends (including P2)
Participant 2	Delft	Female	25	3x a year to sun destinations	2 times	3 times (Mallorca)	Friends (including P1)
Participant 3	Helmond	Female	51	4x a year (1x ski holiday)	More than 10 times	More than 10 times (Canary Islands, Madrid, Valencia, Andalucía)	Family (kids + husband (P6)), friends
Participant 4	Helmond	Male	22	3-4 times a year (1x ski holiday)	+/- 8 times	More than 10 times (Ibiza, Valencia, Andalucía)	Family, friends
Participant 5	Breda	Male	32	3-4x a year, lived in Spain	+/- 10 times	+/-20	Friends, Family, Solo travelling
Participant 6	Helmond	Male	58	3x a year (1x ski holidays), in addition: business trips	+/- 10 times	More than 10 times (Canary Islands, Madrid, Valencia, Andalucía)	Family (kids + wife (P3)), friends
Participant 7	Milheeze	Female	47	2x a year (1x ski holidays)	3-4 times	5+ times (Canary Islands, Mallorca)	Family
Participant 8	Nijmegen	Male	26	1-2x a year	2 times (soon the 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	NA	Friends, ex, family (soon)
Participant 9	Eindhoven/Antwerp	Female	21	NA, lived in Andalucía, Spain	2 times	Multiple times	Family, friends

Table 2: List of participants and their background information

From these participants, 7 out of 9 participants expressed that their main source of information about Catalonia is friends and/or family. Only one participant, participant 7, mentioned she searched some things on the internet.

In addition to the nine participants, 143 respondents have filled in the short qualitative survey to draw significant conclusions on people's perceptions by asking questions concerning the three components of tourist destination image. 90,2% of the respondents answered that they have visited Spain at least once, and 75% of the respondents answered they have visited Catalonia once, at least. At the end, 91 individual respondents have answered all the questions, so that means that the final sample, which has visited Catalonia *and* finished the survey, ended with 91 respondents. One-third of these respondents were men, and two-thirds of the respondents identified themselves as female. All of the respondents stated to live in The Netherlands.

### 5.1.1. Mental Mapping Catalonia as a Tourist Destination

As described in paragraph 4.4. (Data Analysis), several components were identified when analyzing the data of both the mental maps and complementary interviews. All nine mental maps are presented in appendix F. In this sub-chapter, it is advisable to lay the participants' mental maps next to the text due to the complementary and visual purpose these mental maps had in the data analysis process.

Maps from this research inclined to fit into three distinct types of drawing: The first type of drawing includes maps that captured the ambiance, atmosphere and different features associated to their holidays in Catalonia (Participants 3 and 4), as participant 4 called it in his mental mapping session a "mood board". Others replicated the tourist destination of Catalonia in maps (Participants 5, 7, 8 and 9), while their emotions, experiences and perceptions were described in words during the complementary interviews, as well as by drawing certain features in the map itself. Participants 1, 2 and 6 drew both types of drawings, by drawing different features associated to their holidays, accompanied by a smaller map of Spain/Catalonia.

In general, participants were free to complete their drawing by adding any elements during the interview. However, participants only used this time during the mental mapping session to add destinations within Catalonia they forgot, or by finalizing their mental map with extra colors.

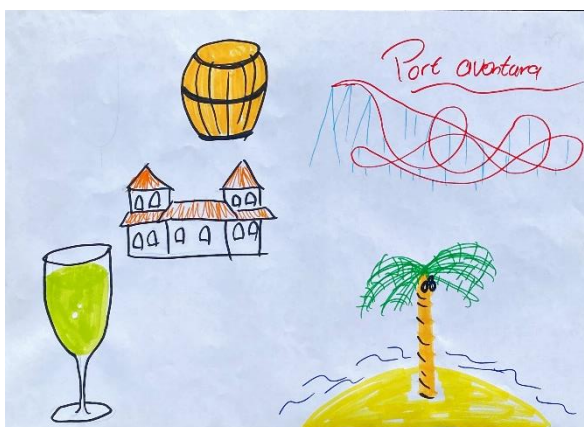


Figure 5: Mental map of Participant 4, using his "Mood Board".

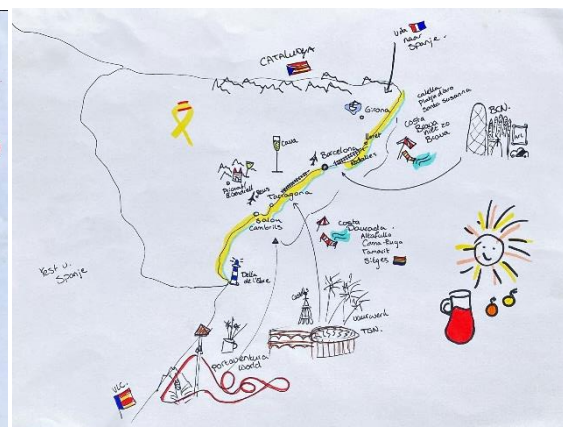


Figure 6: Mental map of Participant 5, drawing a 'cartographic' map of Catalonia according to his memory.

## Mechanics of Methods

This section presents the mechanics of methods, that include the components of *how* participants portrayed their perception of Catalonia's spatial reality. It also portrays their level of focus on their mental maps and their sense of success during the drawing sessions (Gieseking, 2017). The average time spend drawing was approximately 20 minutes, as some of the participants were done visualizing their perception within 10 minutes, and others within 40 minutes. Even though most of the participants drew within the average time limit, participants 1, 7 and 9 spend most of their time talking when drawing. The rest of the participants pointed out some aspects on their mental map during the drawing session but did not provide much detailed information about their experiences during their holidays in Catalonia (yet). These participants were more focused on their mental map itself and talking or mumbling to themselves to remember the places they have been to within Catalonia: *"This is Catalonia. And this is Tarragona. These are mountains. This is a train [track]. These are patatas bravas. [...] Here, I drew a Spaniard"* (P2). But also, during the complementary interviews, after finishing their mental maps, participants pointed out several features and referred to their drawings: *"[Here], we always stayed in the hostel, and then we discovered different parts of the city from here [draws metro sign]"* (P8).

Most of the participants were eager to draw and locate Catalonia but had their doubts on the perfection of that drawing and location, concerning the shape and which places to include. As participant 2 commented on her doubt of Catalonia's shape and participant 1 first drew Spain to be able to locate Catalonia within the country: *"Well, I started drawing Spain because I kind of know-how the country looks like [...]"*. Most of the participants were able to identify the destinations they have been to within Catalonia but participant 3 first included Valencia (Comunidad Valenciana) too. In the mental map below (participant 1), it is presented how the participant perceives the shape and location of Catalonia within Spain.



Figure 7: Mental map of participant 1.

To finalize this section, more than two thirds of the participants expressed a significant anxiety/insecurity while drawing, such as participant 4: *"It is becoming very ugly. I want to start over. [...]. Can't I start over?"*. However, beyond comments of fear, insecurity and anxiety regarding their drawing skills, participants seemed to enjoy the mental mapping session after catching up on their memories of their holidays to Catalonia. This it is not about the quality of their mental maps but about what perceptions they have. Participant 5 even asked to take his mental map home because of the fact he could make his memories visible.

### Drawing elements

The next section contains the drawing elements which Giesecking (2017) introduced as elements that “entail spatial analysis of how participants have drawn a map through color, projection and accuracy of scale” (p. 719). The most intriguing quality of a mental map is what is placed at both the center and border of the maps. In addition, it is curious to see which colors are used and why participants used those colors. As already mentioned, seven out of the nine participants have drawn a (smaller) ‘cartographic’ map of Catalonia to support the physical environment of their perception of Catalonia. In their drawings, the sea/coastline has been drawn first and central in their drawing (participants 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9), or participants have drawn a significant part of their paper attributes such as the sea, sun or palm trees (participants 1, 3, 4, and 6). In the paragraphs in which the components of their perception of Catalonia is presented, these central features will be presented more thoroughly.

To capture the borders of Catalonia, also meaning what physical, social and/or built elements people exactly include in their perception of Catalonia, the mental maps helped significantly. As with the central features of their drawings, most participants were able to draw borders and commented on the inclusion of the Catalan destination. Participants drew physical borders (participants 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8) by both drawing *only* the places they knew were Catalan or by drawing Catalonia as a part of Spain. Participant 6 even perceived Catalonia as the “*sun destination*” of Spain by drawing a sun over the region of Catalonia.

What participants were not able to draw, such as the atmosphere or specific memories, they commented during the drawing of their mental map or during the complementary interviews. On top of that, participants made use of written text, such as participant 1 who explained almost every drawn feature with text, or even a legend (participant 2). Also, certain symbols and colors were used to clarify what they wanted to draw. To be able to interpret these symbols and colors used in the mental maps, it was essential to listen to each participant’s spoken word, but also what they had written on their mental maps. All of the participants made use of colors to clarify what the natural environment such as the beach (blue waves), sun (yellow), or mountains (brown) were. Some participants really emphasized on color when drawing their mental map, as participant 4 had a clear memory of the roller coaster Dragon Khan (PortAventura) which was clearly red. Participant 3 also mentioned the color red (with black polka dots) as something “*typically from there*”.

### Narratives of Place

In this third section, the components of narratives of place are introduced which “*help us to see how the physical, remembered and imagined space*” (p. 720) of Catalonia as a tourist destination come together and how that produced space is perceived and conceived. All the participants included both built elements (e.g. buildings and human-made elements), as physical and environmental elements. As described in the previous section, from the mental maps, it is clear that *all* of the participants placed the sea/beach in a central position within their mental maps, both drawing the coast and waves of the sea or just by simply adding palm trees or a sun. Most of the participants were able to draw the built environment by adding typical architecture from Catalonia (participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9), whilst participants were also able to identify gastronomic features such as cava or patatas bravas (participants 1, 2, 3,

4, 5, 6 and 8), typical symbols of Catalonia (participant 4 drew a barrel associated with cava and participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 drew attractions from the theme park PortAventura). Additionally, participants were able to draw or comment on landmarks or popular items, such as the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona (participants 5-9).

All participants, except participant 4, included elements that were social characteristics of Catalonia, as they remembered characteristics concerning the “Locals”:

*“With people that enjoy life. Also, I think about the togetherness of the people. When they have a feria, they spend it outside in a park or on a plaza, they take their decorations. It is very fun. [...]. The happiness [of the people]. [...]. And just, happy and cheerful people. Hospitality is everywhere” (P3).*

Participant 2 even drew a “typical Spanish person” with the following description: “Here, I drew a Spaniard. A man with curly hair, slightly tanned, a beard, and a big nose. That is a Spaniard. Beautiful. Red on the cheeks.” Some of the participants additionally included personal experiences regarding their holidays in Catalonia, making use of nostalgic feelings or specific experiences that made their holiday memorable. Participants 2 and 3 also have in common that they both drew the company they travelled with, such as participant 2 (visible in figure 8) who drew her friends next to the “typical Spanish person”, and participant 3 (visible in figure 9) who drew her family members with whom she spent most of her holidays with.



Figure 8: Mental map of participant 2.



Figure 9: Mental map of participant 3.

Participants 4 and 5 both expressed that they went to the Costa Daurada during their childhood, taken by their parents: “My parents always took us to a camping in Salou, so it’s a very nostalgic place to me. And with that, I mean, the Costa Daurada. It feels like home because we have spent so much time there” (P5). Participant 7 mentioned that a holiday to Catalonia was the first time going abroad with their first-born child, and as of that, the destination was quite memorable and exciting.

Lastly, participants were asked to directly comment on their mental map after drawing them. It made the participants able to give a *Grand tour* of their mental map and show directly how they perceived both the drawing exercise and their associations to Catalonia concerning their experiences. These grand tour questions differed between all the participants, as their

background characteristics differed. For example, the grand tour of participant 6 is introduced, as well as his mental map:

*“Yes, well, I have been starting with this one [pointing out their map of Spain], this is the entirety of Spain, and I made a huge sun where Catalonia lies. Because most of what I associate Catalonia with is: sun, sea, and the beach [again, pointing out one of their drawings]. But also, where I have great memories is PortAventura: Huracan Condor, the roller coasters. Another thing I associate with Catalonia is Barcelona. I see this in two ways: the soccer club FC Barcelona. One of the clubs I think are well, besides PSV [their soccer club], is FC Barcelona. The other thing is the beautiful buildings you encounter not only in Barcelona but also in Girona and Tarragona. Or the boulevard of Altafulla. So, the picturesque, historical... And I tried to draw the Sagrada Familia, but it was a hard one! I hope you can see what I mean. Another thing I associate with Catalonia is independence and having an own identity. That is why I drew the flag [pointing out the flag]. I hope I drew it well...” (P6).*



Figure 10: Mental map of participant 6.

### Personalization

Before introducing the three components on the participants' perceptions on Catalonia as a tourist destination, the last section of the mental mapping analysis will be presented. In this part, the deepest experiences of the participants will be revealed. For example, participant 9 told a story about a personal experience she had during her first visit to Catalonia, even though these were more negative connotations towards the holiday destination:

*“One of the things I remember most clearly is that we traveled by train and saw pickpockets. My mom almost fought with them. Let's say, that's my memory. Pickpockets are something I think about a lot when traveling to Barcelona. Oh, and when we went to Valencia, the terrorist attacks were happening on the Rambles in Barcelona. The people [terrorists] fled to Valencia when we were staying there, and they completely fortified the city [Valencia]. That's also something I remember”*

Another participant, participant 7 was able to share a personal experience. She talked about how her husband broke his toe *and* his bike was broken during a biking tour through Parque de Ciutadella during their visit to Barcelona. She also told a thorough story about a boat ride to some islands near the Catalan coast and expressed several times how impressive the bike tour through Barcelona was. Some of the participants took the interviewer and interviewee back to their childhood or juvenile years, whilst participant 6 expressed that he sometimes visits Catalonia for business purposes, participant 5 has lived some time in Tarragona, and participant 4 commented on the sense of nostalgia during his visits to Salou (PortAventura). Especially the experiences of participant 6 could be interesting as he sketches different intentions to visit Catalonia, both as a tourist destination and as a business destination. After asking what the different perceptions of these visits were, he commented *“well, you wear long pants, and you have to work”*. But also *“What I like about Spain is when eating with the people [their colleagues], you eat later [compared to The Netherlands]. But you even get a sense of family”*.

Considering the first-drawn elements, participants mostly started to draw the Catalan coastline or drawings such as palm trees and waves of the ocean. Participant 5 first drew the Pyrenees and the French flag because his holidays always started by either driving through France or flying over the Pyrenees before arriving to Catalonia. He was able to take us through his travels to and in Catalonia, chronologically.

Overall, after having analyzed and presented the recurring analytical components concerning the mental maps and complementary interviews, several components were identified: Ranging from the participants' insecurities while drawing (Mechanics of Method) and describing how the participants perceived and experienced Catalonia's built and physical environments (Narratives of Place), to the participants' personal experiences when visiting Catalonia. These mental mapping sessions give the individual participants the needed structure of the places they visited. Following the literature review, it is clear that every single mental map and its comments is unique, and everyone's experience during their visit(s) to Catalonia sketch different perceptions to this specific tourist destination. However, several similarities occurred in some of the components, as the Catalan coastline and beaches were mostly put central in both the mental maps and the complementary interviews. On top of that, participants were eager to draw and/or express some 'typical' features of Catalonia, such as the traditional architecture, gastronomical features such as sangria and cava, and the roller coaster of PortAventura. In summary, these mental maps gave the researcher insights in how the participants perceived and experienced Catalonia as a tourist destination.

### 5.1.2. Mental Mapping the Components of Tourist Destination Image

In addition to presenting the results surrounding the analysis of the mental mapping sessions and the comments related to these mental maps, this sub-chapter provides more information on the participants' perception of Catalonia as a tourist destination. As already introduced before, the image of a tourist destination can be analyzed by asking questions on both the cognitive, affective and conative components. These will be presented in the paragraphs below, accompanied by the results of the short qualitative survey among 14 Dutch tourists. Also, some other perceptions came to the forefront during the mental mapping sessions with the 9 participants, and those results are presented after the three components of the

perceived tourist destination: Sense of independence, the Catalan culture compared to other tourist destinations and the participants' own advice to promote Catalonia as a stronger image towards the Dutch market.

### **The cognitive component of tourist destination image**

The first component asked to the participants was the cognitive component by asking which words directly came to mind when thinking about Catalonia and their experiences during their holidays in Catalonia. Most of the participants associated Catalonia with the summer holiday formula "zon-zee-strand" (sun, sea, beach) describing words as "beach" or "costas" (5 participants), "sun" (3 participants), "sea" (2 participants) or "warm" (1 participant). Furthermore, associations with the Catalan/Spanish gastronomy were made by four participants ("wine", "sangria", "delicious food", and "cava"), or its local people by three participants ("cheerfulness of the people", "good/nice atmosphere"). Two participants mentioned the city of Barcelona, and two times the independence and issues related to that (e.g., the Catalan flag) were mentioned. Participant 1 even mentioned "independence", "yellow ribbon", "language" first. After asking if she associated these words with Catalonia as a tourist destination, she answered no and introduced other words. Especially the associated words of beach, sun and sea could be identified from their drawing, but also the other associated words mentioned by the participants are found back in their respective mental maps.

Two of the participants even introduced Catalonia as a "typical summer destination" after answering the cognitive question: "It is like a basic summer holiday destination. If you would like to relax on the typical "Dutch" beaches or visiting cities, you can do it all" (P4), and "I think, speaking as a Dutch tourist myself, many of us go to the coasts of Catalonia to party or spend some weeks on a relaxing camping near the beach"(P5).

Most of the participants were able to comment on this cognitive question that range from the socio-cultural characteristics (e.g., "good atmosphere") of Catalonia to the physical ones (e.g., "beach"). However, participant 9 was unable to associate words to Catalonia after the question was asked. Still, the cognitive component of Catalonia as a tourist destination appeared to be diverse. Also, comparing it to the answers that the respondents of the short survey gave, different associations were given to Catalonia as a tourist destination, ranging from environmental characteristics (e.g., "sun", "palm trees", "beach") to the built environment (e.g., "Costa Brava"), gastronomy (e.g., "cerveza") or specific activities (e.g., "soccer"). In total, approximately 60 different associations were given. "Barcelona" was most associated with Catalonia (26 answers), followed by "sun" (22 answers), "sea" (15 answers), "beach" (14 answers), and "warmth" (7 answers). For all the associated words, see the data package.

### **The affective component of tourist destination image**

The results of the second component asked to the participants is introduced in this section. The affective component, as already described in the literature review, provides insights into how participants attach emotions and feelings to a physical environment, in this case Catalonia. The participants were able to both comment on the most likeable destination and/or memory and the least likeable. Some of the participants mentioned a local destination as the most likeable memory, such as Tarragona (Participant 2), Salou/PortAventura

(Participants 3 and 4), or distinct places in Barcelona (Participant 8: Platja Barceloneta; Participant 9: Montjuïc). Participant 1 introduced an accommodation that she found very impressive, participant 5 introduced Delta de L'Ebre where he can always find his piece, and participant 7 commented on the bike tour in Barcelona that she had the most positive memories about.

However, some of the participants expressed some negative connotations to their holidays in Catalonia, except for participants 2, 3, and 8. Participant 5 expressed that their camera lens was stolen in Barcelona, and he dislikes the difficult access to the beaches due to the train track on the Catalan coastline. Participants 6 and 7 commented on the overcrowded villages on the Catalan coast by introducing *"I will only visit Catalonia outside of the peak seasons"* (P6), Participant 9 referred to the terrorist attack in Barcelona on the Rambles in 2017, mass-tourism, and the presence of pickpockets. Participant 1 shared a personal story about minor inconveniences during her holiday:

*"Well, I do not like the parking place of the Lidl anymore [ha-ha]. Because there, we have been waiting on a taxi for 1,5 hours to get to Lloret to hop on a Catamaran cruise. However, we could not make it because of the taxi. That was quite a pity. There were no taxis available because Max Verstappen was racing in Barcelona [F1]. So, I did not really consider that a nice place or memory."*

Participants 2 and 4, in line with the comments of participants 6 and 9 (overtourism, mass-tourism), mentioned that some coastal destinations were *"typically Dutch"*. Participant 2 even drew a Dutch flag near the Costa Brava and called this coastline *"The Netherlands 2.0."* Participants 3 and 5 also mentioned the *"(too) touristic"* Catalonia (or Spain as a whole).

### **The conative component of tourist destination image**

The last of the three components is the conative component, which involves action, doing or striving as a response to the previous two components. In this sense, participants were asked which places in the neighborhood they have visited, and which they have visited most often (in terms of revisits). In addition, they were asked which places they would recommend to their families and friends to go to.

Talking about where the participants have been to during their holidays, it is very clear that most of the participants stick to the coastal areas, as illustrated in figure 11. Ranging from bigger cities such as Barcelona and Girona, to coastal villages such as Salou, Pals, Santa Susanna and Blanes. Some of the participants have visited places more inland, such as participants 1 and 2 (Vila-Rodona), participant 5 (Priorat) and participant 6 (Penedés). However, no participant has visited the Pyrenees or the Llérida region during their holidays. Still, three participants have expressed to be willing to visit different places in Catalonia, such as participant 5. Participant 5 had heard about Val d'Aran in the Spanish Pyrenees from a friend and expressed that he would like to *"experience the mountain area and ski"*. In the figure below (11), the destinations visited by the participants are visible. As the map indicates, all of the participants have visited Barcelona. Lloret de Mar is visited by seven participants, and Tarragona, as third most-visited destination among the participants, five times. Surrounding the Costa Brava and Costa Daurada, several places have been visited and it seems quite dense.

However, the map also indicates that no participants have visited the province of Lleida, or other Catalan inland (except Priorat, Vila-Rodona, and Penedés).

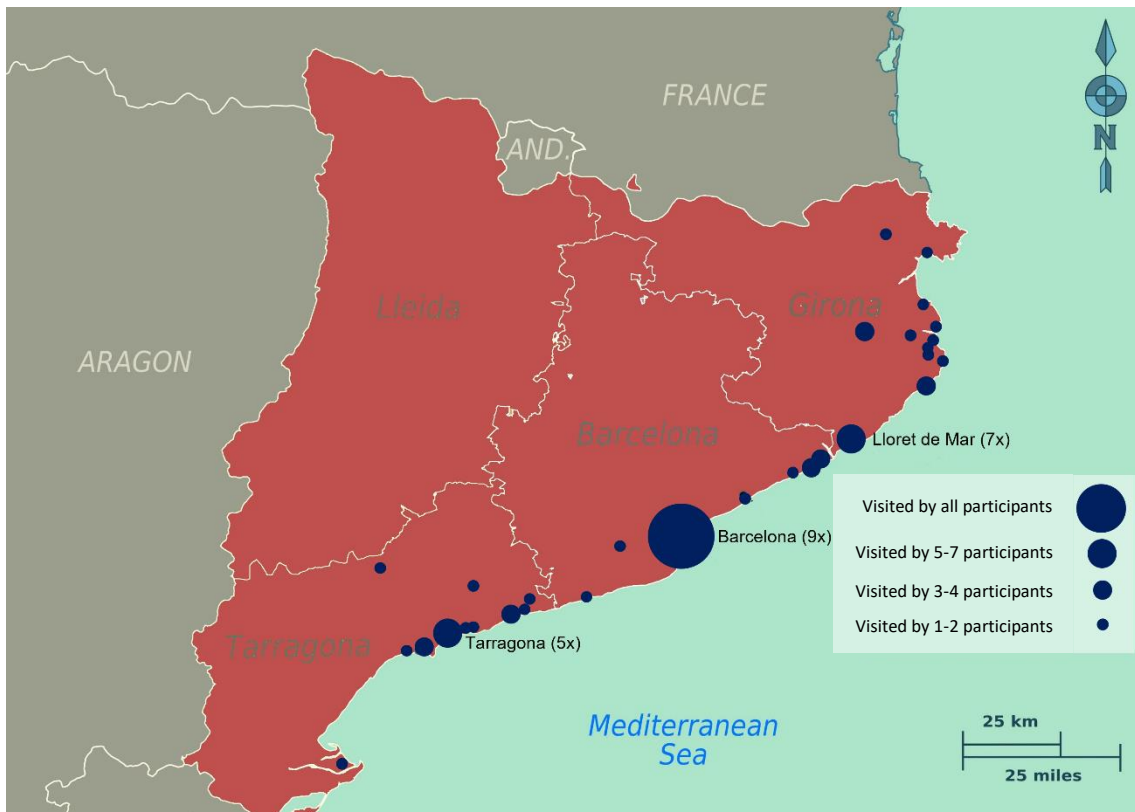


Figure 11: Destinations where the participants have been during their holidays in Catalonia.

In terms of most visited destinations, participants 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have expressed they have revisited some destinations. For participants 3, 4 and 6, Salou has been introduced as a destination they have nostalgic feelings for. Also, the Costa Brava and its coastal villages have been introduced as a place they have come back to several times, including participant 7. Participant 5 has lived in Tarragona himself, so, as of that, he has revisited the Costa Daurada several times. Asking the participants about their recommendations for their families and friends, participants 5, 6 and 7 express they would recommend people to “try the less basic destinations”(P5), such as the Catalan interior or coastal villages that are rather visited by Spanish tourists than by international tourists. Participant 3 expressed her recommendation for Valencia, as she really loved that city. Even though she knows Valencia is not located within Catalonia.

Considering the respondents of the short survey, the results were approximately the same as those of the nine participants. The destinations the Dutch respondents have visited were respectively Barcelona (49 times), Salou (17 times), Tarragona (16 times), and Lloret de Mar (14 times). Other destinations were visited by not more than 10 respondents, such as Gerona (10 times), Costa Brava (2 times) or L’Estartit (7 times). Nonetheless, other destinations than introduced by the participants were collected: Tortosa (1 time), Vic (1 time), Cadaques (3 times), Pineda del Mar (1 time), and Castelldefells (1 time).

### Other perceptions concerning the tourist destination image

As already introduced, in addition to the participants' answers on the three components of tourist destination image, other subjects came to the forefront during the mental mappings sessions: Sense of independence, the Catalan culture compared to other tourist destinations and the participants' own advice to promote Catalonia as a stronger image towards the Dutch market. These three subjects will be presented in this last part of chapter 5.1.

#### *Sense of independence*

The Catalan sense of independence was mentioned numerous times by *all* of the participants. As an example, after asking participant 1 what words she would describe when thinking of Catalonia (cognitive component), she directly introduced the words "*independence*", "the yellow ribbon", and the "*language*", referring to the Catalan language. Also, participant 7 introduced "the fight of independence" in addition to "*Barcelona*" after being asked what words she would use to describe Catalonia. She mentioned that she meant the Catalan flag, that "*you come across a lot. [...]. Especially in the little villages*". Participant 7 was not the only one who mentioned or drew the Catalan flag: Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9 did the same.

Most of these comments concerning the Catalan sense of independence were drawn or mentioned by the participants themselves during the mental mapping sessions. However, also, when asking the participants, the following question – "*Can you tell me some things that are really Catalan?*" – the participants also repeated or mentioned for the first time this topic. Most of the participants were able to identify Spanish wine, sangria, beer or tapas dishes, related to the Spanish gastronomy. These gastronomical features were mentioned and drawn by almost all of the participants, including the Catalan cava by half of them. However, most of the participants related these features to Spain in general, or even Portugal: "*You always drink it [sangria] on holidays. I do not really associate that with Catalonia/Spain. In Portugal they drink that too*" (P2).

Diving deeper in the participants' specific knowledge of the Catalan culture, some participants kept on referencing to the weather and beaches: "*I think a lot of people go to Catalonia on holidays because the weather is nice, and the beach are beautiful*" (P4). Others mentioned that "*everywhere you go, you come across something historical. Such as in the older villages or the bridge [near Tarragona]*" (P3). Participants 5 and 6 were able to mention the castells. Participant 6 simply "*feels at home*" in Catalonia, as he mentioned. However, in general, most of the participants were not able to recall typical Catalan features regarding its culture, gastronomy, traditions, or history. This became clear by statements, such as,

*"To be honest, I have no clue what the Catalan culture consists of"* (P2).

*"I cannot mention anything typical Catalan"* (P6).

*"Well, I have no idea what's more than Barcelona in Catalonia. That's something that I experience a lot when talking or thinking about the coast"* (P9).

#### *Promotion of Catalonia*

due to the fact that not many participants were able to mention typical Catalan products, they were asked how they would improve the Catalan knowledge among Dutch tourists themselves.

The answers ranged enormously. Therefore, three different examples will be introduced in this section.

Participant 6 mentioned that he *“cannot think about one [unique selling point] for Catalonia, besides the beautiful beaches, Barcelona, and the friendliness of its people”*. Nevertheless, he mentioned that the same friendliness and hospitality of the people can also be found in other places that he has visited, such as Valencia and Sevilla. His proposal was that Catalonia *“needs to have a unique selling point”* if they want to position it on the Dutch market. Participant 1 also made a comment concerning this example; She also does not have the feeling that there is something distinctive from the rest of Spain. She commented that they should:

*“promote what makes them special. You just asked what the specialties of Catalonia are. I have no idea! Just what makes them special, instead of only the cheap flights that make it attractive to come to this place”*.

Introducing the last part concerning Catalonia’s accessibility, participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 mentioned that they chose to travel to Catalonia due to its proximity and low-cost offers (in relation to other parts of Spain). Another way to enhance the Catalan destination image, according to participants 2, 4 and 5, is providing more information in the Dutch language. Participant 4 introduces the following:

*“Maybe make the information about Catalonia more present on the website [referring to Dutch information sites] and Dutch social media accounts. Make Dutch people curious! Catalonia should be perceived more as a destination where you can discover multiple things instead of teenagers going there to drink alcohol. Because, eventually, people want to drink alcohol, but you could combine it”*.

Participant 5 also comments on providing more information specifically for the Dutch market, as he introduces to use tv commercials in Dutch promoting the Dutch language or put those commercial adverts in Dutch bus stops. He also asks back to the interviewer: *“What kind of people does the organization want to attract and focus on?”*, after introducing that there is a distinction between Dutch tourists that visit more than one (cultural) place within Catalonia and tourists that visit only Barcelona or the coastal villages that are famous for its drinking.

Others, such as participants 2, 5 and 9, introduced that ‘they should’ promote different locations within Catalonia, so that the tourists will be dispersed and get to know other places in the Catalan region. Participant 9 even referred Barcelona to a *“tourist bubble”* and they should promote Catalonia as a place that is *“more than Barcelona”*.

### *Catalan culture comparisons*

The last conversational topic that came to the forefront in the mental mapping sessions with the nine participants was that they related Catalonia to the rest of Spain, other European countries or The Netherlands (their country of residence) itself. Some participants made a distinction between Barcelona and other big European cities, while favoring Barcelona. They expressed preferences to Barcelona because of the colors and architecture of the buildings that are *“typically Spanish”* (participant 9), the proximity towards and accessibility of the beach (Participants 6, 8 and 9) or, simply, the sun (participants 2, 3 and 6). The participants referred in their mental mapping sessions to ranging European destinations that have the same

“anonymity when walking on the streets” such as Copenhagen and London (participant 9), or by simply comparing Barcelona to other traditional summer holiday destinations such as Portugal, France, Italy, or Greece (participants 1, 6, 7, and 8).

As already introduced in previous sections of this first part of the results, participants referred in their mental mapping sessions also to the differences, or better said, similarities between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. In terms of accessibility and low cost offers, Catalonia was mostly favored. Also, nostalgic feelings were mentioned by some participants. However, most of the participants did not excessively make a distinction between Catalonia’s culture, gastronomy and other characteristics and the rest of Spain.

Many participants did mention distinctions between Catalonia, or Spain in general, and The Netherlands. Participant 9, for example, mentioned the fact that in Spain she did not experience a strong sense of fear when seeing two men or women were holding hands in the streets. She expressed that in Barcelona “*people are freer/more acceptive – live and let live*”. In the Netherlands she thought it is less likely that people loving the same sex would do that. She also mentioned another difference between Catalonia, that she associated with the RandStad (urbanized region of Utrecht-Rotterdam-Amsterdam), and the rest of Spain, mainly the southern regions, to the south of The Netherlands (Zeeland, Noord-Brabant, Limburg). She expressed that the south in both countries is more “*bourgeoisie, more welcoming and warmer*”. Still, she liked to visit urbanized areas for their greatness and anonymity. Also, participant 5 points the regional differences between bigger Dutch cities and Noord-Brabant, so that he could express that it is logical that regions in Spain differ too.

## 5.2. Projected tourist destination image

In this sub-chapter, the results of the analysis on the projected destination image of Catalonia are presented. In the following paragraphs, results of a thorough qualitative content analysis of the official tourist website of Catalonia, managed by the Catalan Tourist Board, is presented. The key findings from this content analysis were complemented with an interview with the director of the Benelux department of the Catalan Tourist Board, Inma Ballestín. This interview was held to interpret and confirm the content analysis done on the official tourist website, and main lines from the point of view from the projected image are presented in this sub-chapter.

The Catalan Tourist Board, the official destination management organization of Catalonia, Spain, promotes its destination online on different platforms (GenCat, n.D.). All of these platforms, both the official tourism website and social media accounts, are named after “Catalunya Experience”, where they want to transmit to potential visitors to Catalonia its destination image. Its main aim is to become a place where Catalans “*can share their knowledge and become opinion leaders about the destination, and for visitors to offer them an opportunity to describe their experiences during their trip*” (GenCat, n.D.). They intend to become a place of interaction innovation and adopted this approach since 2009.

As the official tourism website is translatable in English, Spanish, Catalan, French, German and Russian, the Dutch language is not present on this official broadcasting platforms maintained by the Catalan Tourist Board. However, when typing “Catalunya Experience” using browsers within The Netherlands, visitors click on the Dutch version of the website, managed and

maintained by the Benelux department office of the Catalan Tourist Board. They claim to “promote Catalunya, from our office in Brussels, within the countries of the Benelux, cooperate with media partners and other relevant organizations, organize workshops and presentations and visit travel conventions” (Catalunya Experience, n.D.). The Benelux department also claims to follow the local trends by researching the market, networking, and following national news. During the interview, it was told that this official Benelux version is launched in the month of April 2022 as a blog because of the lack of content on the international website in the Dutch language. Since the launch date until September 5 (approximately 4 months), 8.394 visitors have visited the blog website of Catalunyaexperience.nl. These mostly originated from the bigger cities within The Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Rotterdam, Haarlem). Among 2700 of those visitors were returning website visitors.

During the interview, one third of the time the Marketing Plan 2019-2023 and its main guidelines were the main topic of conversation. The expert expressed that this marketing plan, re-established every four years, presents the main guidelines for promotional activities within the different markets where the Catalan Tourist Board focuses on. These four main guidelines were the following:

1. Better distribution of visitors among the Catalan territory;
2. Diversification of the tourist products offered in Catalonia;
3. Increase expenditure of the visitors; And
4. Fight seasonality

From the interview, it is clear that these guidelines differ among the different markets where the Catalan Tourist Board is present. The South American market is better in fighting seasonality as their summer is taking place in our winter. Speaking of the Benelux market, the expert expressed that Dutch and Belgian (Luxemburgish market was not worth mentioning) tourists were markets that distribute well among the Catalan territory, participate in different tourist products, and were one of the highest expenditures within Europe (after the Scandinavian market). As of these reasons, the expert acknowledged the importance of the Benelux market for Catalonia. However, where the Benelux market is strong in three of the four goals of the Catalan Tourist Board, fighting seasonality is still a challenge to work on: 50-60% of the Benelux tourists visit Catalonia during the high summer peak (July-August).

#### *Main tourist products promoted on Catalunya Experience*

On the official tourist website (blog) of the Catalan Tourist Board, the one focused on the Benelux market, several tourist products directly cross the eye: “The Grand Tour of Catalonia”, “Discover the work of Gaudí in Catalonia”, and “Discover what to do with your kids in Catalonia”. After the interview, it is clear that The Grand Tour of Catalunya is the main tourist product promoted by the Catalan Tourist Board among all its different markets, such as the Benelux market. Over the years, starting from 2015 until the COVID-19 pandemic, the Catalan Tourist Board focused their promotional activities on different themes:

- Catalonia as a family destination (2015)
- Catalonia as a wine tourism destination (2016)
- Catalonia as a sustainable destination (2017)
- Catalonia as a cultural Tourism destination (2018-2019)

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the expert of the Catalan Tourist Board expressed that they mostly focused on recovery and inventorying how and if tourist companies in both Catalonia and the Benelux have survived the pandemic. The Catalan Tourist Board also let go on thematic years, as explained above, and merely focused (and still focuses) on the Grand Tour of Catalunya. The Grand Tour of Catalonia is promoted as the current main tourist product by the Catalan Tourist Board. On this specific page, a map of Catalonia is displayed with the route of the “Grand Tour of Catalonia”, parted into five sections. The accompanied text tells the visitors that participating in this Grand Tour of Catalonia is “a route to know, discover, live, taste and enjoy Catalonia with your vehicle”. The words describing the tour are describing different emotions the visitors of this grand tour will experience during their trip to Catalonia. Potential visitors to Catalonia are welcomed to drive along this “journey full of journeys” on their own pace, at the time of the year that they prefer, and the experiences visitors choose themselves to participate in. On the website, the different trams are introduced.



Figure 12: Map of the Grand Tour of Catalonia: A journey full of journeys, on the website’s web page.

This tour makes the tourists able to discover the essence of Catalonia and “connects cultural heritage, natural landscape, and food and wine pleasures, which define this land’s personality, in both cultural and urban environments”. The aim of this tour is promoting the knowledge of the Catalan territory and its culture and traditions, encouraging the environment, and boosting the discovery of local Catalan products. On this web page, different sections of the “Grand Tour” are introduced and accompanied by visual content in any category: ranging from the Catalan traditions to the built and natural environment. According to the Catalan Tourist Board, this tour is based on sustainable tourism models that aims to distribute tourism

throughout the Catalan territory throughout all the seasons of the year. The expert interview also resulted in the notion that The Grand Tour of Catalunya is mainly introduced to hook onto the four main guidelines of the current marketing plan (e.g., dispersion of tourists within the Catalan territory).

The second tourist product introduced on Catalunya Experience is a web page in which different monuments of the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí are introduced as part of the UNESCO world heritage. On the website, seven monuments located in Barcelona, such as Casa Vicens, are promoted.

The third tourist product introduced on the Benelux version of Catalunya Experience is the web page called “With the entire family on holiday through Catalonia”, emphasizing on places within Catalonia that are family-friendly, labeled as *Destinacions de Turisme Familiar (DTF)* by the Catalan government. These destinations include Platja d’Aro, Sant Antoni de Calonge and Palamos, Sant Pere Pescador, Lloret de Mar and La Garrotxa. All of those destinations promoted on this family-friendly web page are located within the province of Girona, and, besides La Garrotxa, all located near the Costa Brava. The visual content provides images of the Costa Brava itself (e.g., Cala Cristus, Platja d’Aro) or outdoor activities (e.g., Aiguamolls de l’Empordà).

However, on the *international* version of the official tourist website, other products are sold on the home page of the website. Besides the “Grand Tour of Catalunya”, which is also promoted on the Benelux version, the international website of the Catalan Tourist Board introduces the following stories: “Meet Catalunya” (<https://catalunya.com/en/catalunya-convention-bureau-ccb>) , “Get thrilled in every step” (<https://advisors.catalunya.com/en/be-thrilled-in-every-step/>), and “A Land that Inspires” (<https://catalunya.com/what-to-do/get-active>). These different headlines bring the visitor to each a specific other web page, respectively to Catalonia as a place where you can have meetings and business conventions, a place where you can meet ambassadors’ favorite places, and a place where you can participate in outdoor activities.

Besides the three main Catalan tourist products promoted to the Benelux market, the website’s homepage is introduced with the quote “Catalonia, there’s always something to do”, with the following accompanied text: “Whether you’re a nature lover, culture lover, sport lover, or a foodie, Catalonia has plenty of things to do for any kind of holiday”. Also, on the web page of “Destinations”, Catalonia is promoted as a destination that has its own language and culture, old traditions and parties, a big diversity of nature and an international acknowledged kitchen. On this web page, the different tourist brands of Catalonia are introduced, ranging from the high mountain ranges of the Pyrenees to the cultural heritage of Gaudí and Dalí. Also, on the web page “What to do?”, Catalonia’s diversity in activities is shown to its visitors.

The most read topics or blogs on Catalunya Experience are presented below. As can be identified, most of these topics are related to “Nature” or “Biking”.

1. Afkoelen in de verborgen poelen van Catalonië (Natuur)
2. Catalonië bij hoog en laag (Avontuur)



3. 8 duizelingwekkende dorpen in Catalonië (Dorpen)
4. De Grand Tour van Catalonië (Roadtrip)
5. Fietsen over de oude spoorlijn van de Via Verda de la Val de Zafán (Fietsen)
6. De mooiste meren van Catalonië (Natuur)
7. De 5 mooiste wandelingen in Catalonië (Natuur)
8. 11 prachtige uitkijkpunten in Catalonië (Natuur)
9. Fietsen van de Pyreneeën naar de sprankelende Costa Brava (Fietsen)
10. Met de kids op vakantie in de Costa Brava (Familie)

These most read blogs on Catalunya Experience are in line with what the Catalan Tourist Board tries to achieve with their promotional activities. The expert expressed that, besides the yearly themes, active tourism and camping holidays were mostly promoted to the international markets. The Catalan Tourist Board seeks for specific collaborations, such as with the national Dutch bike association (Nederlandse Toer Fiets Unie), and work together on market research to their members. However, speaking of promotional campaigns in print media, television or other traditional advertising, the Catalan Tourist Board does not participate in those. Another noteworthy topic was mentioned by the expert, and that was that the Catalan Tourist Board prefers to not invest much time and money into the promotion of Barcelona and/or the touristic coastline of Catalonia:

*“We try not to spend much money and time on promoting Barcelona and the coastline. Well, if someone approaches us with a nice product to promote Barcelona, we may seek the opportunity to collaborate and dedicate some time and money on that. But if someone only wants to talk about the main topics that everybody already knows, we do not want to put any money or time in that.”*

From this analysis on the projected perspective of Catalonia as a tourist destination, it is clear that Catalonia is promoted as a versatile tourist destination “for any type of holiday”. And by introducing different tourist products such as “The Grand Tour of Catalunya”, visitors of the website can engage themselves in the different stories that display Catalonia’s diversity. From the interviews, it became clear that the well-known tourist destinations of Catalonia (Barcelona and the coastline) much, and active tourism, camping holidays and the Grand Tour of Catalonia were points of focus over the last four years. By implementing the marketing plan by emphasizing on the dispersion and diversification of the tourist products in Catalonia, as well as increasing the tourists’ expenditure and fighting seasonality, most focus is put on the diverse tourist destinations within the entirety of the Catalan territory.

#### *Other platforms of Catalunya Experience*

The main platforms Catalunya Tourism interacts with its public, besides the official tourist website, are Facebook (@Catalunya Experience), Twitter (@Catalunya Experience), Instagram (@catalunyaexperience) and YouTube (Catalunya Experience).

The Catalan Tourist Board uses Facebook for users to find information that is updated and introduce discounts and promotional offers on various tourist activities. Content-wise, Catalunya Experience on Facebook promotes full destinations and multiple pictures per post. As of that, different themes can be shown simultaneously, promoting destinations as Priorat as a destination in which you can use its extensive network of walking paths that take you through its wonderful villages, where you can discover Sierra de Montsant National Park and Sierra de Llaberia Protected Area, and, in addition, its wine and olive oil routes. The pictures

show both the natural environment and build environment, as well as some wine fields (gastronomy) and a tourist taking a hike (sport).

Considering Instagram, the account of @Catalunyaexperience promotes mostly the built environment in combination with the natural environment. Mostly, mountain towns surrounded by nature were posted in the last 30 pictures as of 20 August 2022. However, also pictures of the Catalan coastal towns and beaches (5x), lakes (5x), or cultural heritage were shared on their official Instagram account. Nevertheless, no pictures were posted considering the Catalan accommodation, gastronomy, or its local people.

YouTube is the third platform used by Experience Catalunya to promote its brand where different videos, also used on the official tourist website, are presented. Twitter is the last social media that Catalunya Experience promotes on its official tourism website. Every day, a tweet of someone posting about Catalonia is re-tweeted on the official Twitter account of Catalunya Experience. However, Catalunya Experience does not tweet itself.

Contact information concerning the Benelux department of the Catalan Tourist Board are also provided on the Benelux version of Catalunya Experience as well as some links to the platforms Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. However, these are not available in Dutch.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion and Discussion

In this last chapter, the main research question and specific research questions will be answered, and in addition, insights into future research and recommendations on tourist destination image will be introduced.

### 6.1. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyze and comprehend how tourism destination images are both projected by destination management organizations and perceived by the people who visit those specific destinations. This research focused on the Spanish region of Catalonia as a tourist destination and chose Dutch (and in a way, Benelux) tourists as the main market of origin. To answer the main research question considering the match, or mismatch, between the projected and perceived image of the destination of Catalonia, Spain, two specific research questions will be addressed and answered first. Afterwards, the main research question will be answered.

To analyze how tourists from specific markets of origin perceive tourist destination image, the mental maps and complementary interviews were analyzed, and the occurring results were presented. An answer to the first specific research question is formulated:

*How is a tourist destination image perceived by tourists in both the affective, conative and cognitive components?*

Insights into the perception of how tourists perceive a tourist destination image were provided by the mental mapping sessions and complementary interviews. Every participant was able to draw their mental map in their own unique way, and their experiences and perceptions of their time in Catalonia differed among the diverse group of participants: Mainly their orientation of drawing, level of drawing insecurity, use of colors, symbols and legends, and the

time talking during the mental mapping sessions. However, all the participants took the mental map as a central referment during the mental mapping sessions and were able to express the experiences and symbols they related during their holiday in the Spanish region of Catalonia. In addition, all of the participants drew the Catalan coastline and were able to identify one or more personal stories about their time in this tourist destination.

By drawing the mental maps and asking the participants how they perceive Catalonia's tourist destination image, in both the cognitive, affective and conative component, the participants' perception to Catalonia was determined and visualized. The cognitive component provided insights into how the participants think about and understand the physical environment of Catalonia, by attaching words to the Catalan region. These words were often referred to the Catalan coast ("sun", "sea", "beach"), but others were also able to associate a Catalan holiday with its gastronomy and local people. In a lesser extent, participants were able to recall Barcelona and independence as words of association. Regarding the affective component of the perceived tourist destination image, participants were asked which places and/or experiences in the physical environment were attached emotions and feelings to. Within this component, participants ranged their answers from local destinations such as PortAventura and Tarragona to a specific accommodation or an activity. Also, negative feelings were introduced by the participants. However, these were mostly associated with over touristic coastal villages and pickpockets within Barcelona. In general, these affections of the participants related mostly to personal experiences they most enjoyed or found least likeable during their visit to Catalonia. Lastly, with the short analysis of the conative component, behavioural intentions of the participants came to light by asking the participants about the places they most frequently have visited *and* the places they would recommend their family and friends. It is noted that most of the places visited in Catalonia by the participants lay on the Catalan coastline, except for Penedès, Priorat and Vila-Rodona. Regarding the most visited places, being Salou and the Costa Brava, many participants introduced a sense of nostalgia because of their visits during their childhood. Considering the participants' recommendations to friends and family, some of the participants mentioned to recommend fewer basic destinations within Catalonia.

During the mental mapping sessions, other topics regarding the participants' perception to the Catalan tourist image were identified: sense of independence and Catalonia compared to other (tourist) destinations. These topics, in combination with the mental maps and the three components, allowed the researcher to seek for what the participants define as "Catalan". Most of the participants related the Catalan culture to its sense of independence by mentioning the yellow ribbons, the Catalan flags or the fact that a different language is spoken. However, some participants were also able to mention typical Catalan symbols such as "castells", "cava" and the historical monuments all across the region. Most of the participants were also able to show *why* they prefer Catalonia to other Spanish regions, due to its proximity and accessibility to The Netherlands, or why Catalonia and its beaches and hospitable locals are more preferable than other main European destinations. However, most of the participants expressed they did not know what typical Catalan was after visiting the tourist destination of Catalonia.

To answer how the tourist destination image of Catalonia is perceived by Dutch tourists is, as the construct of perceived tourist destination image, complex and multidimensional. However, it can be concluded that overlap between the participants arose in both their mental maps and the comments they made during the complementary interviews. Most of the participants remember and visit Catalonia because of its coastal towns near the Mediterranean Sea, its gastronomy, its proximity and accessibility to The Netherlands, and the hospitality and kindness of its local people. Even though every participant has expressed its own personal stories, preferences and recommendations from their visits to the Spanish region of Catalonia, the Catalan coastline's "Sun, sea and beach"-formula is quite successful and dominates the perceived image of the Dutch tourist in all of the three components.

To complement the other component of tourist destination image, a content analysis of the official tourist website of the Catalan Tourism Board was conducted, and an additional interview with an expert of that organization's Benelux department took place. These were analyzed to answer the second specific research question:

*Sub-research question 2: How does a tourist destination sell itself, and in turn its image, to specific markets?*

Concerning the analysis of the projected image of a tourist destination, in this case being Catalonia, it is clear to conclude that Catalonia is promoted as a versatile tourist destination where promotional activities are mostly focused on active tourism in the Catalan territory, as well as the promotion of the Grand Tour of Catalunya. However, these promotional activities differ and change in focus over time, as in previous years different themes were focused on. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the Catalan Tourist Board mainly focuses on the diversity of the Catalan territory and its tourist activities outside of the areas that are most visited and well-known by Dutch tourist, such as the Catalan coastline and Barcelona.

Regarding the *selling* of Catalunya as a tourist destination to specific markets, promotional activities are similar among different markets, as well as the main guidelines from the marketing plans. However, specific tourist markets have their specific adaptations suited to the behavior of the tourists within those markets, and in this case, a tailor-made blog website (Catalunya Experience) for the Benelux market in the Dutch language. These digital contents have a predominant role in the projected image the Catalan Tourist Board wants to transmit to their public (potential tourists) and tries to influence the tourists' perception of Catalonia as a tourist destination.

To fully understand if and how both the perceived and projected tourist destination image, in the context of this research, relate, an answer to the main research question is provided:

*Does the perceived image held by tourists who have visited a destination (mis)match the projected image of that certain destination?*

It can be concluded that both differences and similarities arise between the perception and the projection of the tourist destination image. Whereas the supply-sided part of this complex construct, the projected image, is mostly intentionally shaped by the Catalan Tourist Board and its many tourist products offered, the tourists' perceived image is shaped by the sensed

experiences during their visit to Catalonia. After analyzing the perceived image of several participants from The Netherlands, it is clear that the Catalan coastline is mostly located central in their mental maps (perception of Catalonia). The “sun-sea-beach”-formula was also most often in the three different components of perceived tourist destination image, as well as in the themes beyond these components (e.g., local people, comparisons with other tourist destinations).

However, the overall tourist destination image is compromised of the interaction between both the projected and perceived images, where the latter one is compromised out individuals’ own sense of perception to their previous experiences in Catalonia and their personal characteristics. Some participants were curious to the other parts of Catalonia that were not that well known and expressed recommendations to family and friends to visit Catalan destinations that are less basic (e.g., Costa Brava, Barcelona). In that sense, the projected image hooks onto this interest by focusing on diversifying its tourist products, dispersing tourist activities throughout the Catalan territory and fight seasonality. By aiming on these goals, the Catalan Tourist Board tries to manipulate and interact with the perceived image of Dutch tourists to complement the “Sun-sea-beach”- formula with all of the other tourist activities and products Catalonia has to offer.

Nevertheless, this image that is projected to the Benelux market is rather normative, as this message of the Catalan DMO is what they desire themselves for the sake of the Catalan tourist industry and to stimulate sustainable tourism within its territory (referring to the four goals of their marketing plan). The perceived image, in contrast to the projected and biased image of the DMO, is rather a descriptive perception, based on the experiences of the tourists and what they sense during their holidays to a tourist destination. Because these two images are, as this study concludes, different, DMOs are having a challenge to find a better match between those images. Nevertheless, there is potential in finding a better congruency between the projected and perceived image.

## 6.2. Discussion

By providing a greater context, the results of this study will be discussed as a contribution to the disciplines in (managing) tourist destination image among different tourist destinations and how people project and perceive those destinations.

By involving a variety of tools like mental mapping, this research was able to make the invisible perceptions about Dutch tourists’ experiences in Catalonia visible in a more concrete way. It allowed the researcher to combine the three proposed components of tourist destination image, being the cognitive, affective and conative, with a spatial component. The different participants were able to comment on their mental maps by pointing out and explaining the places they visited within Catalonia, how their feelings were affected by and associated with those places, and if they would recommend those places to others or had intentions to revisit it. By creating a (mental) connection with their holiday destination, the researcher was able to analyze the participant’s perception on the tourist destination, and more importantly, answer the first specific research question. However, without the complementary interviews, it would be difficult to visualize and interpret the tourists’ perception. In future research, it might be

more interesting to collect all the data and combine that into one collective mental map, as a carrier of a collected perception of the tourist destination image.

Even though the mental mapping sessions were a functional tool to visualize the Dutch tourists' perceptions on Catalonia as a tourist destination, many of the participants in this research showed a certain level of drawing anxiety and/or insecurity. Considering the low response-rate in the acquisition of Dutch tourists, it can be concluded that the bar to contribute to this study is too high. Even though most participants expressed their enjoyment and gratitude after the mental mapping sessions, future studies might also benefit from group drawings to share their experiences together and recommend places within the tourist destination to each other. Especially since some participants showed interest in how others drew and perceived Catalonia. In addition to the acquisition of the participants, it should be noted that most of the participants were direct (such as friends or family that have visited Catalonia) or indirect (strangers) contacts of the researcher, who were willing to participate. On top of that, it should be considered that every single participant experiences and perceives in a different way. Different compositions of research samples might result in different conclusions regarding the collectivity on tourist destination image perception. However, this research sample was heterogeneous considering their background information such as travel company, age, gender and previous travels to Catalonia.

Continuing on the differences that can occur when having sessions with different participants *within The Netherlands*, it should be taken into account that the impact of cultural background on the perception of tourist destination image could differ. As an example, if in this research an Italian (European) or Chinese (non-European) group of participants would be the focus market of origin, different conclusions might be drawn from this research. Dutch tourists might visit different places than Italian or Chinese tourists, or, as another example, the (international) market share within Catalonia's tourism industry might be different. As of that, future research could focus on different markets of origin, within or outside of Europe. This mainly reflects on the perspective of the perception of tourist destination images.

From the other perspective, being the projected image, it might also be interesting to analyze how that specific tourist destination is promoted, communicated and managed to other markets. As mentioned before, the match or mismatch between the projected and perceived images is needed to be calculated by DMOs, so that these organizations can improve and adjust the promotion of the destination. However, from this study, it can be concluded that different participants of the *same* market of origin already have different perceptions on the tourist destination image of Catalonia. Destination management organizations should also anticipate on the differences of perception and image of specific markets of origin. In this study, Catalonia was chosen as the destination but other Spanish regions such as Andalucía, Islas Canarias or Galicia might result in different answers to the research question. Also, taking a lower-scale destination such as one of the Catalan tourist brands, being Costa Brava, Pirineus or Barcelona, the main research question might be answered differently depending on the destination. Not only in Spain, but also among other countries where Dutch tourists, or tourists from other markets markets, travel to.

Next to analyzing other markets or tourist images, there might be great potential in analyzing how tourists perceive tourist destinations *before* (expectations) and *after* (experiences) their visits to those specific destinations. It can contribute to the social world, mainly tourism destination organizations, to showcase how tourists perceive a tourist destination in the stages of travelling to that destination, before, during and after their visit. This insight relates to the tourists' expectations, satisfaction levels and post-visit experiences and recommendations to their family and friends. Also, DMOs can anticipate on the travel decision-making behavior before even visiting those destinations.

Considering the content analysis, it should be discussed that only the main pages and second level of navigation of the Benelux official tourist website were interpreted by the researcher, and, in some ways, confirmed by the expert of the Catalan Tourist Board. Future research should incorporate also other promoted materials such as brochures, advertisements and commercials that the Catalan Tourist Board uses specifically to the Dutch market. However, social media channels were not present in the Dutch language. Moreover, it is concluded that the participants did not necessarily hear about the website of Catalunya Experience nor got to know the tourist destination via its social media channels. It would be advisory for the Catalan Tourist Board to be more present, and in turn, be able to influence the Dutch tourists' perceived image.

Lastly, the lack of analysis on the spatial dimension in research on tourist destination images should be noted because of its importance. By implementing the method of mental mapping in the visualization of tourists' perceptions on a tourist destination, DMOs can gain insights into the tourists their perception to image such as its texture, color, location and relativity. With the rise of technology, internet and social media platforms, the visual content of projected images is one of the most important ways of communicating in tourism. As of that, to seek for incongruences between those projected and perceived images of a specific tourism destination, it might be useful to use the mental mapping method in the analysis of the perception of tourists towards that certain destination: Mental maps visualize how individuals perceive the tourist destination in the three analyzed components and beyond – the spatial dimension of their perception and other themes such as their perception on the sense of independence of Catalonia. It gives destination management organizations an insight into their target market and helps in visualizing how tourists would share their stories to their families and friends, decide where to travel to or not, and whether they will revisit the tourist destination in the future. DMOs can adapt their marketing and management campaigns of the tourists to achieve a change of perception. However, they should target their potential visitors that can influence the tourists' mental perceptions and that can only be done by *analyzing* their those first.

## References

- Agapito, D., Oom do Valle, P., & da Costa Mendes, J. (2013). The cognitive-affective conative model of destination image: A confirmatory analysis. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(5), pp. 471–481.
- Albers, P. C. & James, W. R. (1988). Travel photography: a methodological approach. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, pp. 134-158.
- Altman, I. & Low, S. (1992). *Place Attachment*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Amposta, J. B. (2015). Tourism Destination Management: An overview of the advances of Catalonia. In: *TOURISMOS: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*, 10(2), pp. 185-198.
- Anand, P., Holbrook, M. B., & Stephens, D. (1988). The formation of affective judgments: The cognitive-affective model versus the independence hypothesis. In: *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, pp. 386-391.
- Andreu, L., Bigné, J. E., & Cooper, C. (2000). Projected and perceived image of Spain as a tourist destination for British travellers. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 9(4), pp. 47–67.
- Armstein, J. & Ward, K. L. (2020). Applying Visual Research Methods in Pharmacy Education. In: *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84 (1).
- Ayyildiz, H. & Turna, G. B. (2013). Image of Spain and Germany as a Tourist Destination for Dutch Travelers. In: *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 1(1).
- Babbie, E. R. & Halley, F. S. (1994). *Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using SPSS*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of In: Tourism Research*, 26(4), pp. 868–897.
- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. In: *Tourism Management*, 22, pp. 137-133.
- Beerli, A., & Martín, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), pp. 657–681.
- Bell, E. & Davison, J. (2013). Visual management studies: empirical and theoretical approaches. In: *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15(2), pp. 167–184.
- Boulding, K. E. (1956). General Systems Theory – The Skeleton of Science. In: *Management Science*.
- Bramwell, B., & Rawding, L. (1996). Tourism marketing images of industrial cities. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(1), pp. 201–221.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In: H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbooks in psychology. APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*, pp. 57–71. American Psychological Association.

Braun, V., Clarke, V. & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In: B. Smith & A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*. London: Routledge. Pp. 191-205.

Bui, T. L. H. (2011). Congruency between the projected and perceived tourism destination image of Vietnam. In: *Journal of International Business Research*, 10(2), pp. 1–14

Camprubí, R., & Coromina, L. (2016). Content analysis in tourism research. In: *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 18, pp. 134–140.

Cassel, C. & Symon, G. (2004). *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*. Sage Publications.

Catalunya Experience (n. D.). Retrieved from [https://www.catalunyaexperience.nl/?gclid=Ci0KCQjwbyYBhCdARIsAArC6LLqHOLTgAHWVbrh9TLwjoFmOmKEskm3Fx-OUoYMoMimjw0KlBhkbwMaAtjQEALw\\_wcB](https://www.catalunyaexperience.nl/?gclid=Ci0KCQjwbyYBhCdARIsAArC6LLqHOLTgAHWVbrh9TLwjoFmOmKEskm3Fx-OUoYMoMimjw0KlBhkbwMaAtjQEALw_wcB)

Catalan Tourist Board. (2022). About the Catalan Tourist Board. Retrieved from [About the Catalan Tourist Board | Agència Catalana de Turisme – ACT \(gencat.cat\)](#)

Caton, K., & Almeida Santos, C. (2008). Closing the hermeneutic circle? Photographic encounters with the other. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(1), pp. 7–26.

Chen, Y. F., & Law, R. (2016). A review of research on electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. In: *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 17(4), pp. 347–372.

Chen, H. J., Yung, C.-Y., & Wang, M.-H. (2008). Perception gaps between tourist blogs and travel information on destination image. Dubai: The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management.

Choi, S., Lehto, X. Y., & Morrison, A. M. (2007). Destination image representation on the web: Content analysis of Macau travel related websites. In: *Tourism Management*, 28(1), pp. 118–129.

Chon, K. & Olsen M. (1991). Tourism destination image modification process: marketing implications. In: *Tourism Management*, 12(1), pp. 68-72.

Crang, M. (2003). The hair in the gate: Visuality and geographical knowledge. In: *Antipode*, 35 (2), pp. 238-243.

Dickinger, A. (2011). The trustworthiness of online channels for experience- and goal directed search tasks. In: *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(4), pp. 378–391.

- Eichner, M. C. & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: and empirical assessment. In: *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), pp. 2-13.
- Eurobarometer. (2016). Flash eurobarometer 432: Preferences of Europeans towards tourism. Brussels: Belgium.
- Eurostat (2016). Tourism. In M. Kotzeva (Ed.). *Eurostat regional yearbook 2016*, pp. 177– 192. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Farmaki, A. (2012). A comparison of the projected and the perceived image of Cyprus. In: *Tourismos*, 7(2), pp. 95–119.
- Fernández-Cavia, J. & Huertas-Roig, A. (2009). City brands and their communication through Web sites: Identification of problems and proposals for Improvement. In: GascoHernandez, M., Torres-Coronas, T. (eds). *Information communication technologies and city marketing: Digital opportunities for cities around the world*, pp. 26-49, Hershey, USA: Idea Group Inc.
- Gartner, W. C. (1993). Image formation process. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 2(2–3), pp. 191–215.
- Generalitat de Catalunya. (2020). 2018-2022 Catalonia Tourism Marketing Plan. Retrieved at 10 May 2022, from [http://act.gencat.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ResumExecutiuPMTC\\_EN.pdf](http://act.gencat.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ResumExecutiuPMTC_EN.pdf)
- Generalitat de Catalunya (2021). Catalan Tourism Brands. Retrieved at 24 June 2022, from [https://empresa.gencat.cat/en/treb\\_ambits\\_actuacio/turisme/informacio\\_promocio/marques-turistiques/](https://empresa.gencat.cat/en/treb_ambits_actuacio/turisme/informacio_promocio/marques-turistiques/)
- Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Thematic Coding and Categorizing. In: *Analyzing Qualitative Data*.
- Gieseeking, J. J. (2013). Where we go from here: The mental sketch mapping method and its analytic components. In: *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19 (9), pp. 712-724.
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British dental journal*, 204(6), pp. 291.
- Gitelson, R. & Kerstetter, D. (1994). The influence of friends and relatives in travel decision-making. In: *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 3(3), pp. 59-68.
- Gläser, J. & Laudel, G. (1999). *Theoriegeleitete Textanalyse? Das Potential einer variablenorientierten qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse*. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Socialforschung GmbH.
- Gökten, C. & Südas, I. (2014). The image of Australia: A case study on the mental maps of Turkish immigrants in Sydney. In: *Journal of Geography and Geology*, 6 (2), pp. 82-92.
- Grosspietsch, M. (2006). Perceived and projected images of Rwanda: Visitor and international tour operator perspectives. In: *Tourism Management*.

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. In: *Field methods*, 18(1), pp. 59-82.
- Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape: Designing Tourist Regions*, Taylor & Francis, Washington.
- Gutsche, R. E. (2014). News place-making: applying 'mental mapping' to explore the journalistic interpretive community. *Visual Communication*, 13 (4), pp. 487-510.
- Hallett, R. W. & Kaplan-Weinger, J. (2010). *Official tourism websites: a discourse analysis perspective*. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Polity Press.
- Hunt, J. D. (1971). *Image: A factor in Tourism*. [Ph.D. dissertation]. Colorado State University, Fort Collins, USA.
- Huertas, A. (2008). Public relations and Tourism: Fighting for the role of public relations in tourism. In: *Public Relations Review*, 34(4), pp. 406-408.
- Idescat. (2021). Turistes estrangers. Per país de residència habitual. Retrieved at 28 April 2022, from <https://www.idescat.cat/indicadors/?id=anuals&n=10532&t=201800&col=1>
- Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012). The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB). In: *Internet Research*, 22(5), pp. 591–612.
- Jalilvand, M. R., Samiei, N., Dini, B., & Manzari, P. Y. (2012). Examining the structural relationships of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention: An integrated approach. In: *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1-2), pp. 134-143.
- Jansen, J. (2011). *Tourist familiarity in Amsterdam: Route choice behavior of (un)familiar domestic tourist within Amsterdam's inner city* (Unpublished master's thesis). Utrecht Publishing & Archiving Services, The Netherlands.
- Jarrat, D., Phelan, C., Wain, J. & Dale, S. (2018). Developing a sense of place toolkit: identifying destination uniqueness. In: *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(4).
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images In: *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1(1), pp. 1-15.
- Ji, S. (2011). *Projected and Perceived Destination Images of Qingdao, China*. [PhD], University of Waterloo: Ontario, Canada.
- Ji, S., & Wall, G. (2015). Understanding supply- and demand-side destination image relationships: The case of Qingdao, China. In: *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(2), pp. 205–222.
- Jiven, G. & Larkham, P. J. (2003). Sense of place, authenticity and character: A commentary. *Journal of Urban Design*, 8(1), pp. 67-81.

- Johnston, R. J., Gregory, D., Pratt, G., & Watts, M. (1986). *The Dictionary of Human Geography*.
- Jung, H. (2014). Let their voices be seen: exploring mental mapping as a feminist visual methodology for the study of migrant women. In: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38 (3).
- Khan, S. (2013). Perceived and projected image of India as a tourism destination. *South Asian In: Journal of Tourism and Heritage*, 6(1), pp. 97–107.
- Khettab, S. & Chabbi-Chemrouk, N. (2017). Sense of place in the coastal town of Tipaza in Algeria: Local-community's socio-cognitive representations. In: *International Journal of Sustainable Built Environment*, 6 (2), pp. 544-554.
- Kim, D., & Perdue, R. R. (2011). The influence of image on destination attractiveness. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(3), pp. 225–239.
- Kim, H., & Richardson, S. L. (2003). Motion picture impacts on destination images. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), pp. 216–237.
- Kim, S., & Lehto, X. Y. (2013). Projected and perceived destination brand personalities: The case of South Korea. In: *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(1), pp. 117–130.
- Kohlbacher, F. (2006). The use of qualitative content analysis in case study research. In: *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 7(1), pp. 1-30.
- Kotler, P. & Gertner, D. (2004). Country as Brand, Product and Beyond: A Place Marketing and Brand Management Perspective. In: Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. & Pride, R. (Eds.), *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, Butterworth-Heinemann: Oxford, pp. 40-56.
- Kotler, P., Hairder, D. H., & Rein, I. (1993). *Marketing places: Attracting investment, industry and tourism to cities, states and nations*. New York, USA: The Free Press.
- Kozma, G. & Ashworth, G. J. (1993). Projected urban images: a comparison of Groningen and Debrecen. In: *Groningen Studies*, 55, Groningen Rijksuniversiteit: Groningen, The Netherlands.
- Kracauer, S. (1952). The challenge of qualitative content analysis. In: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 16(4), pp. 631-642.
- Lai, K., & Li, X. (2016). Tourism destination image: Conceptual problems and definitional solutions. In: *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(8), pp. 1065–1080.
- Lee, M. Y., Hitchcock, M., & Lei, W. J. (2017). Mental mapping and heritage visitors' spatial perceptions. In: *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, pp. 1–15.
- Leung, D., Law, R., & Van Hoof, H. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: a literature review. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(1–2), pp. 3–22.
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. In: *Tourism Management*, 29(3), pp. 458–468.

- Llodrà-Riera, I., Martínez-Ruiz, M. P., Jiménez-Zarco, A. I., & Izquierdo-Yusta, A. (2015). A multidimensional analysis of the information sources constructs and its relevance for destination image formation. In: *Tourism Management*, 48, pp. 319–328.
- Loncaric, D., Basa, L. & Markovic, M. G. (2013). Importance of DMO websites in tourist destination selection. In: *Marketing in a Dynamic Environment – Academic and Practical Insights*.
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Lynch, K. Pocock, D., & Hudson, R. (1978). *Images of the urban environment*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Mak, A. H. N. (2017). Online destination image: Comparing national tourism organisation's and tourists' perspectives. In: *Tourism Management*, 60, pp. 280–297.
- Mackay, K.J. & Couldwell, C.M. (2004) Using Visitor-Employed Photography to Investigate Destination Image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42, pp. 390-396.
- Mackay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. In: *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(3), pp. 537–565.
- Manstead, S. R. (1996). Attributes and behavior. In G. S. Semin & K. Fiedler (Eds.), *Applied social psychology*, pp. 3-29. London: Sage.
- Marine-Roig, E. (2014). From the projected to the transmitted image: the 2.0 constructed tourist destination image and identity in Catalonia. [Thesis], Universitat Rovira i Virgili: Vila-Seca, España.
- Marine-Roig, E. (2015). Identity and authenticity in destination image construction. *Anatolia: In: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 26(4), pp. 574–587
- Marine-Roig, E. & Anton Clavé, S. (2016). Destination Image Gaps Between Official Tourism Websites and User-Generated Content. IN: *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*, pp. 253-265.
- Marine-Roig, E. & Ferrer-Rosell, B. (2018). Measuring the gap between projected and perceived destination images of Catalonia using compositional analysis. In: *Tourism Management*, 68, pp. 236-249.
- Martineau, P. (1958). Social Classes and Spending Behavior. in: *Journal of Marketing*, 23, pp. 121-130.
- Mayring, P. (2003). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse Grundlagen und Techniken*, (8).
- Meneghello, S., & Montaguti, F. (2016). Travel writings and destination image. In M. Kozak, & N. Kozak (Eds.). *Destination Marketing: An international perspective*, New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 39– 48.

Morgan, N. & Pritchard, A. (2004) Meeting the Destination Branding Challenge. In: Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R., Eds., Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, pp. 59-78.

Moufakkir, O. (2008). Destination Image Revisited: The Dutch Market Perceptions of Morocco as a Tourism Destination (chapter 7). In: Burns, P. M. & Novelli, M. (Eds). Tourism Development: Growth, Myths, and Inequalities. Center for Tourism Policy Studies: University of Brighton, UK.

Moutinho, L. (1987). Consumer Behaviour in Tourism. In: European Journal of Marketing, 21, pp. 5-44.

Neuman, W. L. (2003). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Toronto: Allyn & Bacon.

Norberg-Schulz, Ch. (1991). Genius loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture. New York: Rizzoli.

Önder, I., & Marchiori, E. (2017). A comparison of pre-visit beliefs and projected visual images of destinations. In: Tourism Management Perspectives, 21, pp. 42–53.

Papadimitriou, D., Kaplanidou, K., & Apostolopoulou, A. (2015). Destination Image Components and Word-of-Mouth Intentions in Urban Tourism: A Multigroup Approach. In: Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research.

Paul i Agustí, D. (2021). The clustering of city images on Instagram: A comparison between projected and perceived images. In: Journal of Destination Marketing & Management.

Pearce, P. L. (1982). Perceived changes in holiday destinations. In: Annals of Tourism Research, 9, pp. 145-164.

Phelphs, A. (1986). Holiday destination image – The problem of assessment: An example developed in Menorca. In: Tourism Management, pp. 168-180.

Picazo, P. & Moreno-Gil, S. (2017). Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: A literature review to prepare for the future. In: Journal of Vacation Marketing.

Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis: A review of 142 papers from 1973-2000. In: Tourism Management, 23(5), pp. 541–549.

Pike, S., & Ryan, C. (2004). Destination position analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. In: Journal of Travel Research, 42, pp. 333-342.

Pitt, L., Campbell, C., Berthon, P., Nel, D., & Loria, K. (2008). Measuring tourism website communication out of Central America. In: Spanjaard, D., Denize, S., & Sharma, N. (eds.). Marketing: shifting the focus from mainstream to offbeat, pp. 1-6, Sydney (Australia).

Poljanec-Boric, S.; Wertag, A. & Sikic, L. (2018). Sense of place: Perceptions of permanent and temporary residents in Croatia. In: Tourism: An international Interdisciplinary Journal, 66 (2), pp. 177-194.

- Qu, H., Kim, L. H., & Im, H. H. (2011). A model of destination branding: integrating the concepts of the brand and destination image. In: *Tourism Management*, 32, pp. 465-476.
- Reich, A. Z. (1999). Positioning of tourist destinations. Sports Publishing LLC.
- Reisinger, Y. & Turner, L. W. (2003). Cross-cultural behaviour in tourism: concepts and analysis. In: *International journal of Tourism Research*, 6(1), p. 54.
- Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice – a guide for social science students and researchers*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Ryan, C. (2003). *Recreational tourism: demand and impacts*. Clevedon: Channel view Publications.
- Singh, N., & Formica, S. (2007). Level of congruency in photographic representations of destination marketing organizations' websites and brochures. Referenced in: Picazo, P. & Moreno-Gil, S. (2017). Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: A literature review to prepare for the future. In: *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 25(1), pp. 3-24.
- Sirakaya, E., Teye, S. & Sonmez, S. (2002). Understanding Residents' Support for Tourism Development in the Central Region of Ghana. In: *Journal of Travel Research*, 41, pp. 57-67.
- Son, A. (2005). The measurement of tourist destination image: Applying a sketch map technique. In: *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 7(4-5), pp. 279-294.
- Statista. (2021). International tourism volume in Catalonia 2000-2021. Retrieved from [International tourists in Catalonia, Spain 2021 | Statista](#)
- Stepchenkova, S. & Morrison, A. M. (2008). Russia's destination image among American pleasure travelers: Revisiting Echtner and Ritchie. In: *Tourism Management*, 29, 548-560.
- Stepchenkova, S., & Zhan, F. (2013). Visual destination images of Peru: Comparative content analysis of DMO and user-generated photography. In: *Tourism Management*, 36, pp. 590-601.
- Stern, E. & Krakover, S. (1993). The formation of a composite urban image. In: *Geographical Analysis*, 25(2), pp. 130-146.
- Sulsters, W. A. (2005). Mental mapping, viewing the urban landscapes of the mind.
- Sulsters, W. A. & Schubert, L. (2006). 'Mental mapping' van stedelijke gebieden.
- Therkelsen, A. (2003). Imagining places: Image formation of tourists and its consequences for destination promotion. In: *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*, 3(2), pp. 134-150.
- Thompson, W. (2000). "The Symbol of Paris": Writing the Eiffel Tower. In: *The French Review*, 73(6), pp. 1130-1140.
- Tsang, N. K. F., Chan, G. K. Y., & Ho, K. K. F. (2011). A holistic approach to understanding the use of travel guidebooks: pre-, during, and post-trip behavior. In: *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(7), pp. 720-735.

- Urry, J. (1960). The 'Consumption' of Tourism. In: Sociology.
- Van Gorp, B. & Beneker, T. (2007). Holland as other place and other time: alterity in projected tourist images of the Netherlands. In: GeoJournal, 68, pp. 293-305.
- VisitBritain (2017). The GB Tourist: 2017 Annual Report. [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/40413193-260c\\_gb\\_tourist\\_2017\\_annual\\_report\\_v18.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/40413193-260c_gb_tourist_2017_annual_report_v18.pdf)
- Woodside, A. G. & Lysonski, S. (1989). A general model of traveler destination choice. In: Journal of Travel Research, pp. 8-14.
- World Tourism Organization (2007), "A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management", Madrid.
- Yin, R. (2003). Case study research, design and methods, 3(5).
- Young, M. (1999). The social construction of tourist places. In: Australian Geographer, 30(3), pp. 373-389.
- Zhang, H., Fu, X., Cai, L. A., & Lu, L. (2014). Destination image and tourist loyalty: A meta-analysis. In: Tourism Management, 40, pp. 213–223.

# Appendices

## Appendix A. Interview Guide Dutch Tourists

*Permission Privacy and Use Statement + Explanation of the session*

Dear,

I first would express my thanks for your cooperation in my research. **I would like you to draw all the places in the Spanish region of Catalonia that are knowledgeable to you, on the piece of paper in front of you.** Everything you do is okay, because in that way, the drawing will purposely reflect your personal story. To emphasize: This session is not to test your memory. If you have the feeling you are finished drawing, I will take a photograph of that drawing, and in addition, I will ask you a certain number of questions regarding your drawn mental map. This mental map is leading during the interview, and you are able to add anything you would like to the drawing if you may find that necessary.

The conversation will be recorded, so that this research can be conducted as valid as possible, and the drawn mental map will be used in this research. The results will not be traceable to you at any time; anonymity is guaranteed. On top of that, all pencils and pens are disinfected. Good luck!

*Mental mapping session*

*Taking a picture of the mental map (first attempt – objective map)*

*Grand tour question: let the participant explain their mental maps*

### **Interview guide components destination image Catalonia**

*Cognitive component:*

- Which words come up directly in mind when thinking about Catalonia?
- Which word(s) best describe Catalonia as a tourist destination?

*Conative component:*

- What are the places you have visited in Catalonia?
  - Which of these places have you visited more frequently?
- What places in Catalonia would you recommend to others to visit? And why?

*Affective component:*

- What places in Catalonia did you enjoy most? Which places did you detest, dislike? Why?

### **interview guide projected image/source information**

- How were you able to obtain information about the tourism destination of Catalonia? (brochures, tv, friends, family, travel agency, etc).
- Why did you choose to travel to Catalonia? Why no other places within Spain? Or why no other destinations in Europe?
- Does the perceived image you have of Catalonia influence your decision on travelling to the Spanish region, and if so, why?



- Looking at the official website of Catalunya Experience... Did you know there are nature-based activities/Catalan cuisine, etc etc.
- What is your perception of the Catalan people in relation to the Spanish people? And how would you be able to distinct the Catalan culture to the Spanish culture?
  - Did that influence your decision to travel to Catalonia?

**Interview guide tourist background**

- What is your age and gender?
- How frequently do you travel abroad each year?
- Do you have any friends and/or family living in Catalonia/Spain?
- Do you have children yourselves? Do they still travel with you?
- When travelling to Catalonia, how did your travel company look like?
- With what modes of transportation have you reached Catalonia?

*Taking a picture of the mental map (second attempt – steered map)*

*Thank you and termination of the session*

## Appendix B. Interview Guide Experts DMO

*Permission Privacy and Use Statement + Explanation of the session*

### ***Interview questions considering the DMO's activities***

- What is your function within the DMO as an organization?
- What are the main activities of your DMO?
- Can you explain to me in three words what the Catalan Tourism destination image is?
- Does your organization investigate/research the perceptive image of the tourists that visit Catalonia?
  - If yes, in what way does the DMO investigate their perceptions on Catalonia?
  - If no, why not? Does your DMO think it is not important?
- What would you say are the main selling points/elements, based on Catalonia, that your DMO is portraying?
- Which information sources/canals are most important when portraying the destination image of Catalonia?
- Do you cooperate with other (Catalan) DMOs?
- What are the latest trends in Tourism and how does your DMO anticipate on those?

### ***Interview questions considering the DMO and the role of the Dutch market***

- How important is the Dutch/Flemish market for your DMO/Catalonia as a tourist destination?
- In what way, if any, does your DMO involve the Dutch market in marketing campaigns and/or the construction of a perceived image among Dutch tourists?
- Does the DMO sell Catalonia (product) differently to other markets?
  - If so, how?
  - If not, how would you be able to send it differently?
- Did COVID-19 change anything in the importance of several markets of origin?

## Appendix C: Consent Form Privacy and Use Statement

### Master thesis: Tourist Destination Image of Catalonia among Dutch Tourists

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the above-mentioned research project. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Student's name: Tim E. C. van der Linden

Date of interview:

Project for which this interview was carried out: Tourist Destination Image of Catalonia

Name Interviewee:

Current address:

Contact:

Note: Contact-details can be used to verify whether the interview has taken place. Contact details can also be used to contact the interviewee for follow-up research if the interviewee agrees to that.

Please sign this form to approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced.
- You may request the transcript in order to correct any factual errors.
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed.
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed.
- I have the right to withdraw my permission at any moment and I have the right to end the experiment at any moment, without having to provide a reason.
- *My data will be treated according to the European Personal Data Protection.*
- The actual recording will be archived.

#### *To be filled in by participant*

I agree that the interview transcript may be used:

*For the project as noted above:*

- Yes, I give permission.

*For educational purposes (for example to show to future students)*

- Yes, I give permission.  No, I don't give permission.

*In academic papers, policy papers or news articles:*

- Yes, I give permission.  No, I don't give permission.

#### *To be filled in by researcher*

As responsible for this experiment, I declare to have explained to the participant as mentioned above what it contains to participate within this experiment, and that I vouch for the privacy of his/her experimental data.

- Yes, I agree.



*Date and place:*

*Signature interviewee:*

*Signature student:*

**Notes and comments:**

## Appendix D: Questions short survey to Dutch tourists

- Have you ever been to Spain on holiday?
  - Yes or no.
- Have you ever visited Catalonia during your holidays?
  - Yes or no.
  
- When thinking about Catalonia, which words do come up in mind?  
[Fill in].
- Which places have you visited?  
[Fill in].
- Which of these places would you recommend to family/friends?  
[Fill in].
- Which place is your favorite?  
[Fill in].
  
- What information sources did you use?  
Friends and/or family, tv advertisement, magazine, travel blog, internet, tour operator.
- Which mode of transportation did you use to visit Catalonia?  
Car, bus, plane, train, boat, other.
- With whom did you visit Catalonia?  
My family (gezin), other family members, friends, partner/ex, solo.
- Do you have friends/family living in Catalonia?  
Friends, family, none.
- What is your age?  
[fill in].
- What is your gender?
  - Male, female, non-binary/third gender, prefer not to say.
- Where are you from?
  - Netherlands, Belgium or other.

## Appendix E: Codes MAXQDA Interviews

Parent code	Code	Cod. segments
●	Grand Tour Question	9
●	Information sources	8
●	Dutch tourists	15
●	DMO Manager	10
● Catalonia as a whole	Wish list	5
● Catalonia as a whole	Motives	6
● Catalonia as a whole	Expectations	1
● Catalonia comparisons	Spain	29
● Catalonia comparisons	Europe in general	7
● Catalonia comparisons	The Netherlands	18
● Catalonia comparisons	Portugal	2
● Catalonia features	Independence	11
● Catalonia features	Transport/Accessibility	21
● Catalonia features	Built environment	16
● Catalonia features	Natural environment	16
● Catalonia features	Activities	10
● Catalonia features	Culture/cultural heritage	8
● Catalonia features	People/locals	24
● Catalonia features	Gastronomy	17
● Catalonia features	Personal experiences from memory	30
● Catalonia features	Other	10
● Catalonia features	Accommodation	2
● Components destination image	cognitive (words described)	16
● Components destination image	conative (recommendation/most visited)	29
● Components destination image	Affective (likes/dislikes)	18
● Descriptives	Travel company	10
● Descriptives	Travel behavior	9
● Descriptives	Friends/relatives in Spain	5
● Descriptives	Tourist vs inhabitant	1
● Descriptives	Tourist vs work trip	2
● Mental Mapping	Insecurity	16
● Mental Mapping	Time	3
● Mental Mapping	Pointing out	24
● Mental Mapping	Paper Size	4
● Mental Mapping	Memories	3
● Mental Mapping	Cartographic map vs mental map	8
● Mental Mapping	Legend	4
● Mental Mapping	Materials	4
● Mental Mapping	Difficulty	7
● Mental Mapping	Commenting during drawing	32

## Appendix F: Mental Maps Perceived Tourist Destination Image





Figure 13: Mental map of participant 1

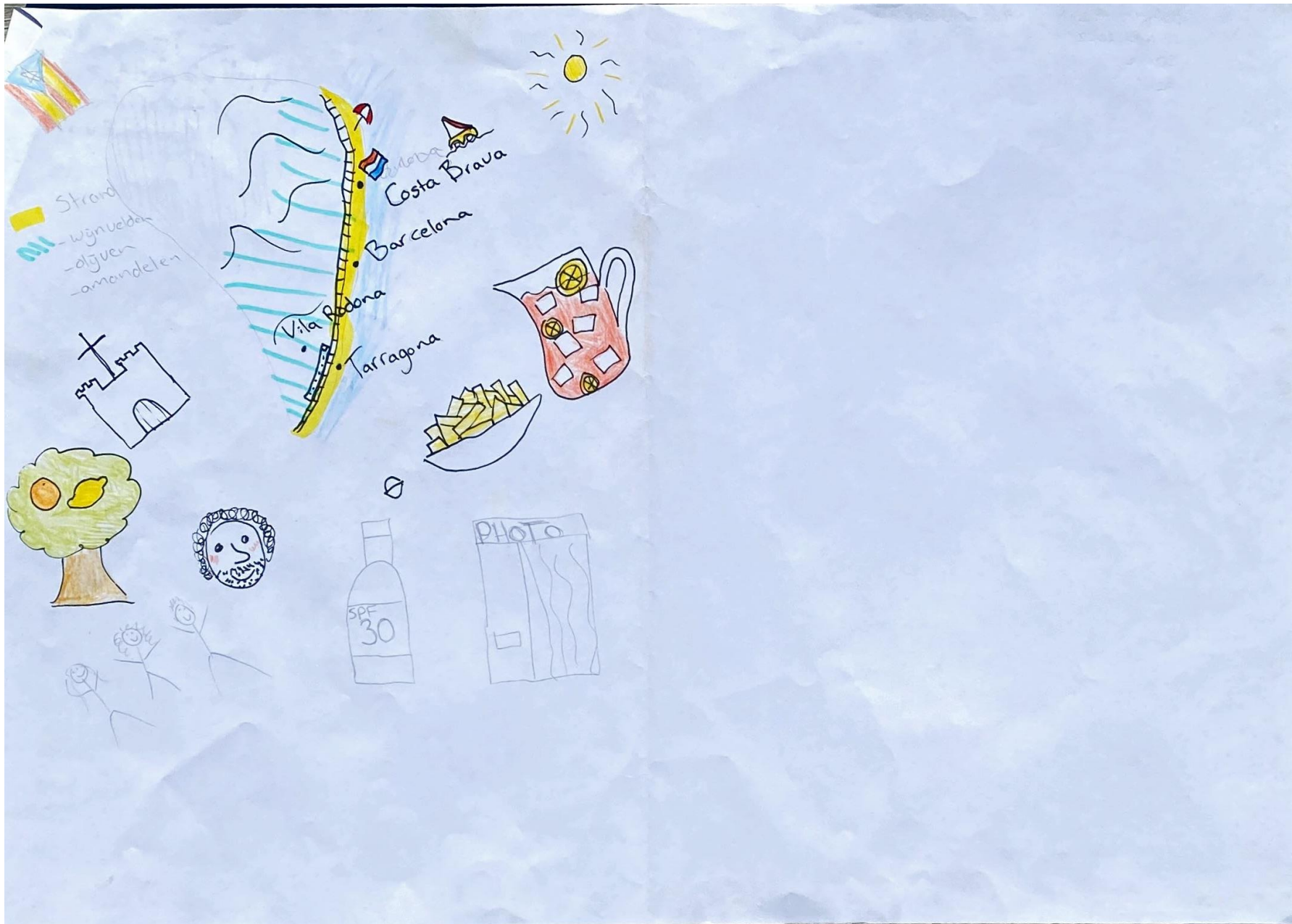


Figure 14: Mental map of participant 2.



Figure 15: Mental map of participant 3.



Figure 16: Mental map of participant 4.

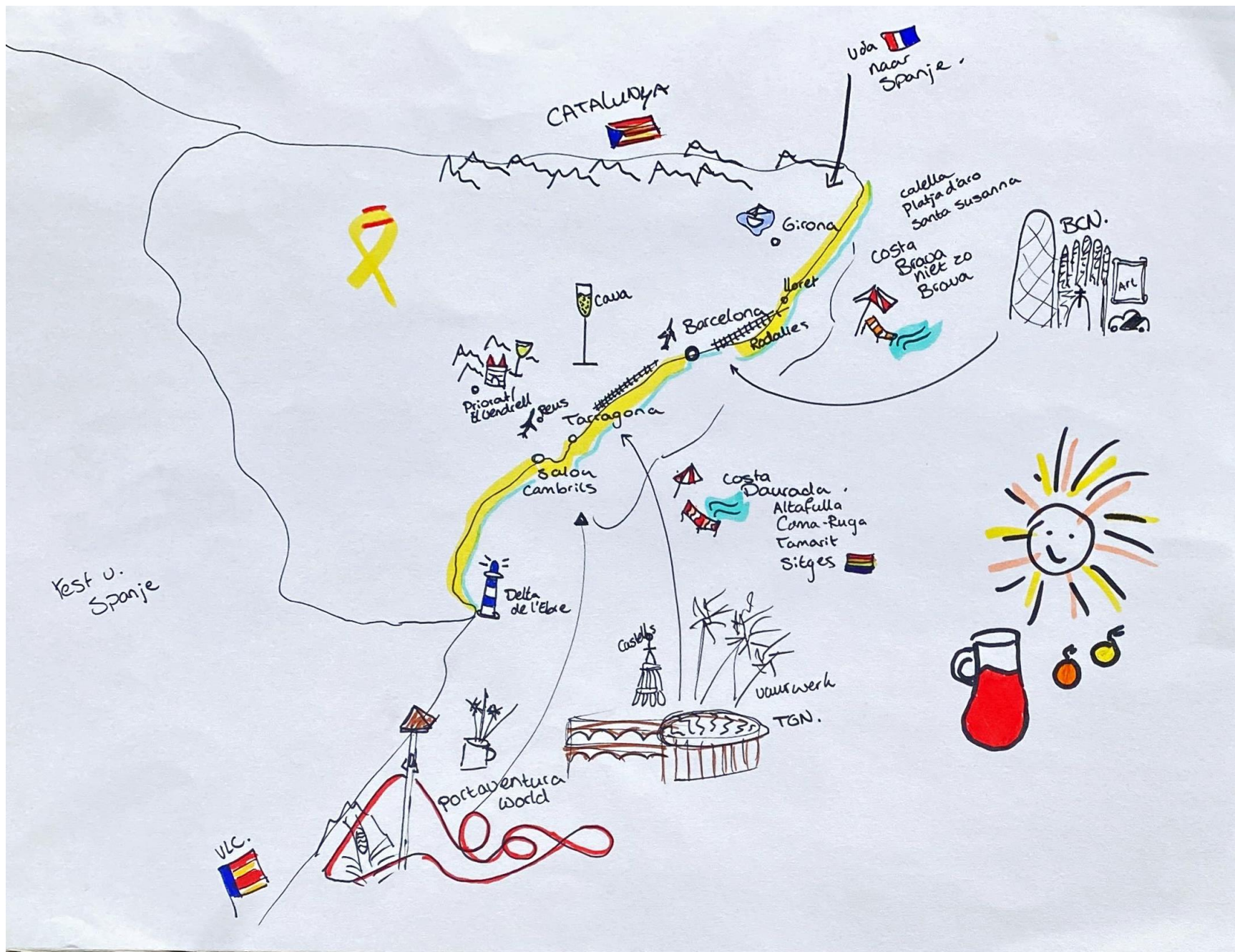


Figure 17: Mental map of participant 5.



Figure 18: Mental map of participant 6.

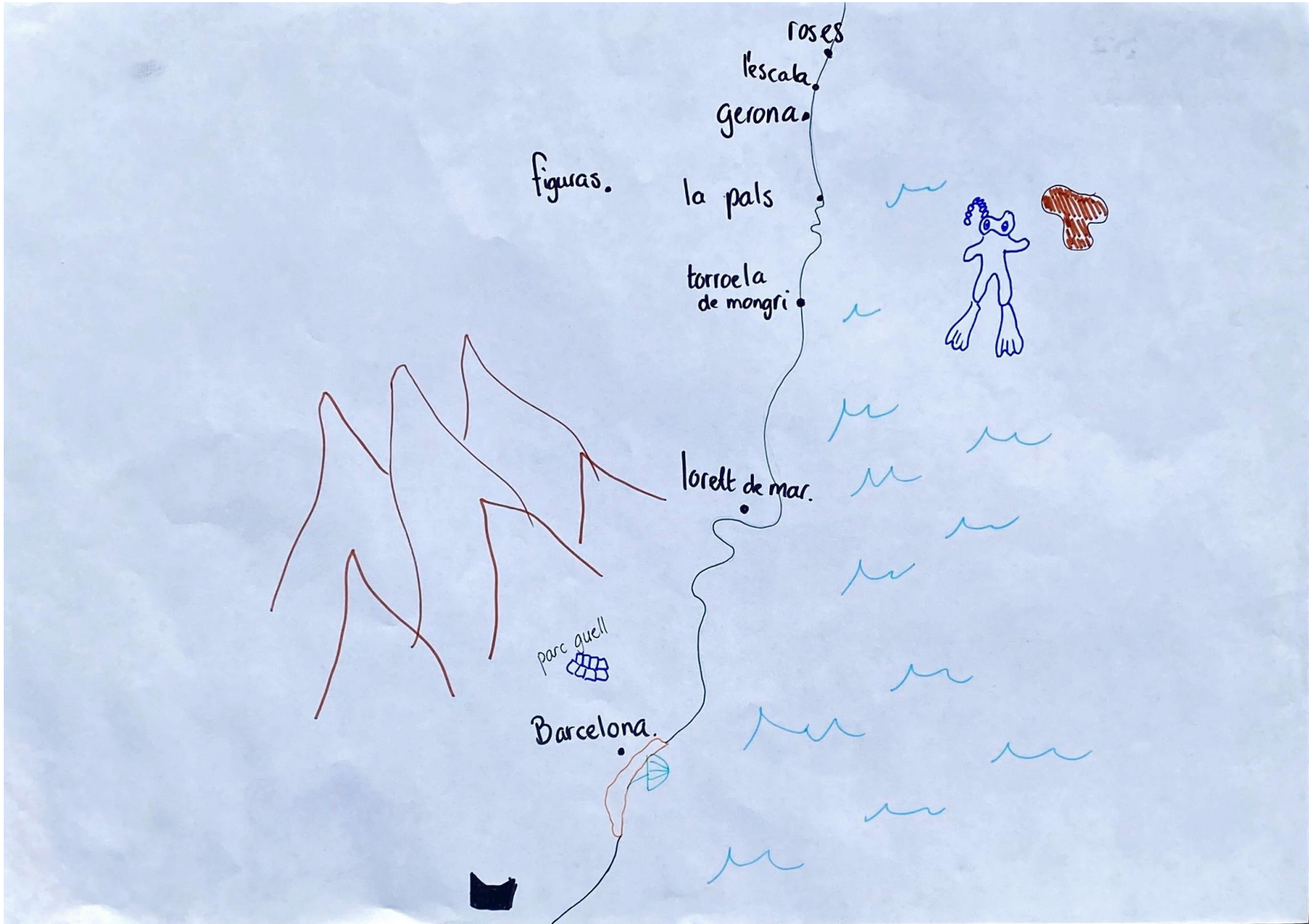


Figure 19: Mental map of participant 7.





Figure 21: Mental map of participant 9.