

GENERATING INWARDS TOURISM BY IMPROVING THE BRAND KNOWLEDGE AND
BRAND IMAGE, THROUGH COMMUNICATING ASSOCIATIONS FAVORED BY THE
TARGET GROUP REFLECTING THE CITY BRAND OF BRATISLAVA

BY

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The theme of this graduation assignment is destination branding. The main goal of destination branding is to emphasize the unique image of a destination, which then differentiates it from competitors (Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011, p.13). The Bratislava Tourist Board – largest in campaigning the city brand – has taken on this challenge for the capital of Slovakia. In 2009 they have distinguished the need to focus on specific target markets which show potential in increasing inwards tourism. One of these target markets defined are the Netherlands. Within this market, generation Y is the target segment campaigns should focus on (International Relations Brochure, 2009). From this segment I have derived by target audience – Dutch students aged 18 to 25 years old – and set up research on how to best communicate the brand that is campaigned by the city to this group. A survey conducted has proved a low level of brand knowledge amongst the target audience. In order to analyze how the brand could appeal more to this group, I have performed an experiment. This experiment has been designed based on previous studies in the field of destination and city branding. The variable manipulated is the awareness of the Bratislava campaign, and there is pre-test and post-test comparison. First, the associations the target group has with their ideal destination have been defined. These have been compared to those associations the target group have with Bratislava (as presented through the brand). Results show that the most important missing associations with the brand are young travelers, affordable accommodation, an entertaining surrounding and good value for money. Knowing this, it can be said that improvements must be made in the brand knowledge and image, in order to successfully campaign the brand to this specific audience. This can be done by creating and image of the desired associations through media channels. Appropriate media for this have been identified through questionnaires, from which I can conclude print and online media are most compatible in regard to the communication objective and target audience. Social media shows great potential for connecting the audience with the brand and so with the city, and through improved perspectives promoted by magazines, brochures, blogs and Facebook, Bratislava can increase favored associations. For example, by promoting more (youth) hostels through the campaign, associations are more likely to be made with both affordable accommodation and young travelers. Especially since the first survey conducted indicated that the target group associates Bratislava – without assessing the brand – with being affordable, focus should be put on getting this through in the brand. More conclusions have been drawn on which advice is given throughout this report, all aiming to improve the brand image and associations made, resulting into more favorability towards the city Bratislava.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Reason for this research and advice

Bratislava as capital of Slovakia is relatively young – as of 1993. Even the modern city name “Bratislava” has only been around for a few hundred years. Despite this the city and its region have a rich history dating back as far as 5000 BC. Ever since the city established its current name one of its biggest challenges has been the trailing behind the competitive neighboring metropolises: Warsaw, Budapest and Prague (Matlovcová, Némethyová & Matlovic, 2009). According to various online forums and blogs Bratislava is one of the most underrated travel destinations of Europe. This means that it has a lot to offer as a travel destination, but is not yet highly visited by tourists. Popular online are “Top 10 Most Underrated Travel Destination” lists, published as a way for others to discover new destinations worth a visit, and in which Bratislava is a frequent choice.

Blog wanderlust.hubpages.com rate Bratislava as number three in their top ten list, commenting: *“Prague is the most lovable Eastern European travel destination, and the city definitely deserves it. But, what about Prague’s little sister Bratislava? Unfortunately, Bratislava has to exist in the shadow of gorgeous Prague. And that’s too bad, because Bratislava is a beautiful old city with its own fascinating history, impressive castles and churches, charming squares and streets”* (Kendle, 2007).

British blog HomeAway.co.uk give the city spot 10, saying: *“When it comes to beautiful cities in Eastern Europe, the gorgeous city of Prague normally steals the limelight from the lesser-known city of Bratislava in Slovakia. That’s unfortunate because the beautiful old city of Bratislava is steeped in fascinating history and is home to impressive castles, historic churches and narrow, winding streets”* (Kerryn, 2012).

Travel&Leisure – online travel magazine – awarded Bratislava as one the world most underrated cities, holding position number seven. *“Fairy-tale buildings, charming squares, a medieval castle looming over the city”* (Hsu, 2011).

Over the last few decades several investments have been made into the city infrastructure, aiming to realize the goal of transforming Bratislava into a modern metropolis. This improved city infrastructure would make the destination more attractive for foreign investments within the country (Matlovcová, Némethyová & Matlovic, 2009, p. 244). This was initiated by the new governmental bodies situated in the city after 1990, supporting social-economic developments. These bodies are the mayor Milan Ftáčnik, also the highest representative of the city executive, and the 40-member City Council (the highest legislative authority). Support for their initiatives has been provided by the territory of the ‘Golden triangle of Europe’ (Vienna-Bratislava-Győr). This territory is considered to be a very important perspective from the point of view of the cities (further) developments.

Since the 1990s these bodies implemented strategies supporting growth, employment and competitiveness, and from 2005 decided to focus more on the already existing cultural and historical potential the city has, as to attract more tourism. Results from these strategies have been analyzed through marketing research, and current and future goals have been set.

Most prioritized as city goal for the coming years is: “Bratislava – a supra-regional center – to strengthen the image of Bratislava as a significant and popular central European metropolis and to increase its attractiveness for visitors and tourists, and to reinforce the field of tourism” (Matlovcová, Némethyová & Matlovic, 2009, p. 224). Tourism is thus a field in which Bratislava is seeking development. This is where destination branding comes in, as destination marketers invest in branding to distinguish their destination in order to create a positive message that will attract tourism (Roodurmun & Juwaheer, 2010 – as cited by Chen & Phou, 2012, chapter 1).

The Bratislava Tourist Board is the official body creating and promoting all different types of tourism for Bratislava. What they do is create a platform for a coalition of public and private sectors in the field of tourism. Hereby they coordinate, initiate and control the development of tourism within the city. In 2009 they released an International Relations Brochure of Bratislava. This document provides a brief overview of the international relations from previous years (2007 and 2008), and gives an outlook on the coming couple of years. In the chapter Foreign Markets, the need to identify the target segments and markets on which the cities external communication should focus has been defined and described. As cited from the brochure: *“It is necessary in the process to thoroughly analyze the demand, to create the city’s own product, to know the competition and development in international markets, as well as to thoroughly evaluate as to which states, regions or towns should be aimed at, which are interesting or promising for the city, what the target groups are”* (International Relations Brochure, 2009, p.28).

Regarding the tourism sector, target markets desired to grow and in which the city sees potential are the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary and Russia. The target segments defined are:

- Sightseers & Culture Seekers (culture and history tourism)
- 2nd generation Y (people aged between 15 and 24 years old)

Based on knowledge and analysis (for example development in international markets and target segments) Bratislava wishes to brand itself into the following three products:

Cool Bratislava – Bratislava for the young. The target group is generation Y, and associating topics are: friendly town, club scene, people – locals, and experience tourism.

Bratislava’s Live Heritage – The target group is 25+, and associating topics are: history in architecture, culture and traditions.

MICE – congress and conference hotel facilities. The target group are corporate clients, congress and conference organizers, and the idea is to establish Bratislava as the host of corporate meetings.

As the Netherlands is categorized as a growing market, there is an interest for the Dutch to travel to Bratislava. Generation Y is the segment which is appealing for the city and needs to be put into focus when attracting inwards tourism.

1.2 Structure of the research

With this graduation assignment I will be researching how the brand of Bratislava can be best communicated to Dutch students aged 18-25 years old. Therefore, the policy question leading my research will be: *How can the brand of Bratislava best be communicated towards Dutch students aged 18-25 years old?*

My research question is: *What are the current knowledge and perceptions of Bratislava that the target audience has, and through what channels and with which associations does the brand of Bratislava need to be communicated?* The following specific sub-questions will guide my research and help me answer the policy question:

- How is Bratislava currently being campaigned as a brand?
- What is the brand knowledge of the target group?
- What are the brand image and associations regarding the brand of Bratislava, as perceived by the target audience?
- Which channels can the brand best be directed through to the target audience?

The target audience I have chosen to focus on comes from generation Y – “the generation born in the 1980’s and 1990’s, comprising primarily the children of the baby boomers and typically perceived as increasingly familiar with digital and electronic technology” (Oxford University Press, 2013). As this age group is still rather wide, and can have various occupations, I have narrowed the group down to only those aged 18-25 years old and currently studying in the Netherlands. Students in the Netherlands are most likely to be involved in modern digital and electronic technology, and thus fit into the group generation Y on which Bratislava wishes to focus. In short, the problem situation is that Bratislava needs to increase inwards tourism within specific target groups, one of which is young Dutch citizens. My research will be structured according to the following division. Relevant theories and strategies for my research will be presented in the chapter Theoretical Framework. Using these theories, I will have a close look at what the brand of Bratislava is, and how this is being presented and perceived. How exactly will be detailed out in the first Methodology chapter, and analyzed in the according results. Then, I will look with more detail at how the brand is being perceived by the target audience and how this can improve. Methods for this will be explained in the second Methodology chapter. Finally, I will conclude with an advice in which it will become clear how the brand of Bratislava can best be communicated towards the target group. With this advice, I will answer my policy question.

1.3. The brand Bratislava

Before getting into the brand of Bratislava, a few things need to be established. First of all: what is a brand? “A brand is a name, term, sign, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler, 2010, p. 255).

Destination branding, as described by Cai (2009), is the process of selecting a consistent element mix to distinguish and identify it with the use of positive image building. An image in general is defined as mental or visual impressions of products, places or experiences held by the general public. When talking specifically about the destination image, Crompton defines it as “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination” (Crompton, 1979, p. 18). Of course, there are challenges that can be faced when branding a destination. Destinations are not simply a single, tangible product. A destination consists of a mix of different components. Also, destination marketers do not have a lot of control over the destination mix they are branding. On top of that, there is often a lack of funding in branding efforts, and/or political influences can be present. Nevertheless, according to Morgan and Pritchard (1998) branding is maybe the single most powerful marketing weapon to contemporary destination marketers.

Now back to the brand on which this research is based. A main part of any brand is the logo. Bratislava originally is represented through the coat of arms symbol (figure 1.1), dating back to 1436. The image represents a general depiction of a medieval town, and was granted to the city by Sigismund of Luxembourg. Nowadays Bratislava is represented by a more modern logo. This city logo (figure 1.2) is based on the coat of arms, but in a more modern way, and is designed to reflect the perception of Bratislava as a dynamic city, as said in the International Relations Brochure (2009, p. 25).



Figure 1.1 Coat of arms symbol

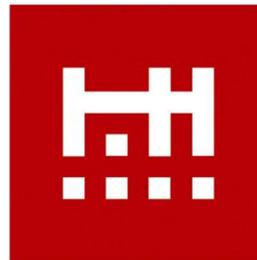


Figure 1.2 City logo

Just as the logo, a slogan is an important feature in branding. Implied in the International Relations Brochure (2009, chapter Foreign Markets) the slogan most commonly used for external communication in the sectors of tourism and travel, culture and marketing is: “*Little Big City*”. For a capital city Bratislava is relatively small, with a population of about 432.800 inhabitants covering a total area of 367.58 square km (International Relations, 2009). “Little” stands for the size, and the “big” stands for the content. The slogan of the country, Slovakia, is very similar: “Little Big Country”.

As mentioned before in this Introduction chapter, the city brand of Bratislava is officially being presented by the Bratislava Tourist Board. In short, what they do is: promote Bratislava as a MICE (involving congress and conference hotel facilities) and leisure destination; provide tourist information about the city; organize trips for journalists and tour operators; support and present own members at exhibitions, foreign events and tourism fairs; and suggest accommodation, social programs, conference venues and conference tours for DMC (destination management company) and PCO (professional conference organizer) organizations. They operate through various channels, and provide information for tourists through Tourist Information Centers in the city and at the airport. Media through which they campaign the city are:

The website - Online is the official city guide of Bratislava, originally in Slovakian. However, this website can be translated into English, German and Spanish. With this switch the focus is immediately put on visitors. The headline reads "The Official Tourism and Travel Guide to Bratislava", and the word "visitors" is incorporated into the logo (URL: www.visits.bratislava.en). This website is aimed at people (considering) traveling to Bratislava. The website mainly provides information about the city and inhabitants, how to get around, accommodations, things to do, events, festivals, brochures; and shows impressions of the city through imagery and audio. Links to partnering tourism information centers in the city are also provided, as are further contacts such as the major's office, the Slovak Tourist Board and International Relations.

Brochures – Different brochures have been published (online as well as offline) promoting the city. These publications are made by the Bratislava Tourist Board, often in cooperation with Bratislava Region Tourism and the Bratislava Culture and Information Center. In 2013 the following brochures were published: Bratislava City and Region Guide 2013, TOP Events 2013 and BratisLover 2013. These brochures promote activities, culture and history, accompanied by the current logo and slogan.

Social media – Bratislava brands itself through various social media networks. Main networks are: Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and Youtube. The official Facebook page (linked to the website of the Official Tourism and Travel Guide of Bratislava) is called "Visit Bratislava". The page is categorized under Travel Agency – Tourist Information. The logo is visualized in the profile picture. On this webpage information is given about attractions and events in the city, and pictures and videos are uploaded linking to the city and its culture. The page was launched in 2009, and so far has 1.970 likes. The twitter account is also called "Visit Bratislava". Tweets are sent about upcoming events, friendly quotes and stories about the city and people, and links to partners and associates. Through their MySpace account videos are broadcasted on all types of aspects of the city. Cultural events, funny home-made footage, music, tourists sharing their holiday film, etc. Also, a short promotional video has been made by MS Agency, another city guide to Bratislava, about the city (brand). This video has been broadcasted through YouTube.com. In the appendix imagery can be found on how the logo, slogan and brand in general are visualized in the these above mentioned channels.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Branding and destination branding

In order to conduct and support my research I will analyze certain theories and models in the field of (destination) branding. This will enable me to define the current situation – what the brand of Bratislava is and how this is being perceived – and research which methods and channels can be used to campaign this brand.

To establish the brand and find out how it is perceived by the target group I will analyze the different aspects of a (destination) brand, with special focus to the brand knowledge and the brand image. The fact that tourism products and services are intangible and that there is mostly impossible trial consumption implies that only destinations with positive and distinctive images have the possibility of being chosen as travel destination. Therefore, the image of a destination and the perception a person has of a place influences the decision of traveling to this location (Hsu & Cai, 2009, p.1). Destination branding is a relatively new concept, and academic research in the field is just appearing (Hsu & Cai, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, I will be combining specific research on destination branding with well-established theory on branding in general, to ensure reliable structure and useful results from my research.

Branding is closely related to destination branding. As the following theories will help me structure my research methods, I will elaborate on these relations. An important contribution introduced to contemporary branding research for destinations by Konecnik and Gartner (2007) is consumer-based brand equity. This is defined as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993, p 1). In other words: when a consumer is familiar with a brand, and holds favorable, unique and strong brand associations in memory. A consumer’s knowing about a brand in this way is defined as brand knowledge. This brand knowledge will help me identify the current perception of the brand of Bratislava by my target group, and will be discussed a little later in this framework.

Konecnik and Gartner (2007) stated that destination brand equity should be measured in the following four dimensions: awareness, image, quality and loyalty. They found that these four dimensions overlay with the components of Gartner’s destination image model (1993), which are: cognitive, affective and conative components. Cognitive components are a person’s knowledge and beliefs about an attitude object/subject, affective components are those which involve a person’s emotions and feelings about an attitude object/subject, and conative (or behavioral) components are those which influence how a person behaves or acts. The overlap looks as following: the awareness dimension is linked to the cognitive image component and to the conative component. The image and quality dimensions are linked to the affective image component as well as to the conative component. And finally, the loyalty dimension is linked to the conative image component. By linking the four dimensions with the three components, Konecnik and Gartner have advanced the destination image research into the platform of destination branding (Hsu & Cai, 2009). In figure 2.1 this linkage is visualized.

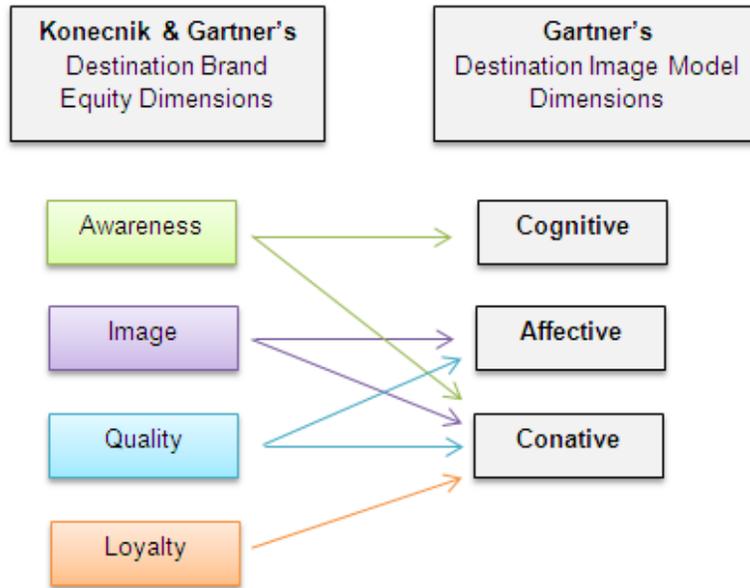


Figure 2.1 Destination brand equity aligned to destination image

There are more connections in the relevant literature between branding and destination branding. Brand knowledge consists of the brand awareness and the brand image, which are components of brand equity (Hsu & Cai, 2009). Previous studies (e.g., Hu & Richie, 1993; Ahmed, 1996 – as cited by Keller, 1993, p. 3-7) have examined the concept of destination awareness in relation to the concept of destination image. When looking at Keller's brand knowledge concept (figure 2.3), the brand image is built on the types, favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand associations. Cai (2002) found that the three types of brand associations of Keller (attitudes, benefits and attributes) are parallel to the three-component image construct of Gartner (Hsu & Cai, 2009). This means that destination image is leveled (figure 2.2) to the brand image of the brand knowledge concept of Keller (Hsu & Cai, 2009). Therefore, I will elaborate on the brand knowledge as defined by Keller (1993), which will support defining the current perception of the brand.

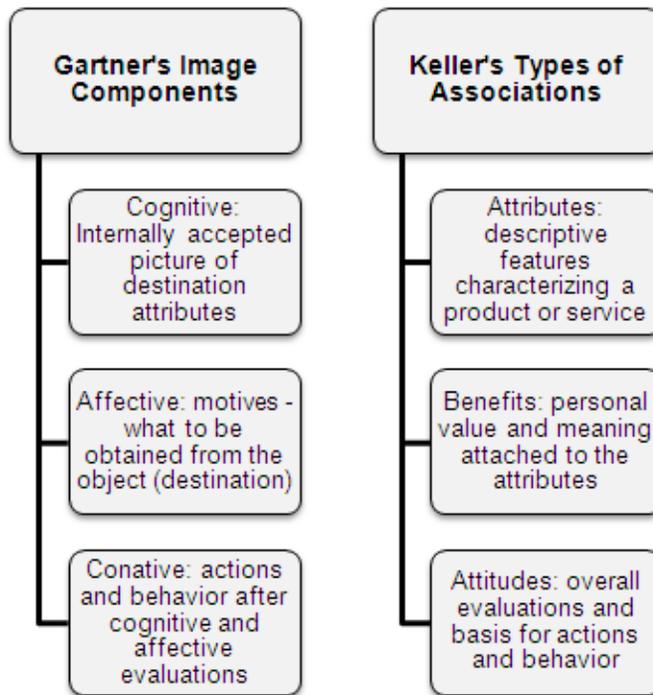


Figure 2.2 Gartner's image components set to Keller's types of associations

2.2 Dimensions of brand knowledge

The content and structure of brand knowledge influence what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand (Alba, Hutchinson, and Lynch, 1991 – as cited by Keller, 1993). Brand knowledge can be divided into two dimensions. The first dimension is brand awareness. Brand awareness is the ability to identify a brand under different conditions (Keller, 2003). This can then be divided into brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition is the “ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. Brand recall relates to consumer’s ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue” (Keller, 1993, p.3-4).

The second dimension of brand knowledge is the brand image. In the concept of marketing, brand image can be defined as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). Strength, favorability, and uniqueness of these brand associations are the dimensions defining brand knowledge, and are important factors in creating brand equity. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Keller defined three categories (attributes, benefits and attitudes) in which brand associations can be classified.

Brand attributes “are those descriptive features that characterize a product or service – what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption” (Myer & Schocker, 1981 - as cited by Keller, 1993, p.4). Attributes are distinguished between product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes. There are four main types of non-product-related attributes, which are: price information, packaging or product appearance information, user imagery and usage imagery. User and usage imagery attributes can be formed from own experiences and the depiction of the target market as communicated in brand advertising or other communication methods (e.g. speech). Associations of a brand user can be demographic or psychological factors. A usage situation could be the week or year, the type of activity or the location. Both user and usage attributes can produce brand personality attributes. These brand personality attributes may also reflect the emotion or feeling that can be evoked by the brand. The brand personality is an important part of branding as it can help to create a set of favorable and unique associations in the consumer memory, and so build and enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993).

Brand benefits (functional, experiential and symbolic) are basically what the consumer believes the brand can do for them. Functional benefits most often correspond to the product-related attributes and are mostly rather basic motivations, for example safety or physiological needs. Experiential benefits link to the product-related attributes as well, and fulfill needs such as variety and cognitive stimulation. Symbolic benefits relate more to non-product-related attributes and link to needs for social approval and personal expression. Brand attitude is defined as the overall evaluation of a consumer. Often brand attitude forms the basis for consumer behavior. Figure 2.3 shows the brand knowledge dimensions linked.

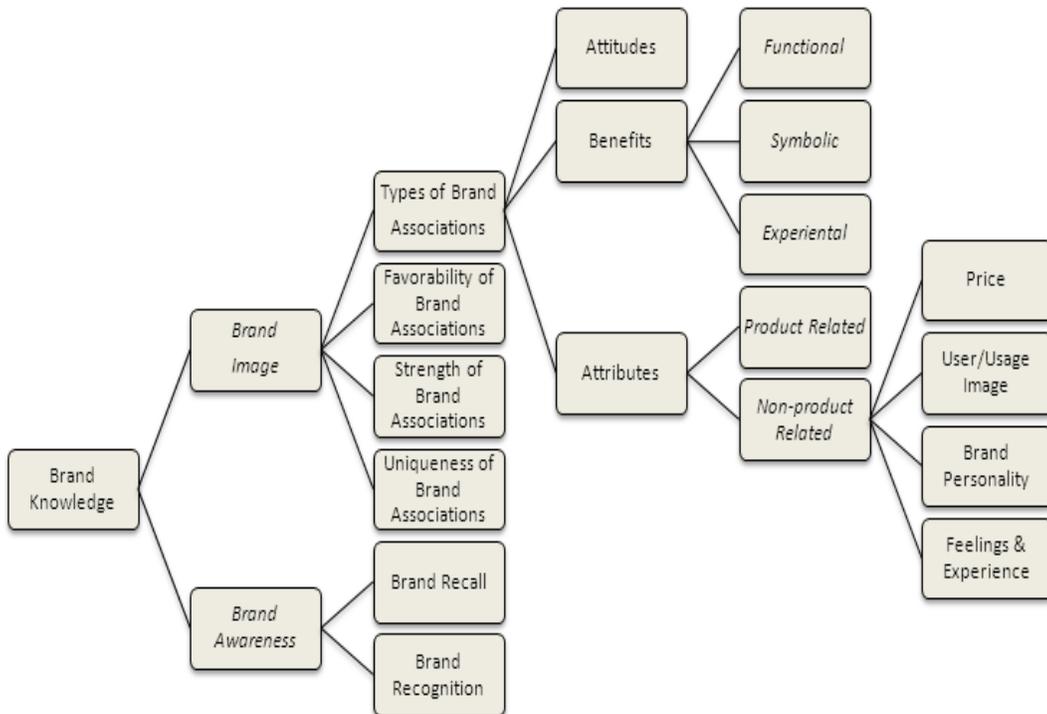


Figure 2.3 Dimensions of brand knowledge (Keller)

2.3 Destination brand image

The destination brand image is increasingly important in the area of leisure tourism (Walmsley & Young, 1998 - as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011). Studies in this field have focused on the attributes forming destination image (for example, the dimensions of brand knowledge from Keller as discussed previously in this framework). According to various researchers in tourism studies (Gunn, 1972; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991 – as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011), there are three types of images that people have when considering a specific destination. These three types are: organic, induced and complex images.

Organic images come from non-tourism information, such as television news and reports, magazine articles or geography books. Induced images come from tourism specific information, such as travel brochures or vacation websites, and are established by means of marketing efforts. According to Gunn (1972 - as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011), anyone can have organic images of a destination, but induced images come from the intention or motivation from an individual to travel. Complex images derive as a result of direct experience with the destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

2.4 Destination brand associations

More studies have been conducted on how a destination image is formed in the mind of a tourist, and with which associations. We have already discussed Keller's (1993) view, by distinguishing associations by types, favorability, strength and uniqueness. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) conducted a study on affecting associations with five defined cognitive destination image factors: social opportunities; natural and cultural amenities; accommodation, transportation, and infrastructure; food and friendly people; bars and evening entertainment. Obenour (2005 - as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011) created a destination image scale that has six cognitive image dimensions with 28 items in total. The six cognitive image dimensions were: priority; attractiveness for overnights; resources; facilities; peripheral attractiveness and reputation. Aksu (2009 – as cited by Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011) did similar research identifying five cognitive destination image factors related to a region in Turkey. The dimensions were: shopping; information; health and hygiene; accommodation; and transportation.

Despite this growing popularity of using a cognitive destination image model, there is a strong argument that tourism destinations should not be understood only by cognitive image, as people can also have an emotional attachment to a destination (Ward & Russell, 1981 – as cited by Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011). Russell (1981) designed a model for assessing a tourist's affect associated with a destination, containing four bipolar dimensions: *pleasant-unpleasant and arousing-sleepy* dimension, and *exciting-gloomy and relaxing-distressing* dimension. Baloglu and Bringer (1997—as cited in Hanzaee and Saeedi, 2011) tested this model using a multidimensional scaling method, and confirmed these four bipolar affective aspects. They thus supported the model in the tourism context. The authors here state that both affective and cognitive image needs to be researched when measuring the destination image in order to get a better understanding of the perception a tourist holds regarding a destination. Etchner and Ritchie (1993) say that both functional and psychological characteristics are part of the destination image. Functional aspects were related to tangibility (cognitive) and psychological characteristics to intangible aspects (affective). This supports previous studies saying that the destination image needs to be measured by both cognitive and affective aspects.

Further research indicates that destination image has an effect on behavioral intentions of tourists (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bigne, 2001; Castro, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Lee, 2009; Alcaniz, 2009 – as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2009, p.16). Behavioral intentions in these studies were measured from two perspectives, verbalized using the terms: “willingness to recommend to others” and “intention to (re)visit”.

By researching the brand knowledge, image and associations – and all previously described around this – I can distinguish what my target audience desires when thinking of a possible travel destination. Then, this can be compared to what they feel when perceiving the brand of Bratislava. Gaps and/or links from these results will help me build an advice on how the brand can be communicated effectively towards the target group.

2.5 Media strategies

According to Percy and Elliott (2009), when deciding which media (strategy) to use for a brand, you must select the media according to your communication objectives, with special attention to the brand awareness and brand attitude. To make sure that the media selected to deliver the message are the right ones, there are at least three important points to consider: the time available to process the message, the visual content, and the frequency potential. Table 2.1 shows a number of primary media, and how they rate on these three characteristics.

Primary media	Visual Content	Time to Process Message	Frequency
Television	Yes	Short	High
Radio	No	Short	High
Newspapers	Limitations	Long	High
Magazines	Yes	Long	Limitations
Posters	Yes	Long	Limitations
Internet	Yes	Long	High
Direct Mail	Yes	Long	Low

Table 2.1 Visual content, time to process and frequency relations

Before we discuss the content of this table, the Rossiter-Percy grid needs to be explained. This grid (Percy & Elliott, 2009, p. 91) suggests that brand attitude strategy consists of two considerations. The first is whether there is low or high involvement with the decision. The level of involvement is directly linked to the decision or psychological risk. This means that low involvement brands are those of low-risk items or services (i.e. everyday consumer goods). High involvement brands are then high-risk purchases (i.e. cars or holidays). The second consideration is whether the underlying motives which evoke behavior in the category are positive or negative. These positive motives can also be described as transformational, and negative motives as informational. This provides us with four quadrants: low involvement with negative motives, low involvement with positive motives, high involvement with negative motives, and high involvement with positive motives.

Negative motives	Positive motives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem removal • problem avoidance • incomplete satisfaction • mixed approach avoidance • normal depletion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sensory gratification • intellectual stimulation • social approval

Table 2.2 Negative motives versus positive motives for brand decisions

Now that we know this we can look at the three important points when selecting a media channel more specifically. *Visual content* is vital for recognition brand awareness, as the brand must be presented in the same manner that it in reality is. *Time available to process a message* is important because of the need for acceptance of the message – and so important for high-involvement informational brand attitude strategies. *Delivering high frequency* is important for recall brand awareness as well as for low-involvement transformational brand attitude strategies. This is because of the need for several exposures that is necessary to build the link in memory between category need and brand for recall brand awareness. (Percy and Elliott, 2009, p. 228-235).

Brand Awareness Strategies

Brand recognition and brand recall are closely connected, as discussed previously in this chapter. Still, the difference between the two has important implications for selecting media. When brand recognition is an objective for (destination) branding, you are looking for strong visual content. Processing should not take too much time, and low frequency is acceptable. When brand recall is an objective, frequency is more important. The link needs to be made clear between the brand name and the actual brand (or destination), and this requires high frequency.

Brand Attitude Strategies

Low-involvement, informational (negative) strategy

Communication objectives of a brand attitude strategy that reflects a low-involvement brand decision linked with negative motivation can be addressed by almost any media. No strong visual content is required, only a short processing time, and high frequency is not necessary - as benefits from this type of adverts must be learned within only a couple of exposures. Therefore, almost any medium can be chosen.

Low-involvement, transformational (positive) strategy

In the case of brand attitude strategy for a low-involvement brand decision when underlying motives are positive, good visual content becomes very important. Although a relatively short processing time is necessary, a rather high frequency is required. This is because of the generally slower brand attitude development. Television and the internet would be good media.

High-involvement, informational (negative) strategy

Brand attitude strategies which consist of high-involvement decisions and negative motivations require a longer processing time, especially necessary for the extensive information content to convince the target group. Because of this, media selection emphasis should best be on print media. As frequency again is not important (the benefits of the brand must be accepted in only a few exposures) practically any print media is acceptable – including the Internet.

High involvement, transformational (positive) strategy

A relatively low frequency is permitted; appropriate media would be television or print media. Even though this quadrant consists of positive motives, eventually it will be necessary to provide your target audience with more detailed information. If this is the case, processing time will need to be considered more in the media selection (Percy & Elliott, 2009, p. 229-234). Table 2.3 shows all these considerations taken into account, and the appropriate media which could then be selected.

Primary Media	Brand Awareness Recognition	Brand Awareness Recall	Low Involvement		High Involvement	
			Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Television	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Radio	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Newspapers	Limitations	Yes	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Limitations
Magazines	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Yes
Posters	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Limitations	Limitations	Yes
Internet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Direct Mail	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Limitations	Yes	Yes

Table 2.3 Primary media related to the Rossiter & Percy grid. Adapted from Rossiter & Percy. (1997). Advertising Communication and Promotion Management. USA, New York: McGraw – Percy & Elliott, 2009.

When selecting media you must try to accommodate all the communication objectives there are regarding the goal of the brand. This means that the media chosen needs to meet both brand awareness strategies and brand attitude strategies. The one medium that is successful regardless the strategy is the Internet.

3. Methodology part 1: survey

The following survey has been given to my target group regarding their general knowledge and thoughts about Bratislava as a city and brand. With this questionnaire I have especially looked at the brand knowledge of my target group. Results of this will provide me with an insight on how the group views the city (brand), and how this could be improved. Through surveymonkey.com – providing the ability to create surveys online - I have designed a survey and have addressed this to my target audience through Facebook and email. This has enabled them to fill in the questions in their own time and pace. Ideally I would have received at least 60 results. This would provide me with results that can differ per respondent showing the variety of opinions possible, and will still provide an insight of the general opinion of my target group.

The survey is introduced through the following message, based on a format given in the fourth year ICM course of Research Studies.

Dear student,

My name is Suzanne Jellema and I am conducting a survey on city branding for my Bachelor graduation assignment in International Communication and Media. I am hoping to gain a better understanding of how Dutch students perceive a certain destination. Therefore, for my research I am asking Dutch students aged 18-25 years old to participate.

My survey involves questions concerning your attitude and beliefs, and takes approximately two minutes to complete. I promise to keep your responses completely anonymous (your identity will never be recorded or revealed), and will only use the data to complete my graduation assignment. Under no conditions will I publish or communicate results elsewhere.

Thank you for your participation.

Questions asked are based on theory from Keller discussed in the Theoretical Framework chapter and on preliminary research conducted early in my research process. Although this theory of Keller has already been explained in detail, I will briefly explain it again to support the justification of the questions. As my survey has been addressed to only those who fit into my target group, no questions are included on age or occupation. I have chosen to analyze a group aged 18-25 and students, and any differences within this group (being 18 or 22 years old) do not concern my research and therefore is not necessary to ask.

Brand knowledge is brand awareness and brand image combined. Brand awareness can be divided into two parts: brand recognition and brand recall. Simply said, brand recognition would be choosing a destination when presented to you in a travel agency, and brand recall is remembering the destination outside of the travel agency in a different surrounding. To determine the brand recognition the following two questions are asked:

Do you recognize this logo?

- *Yes, it's from*
- *I have seen it before, but I don't know where it's from*
- *No, I have never seen this logo before*



Do you know the slogan "Little Big City"?

- *Yes, it's from*
- *I've heard of it before, but I don't know where it's from*
- *No, I don't recognize it*

To define the brand recall of Bratislava the following question is asked. This question will ask the target audience to think for themselves where Bratislava is located, without being introduced yet to the specific topic of this research.

Do you know where Bratislava is located?

- *Yes, in (country)*
- *No, I don't know where it is*

The brand image is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations that are held in consumer memory (Keller, 1993). These brand associations can be divided into three types: attributes, benefits and attitudes. The following questions are based on the brand image. A statement will be presented in which respondents must indicate a degree of agreement. This form of questions is referred to as the Likert Scale. Advantages of this method are that the responses are easily quantifiable. The respondent does not need to take a particular stand on the topic, they can simply agree or disagree, taking pressure of answering the questions. With this scale respondents can also express their opinion as neutral. Respondents can strongly disagree (=1), disagree (=2), answer undecided (3=), agree (=4) or strongly agree (=5).

To see what the opinion is on the topic *price*, as a non-product-related attribute of brand association, the following statement will be presented:

- *I associate Bratislava with being expensive.*

To see what the opinion is on the topic *packaging*, as a non-product related attribute of brand associations, the following statement will be presented:

- *The logo and slogan of Bratislava (see questions 1 & 2) present the city in a positive way*

The second type of brand associations is benefits. The first type of benefits is functional benefits, which are often linked to fairly basic motivations, such as safety and physiological needs. Therefore the following question has been established:

- *I associate Bratislava with safety*

The second type of benefits is experiential benefits, which are related to what it feels like to use the product or service.

- *Travelling to Bratislava would make me feel good*

The third type of benefits is symbolic benefits, which relate to the underlying needs for social approval or personal expression. A statement could be: "*travelling to Bratislava would give me status*". However, the results of this question are not useful for my research, as no one is likely to answer they agree. The third type of brand associations is attitudes. These attitudes are certain attributes or benefits the respondents think the brand has and how good or bad it is that the brand has these. This will be dealt with in the second Methodology chapter of this research.

The second point of brand image is the favorability of brand associations. "The success of a marketing program is reflected in the creation of favorable brand associations" (Keller, 1993, p.4). Favorable brand associations are made when consumers believe a brand has attributes and benefits that satisfy their needs, in a way that a positive overall brand attitude is formed.

- *For me Bratislava would be an ideal travel destination*

The third point of brand image is the strength of brand associations. "The strength of associations depends on how the information enters consumer memory and how it is maintained" (Keller, 1993, p. 5-6). The following questions are again multiple-choice.

Through which channels have you heard of Bratislava?

- Friends and family*
- Travel agencies*
- Television advertisements*
- Internet advertisement*
- Print advertisement*
- Travel guides*
- Social Media*
- Other*

Which channels do you consider most reliable when considering Bratislava as travel destination?

- Friends and family*
- Travel agencies*
- Television advertisements*
- Internet advertisement*
- Print advertisement*
- Travel guides*
- Social Media*
- Other*

In which categories could Bratislava for you personally come to mind?

- European city*
- Eastern European city*
- City trip*
- Backpacking*
- Beach vacation*
- Adventure vacation*
- Nature and wildlife vacation*
- Spa-resort vacation*
- None of the above*

The last two questions do not only apply to the strength of brand associations but also indicate in general which channels my target audience trusts when it comes to choosing and/or informing themselves about a travel destination. During my preliminary research on the subject I questioned around 40 people through two open forums: *scholieren.com*, which is directed to high school and university students on subjects regarding education, personal life and the society; and on *reisforum.nl*, which is open for all who are interested in any aspect that has to do with travel, tourism and destinations. On these forums I questioned people if they were of the opinion that the media is influencing your choice in travel destination, and if so, if this a good or bad thing. A great variety of opinions were shared, but what got my attention most is that many described that they only start taking notice of the media after they have decided on their travel destination. My question then is how they do come up with the destination. Hopefully these questions will give an insight on this, as it indicates the channels from which people get to trust brands most.

4. Results survey

My goal was to have 60 respondents fill out the questionnaire. In total 72 students did, of which 63 filled out all questions. In the results you can see how many students skipped which questions. Respondents skipping questions is an indication that they are not willing to fill in the questionnaire seriously, i.e. with their actual own opinions. Therefore omitting the analysis of their questionnaires is not harmful, as only serious results are useful for my research. I will elaborate on the important findings of each question.

As resulted from asking if the respondent recognized the logo, almost 95% did not. The small remaining amount which did recognize the logo cannot connect it to where it is from. None of the respondents recognized the logo is the city logo of Bratislava. The slogan is better known, with about 24% having heard of it. However, this percentage does not know where the slogan is from. The remaining 76% does not know the slogan at all. When asked if the students knew where Bratislava is located (country-wise), almost one-third did not know. The rest did know, and successfully managed to answer the name of the country (though with a few spelling errors).

The following results are derived from the judgment of the respondents on six statements, rated on a Likert scale, with strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5). Almost half of the respondents do not agree with Bratislava being expensive. Only 3% agrees with the statement. A quarter remains undecided. On the statement if the logo and slogan present the city in a positive way one-fourth agrees. The percentage that disagrees is less, about 20%. A little over half of the respondents are again undecided. More respondents associate Bratislava with being unsafe than those who feel it is safe. "Traveling to Bratislava would make you feel good" is a statement on which almost a quarter agrees.

In short, disregarding the amount undecided, the majority of the respondents:

- Does not associate Bratislava with being expensive
- Perceives the logo and slogan of Bratislava in a positive way
- Would feel good by traveling to Bratislava

But,

- Does not associate the city with safety
- Does not feel that Bratislava for them would be an ideal travel destination

When asked which channels are found to be most reliable for information if considering Bratislava as a travel destination, multiple answers were permitted. Also, the option “other” was provided. Here they could manually fill out from where they have heard of Bratislava, or if they have never heard of it at all. Most chosen from the provided options were friends and family, and travel guides. Then, both chosen by 19% are travel agencies and social media. Advertisements through internet, television and print media scored relatively low. Most respondents answered the option “other”. In the table below you can see what these results were.

Answers for ‘other’	Percentage of respondents	Amount of respondents
School	17.46%	11
Television news	3.17%	2
Books	1.59%	1
Movies	1.59%	1
Common knowledge	3.17%	2
None	4.76%	3
I have been there before	3.17%	2
I have never heard of it before	1.59%	1
	Total: 36.5%	Total: 23

Table 4.1 Results option “other” for question most reliable channels

When asking which channels the target group would consider most reliable receiving information from, the same seven options were given. Again, they could choose the option “other”. Considered most reliable channels are family and friends. Travel guides are given second place. The numbers then drop quite a bit, with travel agencies and social media next. Advertisements through television, internet and print are considered least reliable. The option “other” was less popular with this question than with the previous one. The table below shows the results.

Answers for ‘other’	Percentage of respondents	Amount of respondents
Travel stories online	1.59%	1
Nothing	1.59%	1
	Total: 3.17%	Total: 2

Table 4.2 Results option “other” for question most reliable source

When asking in which categories Bratislava could come to mind, eight options were provided. If a respondent does not associate any of these categories, they can answer “none of the above”. Most associated with Bratislava is “Eastern European City”. After that came “city trip”, “backpacking” and “European City”.

5. Methodology part 2: experiment

Researched and described in the Introduction chapter is how Bratislava as a brand is being presented – answering my first sub-question: *how is Bratislava currently campaigned as a brand*. With the survey I have found results for the second sub-question, *what does the target audience in general know about this brand*, and gained insight into the third sub-question, *what are the brand image and associations regarding the brand of Bratislava, perceived by the target audience*.

More details still need to be found on *how the brand image and associations are perceived by the target group*, and *through which channels Bratislava best can be directed towards the target audience*. This will be researched by conducting an experiment, with a sample from my target group which will be exposed to the Bratislava campaign. The variable manipulated is the awareness of the Bratislava campaign, and there is pre-test and post-test comparison. This experiment is designed based on results from my survey and relevant theory from my theoretical framework. To link the experiment as much as possible with only the viewing of the specific brand, all participants selected have not visited Bratislava before.

The experiment is divided into four parts. In total 20 students were invited to participate, in groups of 5-6 people at a time. The first part of the experiment consists of a short questionnaire – similar to the first survey, but more in depth. The second part is also focused on the opinions in general, regarding travel destinations and their associations. The third and fourth parts revolve around Bratislava, and are specific to the brand and according media channels. Each part will be explained in detail throughout this chapter.

Part One - As seen in the previous survey, the logo and slogan are rather unknown amongst the target group. This will again be tested in the experiment with the questions “do you recognize this logo”, and “do you know the slogan *Little Big City*”, to see if the chosen selection has the same brand knowledge level as that of the overall target group. Just as in the first survey, the participants will be asked to answer if they know where Bratislava is, justifying the recall brand awareness. Participants will also be asked through which channels they have heard of Bratislava. This is related to the brand associations of the brand image. Based on the results from the first survey, the formulation of the question has been changed to “How have you heard of Bratislava?” which will generate more specific answers. In the results of the first survey I found that respondents tended to answer this question as if it were already formulated in this sentence. Also, the options “school”, “radio”, and “I have never heard of it” have been added.

As concluded in the theoretical framework, the destination image has an effect on behavioral intentions of tourists, which is often measured by “the willingness to recommend to others” and “intention to (re)visit”. To assess the intentions of the participants to visit Bratislava or recommend it to others, the following two questions were asked. “Do you have any intentions to visit Bratislava in the future?”, and “would you recommend visiting Bratislava to others?”. These two questions were once more asked after the participants had viewed the brand, to see if this had influenced their opinion.

Part Two - What I further wanted to discover with this experiment is what is important for my target audience when considering a travel destination, and how far these factors are associated with the brand that represents Bratislava. For this I constructed a list of cognitive attributes to be indicated by the participants of the experiment. Before the experiment, I sent them a list of possible options to choose from, selected from cognitive attributes used in previous studies. The participants were asked to rate each attribute in terms of importance for them in a travel destination on a Likert scale, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree and 5=strongly agree. A similar approach was used by Etchner and Ritchie (1993) and then by Hanzaee and Saeedi (2009) (as cited by Hanzaee and Saeedi, 2009) for distinguishing cognitive brand associations. From this list, the 25 attributes rated highest were selected, being: (1) culture, (2) entertainment, (3) friendly people, (4) affordable accommodation, (5) nightlife & bars, (6) adventure, (7) local people, (8) good shopping facilities, (9) festivals, (10), good weather, (11) sea/beach, (12) affordable food/restaurants, (13) entertaining surroundings/region, (14) safe and secure environment, (15) atmosphere, (16) transportation, (17) political stability, (18) other travelers, (19) young people, (20) beautiful environment, (21) relaxing, (22) clean environment, (23) cultural/historical attractions, (24) internet available, and (25) good value for money. The students were asked to rate in which amount they personally agree with the 25 attributes, associating to an ideal travel destination. This destination could be any they preferred, and could differ amongst participants. Before hand, each association was discussed in the groups, to ensure that all participants had the same understanding of the attributes.

Part Three - For the next step the brand of Bratislava was presented through various media. On a screen – all participants could see well, as the groups were kept small – the website, promotional video, Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace were shown in detail. Also, printed brochures were viewed. This material is the same as discussed in the Introduction chapter of this research. This viewing took place in a time period of about 15 minutes. After, the participants were asked to rate the brand on a Likert scale, in the same manner as asked to do prior to the experiment, but this time by thinking about the city brand they just saw. So, the 25 attributes were rated in association with Bratislava, based on what they had seen through the brand. Hanzaee and Saeedi (2009) also exposed their participants to travel literature and promotional brochures on their city in question, to provide an image of the city – therefore the added brochures. With the results from sections two and three of the experiment, I am able to see what the target group values in a travel destination, and how they feel Bratislava is offering the same, judging from the brand through which the city is mostly promoted.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, both the affective and cognitive image needs to be researched when measuring the destination image, in order to get a better understanding of the perception a tourist holds regarding a destination. The affective image will be judged by the same means used by Hanzaee and Saeedi (2009), in their research on integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image. To measure the affective image they implemented the image scales of Russell (1981). This scale includes four bipolar scales: arousing – sleepy, pleasant – unpleasant, exciting – gloomy, and relaxing – distressing. A 7-point scale was used for all bipolar scales, where the smaller values were assigned to the positive poles, so: 1 =arousing and 7 =sleepy, 1 =pleasant and 7 =unpleasant, 1 =exciting and 7 =gloomy, 1 =relaxing and 7 =distressing. Using the same scale, my participants were asked to rate their perception of the image they had on the Bratislava campaign.

Part Four - The final part of this experiment consists again of multiple-choice questions. Now that the participants have been introduced with the brand, questions six and seven from the first section will be asked again, to see if their answers have been influenced by the brand exposure. These questions measure the intention to visit and willingness to recommend the city to others. The next part of the questionnaire regards the specific media through which the target group is approached by the brand. Similar to the first questionnaire (first Methodology chapter) the participants will be asked through which channels they know the city, though this time in more detail. The following questions are asked: “Which media would you prefer to be approached by with a promotional message about a travel destination?”, “which media would you prefer to be approached by with a promotional message about Bratislava?”, and “which media – regarding what you have seen during this experiment – for you presents Bratislava best?”.

The answer options of the following question are based on the media through which Bratislava operates, and the list of top social networking sites in the Netherlands, according to the New Media Trend Watch (2011). “Through which social media would you like to get involved with the brand of Bratislava?”. Finally, participants were asked is they felt that hearing from the brand through social media would attract them more to the destination.

6. Results experiment

All results from the experiment have been analyzed with the use of Excel 2010. Regarding the first part of the experiment, findings were similar to those found in the first survey. Therefore, I will only briefly state the results.

Just as the results from the survey showed, almost none of the respondents recognize the logo. Only a small percentage have seen it before, but cannot recall where from. More participants have heard of the slogan than of the logo. However, still no one can recognize where it is from. Almost all participants (90%) do know where the city is located. The largest channels through which participants have heard of Bratislava are friends and family, school, social media, and travel guides. Channels considered most reliable for hearing/viewing advertisements on travel destinations are friends and family, social media, travel agencies and travel guides. For the second and third part of the experiment associations were measured, first regarding an ideal travel destination of the respondent, and then, after having been introduced to the brand, regarding Bratislava. In table 6.1 are the eight highest rated associations in general, compared to those regarding Bratislava.

Associations	% associated with ideal travel destination	% associated with brand of Bratislava
Young public		
Strongly Agree	60	0
Agree	40	15
Neutral	0	25
Disagree	0	60
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Good weather		
Strongly Agree	55	5
Agree	40	75
Neutral	5	20
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Entertaining region		
Strongly Agree	35	5
Agree	60	40
Neutral	5	35
Disagree	0	20
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Good value for money		
Strongly Agree	40	0
Agree	55	30
Neutral	5	30
Disagree	0	35
Strongly Disagree	0	5
Other travelers		
Strongly Agree	55	0
Agree	35	15
Neutral	10	35
Disagree	0	50
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Affordable accom.		
Strongly Agree	45	0
Agree	45	10
Neutral	10	30
Disagree	0	60
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Culture		
Strongly Agree	35	25
Agree	60	65
Neutral	15	15
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 6.1 Associations in % of ideal travel destination compared to Bratislava

Young public - those of similar age as the respondents – is an attribute associated strongly with the ideal travel destination of the target audience. After viewing the brand, this association was made less with Bratislava, as 60% disagrees. Participants agreeing that this attribute characterizes Bratislava were only 15%. *Good weather* is an association strongly agreed on by more than half of the participants. The rest agrees, with only 5% acting neutral. Regarding Bratislava, 75% associates good weather with the city. The remaining lean more to neutral (20%) than to strongly agreeing (5%).

Nearly all participants agree (60%) on an *entertaining surrounding/region* being important; almost all others strongly agree (35%). Regarding Bratislava, the amount agreeing is 35%, and the amount strongly agreeing to 5%. More disagree (40%) with this association to Bratislava. Also *good value for money* is less associated with Bratislava than with the chosen destination. Almost all participants either strongly agree or agree regarding their chosen destination, while only 30% agree for Bratislava. Even more disagree (35%), and 5% strongly disagrees.

More than half of the participants strongly associated *other travelers* to the first destination. In regard to Bratislava, nobody did. Instead, half do not associate other travelers with the city at all. Only 15% agree, and 35% remains neutral. *Affordable accommodation* is associated amongst 90% of the participants in regard to their own travel destination (45% of which strongly agreed). What they have seen in the experiment does not reflect on this, as only 10% agrees affordable accommodation associates with the city as campaigned. More than half of the participants even disagree with associating Bratislava to affordable accommodation, and 30% is neutral. Regarding *culture*, the associations made are rather similar. Strongly agreeing on their chosen destination are 35% - against 25% regarding Bratislava. Slightly more participants associated culture more with Bratislava than with their own chosen destination.

More results were found which show differences. *Good shopping facilities* are one, with 45% agreeing and nobody disagreeing to associating this with their own destination. Only 5% agree and 40% disagree in regard to Bratislava. *Nightlife & bars* had 20% strongly agreeing and 40% simply agreeing associating this with their chosen destination. Nobody strongly associates this with Bratislava, but only 35% indicated they agree; 25% disagrees and the rest is neutral. Associations more strongly linked to Bratislava than to the chosen destination were *local people*; *internet available*; *cultural/historical environment*; and *clean environment*. Next tested in the experiment was the rating of four bipolar attributes. Participants could rate their opinion between these attributes on a scale from one to seven. Results show that:

- **Arousing-Sleepy** – On average, participants rate exactly in the middle of arousing and sleepy (3=25%; 4=50%; and 5=25%).
- **Pleasant-Unpleasant** – The majority associated the brand with pleasant over unpleasant (2=20%; 3=30%; 4=45%; 5=5%).
- **Exciting-Gloomy** – Half the participants rate this scale exactly in the middle. The rest lean slightly more to gloomy (3=15%; 4=50%; 5=30%; 6=5%).
- **Relaxing-Distressing** – Participants feel more relaxing towards the brand than distressing (2=10%; 3=60%; 4=25%; 5=5%).

The following results are from the final part of the experiment. During the first section of this experiment, the students were asked two questions in order to analyze the “intention to visit” and “willingness to recommend to others”. After the brand was presented, participants were once again asked to answer these questions, to see if the brand had influenced their opinions.

Before the brand was introduced, most participants showed they do not have any intentions to visit the city at the moment, 25% says they might sometime like to visit, and only 15% can say for sure they have the intentions to visit the city. Also, 60% of the participants would not recommend Bratislava to others, because they feel they do not know enough about the city to do so. Already concluding that they would defiantly not recommend the city are 20%, equal to the percentage of those saying they would recommend Bratislava. After the brand was presented, and asked if they now have any intentions to visit Bratislava sometime in the future, half responded with a “yes”. For the rest, 40% said to have no intentions at the moment, while 10% could already say they would never visit the city. When asked if they would now recommend the city to others, 35% said they would. More however still felt they did not know enough about Bratislava to recommend it as a travel destination. The remaining participants (20%) would not recommend the city. Concluded can be that both the intentions to visit and the willingness to recommend to others have improved slightly after viewing the campaign material.

The final five questions examine the appropriate media choices which could communicate the brand, as judged by the target group themselves. Media which they would prefer to be approached by with an advertisement about a travel destination in general are: social media 50%; magazines 30%; posters 20% television, newspapers, internet each 15%. When asked the same question, but specific to Bratislava, answers barely differed. Social media dropped by 5%, posters increased by 5%, internet increased as well with 5% - becoming third in line. Magazines rose to 40%. Only 10% chose television as a channel, and in contrary to the previous question 5% would not want to be approached by any of the options.

Regarding what they have seen of the brand and city during the experiment, best representing Bratislava (in their personal opinions) is the Facebook page. This has become evident from the 60% sharing this opinion. Second is the website, with 45%, followed by Twitter, with 25% of the participants' votes. The brochures presented and the MySpace account was rated equally with 15%, and finally – least popular – is the Youtube video. The most popular media through which the participants would like to get involved with the brand shows to be again Facebook, but also through online blogs. Both options are chosen by 35% of the students questioned. Twitter is next as favorite, according to 20% of the respondents, and following is MySpace with a small 5%. Another 5% say they do not wish to get involved through any of the media options. Ending the experiment was the last question, inquiring whether participants feel that hearing from the brand through social media would attract them more to Bratislava. Half answered yes, 35% said maybe, and 15% were aligned with the opinion that this would not affect how they feel about the brand or city.

7. Conclusion

At the beginning of this report the following research question was presented: *What is the current knowledge and perception of Bratislava that the target audience has, and through what channels and with which associations does the brand of Bratislava need to be communicated?*

This has been divided into four sub-questions:

- How is Bratislava currently being campaigned as a brand?
- What is the brand knowledge of the target group?
- What are the brand image and associations regarding the brand of Bratislava, perceived by the target audience?
- Which channels can the brand best be directed through towards the target audience?

By concluding the results found from my research – designed to answer these four sub-questions – I will answer my research question. Based on this, advice will be presented in the following chapter.

How is Bratislava currently being campaigned as a brand?

When distinguishing which foreign markets the city should focus on in order to generate inwards tourism, the Netherlands showed as potential – due to the slight growth of inwards tourism over the last few years. Within the Netherlands focus is placed on generation Y. These conclusions have been made in 2009 by the Bratislava Tourist Board – most important when campaigning the brand of Bratislava to target markets. They, together with associating partners, mainly reach out to these markets through their website, brochures and tourist information centers. The city has both a logo and a slogan, which are visualized and promoted through these channels.

What is the brand knowledge of the target group?

After having established what the brand is, the next step was to research the brand knowledge of the target group. As discussed in detail in the theoretical framework, according to Keller (1993), the brand knowledge can be visualized with the use of several linking dimensions. This model has formed the structure of my first survey – each question representing one of these dimensions. From the results of the survey I can conclude that the brand awareness of my target audience is relatively low. Only about 5% of the respondents could recognize the logo, but nobody actually knew where from it is. The slogan was recognized by 23% of the respondents, but still no one could recognize where it belongs. Respondents proved better in recalling where the city is located, with almost 70% knowing in which country Bratislava lies.

By rating statements on a Likert scale, the brand image has found to be perceived in different ways. The city is not associated with being expensive, and both the logo and slogan were perceived as positive looking. Also, most respondents would feel good traveling to Bratislava. These results reflect positively on the image of the city. On the other side, Bratislava is not

associated with safety, and for most respondents it is not classified as an ideal travel destination. Also, the majority of the respondents were unable to associate the statements with the city, resulting into answering neutral. This is most likely due to them simply not knowing much about neither the city nor the brand presenting it. This argument can be supported by considering the almost one-third of the target group not knowing where the city is located and the majority unable to recognize the logo and slogan.

As explained in the theoretical framework, options respondents showed when indicating how they know of the city can be classified as organic (non-tourism information, such as TV, print, internet ads, school or news) or induced (tourism specific information, such as travel agencies and travel guides). According to Gunn (1972 - as cited in Hanzae & Saeedi, 2011), anyone can have organic images of a destination, but induced images come from the intention or motivation from an individual to travel. Those that have heard of the city have done so mostly through friends and family (organic). After this, the options selected most were travel guides and agencies (induced). Although these induced images score high, many different organic images were chosen – TV, school, news etc. Even though I cannot conclude that only because the target group knows of the city through induced images they automatically want to travel to Bratislava, it is possible. What can be assumed is that because of the high rating in travel agencies and guides, the target group has a motivation to travel in general. Besides friends and families, travel agencies, travel guides, and social media, the brand is not frequently known through other channels.

What are the brand image and associations regarding the brand of Bratislava, perceived by the target audience?

Based on the results from the survey and theories in my theoretical framework I have conducted a type of experiment, which has provided results that help me to answer my last two sub-questions. First, in the experiment, questions similar to those asked in the first survey were asked, to see whether the target audience was consistent in their knowledge (and so if my sample was representative for the target group). The results from both were in the end compared. I had already gained some insight on the brand image and associations of the target group. As explained in my theoretical framework, the destination image is formed in the mind of a tourist, according to which associations one has with the destination. With my experiment I have analyzed this, by having the group rate their associations with an ideal or desired travel destination, presenting them Bratislava through the brand, and asking them to rate the same association, only now regarding Bratislava. I have analyzed the most interesting findings of this experiment. From these results I can conclude that most valued associations regarding an ideal travel destination are:

- Young public
- Good weather
- Entertaining surrounding/region
- Good value for money
- Other travelers
- Affordable accommodation
- Culture

Similar agreements have been made regarding Bratislava on these associations. For example, *good weather* is valued high amongst the target group, and the brand met their standards well. Although less strongly agreed, overall three-quarters agreed with associating Bratislava with nice weather. Other associations from the twenty-five asked more strongly linked to Bratislava than to the chosen destination were *local people*; *internet available*; *cultural/historical environment*; and *clean environment*. This means that – in their opinion – Bratislava seems to possess more of the last mentioned features than they desire to have, or find necessary in a travel destination. This could either mean that, for example, too many local people is a negative feature for them, or that they appreciate locals and therefore could be attracted more to the city. When comparing the most highly valued associations of the target audience to the level of agreement they have of these same associations regarding Bratislava, difference – or gaps – are found.

More than half of the participants strongly agree *young public* associates with their ideal travel destination, and the rest simply agrees. When the same was asked about Bratislava, 60% says not to associate this with the city. Only about one-seventh agrees the brand presents Bratislava as a destination for young people (those of the same age as the respondents). More than half agree on needing an *entertaining surrounding/region*, with 35% even strongly agreeing. Although less associate Bratislava with this, still 35% agrees. 20% remain neutral on this subject, and the other 40% disagrees, therefore missing the associations of entertainment in the surrounding of the city. Participants staying neutral most likely indicate that the brand did not impress them very well when it comes to the surroundings of the city, resulting into no clear opinion on this subject.

Other travelers are highly valued, with only 10% calling neutral. The rest is spread between strongly agreeing and agreeing. This is poorly associated with the city, as half of the participants disagree to associate other travelers with Bratislava. Apart from one participant rating *neutral*, all students associate *good value for money* with their desired travel destination. A little less than a quarter associate this with what they have seen of the brand. Another quarter stays neutral, and even a little more than a quarter disagrees with associating Bratislava to this. Almost all (except 10%) associate their desired destination with *affordable accommodation* – equally split between strongly agreeing and agreeing. These associations show a large gap with those of Bratislava, as 60% disagree. The last two missing associations are rather surprising, as results from the first survey showed that the target group associated Bratislava (without directly linking to campaigns) as not being expensive.

Defined by Ward & Russell, ((1981) – as cited by Hanzae & Saeedi, 2011), people also can have an emotional attachment to a destination. Russell (1981) designed a model for assessing a tourist's affect associated with a destination, containing four bipolar dimensions. These dimensions have been analyzed, as participants could rate their opinion between these attributes on a scale from one to seven. Results show that the target group associates arousing and sleepy equally; has pleasant associations over unpleasant ones; views the city (brand) equally exiting as gloomy; although more relaxing than distressing.

Further research (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bigne, 2001; Castro, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Lee, 2009; Alcaniz, 2009 – as cited in Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2009, p.16) has indicated that destination image has an effect on behavioral intentions of tourists. Behavioral intentions in these studies were measured from two perspectives, vocalized as: “willingness to recommend to others” and “intention to (re)visit”. Before the brand was presented, the majority of participants indicated at the moment not having any intentions on visiting the city, and also not knowing enough about the brand to recommend it to someone. After the brand was introduced, more participants had the intention to visit the city. Also, the percentage feeling they did not know enough about the city had dropped (by 15%), and more agreed they could recommend Bratislava to others.

Which channels can the brand best be directed through towards the target audience?

According to Percy and Elliott (2009, p. 232-236), as discussed in the theoretical framework, when selecting media (strategies) special attention should be given to the processing requirements of the brand awareness and brand attitude strategies. As for the brand awareness, brand recognition requires good visual representation of the logo, and brand recall requires emphasis on frequency to build associations between the category need and the brand name. Results from my conducted research have shown that both the logo and slogan (and to many even the destination name) are mostly unknown. Therefore, selected media must be beneficial for both the brand recognition and brand recall. As for the brand attitude, as choosing a vacation destination is a high risk choice, media must be selected appropriate to a high involvement brand.

High-involvement brand decisions often require longer processing time (because of the extensive information needed to convince the audience). Therefore, print-oriented media (including the Internet) are appropriate. Also, with destination/vacation choices, decisions usually have a longer purchase cycle, which allows a relatively low rate of frequency. Most compatible media strategies based on these arguments would be through print and the Internet. Print media (usually magazines) most often have good visual content, a long time available to process, but limitations in frequency. The Internet has good visual content, a long time available to process and frequency potential.

With the experiment the target group was questioned about their preferences regarding media strategies and the brand. As results show, the target group prefers to be approached with travel advertisement in general and specific to Bratislava through social media. Closing following are magazines, then posters. Best presenting the brand as it is, is the Facebook page, through which the target group would also wish most to get involved with. Also presenting the brand well, in the opinion of the participants, is the website. Twitter also made a reasonable impression, with 25% indicting the account as presenting the brand positively. Half of the participants indicated that they feel they could be more attracted to the brand through social networks. Participants also say they would be equally interested in the brand through online blogs.

8. Advice

Based on the theories implemented, research conducted, results analyzed, and conclusions drawn, I would like to present the following advice to the Bratislava Tourist Board and associating partners. This advice will answer my policy question: *How can the brand of Bratislava best be communicated towards Dutch students aged 18-25 years old?*

The target group has various positive associations with travel destinations they like. Bratislava as it is campaigned is successful in reflecting some of these associations. However, by conducting research, differences have been identified. If the brand were to reflect these missing desired associations, the target group would most likely gain more interest in Bratislava. These associations which are valued highly by the target group, but in their opinions presented poorly by the city brand are: young public (those of the same age as the target group), other travelers, entertaining surrounding/region, good value for money and affordable accommodation. Bratislava needs to campaign in such a way that these associations are made with the city. This can be done through various media channels, which have been identified by the preformed research.

The best media channels would be print-oriented media and the Internet. Results from the experiment show that print media with this audience best can be in the form of magazines, possibly also posters. The brand is already promoted through brochures, only these proved not to present the brand as attractive. The content and so favorability of published material by the brand can be improved by incorporating more events which attract other travelers (of the same age). Also, by getting the cities hostels involved in these publications, you are combining the associations of young travelers and affordable accommodation. Other publications are already promoting in these manners (i.e. Lonely Planet). Promoting the more affordable accommodation supports the associations of good value for money, as hostels are known to be reasonably priced and often attract (young) travelers. The Bratislava Tourist Board should make more use in their campaigning of the fact that the target group associates Bratislava – just by name, not by brand - as affordable. This association is highly valued by the audience, and therefore most likely to get them more enthusiastic about the destination, if campaigned well through the brand.

As for promoting through social media, Facebook shows most potential and should be updated more often, and incorporate interesting information for the target group. However, as it is now, little knowledge of the city (brand) has been generated by social media. The only reference made by the Bratislava Tourist Board to the Facebook page is a small link on the website of *The Official Tourist and Travel Guide to Bratislava*. After having seen the campaigns Facebook page, half the target audience indicated they would like to be more involved with the brand through Facebook. This page should be promoted through improved published brochures/magazines, and by hostels and organizations holding events in the city. The other way around, the Facebook account should focus more on promoting affordable accommodation and entertainment within the city and its surroundings.

The target audience values other (young) travelers, and associates Bratislava strongly as Eastern European city, and as a destination for backpacking (shown in the results from the first survey). Therefore, campaigning should focus on travelers passing by on for example a

backpacking trip. Promotional deals could be made with other hostels and/or travel/tourist facilities in the city, region and neighboring countries, arranging cheaper bookings and promotion of each other. This can then be shared through social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which the target audience can follow while on the road. As good weather is associated with both the ideal destination and Bratislava, campaigning should focus within the summer period. Bratislava as travel destination shows good potentials for this target audience, however, some associations made through the brand somewhat mislead the audience into thinking the city is not for them. Bratislava has many events going on all year round, but for this specific target group focus should be put more on those representing the city as exiting and full of other travelers. As the city is well known its culture and history, which should be preserved, campaigning towards this target audience can best be slightly separated from the more classical campaigns, such as the brochures. Evidentially, these proved not to impress the target group. With this separation I am indicating to the social media networks mentioned, and travel guides published for young traveler.

Further research based on my results could focus more on the satisfaction of the target group after having visited or currently visiting the city. Again, associations could be measured with what the audience perceives of the city, and how well this is campaigned by the Bratislava Tourist Board and partners. Similar research as I have done might also be conducted with different target markets or segments, or of course regarding a different city (brand).

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Appendix 1: Experiment form

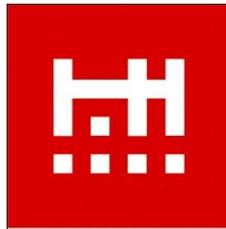


Experiment Destination Branding 2013

Thank you for participating with this experiment, contributing to my graduation assignment for my Bachelor in International Communication & Media. During all time questions may be asked. Results will be used only for this assignment, and personal information will be not acquired. Please fill out this accompanying form in the order in which the experiment is conducted. The duration of this experiment will be about 30-40 minutes.

Part 1. Questionnaire

1. Do you recognize this logo ?
 - Yes, it's from
 - I have seen it before, but I don't know where it's from
 - No, I have never seen this logo before



2. Do you know the slogan "Little Big City"?
 - Yes, it's from
 - I've heard of it before, but I don't know where it's from
 - No, I don't recognize it
3. Do you know where Bratislava is located?
 - Yes, in (*country*)
 - No, I don't know where it is
4. How have you heard of Bratislava? (*you can select multiple answers*)
 - Friends and family
 - Travel agencies
 - Television advertisements
 - Internet advertisement
 - Print advertisement
 - Travel guides
 - Social Media
 - School
 - Radio
 - I haven't heard of it before
 - Other

5. Which channel(s) do you find reliable when viewing/hearing advertisements for travel destinations?

- Friends and family
- Travel agencies
- Television advertisements
- Internet advertisement
- Print advertisement
- Travel guides
- Social Media
- School
- Radio
- Other

6. Do you have any intentions to visit Bratislava in the future?

- Yes, I am certainly going to visit Bratislava
- Yes, I would like to visit Bratislava sometime
- I have no intentions to visit Bratislava at the moment
- No, I will definitely never visit Bratislava

7. Would you recommend visiting Bratislava to others?

- Yes, I would recommend Bratislava as a travel destination
- I don't know enough about the destination to recommend it to someone
- No, I would not recommend Bratislava as a travel destination

Part 2. Overall destination associations

The next part of this experiment is based on the personal associations you have with your ideal travel destination. You may rate the following attributes on a Likert scale, in which 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree and 5=strongly agree. So, for each attribute you can rate if you agree it associates with a destination you would like to visit. Please **circle** the number of the level you agree with.

<i>Attributes</i>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Culture	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly people	1	2	3	4	5
Affordable accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Nightlife & bars	1	2	3	4	5
Adventure	1	2	3	4	5
Local people	1	2	3	4	5
Good shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Festivals	1	2	3	4	5
Good weather	1	2	3	4	5
Sea/beach	1	2	3	4	5
Affordable food/restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Entertaining surrounding/region	1	2	3	4	5
Safe and secure environment	1	2	3	4	5
Atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Political stability	1	2	3	4	5
Other travelers	1	2	3	4	5
Young people	1	2	3	4	5
Beautiful environment	1	2	3	4	5
Relaxing	1	2	3	4	5
Clean environment	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural/historical environment	1	2	3	4	5
Internet available	1	2	3	4	5
Good value for money	1	2	3	4	5

Part 3. Destination associations with the brand of Bratislava

You have now seen the brand that represents the city Bratislava. Please rate the same attributes as before, but this time rate them to the level you find they associate with Bratislava, as you have just seen through the various media shown. Please **circle** the number of the level you agree with.

<i>Attributes</i>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Culture	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly people	1	2	3	4	5
Affordable accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Nightlife & bars	1	2	3	4	5
Adventure	1	2	3	4	5
Local people	1	2	3	4	5
Good shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Festivals	1	2	3	4	5
Good weather	1	2	3	4	5
Sea/beach	1	2	3	4	5
Affordable food/restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Entertaining surrounding/region	1	2	3	4	5
Safe and secure environment	1	2	3	4	5
Atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
Political stability	1	2	3	4	5
Other travelers	1	2	3	4	5
Young people	1	2	3	4	5
Beautiful environment	1	2	3	4	5
Relaxing	1	2	3	4	5
Clean environment	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural/historical environment	1	2	3	4	5
Internet available	1	2	3	4	5
Good value for money	1	2	3	4	5

When considering the brand you have just been introduced with, please rate on this 7 point scale where your perception lies between the two opposite attributes. Please **circle** the number indicating the position of your answer.

Arousing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sleepy
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpleasant
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Gloomy
Relaxing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Distressing



Part 4. Questionnaire regarding the brand of Bratislava

8. Do you have any intentions to visit Bratislava in the future?
 - Yes, I am certainly going to visit Bratislava
 - Yes, I would like to visit Bratislava sometime
 - I have no intentions to visit Bratislava at the moment
 - No, I will definitely never visit Bratislava

9. Would you recommend visiting Bratislava to others?
 - Yes, I would recommend Bratislava as a travel destination
 - I don't know enough about the destination to recommend it to someone
 - No, I would not recommend Bratislava as a travel destination

10. Which media would you prefer to be approached by with a promotional message about a travel destination?
 - Television
 - Radio
 - Newspaper
 - Magazines
 - Posters
 - Internet
 - Direct Mail
 - Social Media
 - None
 - Other

.....

11. Which media would you prefer to be approached by with a promotional message about Bratislava?

- Television
 - Radio
 - Newspaper
 - Magazines
 - Posters
 - Internet
 - Direct Mail
 - Social Media
 - None
 - Other
-

12. Which media – regarding what you have seen during this experiment – for you best represent Bratislava?

- Website
- Brochures
- Facebook page
- Youtube (video)
- Videos through MySpace
- Twitter
- None

13. Through which social media would you like to get involved with the brand of Bratislava?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Hyves
- MySpace
- YouTube
- Windows Live Profile
- Blogs
- None

14. Do you feel that hearing from the brand through social media would attract you more to the destination?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Appendix 2: Results experiment – associations compared

Associations	% associated with ideal travel destination	% associated with brand of Bratislava
Culture		
Strongly Agree	35	25
Agree	60	65
Neutral	15	15
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Entertainment		
Strongly Agree	15	10
Agree	30	40
Neutral	45	40
Disagree	10	10
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Friendly people		
Strongly Agree	35	25
Agree	45	50
Neutral	20	25
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Affordable accom.		
Strongly Agree	45	0
Agree	45	10
Neutral	10	30
Disagree	0	60
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Nightlife & bars		
Strongly Agree	20	0
Agree	40	35
Neutral	30	40
Disagree	10	20
Strongly Disagree	0	5
Adventure		
Strongly Agree	10	0
Agree	30	15
Neutral	55	75
Disagree	5	25
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Local people		
Strongly Agree	25	25
Agree	40	65
Neutral	25	15
Disagree	10	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Festivals		
Strongly Agree	5	0
Agree	45	5
Neutral	40	50
Disagree	5	40
Strongly Disagree	5	5
Festivals		
Strongly Agree	20	0
Agree	50	50
Neutral	15	35
Disagree	15	15
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Good weather		
Strongly Agree	55	5
Agree	40	75
Neutral	5	20
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Sea/beach		
Strongly Agree	5	0
Agree	35	0
Neutral	55	0
Disagree	5	90
Strongly Disagree	0	10
Affordable food		
Strongly Agree	20	5
Agree	60	40
Neutral	20	55
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Entertaining region		
Strongly Agree	35	5
Agree	60	35
Neutral	5	20
Disagree	0	40
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Safe environment		
Strongly Agree	25	15
Agree	45	60
Neutral	40	25
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Atmosphere		
Strongly Agree	15	10
Agree	50	45
Neutral	35	40
Disagree	0	5

Strongly Disagree	0	0
Transportation		
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	40	55
Neutral	55	45
Disagree	5	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Political stability		
Strongly Agree	5	5
Agree	80	85
Neutral	15	10
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Other travelers		
Strongly Agree	55	0
Agree	35	15
Neutral	10	35
Disagree	0	50
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Young public		
Strongly Agree	60	0
Agree	40	15
Neutral	0	25
Disagree	0	60
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Beautiful environment		
Strongly Agree	15	15
Agree	60	45
Neutral	25	25
Disagree	0	15
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Relaxing		
Strongly Agree	5	10
Agree	35	45
Neutral	50	40
Disagree	10	5
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Clean environment		
Strongly Agree	5	20
Agree	60	50
Neutral	35	30
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Cultural/historical		
Strongly Agree	25	15
Agree	50	80

Neutral	25	5
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Internet available		
Strongly Agree	5	0
Agree	30	90
Neutral	40	10
Disagree	20	0
Strongly Disagree	5	0
Good value for money		
Strongly Agree	40	0
Agree	55	30
Neutral	5	30
Disagree	0	35
Strongly Disagree	0	5

Table Appendix 1: comparison of associations

The following screenshots are from material used during the experiment, presenting the brand as campaigned by Bratislava. These screenshots are meant to give a global impression of the complete materials used.

Website – homepage

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Bratislava Official Tourism and Travel Guide website. The header features the Bratislava logo and the text "Official Tourism and Travel Guide to Bratislava". Navigation links include "Switch off graphic", "Site map", and "Print". A search bar is present, along with "Help" and "Advanced Search" links. The main content area is divided into five colored boxes: "About Bratislava Getting Around", "Accommodation Wining and Dining", "What to see Events and Festivals", "What to do Brochures and Maps", and "Imagebank Press/ B2B". Below this, there are sections for "ADDITIONAL RESOURCES" (including Bratislava City Card, Tourist Information Centres, and Guided Tours), "NEWS" (with a featured article "Coronation Festival in Bratislava 2013"), and "WEATHER" (showing a 3-day forecast). A "BOOKING" section is also visible at the bottom right.

Website - content

About Bratislava



Welcome to Europe's most glamorous city!

Well OK, not quite. And truth be told, Bratislava, with fewer than half a million people, is never likely to be. But it might be Europe's most relaxed, because what this city does have is old-town charm, sophisticated restaurants, traditional pubs, good music ranging from jazz to opera, stylish people, and a human scale which means that as a visitor you will not spend half your day trekking in and out of underground stations or getting from the airport into town. All this, and Europe's greatest river as a backdrop. What more could you want?

Known as Pressburg to German-speakers or Pozsony to Hungarian-speakers, Bratislava got its present name only 90 years ago. But the city has a long and proud history that dates back to pre-Roman times.

The hillsides on the edge of the city have been home to vineyards for centuries, and close to Bratislava are wine towns where you can taste the best - and it is startlingly good! - that Slovakia has to offer.

In the city itself there is plenty to see and do. Bratislava's long history - as home to Celts, Romans, Germans, Hungarians, Jews, and of course Slovaks - means there is an impressive range of architecture, languages and cuisine.

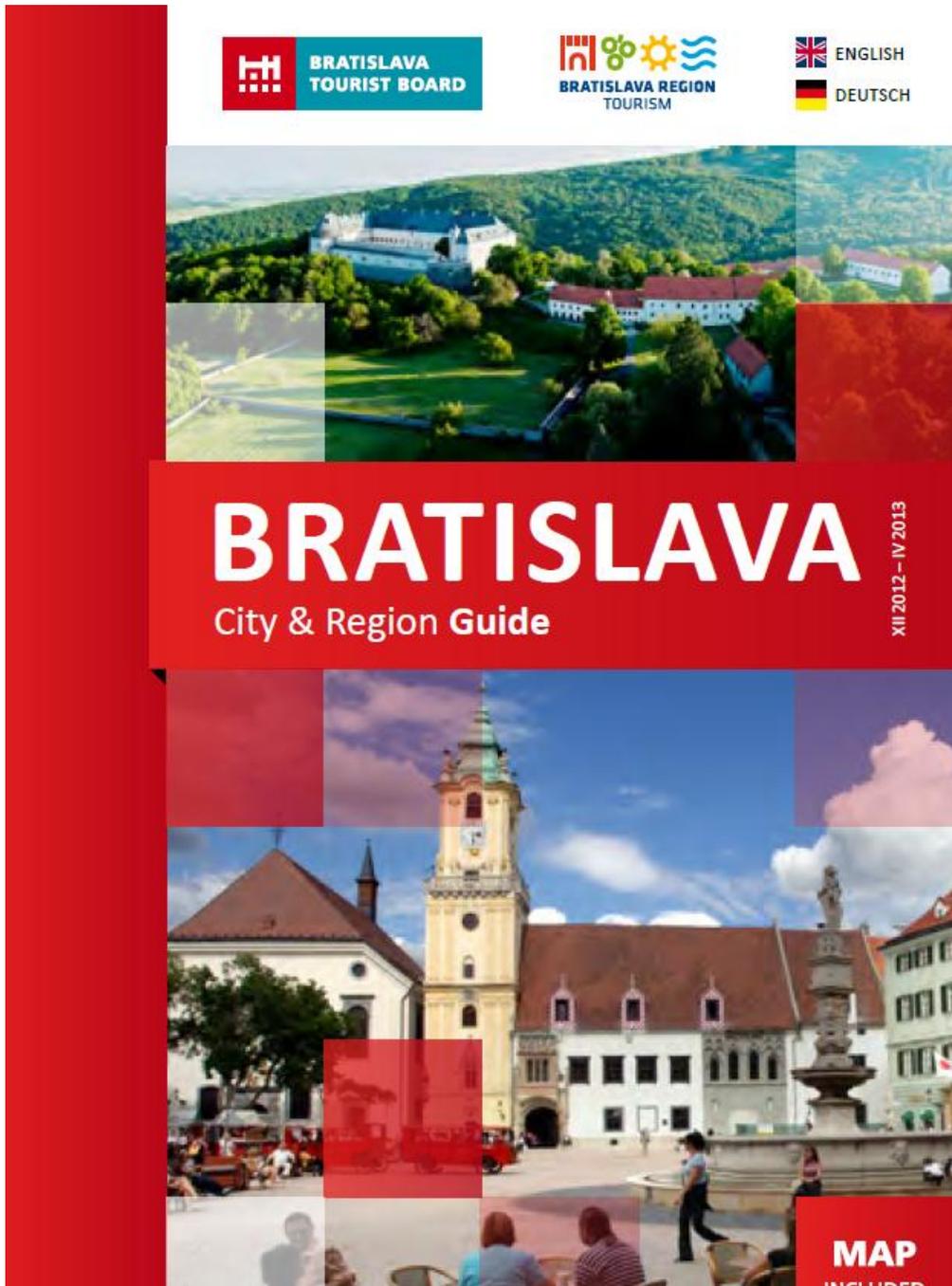
The handsome homes of the Austro-Hungarian noble families who built palaces here dot the city, and many of them are now open to the public as museums and galleries. The castle, with its long and chequered history (it has been destroyed more than once), is now undergoing a major restoration. There are great views over the mediaeval old town and the Danube valley from its fortifications.

Bratislava was once one of the most important centres of Jewish learning in Europe. A unique memorial to its most renowned rabbi, the Chatam Sofer, and the city's Museum of Jewish Culture celebrate this heritage.

Communism too left its mark: across the river, the unmistakable ranks of concrete housing blocks - paneláky in Slovak - line the horizon, with the unique UFO-style New Bridge in the foreground.

The Danube River itself is, of course, one of the city's main assets. There are several cafes along its banks, within walking distance of the centre. The 'UFO' itself contains an eponymous bar high above the river. The pedestrian decks of the New and Old Bridges are good places to watch the river traffic, including huge Danube barges, glide past. Alternatively, you can take to the water yourself: daily hydrofoil services link the city with nearby Vienna.

A succession of four- and five-star hotels have opened in the city over the past few years and quality accommodation is now readily available. There are also more cheap options than ever before, with several backpacker hostels in the centre of town.





🇸🇰 VISIT BRATISLAVA'S LOST TOWN

🇩🇪 *Besuchen Sie Bratislavas Verlorene Stadt*

🇸🇰 Passing through Bratislava's old town, with every step you take, there is rich history. The buildings, pavements and even trees witnessed different events and historical milestones of Bratislava. If only walls could talk and re-tell history. However, there is a large part of our history that no wall or building will ever be able to re-tell. In the 1960's, during Communism the entire Jewish quarter located below the Bratislava castle was destroyed to make room for new Communist building projects. 50 years later, Bratislava is re-claiming its lost history and refreshing its memory. The Lost town project is bringing back important dominants of the town. The first and most striking one you can see in the centre of the town at Rybné square is the small replica of the grand and once famous neogothic synagogue. In case you are in Bratislava in the 4 months of the summer season, come and take a tour of the Lost Town ... a town that

🇩🇪 *Beim Spaziergang durch die Altstadt spürt man an jedem Schritt die reiche Geschichte der Stadt. Gebäude, Straßen und sogar Bäume sind Zeugen verschiedener Ereignisse und historischer Meilensteine Bratislavas. Wenn nur Mauern sprechen und die Geschichte nacherzählen könnten. Doch einen großen Teil unserer Geschichte kann keine Mauer und kein Gebäude erzählen. In den 1960ern, während des Kommunismus, wurde ein ganzes Judenviertel, das sich unterhalb der Burg befand, zerstört um Platz für neue kommunistische Bauprojekte zu machen. 50 Jahre später entsinnt sich Bratislava an die verlorene Geschichte der Stadt. Das Projekt der Verlorenen Stadt bringt uns wichtige Dominanten der Stadt zurück. Die erste und auffallendste Rekonstruktion kann man im Stadtzentrum, am Platz Rybné námestie bewundern, es ist eine kleine Replik der einst großen und bekannten neogotischen Synagoge. Falls Sie während der vier Monate der Sommersaison in Bratislava sind, empfehlen wir Ihnen die Tour der Verlorenen Stadt zu absolvieren... eine*

 Air conditioning / Klimaanlage	 Guarded parking / Bewachter Parkplatz
 Credit cards accepted / Kreditkarten	 Fitness centre / Fitnesscenter
 Casino / Kasino	 Non-smoking rooms / Nichtraucherzimmer
 Conference facilities / Konferenzräume	 Restaurant / Restaurant
 Child friendly / Kinderfreundliche Einrichtung	 Swimming pool / Schwimmbad
 Facilities for the disabled / Behindertenfreundliche Einrichtung	 Sauna / Sauna
 Internet	 Wi-Fi

HOTELS*** / Hotels*******

KEMPINSKI HOTEL RIVER PARK | Awarded Best Hotel in Slovakia, the definition of luxury on the banks of river Danube, a uniquely located and unmissable lifestyle hot spot. Complimentary Rolls Roys transfer service, full spa, pool, café, restaurant, bar | +421 2 3223 8222, www.kempinski.com/bratislava, 



HOTEL AVANCE is a newly built luxury hotel, set in the historical centre. | Medená 9, tel.: +421 2 592 084 00, hotelavance@hotelavance.sk, www.hotelavance.sk, 

HOTEL MERCURE BRATISLAVA CENTRUM | Go for an entirely new hotel experience! Hotel Mercure has extravagant design, unique and trendy style, is well accessible and provides high quality service. It is the perfect choice for a unique experience and a comfortable stay. | Žabotova 2, +421 2 5727 7000, h6840@accor.com, 

SHERATON BRATISLAVA HOTEL | A welcoming 5 star hotel in EUROVEA by the Danube. Enjoy spacious rooms with Sweet Sleeper beds, free access to Shine Spa and 24/7 fitness. | Pribinova 12, tel.: +421 2 3535 0000, www.sheratonbratislava.com, 

TULIP HOUSE BOUTIQUE HOTEL | Luxury boutique hotel situated in the heart of city center offering spacious apartments, fine dining restaurant Rhapsody and Café Tulip with the best desserts in the city. | Šturova 10, tel. +421 2 3217 1819, www.tuliphouse.sk, 



ARCADIA | Františkánska 3, www.arcadia-hotel.sk
ALBRECHT | Mudroňova 82, www.hotelalbrecht.com

HOTELS** / Hotels******

FALKENSTEINER HOTEL BRATISLAVA A totally new hotel experience - unique lifestyle atmosphere with „Welcome home“ hospitality Piláríkova 5, tel. +421 2 5923 6100, 

ABBA BRATISLAVA HOTEL | Štefánikova 4, www.abbabratislavahotel.com/en/

ART HOTEL WILLIAM | Laurinská 17, www.art-hotel-william.sk

APOLLO | Dulo vo námestie 1, www.apollohotel.sk

AUSTRIA TREND HOTEL | Vysoká 2A, www.austria-trend.sk

BARÓNKA | Mudrochova 2, www.baronka.sk

BEST WESTERN HOTEL ANTARES | Šulekova 15, www.hotelantares.sk

BEST WESTERN HOTEL WEST | Koliba - Kamzík, www.hotel-west.sk

BONBÓN | Antolská 2, www.bonbon.sk

BRIX | Stromova 2, www.hotelbrix.sk

CROWNE PLAZA BRATISLAVA | Hodžovo námestie 2, www.crowne-plaza.sk

DANUBIA GATE | Dunajská 26, www.danubiagate.sk

DESIGN HOTEL ČAKOV:MAKARA | Trnavská cesta 72, www.designhotel.sk

DEVÍN | Vajanského nábřežie, www.hoteldevin.sk

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON | Trnavská cesta 27A, www.doubletree3.hilton.com

GATE ONE HOTEL | Ambrušova 7, www.hotelgateone.sk

HOLIDAY INN BRATISLAVA | Bajkalská 25, www.holidayinn.sk

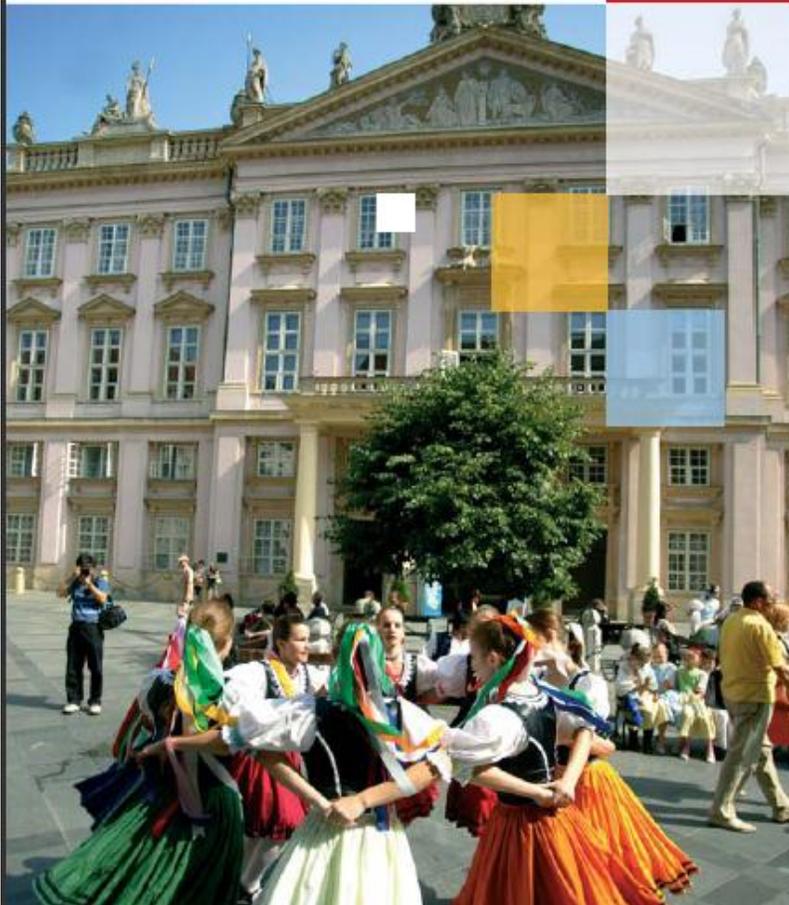
HRADNÁ BRÁNA | Slovenské nábr. 15, www.hotelhb.sk

KAMILA | Čierna voda 611, www.kamila.sk

MAMA'S DESIGN | Chorvátska 2, www.hotelmamas.sk

BRATISLAVA 2013

TOP-VERANSTALTUNGEN
TOP EVENTS





1. – 31. January / 1. – 31. Januar

Bratislava On Ice / Bratislava On Ice

Enjoy ice skating at Hviezdoslavovo Square directly in front of the Slovak National Theatre. The rink will be open to the public daily until 31 January 2013.

Genießen Eislaufen am Hviezdoslavovo Platz direkt vor dem Slowakischen Nationaltheater. Sport macht Laune!
www.visitbratislava.sk

19. – 20. January / 19. – 20. Januar

1st Slovak winter MTB & RUNNING Trophy 2013

If you want to experience a winter adventure on mountain wheels or during MOUNTAIN RUN in the surroundings of Bratislava, come and take part in the 5th year of the 1st winter marathon in Slovakia.

Wenn Sie ein Winterabenteuer auf Mountain-Rädern oder bei einem MOUNTAIN RUN in der Umgebung von Bratislava erleben möchten, kommen Sie und nehmen Sie teil an dem 5. Jahrgang des 1. Winter Marathon in der Slowakei.
www.stupavskymaraton.sk



26. January and 23. February / 26. Januar und 23. Februar

Winter dozen / Winter Dutzend

Winter sports events in Bratislava.

Wintersport-Events in Bratislava.
www.bratislavamarathon.com

8. – 14. March / 8. – 14. März

FEBIO FEST 2013

International film, television and video festival starts this year on 8. March.

Internationale Film-, Fernseh- und Video-Festival beginnt dieses Jahr am 8. März.
www.feblofest.sk

21. – 24. March / 21. – 24. März

ČSOB Bratislava Marathon 2013

8th annual Bratislava City Marathon is expecting 7,000 runners and an interesting accompanying program for all those non-runners.

8. jährliche Bratislava City Marathon erwartet 7.000 Läufer und ein interessantes Begleitprogramm für all jene Nicht-Läufer.
www.bratislavamarathon.com



7. April / 7. April

National Run Devín – Bratislava / Nationale Run

Devín – Bratislava

The 66th annual running event is for everyone with international participation with more than 2,000 runners.

66. Jahrgang von laufender Veranstaltung ist für jedermann. Mit internationaler Beteiligung mit mehr als 2.000 Läufern.
www.starz.sk

Facebook page



BRATISLAVA Visit Bratislava

1.999 personen vinden dit leuk · 169 praten hierover · 284 waren hier

Reisbureau · Toeristische informatie
Bratislava Tourist Office. Here to share best tips about Travel and Bratislava and to answer any question you might have. <http://www.visitbratislava.eu/>

Info – Een bewerking voorstellen

Foto's

Vind-ik-leuks 1.999

Kaart

Twitter

Belangrijkste berichten

Plaatsen Foto / Video

Schrijf iets...

Visit Bratislava heeft de foto van Bratislava na Facebooku gedeeld.
4 juni

Situation is still under control.

<http://www.sme.sk/c/6825123/pozrite-si-letecke-zabery-povodni-v-bratislave-a-okoli.html>

Recente berichten van anderen over Visit Bratislava Alles weergeven

- Teresa Samerek**
Ci vediamo a Bratislava?
vrijdag om 21:22
- Ivan Dasko**
@ Bratislava new adrenalin... Must see , Reality floating show
vrijdag om 18:15
- Simone Fra**
What are the 10 most important things to see in Bratislava?
donderdag om 0:40
- Holiday Card**
@ Hotel Set**** s kartou HolidayCard za 1/2 cenu
23 mei om 8:27

Meer berichten



Visit Bratislava

@VisitBratislava

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Bratislava · visit.bratislava.sk/en

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Tweets



Visit Bratislava @VisitBratislava 31 Aug 11
Life's tough RT @erintweets: This just in: Local @Pinkberry out of peanut butter. My whole day is ruined.
[Expand](#)



Visit Bratislava @VisitBratislava 31 Aug 11
@jkrums maybe google just gave up on plus one and paked up :)
[View conversation](#)



Visit Bratislava @VisitBratislava 23 Aug 11
Hehe. No. Kids first schoolday! RT @traveldudes: @hjortur Is a volcan erupting or why do you run? hahaha #ttot
[Expand](#)



Visit Bratislava @VisitBratislava 23 Aug 11
A4: a sail! #ttot
[Expand](#)



Renee Dobbs @reneedobbs 21 Aug 11
Yes! RT @wykehamgirl: Really we must go & dine @FashionOffice house!!! -> Fresh Fruit, Pancakes, Waffles, Oatmeal, all made 2 order..
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