

# Branding Vlieland: both islanders and guests in their element?

A comparative study on the different experiences and effects of place branding between locals and tourists



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## SUMMARY & CENTRAL CONCEPTS

**Abstract** Tourism is described as an industry and experience that has potential to improve the Quality of Life (QoL) for both travellers and residents. Several studies found that tourism development does benefit the host communities, in example by a high degree of regional identification with the space, history and cultural heritage, but also enhancement of local employment opportunities, tax revenues and economic diversity which improve the QoL. The positive effect of tourism is only observed up until a certain point, when negative impacts such as cultural commodification, economic exclusion and environmental degradation can occur, that decrease QoL. Place branding is increasingly used as means to attract more resources (e.g. tourists) to a tourist destination. Place branding might include developing a new platform with logo, slogan and brand values, but recently increasing importance has been given to the usage of signature buildings or events as means of place branding. This is also the case in Vlieland, the Netherlands, where a new platform and several events are used to lure visitors over outside the high season. The analysis focuses on the relationship between local stakeholders and visitors, to uncover any differences in experience and effects of the brand Vlieland and if that causes any tension between the hosts and guests. The results may entail further recommendations for place-branding through events on other small cold water islands across Europe.

**Keywords** Tourism planning · Place branding · Quality of Life · Host/Guest relations · Island branding

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism in the 1950s and 1960s was embraced as economic panacea for issues such as underdevelopment and elimination of poverty. Little investment was required by local authorities, who provided lucrative incentives to investors and multinationals to start operating in their destination. The local authorities chased tourism's fascinating growth potentials and highly reproducible characteristics (Liburd et al., 2012). Nowadays, tourism development is desirable and it contributes to development of the overall area (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). A model often used to describe the development path of a tourist destination is the Destination Life Cycle Model by Butler (1980). As explained in Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka (2016), a pristine and unspoiled area in first instance is visited by travellers searching for the unknown. Commercialization of tourism services occurs when the area gains in popularity, which contributes to loss of the destination's original character. Wealthier newcomers are forcing out less prosperous locals. These indications of commercialization and gentrification make locals unhappy. The positive, desirable impact of tourism development is only observed up until a certain point. Negative impacts on host communities include cultural commodification, economic exclusion and environmental degradation (Liburd et al., 2012).

According to Brown & Cave (2010), tourism's carrying capacity is limited. Liburd et al. (2012, p.3) define it as "the maximum number of people using a site without an unacceptable alteration of the physical environment and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors". If this is exceeded, visitor attractiveness is reduced, leading a declining arrivals (Liburd et al. 2012). For policymakers in tourist destinations it is important to keep this carrying capacity in mind when implying new policies. The definition of carrying capacity merely states something about the changes tourists make in the living environment of the residents in the destination. According to Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka (2016), there is a clear mechanism between tourism and residents' happiness; more tourism development is more likely to make residents unhappy, resulting in higher chances on negative attitudes towards tourism. Tourism is thus a mixed blessing for host communities. It brings economic benefits, but sometimes its popularity takes away what made it popular in a first place. This happens when the tourism policy prioritizes tourist happiness, while neglecting residents' satisfaction with the industry (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). Uysal et al. (2012) states that the value of tourism has transitioned from economic panacea to a focus on non-economic measures such as Quality of Life (QoL). For tourists this means quality touristic experiences, for residents it contains avoiding excessive exploitation of resources in their living environment. Positive impacts of tourism on a destination area also include sustainability, corporate social responsibility and community leadership, which are considered to correlate with improvements in subjective well-being and QoL (Liburd et al., 2012).

Place branding has become a strategy for places to improve their position relative to others in attracting resources, such as tourists. Boisen et al. (2017) researched place promotion, marketing and branding and found that these have become a universal issue for local authorities in the Netherlands. The forming of a brand can be effective in providing consistent market signals and an accumulation of shared experiences across product or service categories, but at the same time risking alienating loyal users and confusing actual or potential patrons (Baldacchino, 2010). As islands are already heavily themed places, they typically brand themselves with as a goal to appeal to actual and potential visitors. By doing so, the appeal of the quality of island life is neglected, rendered indistinct or discounted (Baldacchino, 2010). This quality of life features a key component of the island allure.

From research that has been done before it is obvious that place-branding is applied to appeal to more visitors to a certain area. That development might cause a bigger economic revenue, but also a decline in QoL for local residents. In this research, a light will be shed on how tourists and residents experience a place brand and the consequences of the place branding in terms of QoL. This paper attempts to observe any

differences in perceptions of place branding for hosts and guests in a tourist area on basis of difference in QoL by looking at the Dutch Waddenisland Vlieland.. The island lends itself well as case study for this thesis because on the island, interaction with tourists is fundamental for the QoL of the community, due to high income-dependency on the tourist sector (VVV Vlieland, n.d.) and the small scale. Even though they are on a high level depending on tourism, the inhabitants wonder whether it can hold on to the current growth (Van der Vlies, 2017).

Central question in this thesis is “To what extent do the effects and experiences of place-branding policy differ between tourists and islanders in terms of Quality of Life?”

Secondary questions I will use to answer this question are:

- What is the effect of place branding efforts on local Quality of Life?
- What is the difference between the experiences and effects of residents and tourists regarding tourism and place branding?
- What considerations are or should be taken in tourism policy regarding improving tourism and maintaining the same Quality of Life for inhabitants?

To be able to answer these questions, point of departure is existing literature on place branding and Quality of Life which can be found in chapter 2. In chapter 3, the argumentation and explanation of the used mixed methods in this case study will be handled. The results of these methods are shown in chapter 4. On basis of these results a conclusion and reflection will be presented in chapter 5.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 PLACE BRANDING

Place branding refers to the efforts of places to position themselves in the competition for tourists, visitors, investors, residents and resources (Avraham & Ketter, 2008 in Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). It is often perceived as the application of marketing and branding techniques from Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or local governments. The place branding then is a DMOs communication about the place to various target groups. The boundaries of the brand construct are the activities of the firm and the perceptions of consumers. Place branding involves consumers', local residents', local businesses' and tourists perceptions of the place". As such, it is interesting to get a deeper insight in the differences of these perceptions between consumers and residents as is done in this thesis.

The core ideas about place branding theory and practices is that places compete with each other for a series of valuable resources (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). It draws upon place identity (the meanings that various stakeholders attach to the place). This identity is not a fixed and given entity, but it must be seen as negotiated, (re)constructed and "used" in a variety of ways. Place brands address multiple groups of stakeholders (e.g. local residents and tourists) and as such have high levels of complexity and intangibility, incorporate multiple identities and represent various communities. According to Uysal et al. (2016), community resources and infrastructure are essential elements in the tourism sector, as it depends on these resources to survive and prosper. In addition, different stakeholder groups in community tourism are affected in different ways by tourists, and "therefore, a challenge is to find the right combination of stakeholder goals and match them with planning and development of tourism projects" (Shani & Pizam, 2012 in Uysal et al. 2016, p. 246). In place branding, these key stakeholders need to invest in and communicate about what is happening in the place. The diversity is important because the place branding must be seen as the result of an open political process through which the profile of the brand emerges (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). Overall, a shift is observed regarding target groups of place branding. The emphasis used to be on the place as promotional instrument to attract more resources to the tourist area by increasing awareness and positive connotations among them. This view is increasingly challenged by the importance of the internal audience, which is the community that is branded.

There are several types of activities that can be demarcated as place branding. The emphasis often lies upon a new communications platform with logo, slogans and brand values (Shoft, 1999; Jensen, 2007 in Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). Recently, increased importance has been giving to the creations of tangible objects or activities that manifest the place through signature buildings or events that link a particular activity with a specific location (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). An example of these events are festivals. Festivals include pleasurable activities, have a festive character and publicly celebrate some concept, happening or fact and are as such potentially useful as place branding initiatives. Festivals can focus on internal community building in the area to serve the aim of building "pride of place" and improve development or reinforcement of community identity, or external attraction of tourists. Especially food festivals may be interwoven with senses and pride of place due to their grounding in local products and culinary traditions (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012). The effects of festivals might be particularly important in a smaller place, as a larger proportion of the community produces and attends the festivals. Signature events are well suited to contribute to the branding of a place, but these events also face some of the key challenges of place branding in general, namely the potential tension between internal and external audiences and the need to manage complex stakeholder relations (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012).

Blichfeldt & Halkier (2012 p.1588 & 1589) come up with 2 alternative scenarios for place branding in relatively small communities and a third option of places branding together:

- 1) Either the urgency of the task of branding small peripheral communities with no or relatively low public profile could lead to short term “boosterism”, which has a focus on maximizing the appeal to external place users while running the risk of neglecting diverging interests and/or internal community building;
- 2) The smallness of the place branding and the geographical and social proximity of key stakeholders form the basis of a relatively harmonious branding process, leading to a focus on activities building local pride rather than attraction of additional place users from outside
- 3) Several small places engage in joint place branding activities on the basis of perceived similarities. Inter-local coalitions will, undoubtedly, add to the complexities of stakeholder relations, the coalitions could also facilitate focusing of branding efforts on the (presumably relatively few) commonalities between the localities involved.

The last option where (island) destinations collaborate in marketing, can help offset exogenous shocks from outside the island in supply and demand in tourists or other products and services, that small tourism economies themselves could not handle. The tourism development will then be seen as the overall picture of supply and demand in the joint place branding. On islands, there is a limited supply of human, cultural and natural resources. Even though their smallness creates a fundamental appeal for tourism, the demand for the tourism product is limited. These accessibility issues together with variations in seasonality drive strategic planning for marketing and market segments, service engagement and community involvement (Brown & Cave, 2010). Careful management of both supply and demand is thus required. Tourism policies should involve anticipation and decreasing negative (economical) effects from outside of the island. In the same article, Kim (2002) notes the importance of public-private partnerships for developing island tourism, in terms of realization of strategic marketing and framework and individual investment strategies. Carter 2004 in Brown & Cave (2010) notes the importance of a process-oriented tourism planning and management system, through mutual adjustment between stakeholders. This requires consideration of the relationship between product, the market and the asset and an awareness of host community dynamics.

## 2.2 QUALITY OF LIFE

Tourists do not choose a place in the first place because locals are happy, but broad ecological and environmental factors matter: natural amenities, historical markets and tourist infrastructure (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). Liburd et al. (2012) described tourism as an industry and experience that has the potential to improve the Quality of Life (QoL) for both travellers and residents. Opperman & Cooper (1999) in Uysal et al. (2016) argue that engaging in memorable and meaningful experiences such as vacations contributes significantly to subjective well-being. This means not only the producers or consumers in a tourist area are positively affected by tourism, but also those not part of those groups. Mayhew states in the Oxford Dictionary of Geography (2015) that Quality of Life (QoL) is the well-being of individuals and societies; ‘either perceived or as identified by observable indicator’. Improving QoL, happiness and well-being have recently become integral to the development agenda of many governments (Galloway, 2006 in Liburd & Derkzen, 2009). Tourism is increasingly treated as an important industry that can enhance local employment opportunities, tax revenues & economic diversity (Kim et al., 2013). On the other hand, it alters community’s natural and cultural assets that it aims to promote for tourists, while also depleting local resources such as water and land and creating air, water and noise pollution (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). The development of conventional tourism is desirable as it contributes to the overall area development, but the positive effect is only observed up until a certain point (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). Most studies in this area found that tourism development does benefit the host communities, for

example by a high degree of regional identification with the space, history and cultural heritage, which improve the QoL for 2 years, but community life is perceived to decline as the development continues. The overall purpose of tourism development must contain the goal to enhance the QoL of residents' lives by addressing the economic, social, cultural and recreational impacts of tourism (Uysal et al. 2016). According to Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka (2016) sustainable, not conventional tourism will actually contribute to residents' happiness.

Much of the research done on this subject before contained effects of tourism impact using objective indicators of community QoL such as poverty, per capita income, crime rates and pollution. Those who directly benefit from tourism are more likely to support it and report higher levels of QoL compared to other not affiliated with tourism (Uysal et al., 2016). Residents recognize the economic impact on their community as positive, but are concerned with potentially negative social and environmental impact (Uysal et al. 2016). In example, on islands the benefits of the tourism industry are not distributed equally. As Jennings & Nickerson (2006, p.136) state in their book *Quality Tourism Experiences*: "When measures of economic wealth are used alone in evaluating the well-being of a community, many other factors that affect quality of life are discounted." ... "Increasing income from tourism may have little effect on community welfare when the benefits from the income are not spread throughout the community." In this research, the emphasis is on the more subjective indicators of QoL. Examples of subjective indicators of QoL are well-being, satisfaction, happiness & delight (Sörös & Pető, 2015). This QoL might vary over time and per dimension, and can change dramatically through new, intense life experiences (Liburd & Derkzen, 2009). The focus of researching tourism changed to more abstract forms of value such as perceived QoL, wellness, sense of well-being and sustainability. The long-term objective is to provide quality touristic experiences, avoid excessive exploitation of resources and promote preservation for future generations (Uysal et al., 2016). QoL and local wellbeing can be enhanced by administrative and creative resources, such as forms of performing, visual and contemporary art, film, literature and festivals. The experience economy promotes the creative use of cultural assets to create added value to the individual & society at large. As a result of increases in leisure time and discretionary spending, governments and tourism organizations have adopted events as strategic means to international marketing and the promotion of a particular image. Festivals and events can help built community pride (Liburd & Derkzen, 2008).

As islands are already heavily themed places, they typically brand themselves with as a goal to appeal to actual and potential visitors. By doing so, the appeal of the quality of island life is neglected, rendered indistinct or discounted (Baldacchino, 2010). This quality of life features a key component of the island allure. Another threat to islands is that despite cultural conservatism caused by their isolation, islands are vulnerable to change during tourism encounters, for example when the cultural heritage is produced for tourism consumption (Brown & Cave, 2010).

### 2.3 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In attachment 1 the conceptual model used for this thesis with an explanation can be found.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Case Study Research is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual (i.e., process, animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture, or nationality). This method fits this research because it takes in consideration the branding process, the attitudes of different organizations towards it and the experiences of it by different groups (residents & tourists). A Case Study Research also makes it possible to use multiple sources of evidence. The use of multiple methods makes it possible to “triangulate” within the same case, as is described by Woodside (2010). This is why this research is based on existing literature, policy-documents, interviews and surveys.

In situ interviews with tourist information (VVV), the municipality, a party from the local council and entrepreneurs from the campsite & a hotel are taken to get a deeper insight in the policy and its goals of the branding process. These respondents are recruited by means of purposive sampling, which entails that respondents are chosen by judgement of the researcher. According to Etikan et al. (2016), this sort of sampling is useful when the research is expected to take a long time before it provides conclusive results or where there is currently a lack of observational evidence. This method of sampling resulted in 5 interviews with the stakeholders mentioned before, but most of them had more roles in the tourism sector on Vlieland. The data created from the interviews was transcribed & coded, because coding helps to keep the data clear which allows the combining of data from different respondents (Cope in Clifford et al. 2010). Codes are set up beforehand, and are added throughout the process to make sure all occurrences of a phenomenon are captured, and will not be biased by the initial coding scheme (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the introduction of the interviews, the respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality are underscored.

In geography, questionnaire surveys are used to explore people’s perceptions, attitudes, experiences, behaviours and spatial interactions in diverse geographical contexts (Lafferty in Clifford et al., 2010). Surveys are conducted among residents and tourists to get an insight in the differences of their perceptions of and feelings about the islands and its brand (attachment 2 & 3). The populations are people living on Vlieland and people visiting Vlieland. The surveys had a qualitative character, to get an understanding of residents’ and tourists’ feelings regarding the place branding of Vlieland. Surveys were chosen above interviews to be able to reach more respondents and generate quantitative data. The data of both groups of respondents is mainly collected on the ferry from Vlieland to Harlingen. More respondents from the group of islanders were recruited by going from door to door on the island. These are both convenience samples. An advantage is that it is suited for a research done in short time. Disadvantage is that it might not be fully representative for the whole population.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 THE ISLAND

#### “TOURISM IS THE CORK WE FLOAT UPON”

During the 1960s, the island was not doing well economically so it was decided to develop the tourism sector. The island had a fusty image. Nowadays, people visit the island for its location, the beach, the nature, the water and the combination of crowds and calmness. The small-scale and modest character are what attracts people. As shown in table 1b, tranquillity & nature are important in choosing Vlieland as destination. The people do not necessarily visit the island for the Islanders, rather for the small village.

The tourism policy is being executed by the public-private partnership Touristic Platform Vlieland (TPV). In this platform, all key stakeholders are represented. From 2014 on the strategy was to maintain the current amount of visitors. From 2019 on the policy will focus on repeating visits. The municipality invests in the Platform to organize events, together with the tourist information centre (VVV), which is the stakeholder that sells the product Vlieland. These events are during the low season, because there is still capacity there. As shown in table 2b, residents are more in favour of attracting more visitors during the low season than in the high season. Overall, they are neutral about the amount of tourists visiting the islands (table 2b). Another target of the policy is that all should be in good harmony with the community. It is important that guests keep coming and feel at home, but they should not decide the policy. There are opportunities in improving the tourist sector, but it is necessary to be critical on these developments. The smallness of the place should not be endangered as a result of the economy being prioritized. There should be invested in quality above quantity, to guarantee the quality experience the island radiates. This involves better hospitality and communication within the local tourism sector.

Name in table	Question in survey
Masbez	I think Vlieland is visited massively
Rust	With choosing Vlieland as destination, 'calmness' was important for me
Natuur	With choosing Vlieland as destination, 'nature' was important for me
Uniek	I think Vlieland is unique in its sort
Identiteit	The residents of Vlieland and their identity add value to a happy stay
Productmerk	I am conscious of what the product/brand 'Vlieland' entails

Table 1a: Questions as appeared in survey

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Masbez	29	1	4	2,76	,912
Rust	29	2	5	4,10	,860
Natuur	29	2	5	4,10	,772
Uniek	27	2	5	4,26	,859
Identiteit	27	2	5	3,59	,844
Productmerk	28	2	5	3,57	,790
Valid N (listwise)	26				

Table 1b: Descriptive statistics of the survey taken among visitors

Name in table	Question in survey
Toerbel	I think it is important that tourists visit Vlieland
Hoogmeer	According to me, more tourists can come during the high season
Buitenhoog	According to me, more tourists can come outside the high season
Teveeltoer	I think that at this moment there are too many tourists visiting Vlieland
Toergeluk	With the coming of tourists to Vlieland, I am happier
toernodig	I think Vlieland cannot go without tourism

Table 2a: Questions as appeared in survey

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Toerbel	18	4	5	4,78	,428
Hoogmeer	18	1	5	2,67	1,029
Buitenhoog	18	3	5	3,94	,725
Teveeltoer	18	1	5	2,61	1,195
Toergeluk	17	2	5	3,35	,931
toernodig	18	3	5	4,61	,608
Valid N (listwise)	17				

Table 2b: Descriptive statistics of the survey taken among islanders

“TOURISM IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF INCOME, SO NO GUESTS MEANS NO EMPLOYABILITY, NO SCHOOLS,  
ET CETERA. SO EVERYONE SUPPORTS TOURISM”

Tourism is the main source of income for residents and as shown in table 2b, they totally agree with tourism being important for the island and think it makes them happier. The tourism thus does enhance the objective QoL. It is still important to find an equilibrium between liveability and tourism/economy on the island to be able to maintain or improve subjective QoL. The small character of the tourist destination might be endangered when the economy is prioritised. This equilibrium is enhanced by the large share of land outside the village that is in control of Staatsbosbeheer. This enhances a balance between nature, ecology and economy. The natural beauty is what attracts people and should be maintained, but there is an interplay with the economy that is wanted to evolve fully, which is necessary for the islanders. The limit of building permits is reached, so whenever there are plans for constructing a new building, another one has to be torn down.

A problem on Vlieland is the large share of ‘airbeds’ on campsites compared to fixed beds in hotels and cottages. From the 7000 beds in the recreational sector, half is an airbed on the campsite. Fixed beds are used longer during the year and thus generate more income, but more fixed beds might also cause more crowdedness in the high season. The municipality wants to switch to more fixed beds where possible to sustain the revenue of tourism, but that might change the diversity of visitors and the image of the island. On Vlieland there are not many other sectors that could create economic diversity and thus less dependency on tourism.

“ENTREPRENEURS SHOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE TO KEEP THE COMMUNITY ALIVE, NOT ONLY THEIR  
BUSINESS”

A change that is observed is the length of the season. 30 years ago, during the winter everything was closed. Nowadays people overall have more leisure days and as a result every weekend the island is crowded. As a result of the expansion of the season, community life is under pressure. This community resource is essential for the tourism sector and thus should remain intact. There used to be all sorts of associations that were very active in the low season that have to deal with less (active) members now. An economy that lasts the yearlong is positive, but the decline in community life, employees and their housing are a problem. Especially during the summer when 500 external workers are attracted, who are being placed in residential areas which impacts liveability there. The demand of the guests is also key in this. The guests on the one hand want the authenticity, but also the luxury of luggage drop-off, which causes more traffic movements. Another development is that people rent a bike not for one day anymore, but for the whole week. As a result the already crowded Dorpsstraat is filled with bikes.

“THE PLATFORM WANTS TO STIMULATE VISITS TO VLIELAND, BUT DOES THAT FIT TO THE SMALLNESS OF  
THE ISLAND, THE ATMOSPHERE IT RADIATES, THE EXTINCT NATURE? I DON’T SEE A PROBLEM BECAUSE  
THE NATURE IS AND WILL STAY EXTINCT, ALSO DURING THE HIGH SEASON. WHEN YOU WALK 150  
METERS ON THE BEACH THERE IS NO ONE IN SIGHT”

There are, however, a few bottlenecks, such as the crowded ferries and the Dorpsstraat, which is the main street in the only village of the island. The arrival and departure of the ferry are crucial crowded moments. These moments should not get more crowded. As infrastructure is one of the essential elements in the tourism sector and residential life, it is important to increase capacity or decrease usage (Uysal et al. 2016).

The maps shown in figure 1a & 1b it is apparent that the tourists appreciate the eastern part of the island most. That is also where the tourism sector is centralised, with the village Oost-Vlieland, the campsite and the cottage area. Islanders more frequently pointed out the ‘Kroonspolders’ to be the most beautiful place. The tourists apparently value the tourist amenities and the residents appreciate the extraordinary nature and more calm areas of the island. On the island are a few crowded hotspots, but you can look up the calmness if you wish., which is what the islanders according to the high density in beauty markers do.

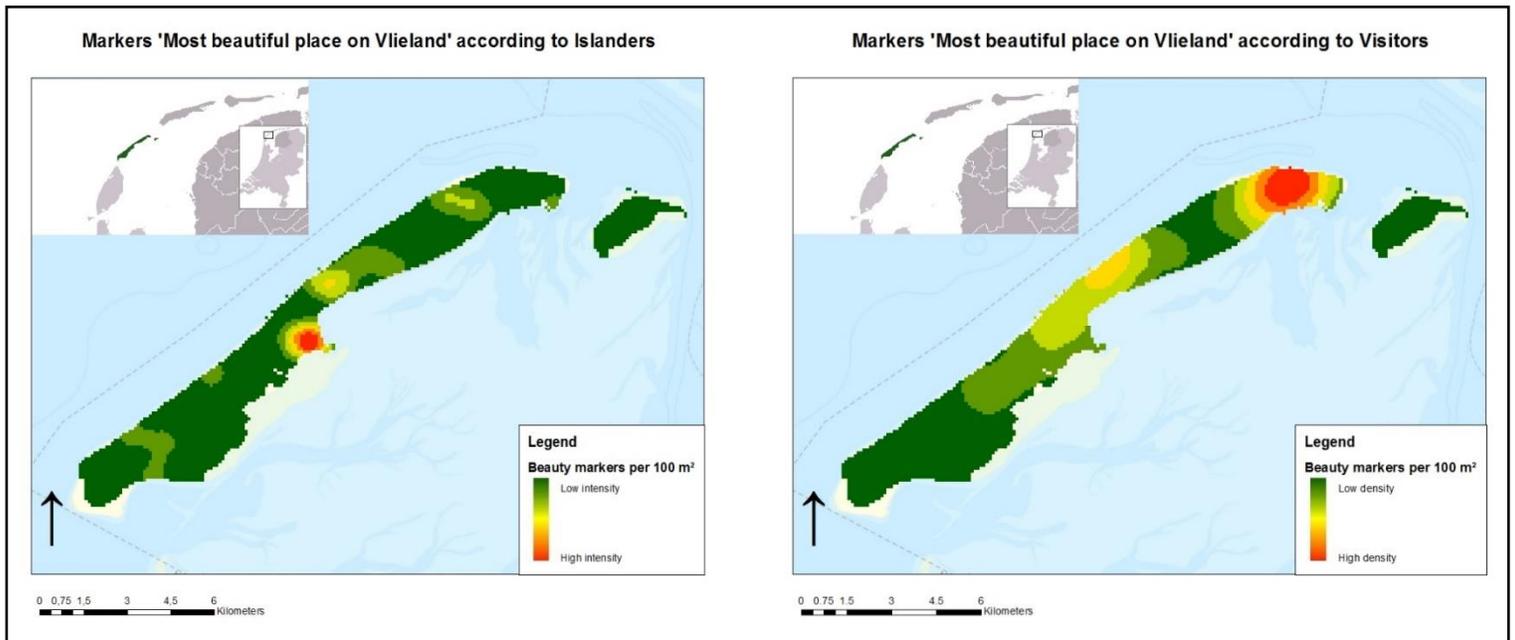


Figure 1a & 1b: Heat map of markers placed by respondents as answer on survey question 4: “What is the most beautiful place on Vlieland, according to you? Mark with an X” Islanders N = 19, visitors N = 26

Even though there is a difference in the most appreciated place on the island between the groups, they appreciate the same values, being nature & tranquillity (figure 2a & 2b). Islanders (N=18) mentioned tranquillity 13 times and nature 10 times, which are the highest ranked words. 6 people mentioned ‘space’ as a quality. Visitors (N=29) mentioned tranquillity the most times, being 18 times, nature 15 times and 7 people appreciated the beach. It can be argued that the islanders and residents experience the same identity of the place. This perceived identity by residents & consumers of the brand, together with the marketing of

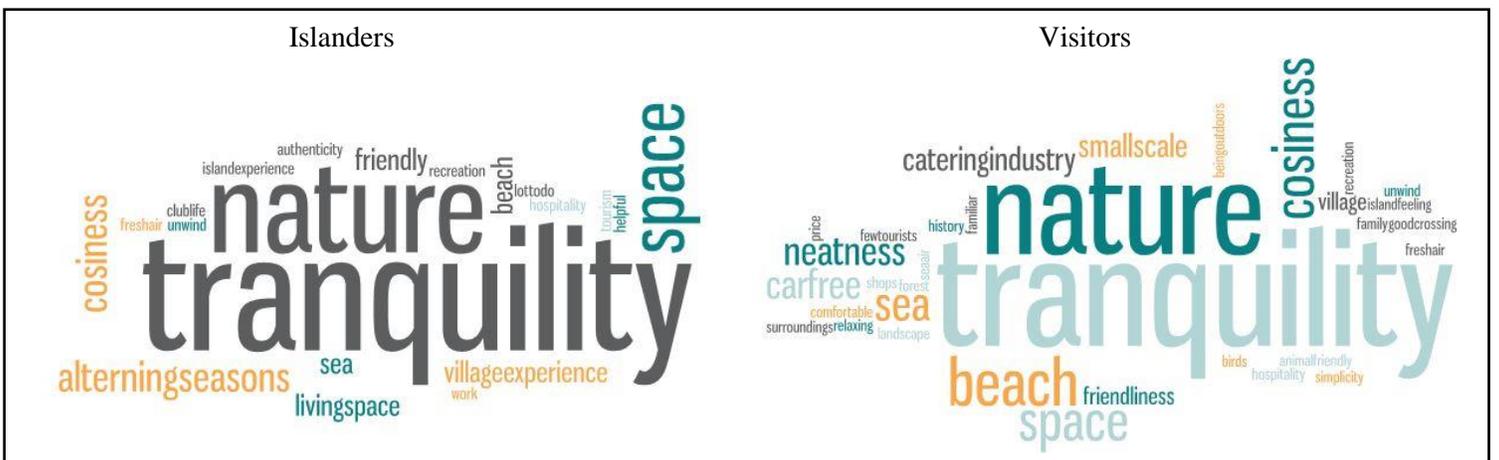


Figure 2a & 2b: Wordclouds generated by respondents’ answers to question 4 of the survey (qualities of Vlieland)

the marketing manager & the tourist information centre forms the boundaries of the brand of Vlieland (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2012).

## 4.2 THE BRAND

In the northern provinces of the country, the Waddenislands are known by name. There, it is the islands' own responsibility to market the place. Since 2015 a manager marketing & events is appointed for this job to sustain the tourism market. A sustained tourism market is preferred above a conventional tourism market and will contribute to residents' happiness (Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka, 2016). This should be the goal of tourism development. The current branding slogan is 'Vlieland, in your element', based upon the keywords 'pure' and 'rough'. It is based upon the proximity of the different elements on the island, and the visitors being 'in their element'. The idea and goals come from the TPV, the marketing manager develops the brand and the VVV carries it out. Even though the majority of the respondents among visitors indicated to know what the brand of Vlieland contained, only one knew the current slogan 'In your element' and another knew the former slogan 'island of tranquillity and space'. It can be argued that the visitors not necessarily are attracted to Vlieland because of the branding strategy of a new communications platform.

Sustainability in environmental terms is also coming up as part of the identity of Vlieland, as sustainability has great overlap with the islands' key value of nature. The island joined the 2020 strategy of the Waddenislands to be self-sufficient in energy and water. Because these goals might be too ambitious to reach, Vlieland strives to be CO<sub>2</sub> neutral. The festival and campsite are also busy with sustainability in developing the tourist sector, in order to sustain the tourist area for future generations, which suits the long-term objective for quality tourist experiences of Uysal et al. (2016).

Beneath the Dutch rivers and in Belgium & Germany, the Dutch Waddenislands profile themselves together, because the individual islands are less known over there. Cooperation is lucrative, especially since Vlieland is one of the smaller islands and can take advantage of the bigger budget & expertise of the other islands.

### "YOU HAVE TO LIVE TOGETHER AND THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT"

The goal of events on Vlieland is to lure visitors with entertainment. In 2007 the festival Into The Great Wide Open was set up to stimulate tourism. Once people visited the festival, they are likely to return. The festival serves as way to introduce people to the island. The event has great spin-off in national media, which is free promotion for the island. Consequences of the event are loud music, big crowds and lots of traffic movements. These things harm the appearance and natural values of the island and are not beneficial for the community. The organization takes into account that there are people living on the island and that they have a voice in what happens on the island. Limits for amount of visitors were set and are now reached, so there will not be further growth of the festival.

An event that is positively reacted upon is the 'Lighthousewalk', a running competition in which 1000 people participate. The islanders support this event more, as the runners do not cause nuisance and are just enjoying the beauty of the island. Islanders prefer these events where nature remains intact and people enjoy the island the way it is. Other events on the island are several food festivals during the low season, which are grounded in local products such as seaweed and cranberries.

The branding of Vlieland is thus mainly focused on the attraction of more tourists by increasing awareness and positive connotations with the island. It is important to keep the internal community in mind in further developing the place brand, as they experience nuisance of the different events and crowds during the whole year.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The experience of the brand 'Vlieland' does not differ greatly between residents and visitors. They both value the same things such as nature and tranquillity. The place-identity is thus experienced in the same way. A difference between these two groups is the usage of the area, as tourists actively approach the tourist amenities in the eastern part of the island, where residents have more interest in the tranquillity of the extraordinary nature in their living area.

On Vlieland, as the main branding strategy is organizing events, the effect on local quality of life is that in periods of events the island might be more busy than usually. There might be more traffic movements, more (different) people on the island and more noise pollution, which have an impact on the subjective QoL of residents. As Jackson (2008) states: "Residents are generally in favor of events that contribute socially and economically to the destination. They are, however, not ambivalent to some of the negative impacts, but are willing to cope with these negative impacts as long as the perceived benefits exceed the negative impacts". The branding strategy might be effective when the benefits for the community are increased and exceed these before mentioned negative impacts. Another strategy that might work is to develop events that fit into the character of the destination & that leave surroundings intact. This reduces the negative effect of the event and that might result in bigger support from the community. The effect of the branding through events for tourists is that they might be attracted to the place to participate in one of these events and might have a first encounter with the island and the community that can cause a series of repeated visits outside of these events. A result of an increased number of tourists might be exceedance of the carrying capacity of a destination, resulting in declining arrivals (Liburd et al. 2012). As the communications platform is almost not recognized by the visitors, it is not expected that that has a significant effect on tourist arrivals, and thus not in exceeding carrying capacity and effecting local QoL.

Further development of the tourism sector should be based on improvement of quality of the tourist experience, not the quantity. The 'island way of life' should be at the basis of the branding strategy (Baldacchino, 2010). This improvement consist of better hospitality services and better communications and adjustment between all local stakeholders, including residents. A recommendation based upon the article of Okulicz-Kozaryn & Strzelecka (2016) is to change the conventional tourism to sustainable tourism, in order to improve residents' QoL and to sustain a living area for future generations (Uysal et al., 2016). An example of making the tourist sector more sustainable is by adjusting the ratio of fixed bed and airbeds. These adjustments should be taken carefully, as a fixed beds are used during the whole year and thus will indirectly have an impact on community life, which reduces the subjective QoL of local residents.

Decrease in QoL of residents does not weigh up against the increase of QoL of tourists, as they are mostly repeaters in visiting the island. As Vlieland already did, in a developed tourist area, there should be set limits to the growth of the tourism sector to prioritize the local residents and their subjective Quality of Life. Connotation in this is that in areas of high economic dependency on tourism, the objective Quality of Life, such as income, should be more or less secured.

As Vlieland already has a high degree in repeated visits, future research might include the effect of place-branding on repeated visits. What forms the first encounter with the island? How big is the effect of place-branding on the first or repeated encounter with a tourist destination?

## 5.2 REFLECTION

During this research process there were some difficulties that had to be encountered. The research proposal was set up with a broad range of subjects. Result was an overload in information which had to be lowered again to make the research to the point.

By means of convenience sampling, respondents for the survey were recruited on the ferry back to the mainland on a weekday outside of the highseason. This might have biased the results, as they had not experienced big crowds on the island that day. If they would have, their answers might have been different. Also, the questions in the surveys might have been better focused on the situation on Vlieland than they have been now. Another flaw in the surveys was the question about qualities of Vlieland before the question of qualities of a destination in general. These answers now were mostly corresponding caused by the association respondents would have already made with Vlieland as destination. The usage of the word 'tourist' would also have been better than the usage of 'visitor', because now not all respondents were tourists and that clearly was the aim of the research.

Strength of the research is the mixed methods that are used, which makes it possible to reflect upon the situations from many stakeholders involved.

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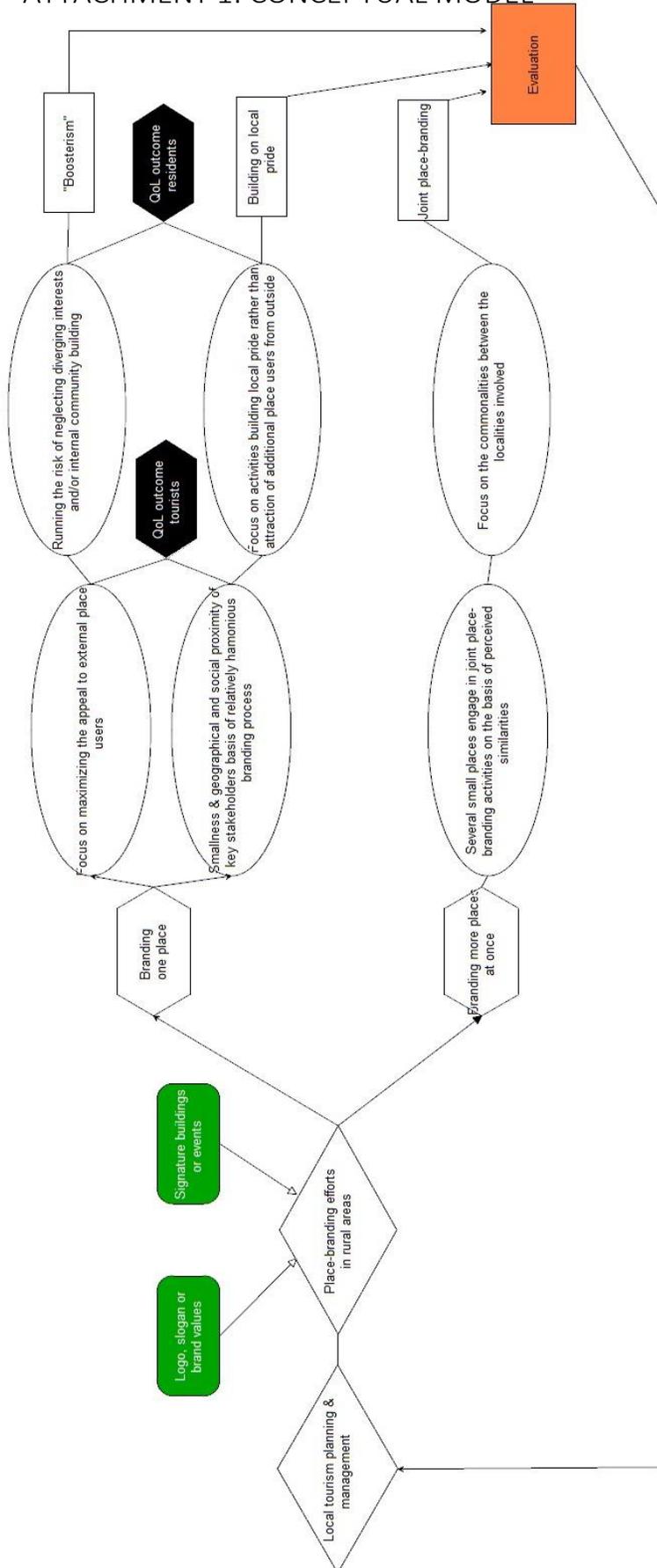
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# ATTACHMENTS

## ATTACHMENT 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL



The conceptual model in figure 3 depicts the place-branding process in a visual way.

The start of the place-branding process is the formation of local tourism policy. When (tourism) policymakers in a specific area start writing new policies or policy recommendations, they often base that on the evaluation of earlier policies and their outcomes. The place-branding efforts can be done in two ways, either for that one place, or with other places with perceived similarities. The arrows refer to an action that needs to be taken in the model. Here it refers to reflecting upon these different methods and choosing which one, two or all three to use. These ways of place-branding result in different outcomes for the QoL for both tourists and residents. Tourists will experience the place differently when the focus lies either on external users or on the community. In policy, the focus should lay upon quality tourist experiences, and not the quantity. Inhabitants' QoL are negatively impacted when the focus is on external users and will be positively impacted when the focus is on the community. These results ask for action again, in the form of evaluation to be able to start a new, better customized policy cycle in place-branding.

Figure 3: Conceptual model based upon the Theoretical Framework (chapter 2)

## ATTACHMENT 2: SURVEY INHABITANTS

### Enquête beleving place-branding Vlieland - Eilanders

Mijn naam is Nienke Buikema en ik schrijf mijn bachelorscriptie voor de studie Sociale Geografie en Planologie aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen over place-branding en de invloed daarvan op bewoners en bezoekers van Vlieland. Deze enquête heeft als doel het toetsen van de verschillen in perceptie van Vlieland en de eventuele verschillen in gevolgen van toeristisch beleid op inwoners en bezoekers van Vlieland. Deze enquête bestaat uit 10 vragen en zal ongeveer 5 minuten in beslag nemen. Mocht u tussentijds vragen hebben, voelt u zich dan vrij om deze te stellen.

De gegevens en resultaten van het onderzoek zullen anoniem en vertrouwelijk en alleen voor deze bachelorscriptie gebruikt worden. U bent ten allen tijde vrij om met het onderzoek te stoppen. Mocht u na afloop van de enquête nog vragen of opmerkingen hebben, dan kunt u contact opnemen via N.A.Buikema@student.rug.nl.

Hartelijk dank dat u de tijd wilt nemen om deze enquête in te vullen!

#### Vraag 1 (controlevraag)

Ik ben een ... (kruis aan wat op u van toepassing is)

- Eilander
- Bezoeker

#### Vraag 2

Wat is uw geslacht? (kruis aan wat op u van toepassing is)

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders

#### Vraag 3

Wat is uw geboortjaar?

.....

#### Vraag 4

Noem 3 kwaliteiten van Vlieland die voor u belangrijk zijn

.....

.....

.....

**Vraag 5**

Wat is volgens u de mooiste plek op Vlieland? - markeer met een X



Bron: Vlieland hogeland (n.d.)

**Vraag 6**

De plek die ik gemarkeerd heb bij vraag 5 is (geef een omschrijving of naam van de plek)

.....

**Vraag 7**

Welke 3 elementen vindt u belangrijk voor een leefbaar Vlieland?

.....

.....

.....

**Vraag 8**

Haalt u uw inkomen (direct of indirect) uit de toerisme-sector op Vlieland? (kruis aan wat op u van toepassing is)

- Ja
- Nee
- Weet niet / zeg ik liever niet

**Vraag 9**

Waarom woont u specifiek op Vlieland en niet op één van de andere Waddeneilanden?

.....

.....

.....

**Vraag 10**

Geef van de volgende stellingen aan in hoeverre u het met die stelling eens bent (kruis één mogelijkheid per vraag aan)

Helemaal mee oneens      Mee oneens      Neutraal      Mee eens      Helemaal mee eens

Ik vind het belangrijk dat er toeristen naar Vlieland komen

Van mij mogen er in het hoogseizoen meer toeristen naar Vlieland komen

Van mij mogen er buiten het hoogseizoen meer toeristen naar Vlieland komen

Ik vind dat er op dit moment teveel toeristen naar Vlieland komen

Door de komst van toeristen naar Vlieland ben ik gelukkiger

Ik vind dat Vlieland niet zonder toerisme kan

**EINDE VAN DE ENQUÊTE**

Hieronder is ruimte voor eventuele opmerkingen die u gelijk na het invullen van de enquête heeft

## ATTACHMENT 3: SURVEY VISITORS

### Enquête beleving place-branding Vlieland - Bezoekers

Mijn naam is Nienke Buikema en ik schrijf mijn bachelorscriptie voor de studie Sociale Geografie en Planologie aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen over place-branding en de invloed daarvan op bewoners en bezoekers van Vlieland. Deze enquête heeft als doel het toetsen van de verschillen in perceptie van Vlieland en de eventuele verschillen in gevolgen van toeristisch beleid op inwoners en bezoekers van Vlieland. Deze enquête bestaat uit 11 vragen en zal ongeveer 5 minuten in beslag nemen. Mocht u tussentijds vragen hebben, voelt u zich dan vrij om deze te stellen.

De gegevens en resultaten van het onderzoek zullen anoniem en vertrouwelijk en alleen voor deze bachelorscriptie gebruikt worden. U bent ten allen tijde vrij om met het onderzoek te stoppen. Mocht u na afloop van de enquête nog vragen of opmerkingen hebben, dan kunt u contact opnemen via N.A.Buikema@student.rug.nl.

Hartelijk dank dat u de tijd wilt nemen om deze enquête in te vullen!

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Ik ben een ... (kruis aan wat op u van toepassing is)

- Eilander
- Bezoeker

#### Vraag 2

Wat is uw geslacht? (kruis aan wat op u van toepassing is)

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders

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Wat is uw geboortejaar?

.....

#### Vraag 4

Noem 3 kwaliteiten van Vlieland die voor u belangrijk zijn

.....

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.....

**Vraag 5**

Wat is volgens u de mooiste plek op Vlieland? - markeer met een X



Bron: Vlieland hogeland (n.d.)

**Vraag 6**

De plek die ik gemarkeerd heb bij vraag 5 is (geef een omschrijving of naam van de plek)

.....

**Vraag 7**

Welke 3 elementen vindt u belangrijk bij het uitkiezen van een bestemming?

.....

.....

.....

**Vraag 8**

Houdt u tijdens een bezoek aan Vlieland rekening met de bewoners?

Ja

Nee

Op welke manier uit zich dit?

.....

**Vraag 9**

Waarom heeft u voor Vlieland gekozen en niet voor een ander Waddeneiland?

.....

.....

.....

**Vraag 10**

Geef van de volgende stellingen aan in hoeverre u het met die stelling eens bent (kruis één mogelijkheid per vraag aan)

Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik vind dat Vlieland te massaal bezocht wordt				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bij het kiezen van Vlieland als bestemming was 'rust' voor mij erg belangrijk				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bij het kiezen van Vlieland als bestemming was 'natuur' voor mij erg belangrijk				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat Vlieland uniek in zijn soort is				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De bewoners van Vlieland en hun gezamenlijke identiteit dragen bij aan een plezierig verblijf				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben me bewust van wat het product/merk 'Vlieland' inhoudt				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Vraag 11**

Wat is volgens u de slogan van Vlieland?

.....

**EINDE VAN DE ENQUÊTE**

Hieronder is ruimte voor eventuele opmerkingen die u gelijk na het invullen van de enquête heeft