

# Insel Ihrer Träume

The role of branding in tourist motives on Borkum



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## **Abstract**

In an ever-increasing competitive sector, tourist destinations fight for publicity. The dominant form herein is branding. Locations are branded by various actors, such as tourism offices, tour operators and municipalities, in various ways. In this thesis, the German island of Borkum is highlighted in a case study, the main research question is:

“To what extent does branding play a role in tourist motives to visit the Isle of Borkum?”

Borkum is part of the islands of the Lower-Saxony district of the Wadden Sea, a recognised world heritage site. The aforementioned district is the only district of the Wadden Sea that observes a continued increase in tourist stays. Dutch and German tourists make up a large share of the total visitor population, and the role of branding on the Dutch tourists has been researched previously. However, the German tourist population has not yet been studied. Therefore, a questionnaire has been distributed both in the Netherlands as well as Germany and on Borkum itself. Two key aspects make up the branding strategy for Borkum, the beach and nature. The island has a unique-selling point, the Strandkörbe, which can be found on the beach and as such is featured on most advertisements.

The data from the questionnaire show that in Borkum's case most tourists visit the island, because of a recommendation by family or acquaintances. The most dominant factors for a visit are the island's nature and beach. (German) culture, does not play a large role when it comes to dominant factors. This, however, can be in part accounted to by the fact that two thirds of the respondents were German. To conclude branding presents an important actor in tourist motives, little under 50% of the respondents replied that the beach was their dominant factor for visiting the island. Moreover, the unique-selling point of the island, the Strandkörbe was also familiar to (almost) all respondents.

## Content

Abstract	2
1. Introduction	4
2. Relevance	5
2.2 Social Relevance	6
2.3 Scientific Relevance	6
2.4 Research Question	6
2.5 Framework	7
2.6 Conceptual Model	11
2.7 Hypotheses	11
3. Methodology	12
3.1 Method	12
3.2 The questionnaire	12
3.3 Data collection	12
3.4 Data analysis	13
3.5 Ethical Considerations	14
4. Results	15
4.1 Response	15
4.2 Descriptive Statistics	15
4.3 Statistics	16
4.4 Frequencies	17
5. Conclusions	20
5.1 Research question	20
5.2 Sub questions	20
5.3 Recommendations	21
5.4 Reflection	22
6. References	23
Appendix $\alpha$	26
Appendix $\beta$	28
Appendix $\gamma$	32
Appendix $\delta$	33

## 1. Introduction

The Wadden Sea is an intertidal belt stretching from the northern Netherlands all the way up to the Danish western coast. The Wadden Sea has been labelled as a World Heritage Site due to its unique historic and aesthetic appeal of nature (Kabat et al., 2012). The World Heritage Sites are chosen in order to preserve a historic, aesthetic or scientific aspect of an area (Drost, 1996). The Wadden Sea is a large uninterrupted intertidal belt, containing mud flats. In addition, the Wadden Sea is an ecological rich zone (Kabat et al., 2012). This ecological rich zone accounts for the aesthetic appeal of the Wadden Sea. The historic appeals are the anthropogenic influences of which land reclamation and coastal protection are good examples. Another important historic aspect is the change from agriculture-based economies to tourism-driven economies on the Isles in the Wadden Sea (Kabat et al., 2012). Due to these appeals, it was nominated to be a World Heritage Site. As a result, the World Heritage Committee, the committee responsible for the list, placed the Wadden Sea area on the list (Drost, 1996).

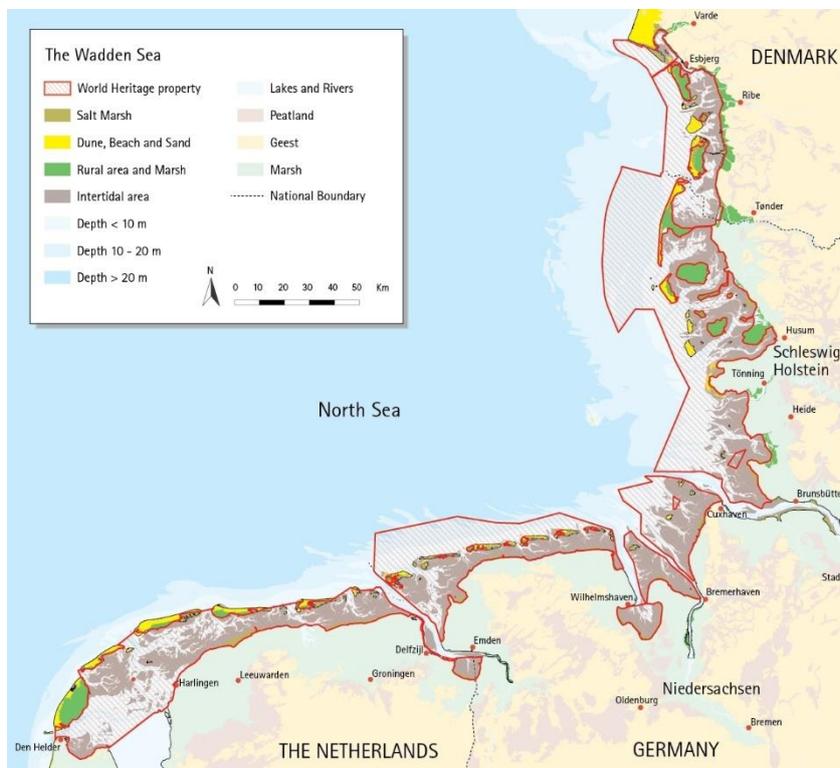


Figure 1: The Wadden Sea area (Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, 2013).

One island in the Wadden Sea is Borkum. Located north of the Dutch province of Groningen, it is a German island in the German state (*Bundesland*) of Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*). Borkum is part of the district of Leer, although the German city of Emden is closer to the island. Borkum has an area of around 31 square kilometres and 5118 inhabitants as of December 2017 (LSN, 2019). Originally, the island was part of Bant, a larger Germanic island, that was due to storms split in four smaller islands, two parts of Borkum, Norderney and Juist, during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nature, however, corrected itself and during the 1860's the two remaining parts of the Borkum were connected again, and the island we have come to know now was created (Borkum.de, 2019). In the 1800's Borkum welcomed her first tourists, arriving from Emden. Since that day Borkum has been developed into a popular tourist

destination. In 2017, around 300 000 tourists visited Borkum, making it the second most visited island, behind Norderney (IHK, 2018). Increasing tourism was made possible by the ferry connections to Emden in Germany and the Eemshaven in the Netherlands (Kars, 2009). From the ferry terminal on the island, one must take the local trains to the only town of the island, Borkum (Borkum.de, 2019).



Figure 2: the geographical location of Borkum (GraphicMaps, 2019).

## 2. Relevance

Now, it has been previously studied by Shackley (1998) and Ryan & Silvanto (2009) that the brand ‘World Heritage Site’ has a positive effect of tourism patterns, resulting in increased tourism for a site. The Wadden Sea is visited by around 10 million tourists each year (Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, 2013). Most of these tourists visit the Isles in the Netherlands (*Friesland and Groningen*) and Lower-Saxony (*D: Niedersachsen*). The Wattenmeer National Park in the German Bundesländer of Hamburg does not offer tourist activities on its islands (Hamburg Tourismus, 2019). Therefore, it is not considered regarding tourism in the report on tourism in the Wadden See (Bjarnason et al., 2017). The previously mentioned districts, the Netherlands and Lower-Saxony account for 7.4 million, out of around 10 million visitors (Bjarnason et al., 2017). Another distinctive difference can be found in the percentage of foreign visitors, 68% for the Danish district, 17% for the Dutch district, 3.8% for Schleswig-Holstein, and 3.1% for Lower-Saxony (Bjarnason J.-B, 2017). In short, this means that Danish Isles have the largest share of foreign tourists, followed at distance by the Dutch Isles (*Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Ameland, and Schiermonnikoog*). While, on the other hand, the share of foreign visitors is very small for the German Isles (*Lower-Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein*). It is also notable that there is a visible decrease in yearly visitors for Schleswig-Holstein (*from 1.9 million in 2009 to 1.7 million in 2017*) as well as the Dutch district (*from 4.8 million in 2009 to 4.4 million in 2017*). In Lower-Saxony, however, one can observe an increase of visitors (*from 1.9 million in 2009 to 3.0 million in 2017*) (Bjarnason et al., 2017). From these figures one can conclude that the previous claim by Shackley (1998) and Ryan & Silvanto (2009) on the positive effects of the brand ‘World Heritage Site’ can be refuted to some extent by statistical data.

## 2.2 Social Relevance

The figures above demonstrate that the islands in Lower-Saxony experience an increase in tourists. This is important as the tourism industry is the main economic driver for the islands in the Wadden Sea (Easterling, 2005). On Terschelling, a Dutch Wadden isle, employment in the tourism industry is ever growing (Sijtsma et al., 2012). Therefore, not only for the economy of the island, but also the people employed in the tourism sector it is important that the island has a healthy number of tourist visitations each year in order to sustain jobs. The time spent on the island plays an important role as the longer a tourist stays the more money they spend on the island (Sijtsma et al., 2012). Branding, promoting destinations so that tourists are encouraged to visit, plays a part in attracting tourists. As a result, the extent to which branding plays a role is important to uncover.

## 2.3 Scientific Relevance

Frechtling (1993) argued that branding is of the utmost importance for the tourism industry in order to attract new visitors. In addition, destinations brand themselves in order to gain a competitive advantage over other destinations (Nolan, 2014). Since the 90s a rise in word-of-mouth advertising was observed (McConnell, 2007). This has led to the question, to what extent does branding play a role in attracting new tourists, and what is the role of word-of-mouth advertisement. This research can contribute by exploring to what extent branding plays a role in tourist motives and to what extent word-of-mouth advertisement contributed to that.

## 2.4 Research question

This research aims to discover the reasoning behind tourists visiting the isle of Borkum from Groningen (*Eemshaven*) and Ost-Friesland (*Emden*), and looks at the way the municipality & tourism office of Borkum actively encourages tourists to visit, alias branding, the Isle as well as the effects of these measures. Therefore, the central question is posed as followed:

To what extent does branding play a role in tourist motives to visit the Isle of Borkum?

To answer this question, a set of sub-questions are required. The sub-questions are the following:

- I. In what way does the Island of Borkum brand itself to the public?
- II. In what way does word-of-mouth advertisement play a role in tourism on Borkum?
- III. What are the dominant motives of tourists that visit the isle?
- IV. What are the dominant lengths of stay for tourists on the island?

## 2.5 Theoretical framework

### *Sustainable tourism*

Since, the Wadden Sea has a collection of islands, these are the centre of tourism in the area (Sijtsma et al., 2012). According to Drost (1996), tourism can be a strength to maintain the natural heritage, although it also introduces certain limitations. To diminish or better said limit these limitations the concept of sustainable tourism was introduced. In short, sustainable tourism calls for an approach that lightens the negative effects while ensuring the benefits to the region stay (Drost, 1996). In addition to ensuring benefits and minimising negative effects, it also calls for the preservation of the sites for future generations (Drost, 1996). This strengthens the argument put forward by McNamara and Prideaux (2011), who argue that nature has a relationship to culture. This relation influences tourism, ergo visitor views and therefore on how tourists consume 'nature' (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). The degree of consummation of 'nature' can be put forward to be either sustainable or not. Sustainable consummation is a goal in order to ensure sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea.

In order to maintain sustainable tourism, both McNamara & Prideaux as well as Drost argue that regulation is key (2011; 1996). Regulation means that boundaries are set as to where and when tourists are allowed into an area. These regulations are enforced by both the municipality and tourist offices, collectively the tourism industry, by using tour guides, protection area managers, and information guides (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). The latter one can be found on advertisement websites, such as Borkum.de, which is the tourism website for the island, available in German and Dutch. On this website one can find the possibilities as to what tourists can and cannot do on the island, thus regulations and possibilities.

### *Culture-nature relationship*

Another point raised by McNamara and Prideaux is the relationship between culture and nature, called culture-nature relationship. They argue that culture is a man-made social construction, as humans can change the environment to their needs (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). This also changes the way tourist consume 'nature'. Green (1990) argued that the experience of 'nature' revolves around tourism and the search for aesthetically pleasing environments. The experience of a 'natural' product is ran by tourism products, for example, tour guides and information centres (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). They do not only facilitate but also regulate, therefore, assisting in the notion of sustainable tourism. This facilitation means that all 'natural' places are up to a certain degree manipulated or staged (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). It is, therefore, argued by McNamara and Prideaux (2011) that this culture-nature relationship lies at the centre of environmental problems.

However, according to McNamara and Prideaux (2011) 'nature' is becoming an ever more important aspect of tourism. This increase influences the culture-nature binary, which in turn influences our experiences and consumption of 'nature'. These experiences: beliefs, values, images, and stories together make up the tourist gaze. The tourist gaze covers the notion on how people view the culture and nature of the location they visited (Urry, 1992). These views make it possible for the tourism industry to gain control over the experiences that people perceive during their stay (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). This visualisation is then used in order to promote the destination. The promotion is heavily dependent on unique-selling points, experiences, narratives and, images, that influence and are influenced by the tourist gaze itself (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018).

### *Length of stay*

In an ever-competing industry, it is important that tourists enjoy a lengthy stay. The shorter the stay, the less people spend at their destination which can have major consequences for the economic sector of that location (Archer & Shea, 1975). Therefore, it is important for stakeholders to keep tourists for as long as possible. However, this introduces new problems as in order to increase tourism number, capacity and amenities must be increased as well (Aguiló et al., 2017). This impacts the balance that it is called sustainable tourism. It is argued, therefore, that stakeholders favour fewer tourists with higher expenditure compared to more tourists with lower expenditure numbers (Aguiló et al., 2017). They found that Germans have a lower expenditure compared to British or Spanish tourists, even though Germans stayed longer compared to other tourists. However, more interestingly they found that length of stay not always means a higher expenditure (Aguiló et al., 2017). This means that theory, held by stakeholders, that longer means more money is debunked to an extent.

Nonetheless, short-term stayers tend to stay centrally, and as such only visit major tourist attractions. In contrast long-term stayers tend to explore the periphery. It is argued that, therefore, long-term stayers have a more diverse economic impact (Barros & Machado, 2010). This suggests that long-term stayers are of more interest to peripheral economic areas of a destination. This means that both short-term stayers as well as long-term stayers are important in the tourism industry, short-term stayers tend to have an increased expenditure, while long-term stayers tend to benefit the peripheral regions on the destination (Aguiló et al., 2017; Barros & Machado, 2010). Therefore, it is important to know the length of people their stay to understand the economic benefits to the industry.

### *Branding*

Destinations brand themselves in order to gain a competitive advantage over similar destinations (Nolan, 2014). Kotler argued that in order to set up a brand you require three steps. Firstly, one has to mark potential competitive advantages. Secondly, the strongest advantages must be selected. Thirdly, these advantages have to be delivered to the target-audience (Kotler et al., 1996). Depending on the target-audience, different methods and media are used to relay the message. Most importantly, the message has to stick in the mind of the target-audience. For example, the McDonalds summon thoughts of products, accessibility and, especially for children, fun (Crockett & Wood, 1999). Another example are luxury airlines that show hospitality, fine dining, and most of all, affluent service (Crockett & Wood, 1999).

One way to brand yourself is through nature-based tourism branding. According to Goodwin (1996) ecotourism is part of the label nature-based tourism. Ecotourism is defined by Black (1996) as a tourist experience that focusses on the natural or cultural environment. This, in turn, has led to rising questions on the well-being of the area that is being visited (Figgis, 1993). This relates to the earlier mentioned notion of sustainable tourism and the culture-nature relationship.

Yet, a specific type of advertising, word-of-mouth, might be even more important to branding. Since 1990 the importance of word-of-mouth has grown exponentially (McConnell, 2007). Due to this exponential rise researchers have studied word-of-mouth (WOM) advertisement, and in particular organic word-of-mouth. This type of word-of-mouth happens spontaneous

between people and is not influenced by marketing (Groeger & Buttle, 2014). However, lately the marketing sector began to play a role in word-of-mouth advertising. They began to stimulate word-of-mouth in order to gain control over what is being shared by people. In doing so, a positive WOM will be shared that increases sales, considering this research tourist visitations, and brand-awareness (Groeger & Buttle, 2014). The strength of word-of-mouth lies in the chain. The chain entails a source that shares a positive WOM with a certain number of people. In turn, they share the WOM and so on. Resulting in a message that can spread to an audience in the millions (Groeger & Buttle, 2014). This raises the question on how strong WOM is as a factor in tourism branding. It is argued that nowadays traditional advertising is less successful (Sweeney et al., 2012). However, as earlier mentioned the importance of word-of-mouth is increasing. This could mean that nowadays more people are inspired to travel to Borkum through family and friends compared to traditional media platforms.

### *Branding of Borkum*

As previously mentioned, destinations brand themselves, and Borkum has not been falling behind on that notion. Given that most tourists are either Dutch or German, due to their proximity to the island, the tourism office on the island has focused on these two nationalities. Two websites exist, Borkum.nl and Borkum.de of which the latter is both accessible in German and Dutch. Borkum.nl was designed and is operated by the AG-Ems, operator of the ferries to the island. Both sites contain many pictures, which predominantly feature the beach on the island. On Borkum.nl (AG Ems, 2019) the following is written:

“Een kuil graven op het strand? Op Borkum huur je gewoon je eigen troon. De legendarische Strandkorb. De ultieme manier om te zonnebaden: een comfortabel ligbed voor twee, met ingebouwd voetenplankje, bijzettafeltje en parasol. Een kleurrijk staaltje Duits design.”



Figure 3: Strandkörbe and Strandzelte on the beach of Borkum (Borkum.de, 2019).

The quote advertises the beach (“*strand*”) and the Strandkorb (“Strandkörbe”), see question 7, Appendix  $\alpha$ , which can only be found on the island of Borkum. Although the first element, the beach, isn’t the unique-selling point of the island, the Strandkörbe is the unique-selling point. Above this quote one can view the traditional Strandkörbe on the beach, on the website. These experiences are played upon by the tourism industry on the island and are linked to branding, as can be seen in figure 3. In addition to the beach and unique-selling point

(“Strandkörbe”), on the Dutch version of the website one can see the new summer 2018 printing on the Dutch Arriva train. This train runs between Groningen, C.S. and Eemshaven, the harbour that the ferry departs from. An important paragraph on Borkum.nl (AG Ems, 2019), operated by AG Ems, is “Je hoeft niet met de laatste boot terug” (“*You don’t have to take the last boat*”), which explains that Borkum has various hotels where you can stay the night. It is possible due to the proximity of home to the target-audience, tourists from the Northern Netherlands, that less people spend the night on Borkum compared to other tourists from, for example, Germany.

In contrast to the rather simplistic Dutch Borkum.nl, the website Borkum.de encompasses more information, and as such more possibilities. The focus on the German and Dutch version, is again, the beach, however in addition to the beach, local events are shown as well as offers, depending on the time of year. Furthermore, the website is designed to have tourist stay the night, compared to the website Borkum.nl that focuses on one-day visitors. The German website, Borkum.de, also gives the user the possibility to discover Borkum with several pages dedicated to the island being part of the World Heritage programme by UNESCO. Borkum is part due to its location in the Wadden Sea and the resulting nature. Therefore, the nature is branded by the tourism industry.

The slogan for Borkum, however, is not focussed on the beach specifically, nor nature, but on the high maritime climate the island enjoys, as stated in the following slogan: Nordseeinsel mit Hochseeklima (“*Borkum: North Sea island with high maritime climate*”). Another term for maritime climate is an oceanic climate, which can be found through Western Europe. A maritime climate lacks a dry season and observes a temperature under 22 degrees Celsius in the warmest month, and above 0 degrees Celsius in the coldest month (Holden, 2017).

To summarise, Borkum is branded by the municipality & local tourism industry as the destination when it comes to visiting the beach, where you can enjoy relaxation and the enjoyable climate. It is worth noting that the World Heritage qualification is less strongly branded compared to the beach and climate.

## 2.6 Conceptual Model

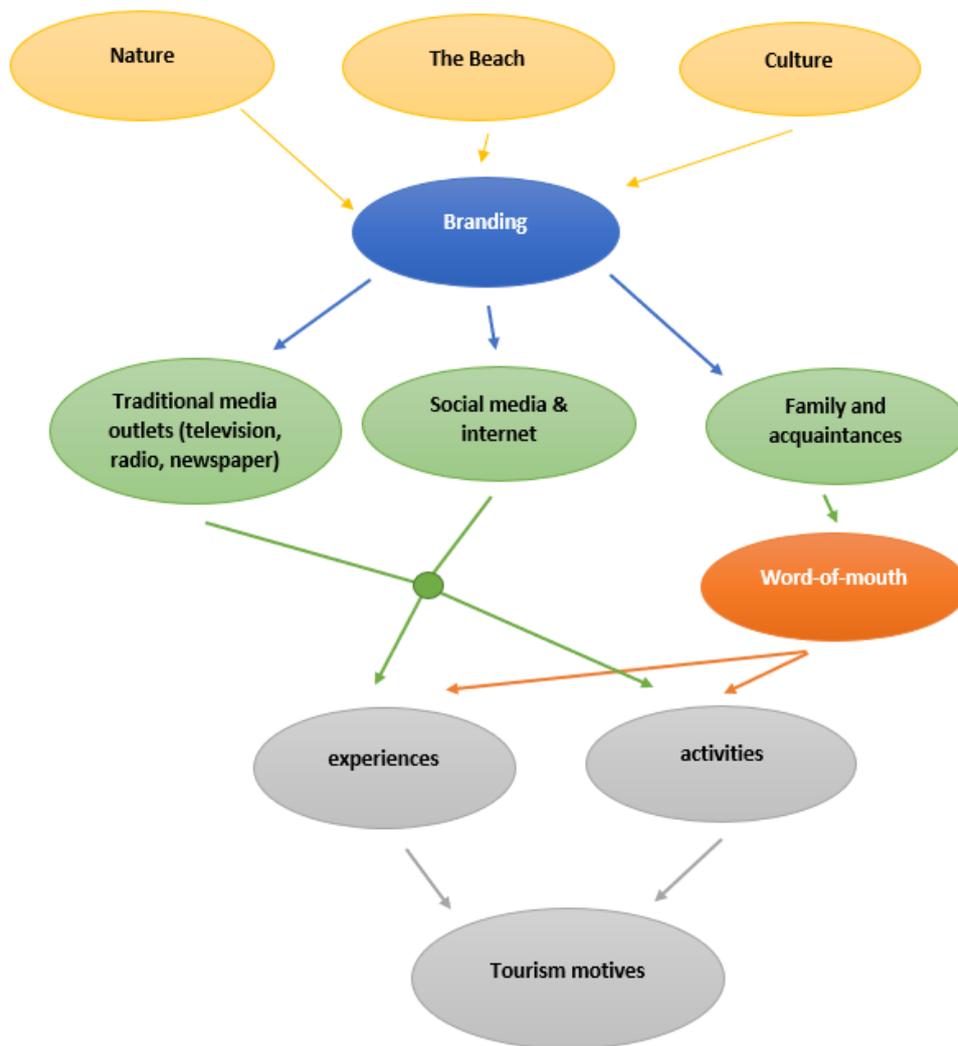


Figure 4: Conceptual Model (Author, 2019).

Nature, Culture and the beach are branded through traditional media outlet, new media outlets such as social media & internet but also through interpersonal contact between family and acquaintances. The latter uses word-of-mouth to relay the message. Together the activities and experiences of other tourists are designed to influence the tourist motives of others and to attract new tourists.

## 2.7 Hypotheses

The following research question is to be answered in this study: To what extent does branding play a role in the reasoning behind tourist motives on the Isle of Borkum? It is logical to assume, that based on the visual representation of the tourism office site, [www.borkum.de](http://www.borkum.de), the main tourist motive would be visiting the beach. Most visual images are focused on the sea and beaches of the island. A large share of the available tourist packages covers a notion that deal prominently with the beaches on the island. Therefore, one can deduce that the tourist office prominently brands the principal motive in order to attract more tourists to the island.

### **3. Methodology**

#### 3.1 Method

In order to study tourist motives, the length of their stay, and the effectiveness of branding in a large population, namely the tourism population of the Netherlands and Germany, a quantitative research method was logical to use. A questionnaire makes it possible to obtain a large data set, that is generalisable through statistical software. However, quantitative research methods also have certain disadvantages. Examples are that the opinions of the respondents are largely translated into numbers and that the room for additional information given by the respondent is (almost) non-existent compared to qualitative research methods. Although, this makes qualitative methods seem better, they are not better suited due to the nature of this study that requires a large data set. The choice for mixed methods, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, was rejected due to it being too time-consuming.

#### 3.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire itself is designed in Dutch, English and German. Since ferries leave from the Dutch and German mainland it is logical to assume that most of the tourists visiting Borkum are either Dutch- or German-speaking. Therefore, it is logical to design the questionnaire in Dutch and German. In addition, the questionnaire was translated into English for the non-Dutch/non-German-speaking tourists. Hereby, one can conclude that in theory (*almost*) every tourist would be able to fill out the questionnaire accordingly. In theory, this would result in a greater representation of the tourist population and strengthen the validity of the outcomes (Punch, 2013). In order to produce acceptable statements, based on data from the questionnaire, a minimum of fifty questionnaires is required (Burt, 2003). However, in order to go into more detail, the objective is a minimum of 150 questionnaires.

The questionnaire, see appendix  $\alpha$ , consists of various questions, ranging from demographic to tourism-specific questions. The demographic questions, question one through three, assists with representativity and general descriptivism of the sample in relation to the population. The tourism-specific questions, questions four and up, ensures the data required to answer the main research question. The data from the questionnaire was analysed using the statistical software, SPSS.

#### 3.3 Data collection

When studying a subject and doing research, one requires a sample of the research population. There are various sample techniques, however the choice was made to use a combination of the convenience strategy and simple random strategy. The convenience sample was used as it allowed for the distribution of the questionnaire on social media, and specifically the following Facebook communities: *Borkum Die Insel meiner Träume* (Borkum, the Isle of my dreams) and *Borkum – meine Insel* (Borkum – my isle). Together these communities enjoy the membership of around 17 000 people, which means that a larger audience could be reached. The English questionnaire was posted in the communities on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2019, through Google Forms.

Importantly, it is also worth noting that the previously mentioned communities are joined by people who are fond of Borkum. It is possible that due to this fondness different results are uncovered compared to the people that fill out the questionnaire on the island. For example, the number of visits and length of stay can be significantly higher. Although one could

consider this bias, it is certainly possible that in a simple random sample the same type of individuals are found.

May 11<sup>th</sup> was also the day that leaflets, see appendix  $\gamma$ , containing QR codes for the digital questionnaires, in English and Dutch, were distributed on the streets of Borkum. Possible participants were approached in the following streets: Bismarckstraße (*promenade to the beach and primary shopping street*), Am Georg-Schütte Platz (*train station*), Bürgermeister-Kieviets-Promenade (*promenade along the beach*), and Franz-Habich-Straße (*secondary shopping street*). Respondents were told the reason and aim of the research and how their data would be handled. Afterwards they decided whether to participate. If they were willingly to participate, they were handed the leaflet.

Together the methods resulted in around 120 obtained questionnaires within 72 hours. The overall quality of the data is rather high. Only two responses had to be omitted as the respondents had not visited Borkum or were planning a visit. This was a requirement in order to give a reliable and useful response. It has to be concluded that these responses were obtained through social media, as all the respondents on Borkum were visiting the island and can, therefore, not be responsible for the two omitted responses. As a result, out of a total of 152 responses, 150 were valid and used in the analysis. Respondents did state that on the leaflet used on Borkum, the lack of a German option, made them doubt whether they filled the questionnaire in correctly. However, due to space restrictions the choice was made to exclude the German translated version of the questionnaire from the leaflet and thereby the study. Analysing the data, no strange results have come up bar an outlier, (*see table 1, \*\*\*\**).

### 3.4 Data analysis

The questionnaire, see appendix  $\alpha$ , consisted of sixteen questions. The first three questions are of a demographic nature, assisting the general descriptivism of the sample in relation to the population. Questions four and up, the tourism-specific questions, ensures the data required to answer the research questions. Through the questionnaire nominal and ratio quantitative data was obtained. Quantitative data is testable through statistical analysis, with the aid of SPSS. SPSS is a statistical software programme that allows for the statistical tests required in this research, most predominantly the one-way Anova.

In order to use the obtained data in SPSS several changes had to be made to the data:

- Gender was changed into a binominal variable, made possible by the absence of other in the sample with male being 0 and female being 1.
- The place of residence of respondents has been changed into province/Bundesland, country or unknown, if no specific town, postal code or country was provided.
- The nominal outcomes of question 5: Television, Radio, Newspaper, Family and acquaintances, Social media, Internet, I don't know, Other was relabelled into 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
- Questions 4 and 6 through 10 were relabelled from no to 0 and yes to 1, resulting in binominal variables.
- Questions 12 and 13 were relabelled from no to 0, yes to 1 and maybe to 2.
- Question 16 was changed into six binominal variables, with Nature, Beach, (German Culture) and other changed into 1 in each distinct variable. In addition, two new categories were created, Health and Climate, with them being 1 if answered. If it was not the dominant factor it was relabelled 0.

- In addition to the province/Bundesland variable, the variable country of respondent was made, relabelling Dutch provinces into 0, and German Bundesländer in 1. The French respondent was omitted in this variable and changed into missing value, in order to make it operational.

After the data was operationalised, it was put in SPSS. In SPSS one-way Anova's were ran for the analysis and several frequency tables were created. The one-way Anova's reveal whether the outcomes are significant, based on a 95% confidence level. If the outcomes are significant it will mean that there is a relation between two variables that have been measured, and the null hypothesis can be rejected. However, it is also possible that the outcomes are not significant, meaning that there is no relation between the variables. If this is the case the null hypothesis, depending on the variables that are being run against each other is accepted (Burt, 2003).

Four one-way Anova's were ran. A one-way Anova will reveal whether there is a difference, based upon distinguished groups between variables. The first Anova had the variable 'age' as factor and 'familiar with Borkum' as the dependent variable. The second Anova had variable 'gender' as the factor, the dependent variable remained unchanged. Thirdly, two separate one-way Anova's were run with 'country of respondent' being the factor and 'Arriva' and '2018 Advertisement' being the dependent variables. The standard null hypothesis used for one-way Anova's is the following: in the population there is no difference, based upon the distinguished groups, between variable 'A' and variable 'B'. Each specific null hypothesis is stated in the paragraphs in 4.3.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

When doing a study involving participants several points with regards to ethical conduct arise. These are anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent (Punch, 2013). Regarding anonymity, the participants that filled out the questionnaire only share their age as well as place of residence. Based on this data only, it is very unlikely that other personal data can be obtained from the questionnaire. The participants do not share their first or last name, nor email, ensuring anonymity. The participant data, in turn, will not be shared with third parties and are stored on a special drive accessible only by the researcher resulting in a high level of confidentiality. Regarding informed consent, participants volunteer their data by filling out the questionnaire, which informs the participants of the aim of the research, as well as how their data is being handled. Beforehand, based on the information provided participants can make a well-considered choice whether to participate.

It is also important to reflect on the position of the researcher (Punch, 2013). Since the questionnaire is distributed through social networks, it is possible that individuals close to the researcher take part in the questionnaire. However, the position of the researcher is more important in qualitative research, as contact with the respondent is made (Punch, 2013). In the sampling strategy used in this research, a quantitative research, there is few to no contact between researcher and respondent. This ensures that respondents are not influenced by the researcher while filling out the questionnaire.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Response

In total, 152 tourists took part in the questionnaire, of which two had to be omitted due to earlier mentioned reasons (*see 3.3*). At least 78 respondents took part in the questionnaire through the Facebook communities, this accounts to 51.31% of the total sample (*these responses were counted before the leaflets were distributed on Borkum on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May*).

### 4.2 descriptive statistics

According to the statistics, more females took part in the research compared to males (*see descriptive statistics, table 1*). The average age of the sample is 42.05 years. More importantly, German respondents account for around 2/3's of the sample, with 1/3 of the sample being Dutch. Additionally, one individual of French origin is part of the sample. Furthermore, most respondents live within the boundaries of the province of Groningen or the Bundesland of Nordrhein-Westfalen (*as can be seen in figures 3 & 4*).

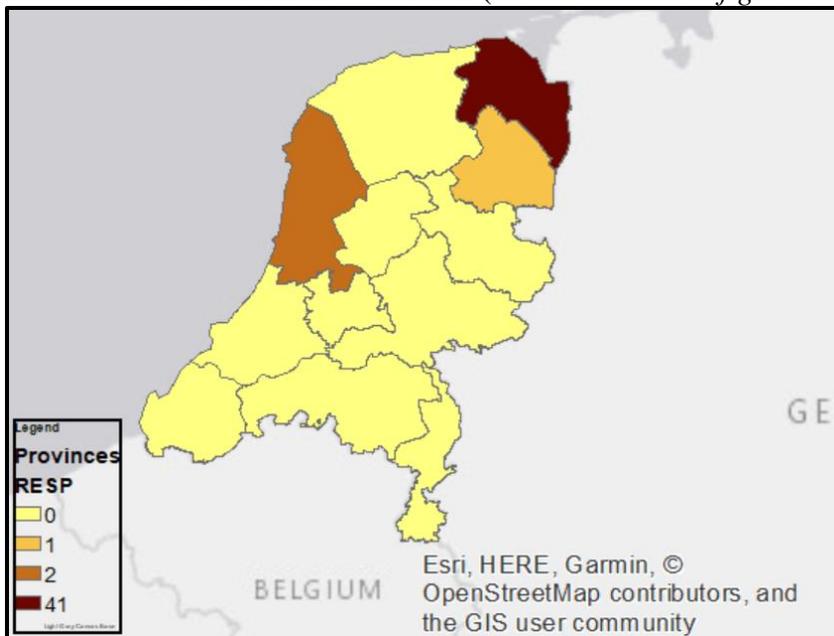


Figure 4: Dutch respondents per province (N=44) (Author, 2019).

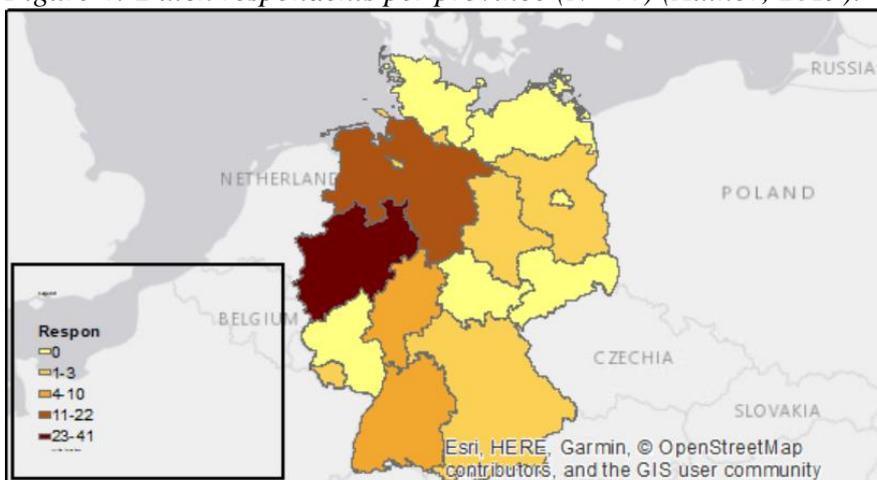


Figure 5: German respondents per Bundesland (N=91)\* (Author, 2019).

\*in addition, six respondents stated that they live in Germany, but provided no place of residence or postal code (postleitzahl), as such they are not included.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Gender (M=0, F=1)	0.77	-	-	-
Age	42.05	5*	79	-
Province/Bundesländer of respondent	-	-	-	1, 19**
Familiar through	-	-	-	6***
Tourism website (No=0, Yes=1)	0.44	-	-	-
Strandkörbe (No=0, Yes=1)	0.77	-	-	-
2018 advertisement (No=0, Yes=1)	0.23	-	-	-
Local trains (No=0, Yes=1)	0.94	-	-	-
Arriva train (No=0, Yes=1)	0.43	-	-	-
Familiar with Borkum (No=0, Yes=1)	0.51	-	-	-
Times visited	16.18*****	0	9125*****	-
Last visit	7.4	0	45	-
Nature (No=0, Yes=1)	0.34	-	-	-
(German) Culture (No=0, Yes=1)	0.03	-	-	-
Beach (No=0, Yes=1)	0.41	-	-	-
Health (No=0, Yes=1)	0.03	-	-	-
Climate (No=0, Yes=1)	0.09	-	-	-
Other (No=0, Yes=1)	0.19	-	-	-

Table 1: descriptive statics, N=150. Source: author (2019).

\*: one respondent has stated that he/she was five years of age. Although it is not impossible, it is rather unrealistic.

\*\*: Both the province of Groningen (1) and Nordrhein-Westfalen (19) are tied with 41 respondents.

\*\*\*: 6: Family and Acquaintances.

\*\*\*\*: The outlier of 9125 is unrealistic as this would suggest that the respondent would have visited Borkum each day for 25 years. The mean was calculated without this outlier.

### 4.3 Statistics

Firstly, a one-way ANOVA was run, with variable ‘age’ as the factor, and variable ‘familiar with Borkum’ as the dependent variable. The following null-hypothesis was formulated: “In the population, there is no difference, based upon the distinguished groups, between the variable ‘age’ and variable ‘familiar with Borkum’”. This test resulted in a p-value of 0.832. Therefore, one can argue that as  $p > 0.05$ , the test is insignificant and as such the null hypothesis must be accepted. In addition to the aforementioned test, a second one-way ANOVA was run, this time ‘gender’ being the factor. The dependent variable remained the same with the new hull hypothesis was formulated as follows: “In the population, there is no difference, based upon the distinguished groups, between the variable ‘gender’ and variable

‘familiar with Borkum’’. Although, this test resulted in a lower p-value, namely  $p = 0.547$ , the test was still insignificant. Thereby, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Secondly, in the questionnaire two questions were placed that were of Dutch origin, the first being an summer 2018 advertisement for the island printed in Dutch and distributed around the province of Groningen and, secondly, the printing on an Arriva train (public transporter in Groningen) that runs between Groningen, Central Station, and Eemshaven, Ferry Terminal to Borkum. Two separate one-way ANOVA’s were run, with ‘country of respondent’ (0= the Netherlands, 1= Germany) being the factor and ‘Arriva’ and ‘2018 Advertisement’ being the respective dependent variables. These tests did result in the omission of a pair of cases, of which one is a respondent from France, and the second a missing value. However, the one-way ANOVA could not be run with only one French respondent. For the first one-way ANOVA the subsequent null hypothesis was defined: “In the population, there is no difference, based upon the distinguished groups, between the variable ‘country of respondent’ and variable ‘Arriva’”. The second one-way ANOVA had the following null hypothesis: “In the population, there is no difference, based upon the distinguished groups, between the variable ‘country of respondent’ and variable ‘2018 Advertisement’”. The prior mentioned test resulted in a p-value of 0.109, the latter had a p-value of 0.632. Both tests were insignificant and as such the null hypothesis for both were accepted.

In summary, it can be concluded that the familiarity with Borkum is equal no matter the age group or gender an individual has within the population. The tests also showed that there is no difference between knowing the printing on the Arriva train or the 2018 Advertisement based on the different groups, which were the Netherlands and Germany in the latter two ANOVA’s. As the printing and 2018 advertisement were designed for the Dutch market, it would be logical that Dutch tourists were more familiar with them compared to German tourists (Kotler et al., 1999). However, statistics show that there is no difference between the two groups. The absence of a difference can be explained by two factors, firstly, German tourists take the train from Groningen to the Eemshaven and vice versa. Secondly, the train has been observed to run on different tracks around the province and to Weener/Leer in Germany. Therefore, one can argue that due to these factors German tourists are familiar with the printing on the train as the message that they see stays in mind, an important aspect of advertising (Crockett & Wood, 1999).

#### 4.4 Frequencies

As Borkum is being branded as a beach destination, the logical result in *dominant factors to visit the island* would be a strong pull to the beach as the dominant factor. In addition, the slogan Borkum: Nordseeinsel mit Hochseeklima (“*Borkum: North Sea island with high maritime climate*”) could result in climate having a large share in the overall dominant factors. However, as can be observed in table 2, climate has only been chosen as the dominant factor by 14 respondents. In addition, three of the respondents have ticked multiple boxes. The most dominant factors according to the sample are nature (48) and the beach (62). In addition, it is worth noting that the Strandkörbe, part of the beach, was recognised by 77% of the respondents (see 4.2 *descriptive statistics*). Stone & Nyaupane (2018) argue that unique-selling points are a cornerstone of branding, which is supported by the outcomes.

28 respondents have chosen the option other and defined their dominant factor. The following answers were given multiple times, albeit it in different wording: “it is easy for us to visit.”, “Heimatgefühl” (Sense of home), and lastly “the good/healthy air”.

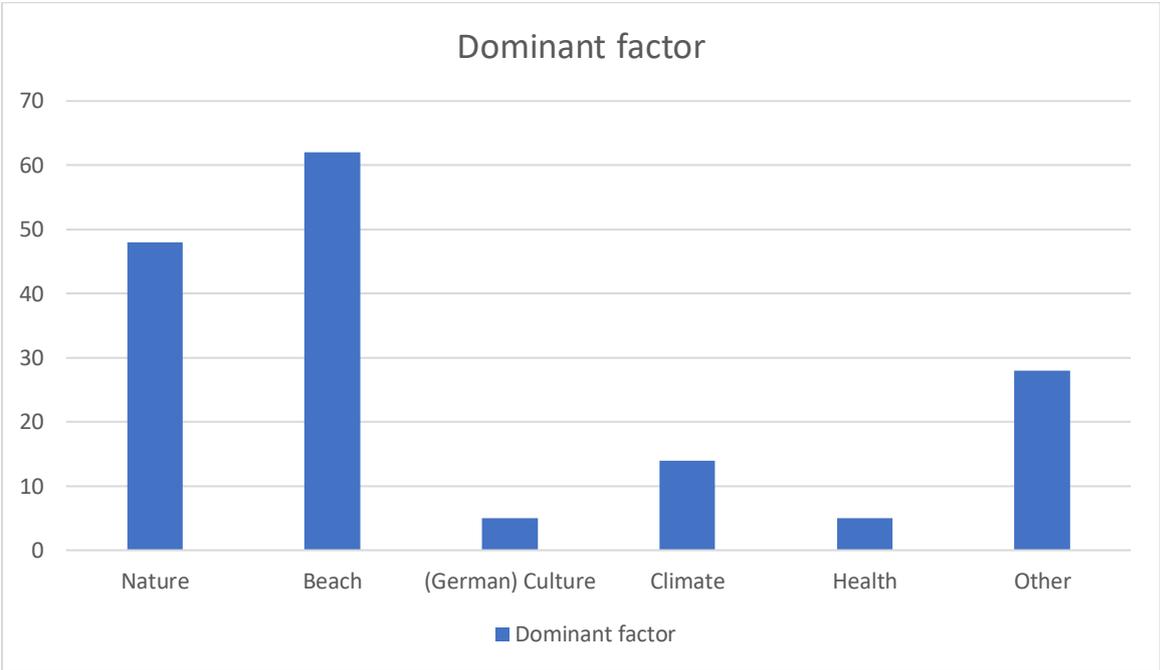


Table 2: The dominant factor for the visit (Author, 2019).

To find out how people learn of Borkum, respondents were presented with eight options, as can be seen in table 3. Most predominantly people get to know Borkum through referral by family and acquaintances (*including friends*). According to the sample, out of 148 valid answers, 113, respondents learned of Borkum through either family or acquaintances. This accounts to 76.35% of the sample. Internet and social media combined accounts to 7.43%, while television, 3.38%, and the newspaper, 2.7%, play an insignificant role. It is worth noting that radio has not been picked as option by a single respondent. This is not illogical as no advertisements could be found on Dutch or German regional broadcasters such as RtvNoord and NDR. These outcomes are also supported by McConnell (2007) and Groeger & Buttle (2014) who argue that word-of-mouth, which are shared by family and acquaintances, is becoming ever more important. Traditional media at the same time has been observed decreasing in importance (Sweeney et al., 2012).

The option other was chosen several times, and three different reasons can be distinguished within this option. These three reasons are rehabilitation, school, and ‘have lived on the island’. However, one can argue that these are not types of advertising, as they are not designed to attract new tourists to the island.

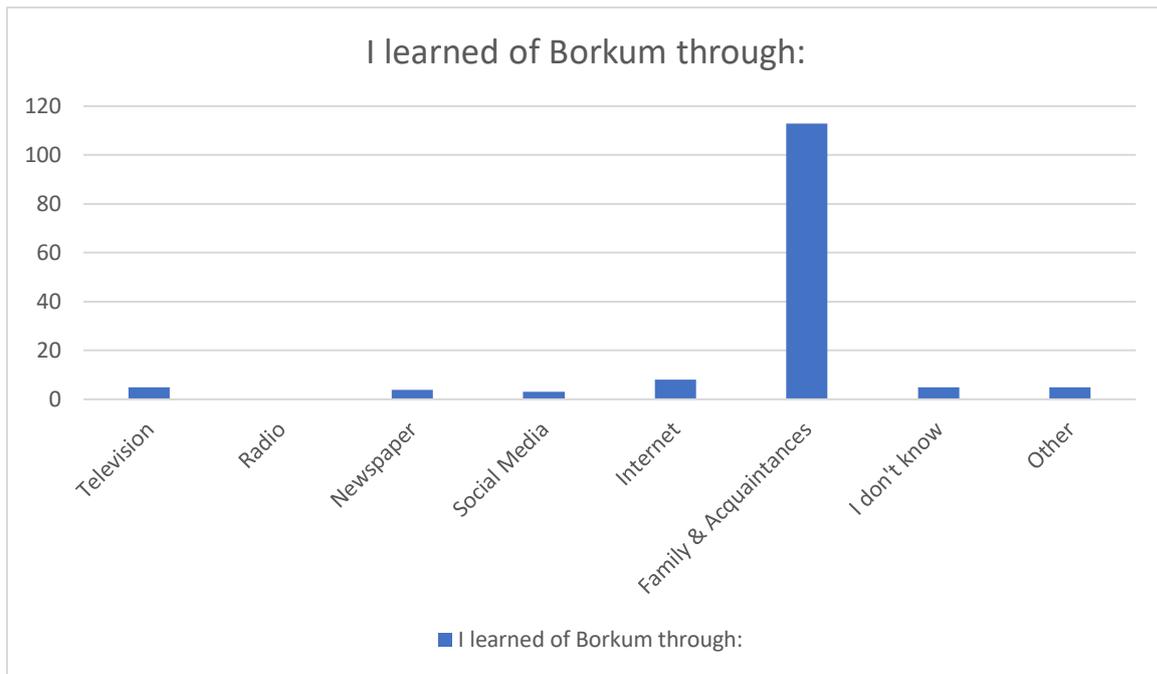


Table 3: The manners of how respondents have learned of Borkum (Author, 2019).

Respondents were also asked how long they stayed on the island during their last visit. Respondents answered in days ranging from 0 to 45. In table 4, one can see the most common answers. Most people only stay for the day, however 7, 14 and 21 days are among the top four lengths. It is worth noting that the share of Dutch tourists in one-day visitors is far larger compared to the German share. German tourists, in general, tend to stay for at least two or more days, with 47% of the German tourists staying either one, two or three weeks. It is also worth mentioning that individuals that came to the island for rehabilitation are partly the reason for such lengthy stays. These outcomes suggest that Borkum has a healthy balance between short-term stayers, who spend more in tourist hotspots, and long-term stayers, who support the peripheral area through expenditure (Barros & Machado, 2010; Aguiló et al., 2017).

Days spent on the island	Frequency
1	42
7	25
14	17
21	9

Table 4: Days spent on the island (Author, 2019).

## 5. Conclusions

In this chapter, the conclusions of the research will be dissertated. Paragraph 5.1 answers the main research question, while paragraph 5.2 focuses on the sub questions. In 5.3 and 5.4, recommendations are made, and the research is reflected upon.

### 5.1 Research question

The main research question was:

*“To what extent does branding play a role in tourist motives to visit the Isle of Borkum?”*

Branding plays a strong role in tourist motives. Borkum brands itself as a tourist destination for beach goers with visually appealing natural scenes. 45% of the respondents shared that their dominant factor was the beach. This confirms the hypothesis that the dominant motive would be to visit the beach. Furthermore, the Strandkörbe which are heavily featured on images of Borkum are also recognised by the public. It is worth noting that these Strandkörbe can only be found on the island and are, therefore, used as a unique-selling point. Nature, also attracts many people to the island, making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> most chosen dominant factor by the public. The third factor, climate, as featured in the slogan of the island, has been picked 14 times. Together the beach, nature, and climate, all strongly branded, account for 82.67% of the population their dominant factors.

Secondly word-of-mouth advertising is also important when it comes to branding. A significant majority of the public was referred to Borkum by family and acquaintances, meaning that the most successful method of attracting new customers it through word-of-mouth, which can be influenced by marketing (Sweeney et al., 2012).

### 5.2 Sub questions

*Sub question 1: In what way does the Island of Borkum brand itself to the public?*

Borkum brands itself as a Wadden island that enjoys a beach and nature. Therefore, one could argue that the public should see it as a beach destination. Most advertisements are either focused on the beaches the island has or feature other elements that can be found on the beach, such as the Strandzelte/Strandkörbe (*see figure 3*). Secondly the slogan for Borkum is heavily features on the tourist website (Borkum.de), ferry website (Borkum.nl) and the ferry’s themselves. The slogan: Nordseeinsel mit Hochseeklima (*“Borkum: North Sea island with high maritime climate”*) features the climate. The latter was only chosen as a dominant factor to visit the island by several respondents. Therefore, one can argue that Borkum is branded as a beach destination with a high maritime climate.

*Sub question 2: In what way does word-of-mouth advertisement play a role in tourism on Borkum?*

The results of the questionnaire indicate that family and acquaintances, 76.35%, are the dominant reason for knowing Borkum. This supports the argument by McConnell (2007) that word-of-mouth advertising is growing in importance and effect. The more mainstream media, internet (including the more recent social media), television and newspaper together account for 13.61%. This is significantly lower compared to word-of-mouth advertising and is supported by the notion that more traditional advertising through media outlets is becoming less successful (Sweeney et al., 2012). One of the oldest media outlets, radio, hasn’t been chosen once. However, this is not illogical as no advertisements could be found on Dutch or German regional broadcasters such as RtvNoord and NDR.

*Sub question 3: What are the dominant motives of tourists that visit the isle?*

Results indicate that nature is a highly dominant factor, however, the beach as dominant factor is even more principal. Nature was chosen as dominant factor 48 times, while the beach as dominant factor was chosen 62 times. This was expected as the beach is heavily branded on by the tourism industry on the island as previously mentioned in 2.5. However, contrary to the believe that the slogan “Nordseeinsel mit Hochseeklima” (“*Borkum: North Sea island with high maritime climate*”) would yield a high number of respondents ticking the box climate as their dominant factor, it was only picked by 14 respondents. This means that the slogan is less effective to lure tourists compared to the images/stories of the beach and nature on the island. Therefore, one can conclude that the dominant motives to visit the island are the beach and nature and to a lesser extent climate.

*Sub question 4: What are the dominant lengths of stay for tourists on the island?*

According to the obtained data, most tourist that visit Borkum only stay for one day, the so-called one-day visitors. Other dominant lengths are one, two and three weeks. Notably, only a very small number of tourists stay the weekend on the island. It is also worth noting that Dutch tourists make up most of the one-day visitors. German tourists, in general, enjoy a longer stay on the island. One can argue, keeping the theory of short-term stayers equals more expenditure in central areas, and long-term stayers equals expenditure in peripheral areas (Aguiló et al., 2017; Barros & Machado, 2010), that Borkum enjoys a healthy mix in its tourism base.

### 5.3 recommendations

Regarding future research, this research showed that most Dutch tourists only stay the day on Borkum. It is recommended for the tourism industry on Borkum to investigate and research whether there is demand for overnight stays by the Dutch tourists. Secondly, the research should focus on how these tourists can be persuaded to stay the night.

Regarding the branding of the island, a substantial share of publicity can be obtained by changing the method of advertising. A long-term project such as the printing on the Arriva train has proved to be very successful with many of the respondents recognising it. However, the summer 2018 advertisement was barely successful, and one might argue that it was unsuccessful. In this department, summer advertisements Borkum can improve its ratings. One possibility is to use regional television broadcasters, but also to distribute the posters at busy pedestrian locations around the Northern states of Germany (including Nordrhein-Westfalen) and the Netherlands. Additionally, tourists from southern Germany and the Netherlands should be approached through new publicity channels in order to get more tourists from these regions to come to Borkum.

As word-of-mouth is a strong actor in getting to know Borkum, it is important that the tourism industry on the island spreads a positive word-of-mouth message. This is possible by ensuring a good tourism experience and through marketing channels, as argued by Groeger & Buttle (2014). According to them, the message can be stimulated and influenced by marketing. In doing so, the island can attract more tourists while almost no marketing costs are involved as tourists are non-paid actors that spread the positive message through interpersonal contact (Groeger & Buttle, 2014).

#### 5.4 reflection

Although enough questionnaires were obtained, feelings arise that the data could have been more diverse. As I went to Borkum only once with the final questionnaire, the population of that day had to be representative for the tourist population throughout the year. It is important to mention that one group on the island was left out. The elderly, who were willing to help but were unable to do so due to the questionnaire being digital. In hindsight, paper versions of the questionnaire, in Dutch and German, should have been printed and handed out to people who were unable to fill out the questionnaire online. Nonetheless, the elderly was represented through respondents that are part of the Facebook communities. However, additional elderly respondents would strengthen the representativity of the case study, and therefore, more reliable outcomes.

Secondly, finding the right theory in order to answer the main research questions and sub questions required extensive tweaking. This resulted in two changes to the sub questions. The first change made was to go from “*what kind of people are visiting the island?*” to “*In what way does word-of-mouth advertisement play a role in tourism on Borkum?*”. This change was made as literature showed that it was far more interesting to uncover the role of word-of-mouth advertisement compared to what kind of people visit the island, as the is answerable by stating outright *tourists*. However, that answer is partly incorrect as respondents stated that their first/only visit was for rehabilitation purposes. Nonetheless, asking respondents why they visited the island proved to be too personal in some cases. The third sub question was the addition of the word “*dominant*”, resulting in the following “*What are the dominant motives of tourists that visit the isle?*”. In addition, a fourth sub question was formulated: “*What are the dominant lengths of stay for tourists on the island?*”. Literature showed that the length of tourism stays can be problematic for the tourism industry. This was interesting as I believed that more time spend equals more expenditure. However, according to the literature I’m proven wrong.

A fresh pair of eyes at the theoretical framework provided a better sense of what literature was required and what concepts were important. This meant that the World Heritage brand is far less explored than in earlier drafts of this thesis. The World Heritage brand was changed into nature as it is more visible, and therefore easier for individuals to understand the concept. The extent of influence by the World Heritage brand is not included in this thesis but could be an important actor in the role branding plays. To research this actor in the master thesis would be interesting.

The thesis has grown exponentially since the draft version, however it is the belief that in order to shorten the text, important paragraphs in the methodology would have to be cut with information loss as a result. The supervisor has kindly suggested various changes, of which most were followed. However, it is the belief from the author that the paragraph *branding of Borkum* had to stay in the theoretical framework, even though it is not based on scientific literature. However, the paragraphs *branding* followed by *branding of Borkum* ensure a better flow in the thesis.

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## Appendix α

Questionnaire – Tourist motives on the isle of Borkum.

*This questionnaire has been set up in order to find out the role branding (advertising) plays in the tourist motives to visit the Isle of Borkum. This questionnaire will be completely anonymised, and the obtained data will not be shared with third parties.*

1. Please specify your gender.

Male       Female       Other

2. Please indicate your age:

.....

3. Please state your town of residence:

.....

4. Before visiting Borkum, have you ever heard of the island?

Yes       No

5. In what way did you learn of the existence of the island?

Television       Social media

Radio       Internet

Newspaper       I don't know

Friends and Family       Other: .....

6. While planning your trip to the Island, have you visited the tourism offices website(s)?

Yes       No

7. Below you can see the German Strandzelt/Strandkörbe on Borkum. Were you aware of the existence of these objects before your visit?

Yes       No



8. Below you can see the 2018 summer advertisements that were distributed around the province of Groningen. Are you familiar with this advertisement or advertisements of similar text and style?

Yes       No



9. In the images below both trains that operate on the Island of Borkum have been photographed. Were you aware of the existence of these trains before your visit?

Yes       No



10. Are you familiar with the following advertisement printed on an Arriva train in the province of Groningen?

Yes       No



11. How many times have you visited Borkum?

.....

12. Will you visit Borkum again?

Yes       No       Maybe

13. Have you chosen Borkum over Dutch Wadden Sea islands or other German Islands?

Yes       No       Maybe

14. If so, what is the reason for this choice?

.....  
 .....

15. How long will you be staying on the island?/How long have you stayed on the island? (*please specify in days*)

.....

16. What was the dominant factor for you to visit Borkum?

Nature                                       Beach  
 German Culture                               Other, namely: .....

## Appendix β

Geachte lezer,

allereerst dank u voor het invullen van mijn enquête voor mijn bachelor scriptie. Daarin heb ik het volgende onderwerp gekozen: de rol van adverteerders op de beweegmotieven van toeristen op het Duitse Waddeneiland Borkum. Om een duidelijk beeld te krijgen, heb ik daarvoor informatie nodig, welke ik middels deze enquête kan verkrijgen.

De informatie die u verstrekt bij het invullen is anoniem en zal niet gedeeld worden met andere partijen, buiten mijzelf. Daarnaast vraag ik u om alle vragen naar waarheid te beantwoorden, opdat mijn data hierdoor niet tot minder vertekend blijft.

Dennis Puister

1. Wat is uw geslacht?

Man       Vrouw       Anders

2. Wat is uw leeftijd?

.....

3. Wat is uw woonplaats?

.....

4. Vooraf aan uw eerste reis naar Borkum, was u bekend met het eiland?

Ja       Nee

5. Op welke manier heeft u kennis vernomen van het eiland Borkum?

Televisie       Sociale media  
 Radio       Internet  
 Krant       Ik weet het niet  
 Familie en kennissen       Anders: .....

6. Tijdens het plannen van uw reis(zen), heeft u de websites van het VVV-bureau van Borkum bezocht?

Ja       Nee

7. In het beeld hieronder, ziet u de zogenoemde 'Strandkörbe' op het strand van Borkum. Was u bekend met deze Strandkörbe op Borkum?

Ja       Nee



8. Hieronder is een poster uit de 2018 Zomer advertentie opgenomen voor het eiland Borkum, welke rondom de provincie Groningen te zien was. Bent u bekend met deze poster of posters van een soort gelijke stijl of tekst over Borkum?

Ja       Nee



9. In de afbeeldingen hieronder staan de lokale treinen van Borkum afgebeeld. Bent u bekend met een of beide treinen?

Ja  Nee



10. Bent u bekend met de opdruk van deze Arriva trein (hieronder afgebeeld)?

Ja  Nee



## Appendix γ

Nederlands/ Dutch version



English version



Dear tourist,

Thank you for filling out my questionnaire on the role of branding on tourist motives on the Isle of Borkum.

This questionnaire is created by me, Dennis Puister, in order to research my subject for my bachelor thesis, for my study Human Geography and Urban & Regional planning at the university of Groningen.

The questionnaire is digital and can be found by

# Insel Ihrer Träume: the role of branding on tourist motives on Borkum.



A research on the role of branding on tourist motives on the German Wadden Sea Island of Borkum.

## Introduction

Tourism is the financial driver of island economies. To stay economically healthy tourists must be attracted to an island.

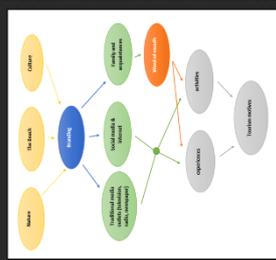
Branding is used as a method to tempt tourists to visit. However, the exact role of branding in tourists motives and whether it works is largely unknown, until now.



While other Wadden Sea regions experience decrease in tourism numbers, Lower-Saxony enjoys growth.

## Theory

- Word-of-mouth is exponentially growing in importance.
- Destinations are branded in order to attract (new) tourists.
- Borkum's tourism industry strongly brand the beach, nature, and climate.
- Borkum: Nordseeinsel mit Hochseeklima.



## Method

Dutch & English questionnaire on the motives of tourists on Borkum.



Facebook communities (Borkum—Die Insel meiner Träume & Borkum—Meine Insel) and tourists on the island took part.

Data was collected & analysed using:

- Google Forms
- SPSS



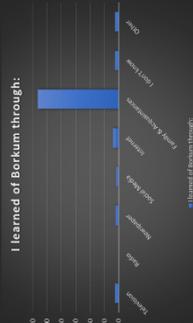
## Results

150 tourists filled out the questionnaire

Most Dutch tourists stay for only one day while German tourists tend to spend more time on Borkum, up to one, two, or three weeks.



77% of the respondents were familiar with the unique-selling point of the islands, the Strandkörbe.



Family & Acquaintances is the strongest actor in learning of Borkum. Actors that play a minor role are:

- Traditional media (Television, Radio & Newspapers)
- New (Digital) media (Social media & internet)
- Rehabilitation

One way Anova's showed that there is no difference in the familiarity with advertisements and train printing, designed to advertise Borkum, between Dutch and German respondents.

## Conclusions

Branding plays an important role in tourist motives.

- Borkum brands itself as a destination for beach goers with visually appealing nature and climate.
- Word-of-mouth is very important as it is the primary manner to learn of Borkum.
- Borkum has a healthy mix of short-term and long-term stayers.
- The unique-selling point of the island is well-known.

## Discussion

- Population proportions (male-female & Dutch-German) are off.
- Possible bias due to Facebook communities.
- Elderly underrepresented due to digital questionnaire accessibility.

## References

- AG-Emis, 2019
- AG-Emis, 2012
- McConnell, 2007
- Sweeney et al., 2012
- Groeger & Burtels, 2014

For a complete overview of all references, see thesis.

