PEKKA MUSTONEN

HELSINKI'S POTENTIAL AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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PREFACE

In our time of cheap flights it is perhaps easier than ever to travel. Helsinki competes with other European cities for travellers that may choose their destination in the last minute. Merely flights within Europe provide an incredibly large choice, and finding your own share among the enormous demand is a challenge. And if we add flights to Asia, which are currently raising their passenger figures tremendously, the picture gets even more complicated.

But these same challenges keep competing cities busy, too. The task of city marketing is to use people's mental images, perceptions, to get an edge over competitors. At their best, these mental images make use of real attraction factors ranging from traditional attractions to, for example, a favorable location. In all simplicity, the goal of city marketing is to tell potential travellers why they should choose Helsinki instead of all the other destinations available.

Obviously, marketing needs accessories. The present study report presents some by surveying perceptions of Helsinki among an important target group, the 16-25 year olds.

The report is the result of a collaboration between Helsinki City Urban Facts and the city's marketing authorities. The findings are based on an extensive material collected in late 2014 by the TNS Gallup.

Helsinki, December 2015

Henrik Lönnqvist, City of Helsinki Urban Facts
Saila Machere, City Executive Office, Economic Development /City Marketing

ESIPUHE

Nykyisellä edullisten lentojen aikakaudella matkustaminen on kenties helpompaa kuin koskaan. Helsinki matkakohteena kilpailee muiden Euroopan kaupunkien kanssa houkutellakseen matkailijoita, jotka saattavat valita kohteensa vasta aivan viime hetkellä. Pelkästään Euroopan sisäisten kaupunkimatkojen kenttä on uskomattoman laaja ja oman siivun löytäminen tästä suunnattomasta matkailukysynnästä on haastava tehtävä. Kun mukaan lisätään hurjaa vauhtia matkailijamääriään kasvattavat Aasian maat, mutkistuu kuvio entisestään.

Samojen haasteiden kanssa kamppailevat myös kilpailijat. Kaupunkimarkkinoinnin tehtävänä on hyödyntää mielikuvia tehdäkseen eroja kilpailijoihin. Parhaimmillaan nämä mielikuvat hyödyntävät todellisia vetovoimatekijöitä – perinteisistä attraktioista vaikkapa suotuisaan sijaintiin. Kaikessa yksinkertaisuudessaan markkinoinnin tarkoitus on kertoa, miksi potentiaalisen matkailijan tulisi valita Helsinki jonkun muun paikan sijaan.

On selvää, että markkinointi tarvitsee avukseen apuvälineitä. Tässä tutkimuskatsaus tarjoaa niitä selvittämällä yhden keskeisen kohderyhmän – 16–25-vuotiaiden nuorten näkemyksiä Helsingistä.

Katsaus on tulosta Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskuksen ja Helsingin kaupunkimarkkinoinnin yhteistyöstä. Tulokset perustuvat TNS Gallupin vuoden 2014 lopulla keräämään laajaan aineistoon.

Helsingissä joulukuussa 2015

Henrik Lönnqvist, Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus
Saila Machere, Helsingin kaupunkimarkkinointi

FÖRORD

Under vår tid av förmånliga flygturer är det kanske lättare än någonsin att resa. Helsingfors tävlar med andra europeiska städer om att locka till sig resenärer, och dessa kan välja sitt resmål alldeles i sista sekunden. De resor som hålls bara inom Europa utgör redan ett otroligt brett urval, och att hitta sin egen nisch i denna ofantliga efterfrågan är en utmaning. Om vi ännu lägger till resorna till Asien, som just nu ökar sina passagerarmängder i rasande fart, blir upplägget ännu krångligare.

Men samma utmaningar kämpar även konkurrenterna med. Stadsmarknadsföringens uppgift är att utnyttja sinnebilder för att få konkurrensförsprång. I bästa fall är dessa sinnebilder till nytta för reella attraktionsfaktorer – allt mellan traditionella attraktioner och till exempel ett bra läge. I all enkelhet är målet med marknadsföringen att berätta för potentiella resenärer varför de borde välja just Helsingfors i stället för något annat mål.

Självklart behöver marknadsföring även hjälpmedel. Föreliggande forskningsöversikt lägger fram några sådana genom att sondera de uppfattningar en viktig målgrupp – 16–25-åringarna – har om Helsingfors.

Översikten är resultatet av ett samarbete mellan Faktacentralen och Helsingfors stads marknadsföringsmyndighet. Rönen bygger på ett omfattande material insamlat i slutet av år 2014 av firman TNS-Gallup.

I Helsingfors december 2015

Henrik Lönnqvist, Helsingfors stads faktacentral
Saila Machere, Helsingfors stads marknadsföringsmyndighet

BACKGROUND

Survey responses of young people from 10 countries portray Helsinki as a city with a great natural environment and as a safe city and an unusual destination. Although evaluated as a relatively interesting destination for young people, Helsinki lags slightly behind other Nordic capitals.

During the past decades, Helsinki has developed into a small metropolis with its own distinctive character. Helsinki has succeeded in struggling out of the shadow of other cities, such as Berlin and Stockholm, and has taken a number of top spots in international city rankings. The list is long (City of Helsinki 2015).

The Economist placed Helsinki in top 10 in its Global Liveability Ranking 2015 (The Economist 2015) Competitors from neighbouring countries were further behind. In the list of popular congress cities by Union of International Associations (2015), Helsinki also performed well. Helsinki was the 18th most popular city of all. In the list of Monocle magazine (2015), Helsinki has ranked high during the last few years although been on the peak position only once, in 2011. Metropolis Magazine (2015) ranked Helsinki in top three. In addition to these, the University of Helsinki was ranked 67th in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (2015) or the so-called Shanghai Ranking. This is the highest the University of Helsinki has ever reached.

Despite this success, Helsinki has not managed to steal its share of the global tourism growth. However, summer 2015 looked good and hopefully this is a turning point in the competition. During the first six months of 2015, the number of bednights declined in Helsinki. However, after September the whole year is now 4.1% ahead of the previous year – domestic (+3.7%) and foreign (+4.4%) bednights summed together. To compare, foreign bednights rose by 7.7% in Stockholm and 7.2% in Copenhagen. Despite these somewhat higher growth rates, by looking at these figures, Helsinki seems to be performing, nevertheless, quite well. Number of foreign bednights totalled the highest number ever recorded in three consecutive months; July, August and September. Despite a remarkably lower number of Russian tourists, overall figures have risen comparing to 2014. (TourMIS 2015, City of Helsinki 2015c and Statistics Finland 2015)

The main reason behind the growth in July was the Gymnaestrada event; more than 20,000 people came to Helsinki only because of this event (Gymnaestrada 2015). Despite this big event, number of Russian tourists declined by 34% in July comparing to July 2014, 31.5% in August and 46.8% in September. Obviously, one major reason behind this decline is the economic situation in Russia. In 2014, bednights by Russian tourists fell by 21.1% in Helsinki. In the first nine months of 2015 these numbers were even more severe. Russian bednights declined by 41% from the previous year (TourMIS 2015, City of Helsinki 2015c and Statistics Finland 2015)

We do not know yet what will happen after the positive pulse is over. If the effect of Gymnaestrada was only temporary, the numbers will be somewhat lower during the last months when compared to 2014. However, due to the emerging rise of interest towards Helsinki, and due to the current positive course, it sounds like there might be a niche for the Finnish capital. However, the situation is challenging. The competition is harsh, and creating a differentiated image is difficult.

Without forgetting other tourist segments such as active seniors, the marketing of the City of Helsinki is more and more focusing on young people. How could Helsinki attract a bigger share of the young people who are planning to travel but have no particular destination in mind? Without knowing the preferences of the target group, this is impossible to achieve. To understand future tourists and their motives, focusing on the heterogeneous groups of young people is thus obviously pivotal.

According to WYSE Travel Confederation (2013), the travelling behaviour of young people has changed. They travel more than before, spend more money than before and the trips are longer. According to the same report, young travellers represent one fifth of international tourism.

Motives seem to be changing as well. More than ever, young people travel for work-related purposes and for educational and cultural reasons. Leisure is becoming serious. Backpacking or traditional three-S tourism (sun, sea and sand) is not enough as young people increasingly want to study, learn and get work experience. (See also UNWTO 2015) From this perspective, it is no surprise that tourism developers want to take this economic potential seriously. Information spreads rapidly amongst young people, and it can be assumed that marketing funds spent on this active demographic would generate returns in the longer term. To understand future tourists and their motives, focusing on the heterogeneous groups of young people is obviously pivotal.

Tourism literature and handbooks are filled with analyses of different tourist segments (e.g. Amadeus 2015) and there are two conclusions that can be drawn from these. First of all, there are as many motives as there are tourists. The recognised segments may be useful for marketing, but the actual logic remains the same. There are pull factors and push factors and the combinations of these vary a lot. There are people who simply want to escape (see a classic book of the topic; Rojek 1993); think of Northern citizens in the middle of the dark and cold winter. And then, there are people who want to go because of some particular reason linked to the destination. Also in the case of purely escapist tourism, choosing the destination links to pull factors: weather, price level and so on. Marketing activities, nevertheless, operate at the side of the pull factors.

On the other hand, information flows freely, and thus, in the long run, great destinations market themselves. Interesting cities draw people like magnets, and above all, interesting cities must be interesting to their own citizens. Of course structural determinants play role as well. Low cost airlines take people wherever they operate. Thus choosing a destination is, to some extent, a matter of luck. Nevertheless, the power of low cost airlines should not be overestimated. Flying is relatively cheap anyway, and intuitively it could be assumed that if people consider Helsinki more interesting than, say, Copenhagen, they would come here in any case.

STUDY AND RESEARCH SETTING

The residents of Helsinki want a pleasant and comfortable city and opportunities to affect the processes through which these qualities can be increased (Mustonen 2014). This kind of city is interesting to outsiders as well. This is in the core of Helsinki's strategy (City of Helsinki 2013). Helsinki aims at being an internationally known and attractive city full of life and events.

Helsinki's tourism strategy is in line with the above. From the viewpoint of tourism, the fundamental aim is to strengthen the appeal of the city. According to the tourism strategy (City of Helsinki 2015b) the vision of Helsinki is to be one of the most competitive city destinations with a strong and unique brand. Creating a unified brand is one of the most important strategic goals of the city. This process has just begun (Project Brand New Helsinki 2015), and the research project presented in this article is designed partly for providing it with background information on an important part of the market – young people.

In the end of 2014, the marketing unit of the City of Helsinki started a project aiming to examine young people's opinions of Helsinki. The data was gathered by TNS Gallup in 10 countries by utilising the extensive internet panels in each country. The countries were Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Russia, South Korea and Japan. All the respondents were 16–25 years of age and had travelled abroad at least once during the last 12 months.

These panels were used in order to keep the data collection process as flexible as possible. Utilising the panels was also the most economical way to get relatively big samples in a limited time. The aim was not to collect spatially or demographically representative data. The wish was, instead, that after analysing the data we would know a bit more of the structures and possible differences between the countries.

The questionnaire was constructed together with the City of Helsinki Urban Facts. In addition to questions concerning opinions, the questionnaire also contained series of questions on lifestyles and consumption. First of all, the aim of these was to give more detailed information of the people under scrutiny and secondly to keep the data as comparable as possible with the other studies containing these same question sequences.

The questionnaire was planned thoroughly and final questions were formulated as simple and universal as possible. Most of the questions were Likert scaled with five points. We ended up using this scale because we did not want to force respondents to state opinions on the issues they do not necessarily have an opinion on (compare to Bourdieu 1972). We did not want to add an extra "I don't know" alternative as it is impossible to know if a respondent without opinion would have chosen this alternative instead of point "3" between negative and positive alternatives (see Johns 2010).

In some analyses in this study, Likert scaled answers are considered as continuous. Problems caused by these kinds of procedures are recognised (Johns 2010; also Denscombe 1998, 178); however, it is assumed that in the case of these quite extensive data, biases caused by differences in how the scale is interpreted are somewhat neutralised and calculated means above the theoretical "middle point=3" would generally indicate positive opinions of the issue or statement and vice versa.

Questionnaire was made up of four parts. The first part consisted of basic background questions on gender, age, employment status, education, welfare (subjective assessment), travelling frequency, preferred travelling company and foreign experience. In the second part, respondents were asked to evaluate their interest towards different cities by using a 1-to-5 Likert scale. The cities that were presented here were the most important competitors of Helsinki: Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Tallinn, Berlin, St Petersburg and Amsterdam.

The third part of the questionnaire concerned Helsinki and contained a series of questions including the open-ended question: "What comes to mind when you think of Helsinki?" Respondents were also asked to evaluate how well they knew Helsinki and to rate whether their view of Helsinki was positive or negative (1–5). They also asked to consider 23 statements and assess how applicable these were to the context of Helsinki – again on a scale of 1 to 5. Further on, the same statements were presented as motives for a trip and the respondents were asked to choose the five most relevant for themselves.

By utilising these two question patterns, it was possible to evaluate how well the motives of the potential tourists are in line with the opinions concerning Helsinki. The last section of the questionnaire concerned consumption, lifestyles and values.

The process of image-building varies between different target groups. We must know what kind of issues are considered important to perform well in marketing. Traditional marketing activities are not necessarily effective amongst different segments of young people especially when taking into account the cultural differences. Thus, one aim of the study was to produce recommendations for marketing and brand work, having this particular target group – young people – in mind.

From this perspective, the main objective of the survey was to obtain information of how young people in the ten selected countries see Helsinki and what are the main differences and similarities between countries. This kind of research setting is new and unique and thus all the results are new. Thus the aim was to get basic information on which further studies can be based. Ideally the results of marketing activities and the recently started brand work can be noticed in the future.

RESULTS

Background variables

The size of the whole combined data was 4,031 respondents and the sample sizes of different countries varied from 401 to 413. A majority (56.4%) of the respondents were female. Amongst Spanish respondents the share was 50/50 and Italy was only the country where a majority (58%) of the respondents were male. Over half of the respondents were at least 23 years old. Thus the number of younger respondents, from 16 to 20, was slightly more than one fourth of the whole sample. For some reason, the share of younger respondents was higher in Sweden and in the Netherlands than in the other countries.

Most of the respondents were either students or working. It was also possible to choose an option that combines these two. Interestingly the shares of those students who also work were relatively low; less than 20% in all the countries and smallest in the Netherlands (5%). The number of unemployed were greatest in France (13.4%) and Italy (17.4%). When looking at the shares of respondents who are either studying or working, the Netherlands and Russia differed most remarkably from the others. In the Netherlands about 60% of all the respondents were students; in Russia, only 13.6%. Almost 70% of Russian respondents were working; about 80% when including those who also studied.

Economic capital usually indicated by income level is a very widely used structural background variable. In this study, economic welfare was approached by asking respondents to evaluate their wealth subjectively using the five point Likert scale. There were some differences between respondents from different countries. Russians considered themselves the most wealthy when approaching this backwards and looking at the share of respondents in the lower two categories (8.4%). South Korea and Japan followed behind (22.7% both). The share of respondent in these two categories were greatest in France (41.3%), Spain (37.1%), Germany (38.1%) and the Netherlands (36.7%).

All the respondents had travelled abroad during past year; this was the precondition for being chosen in the sample. In general, respondents travel abroad quite often. About 80% of the respondents travel at least once a year and 40% at least twice. Thus, according to the data, it seems that those who travel, travel quite often. There were some differences between countries but these were, however, quite small. The number of very active travellers (at least three times a year) was the biggest in the Netherlands, which, knowing the geographical facts, is not a surprise.

About a third of the respondents had lived or studied abroad. This is quite a remarkable share although we do not know how respondents understood "living" and "studying". The shares were greatest in Spain and in Japan and smallest in Germany, the Netherlands and Russia. Thus, by looking at the results derived from our data, even though Dutch respondents travel a lot, they have studied or lived abroad significantly less than respondents from Sweden, UK or the above mentioned countries on top of this list.

As noticed above, the differences between countries were remarkable in terms of background variables. Thus it is evident that these affect the results as well. However, due to space restrictions, the effects of these differences are not examined more deeply in this study. Education level was left outside as well. The question was different in each country because of the different educational systems and examining these was not possible here.

Consumption and lifestyles

In addition to utilising structural variables, we wanted to know more about the respondents by asking them about consumption habits, lifestyles and values. In general these results were quite neutral and close to (or just above) the theoretical middle point “3” (see Figure 1). This is partly due to the fact that there were a lot of differences between the countries especially in the cases of the alternatives beyond top five and bottom five.

Young people throughout these data seemed to be interested in other cultures and travelling. They would also be happier if they had more money. Shopping and new experiences were among the main interests. These are well in line with the pre-assumptions. Respondents also somewhat agreed on the above mentioned statements that were all commonly evaluated with higher grades. Russians gave the highest grades to all these top five alternatives.

Nevertheless, the results at the other end were somewhat surprising. When looking only at these variables in the context of the whole data, it seems that young people were less environmentally conscious than could have been assumed. Also differences between the countries were greatest in the case of the statements at the bottom of the list such as the ones concerning flea markets, consumption-centred life, organic products and eating out. However, when exploring the results more deeply, it can be seen that answers are highly polarised. For example, in the case of buying organic products, the share of respondents who agreed with the statement “I try to buy organic” was relatively high in all the countries; 39 % amongst Italians and 37% amongst Russians to give a couple of examples. Thus, it seems clear that looking only at the calculated means is not enough and generalisations should only be made with care. However, in this study we are not going deeper into this.

The results of this consumption pattern was also analysed with principal component analysis (SPSS 22.0) and later with the GLM procedure (Univariate ANOVA). This was done in order to have more information on the target group as well as information on how respondents from different countries differed from each other. The results revealed that respondents could be grouped roughly into four groups. These are: materialists, experience seekers, environmentally conscious and consumers with guilty conscience. These components were explained by country, gender, foreign experience and incomes.

Briefly, the results reveal that even when the above mentioned variables are controlled, the respondents’ country of origin has an effect on these lifestyle components. So there are some latent characteristics that have an influence on choices in the background. However, the results are only approximates but they give hints on what kind of differences can be found when going deeper into the data. The results also highlight that similar marketing activities do not necessarily work effectively in different countries even though the target group was the same.

Materialists

British, South Korean and Japanese respondents seem to be the most materialists. All the other countries except Italy differ remarkably from these. When examining the other variables, those who have studied or lived abroad and those who considered themselves wealthy are more materialist than others. Gender was insignificant here. Thus even when countries of origin are controlled, there other determinants that affect materialistic tendencies.

Experience seekers

Swedish, British, Dutch and Japanese were the least experience seeking respondents when other determinants were controlled. Russians differed from these the most and thus they seem the most eager to look for a different culture and experiences. Unlike in the case of materialists, here the gender was significant. Women sought new experiences more than men. International experience also had an effect and to the direction that was not a surprise. Those with international experience searched for new experiences more than the others. The subjective income level was not significant. As mentioned earlier, the analysis method controls other variables and thus the significant differences did not depend on the country.

Environmentally conscious

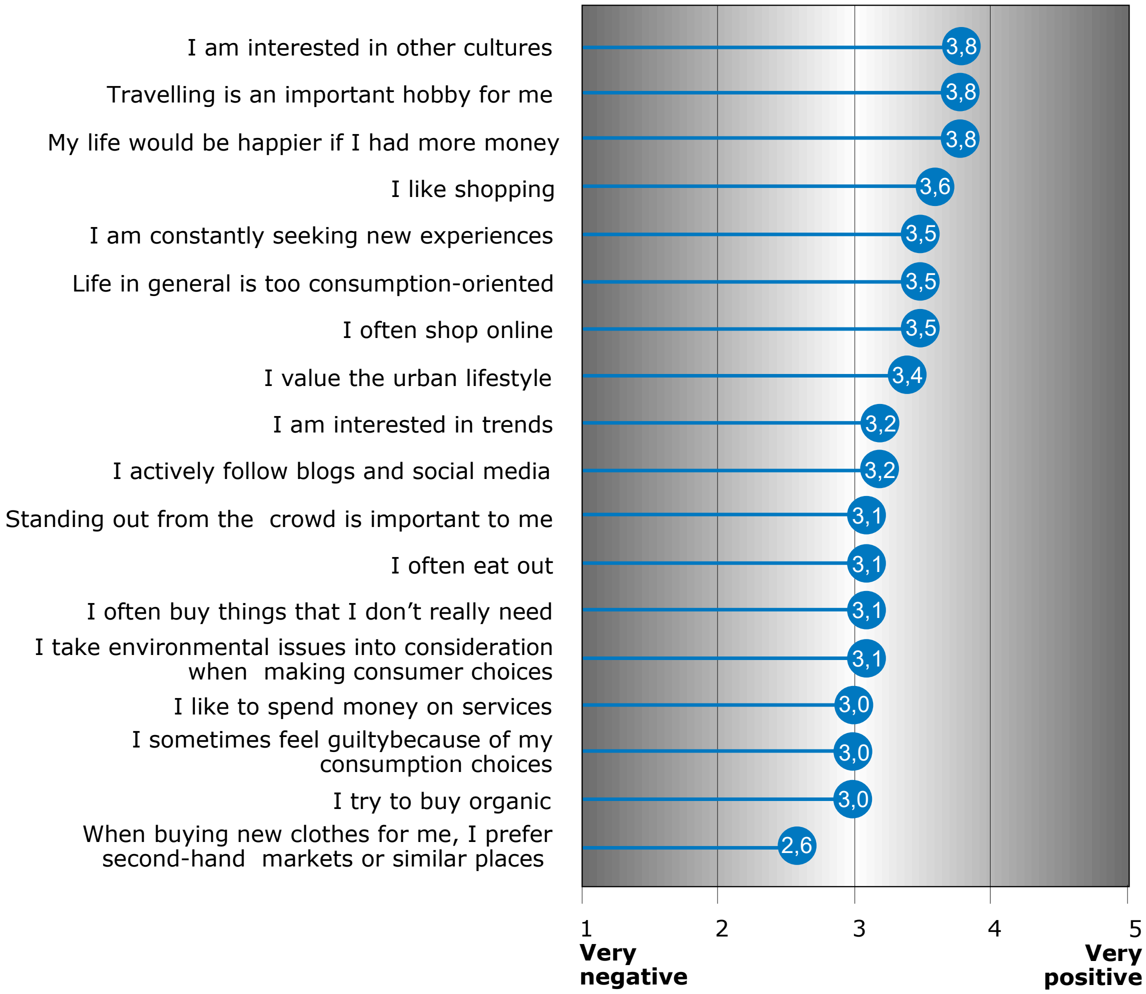
Amongst the target group – young people in this study – women seem to be less environmentally friendly than men. The difference between the genders was a somewhat surprising result. Verifying this interesting finding as well as examining the background mechanisms could be worth studying in a future.

International experience and subjective income level had a similar effect here as in the case of materialism: positive. In addition to these, there were some differences between the countries. South Koreans were the most environmentally friendly and Germans and Russians the least. However, the differences between the countries were quite small. Now, it seems that in this sense, respondents from South Korea were somewhat polarised in their opinions; roughly speaking, there were both materialists and environmentally conscious respondents. However, as well as the gender differences, verifying this hypothesis would also require deeper analysis and this was beyond the scope here.

Guilty conscience

When looking more deeply at the last component – those with guilty consumer conscience – Japanese and South Koreans differed from the respondents from other countries. This, in a way, strengthens the above results where the respondents from these two countries were found as being the most materialist as well. The case of British respondents was interesting. They loaded quite heavily on the materialism component and at the same time they had bad conscience when thinking of consumption. International experience was connected to this component slightly positively and subjective income negatively. Gender was not significant.

Figure 1. Consumption and lifestyles

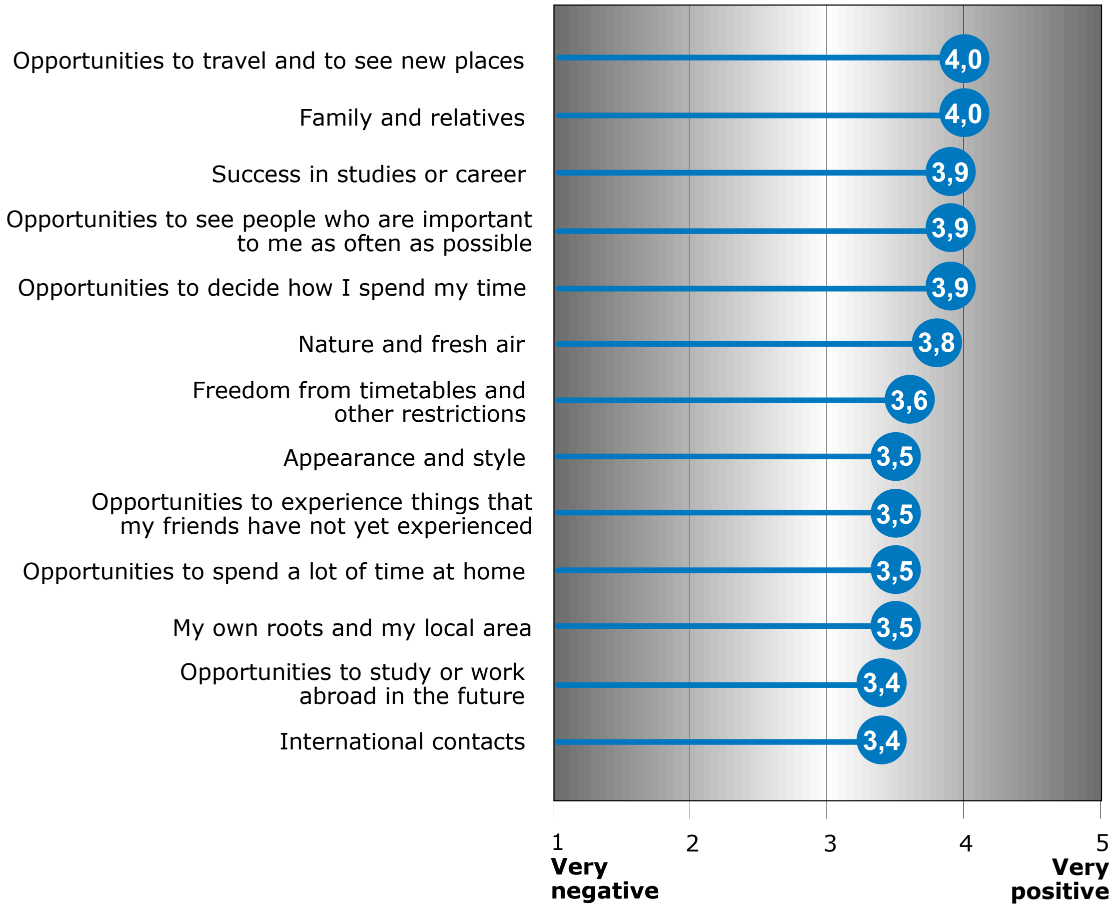


Values and interests

As in the case of lifestyles, the respondents' values and interests were examined by using a separate set of questions. In the questionnaire, there were 13 questions concerning these issues. Differences between countries were clearly smaller than in the case of consumption habits and thus the values are examined here only briefly.

The questions examining the personal values of the respondents turned out to receive somewhat higher mean scores all down the line, compared to the ones concerning consumption. From the viewpoint of values, young people from these ten examined countries appear quite similar. Possibilities to travel and see new places, being successful at studies or at work, contacts with family and friends, as well as the freedom to set their own schedules were evaluated with the highest scores.

Figure 2. Values and interests



RESULTS CONCERNING HELSINKI

Common views – positive or negative?

Respondents were asked whether their general views of Helsinki were positive or negative. The scale was from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). The results show some very interesting results (see Figure 3). Negative views were quite rare; opinions were either neutral of positive.

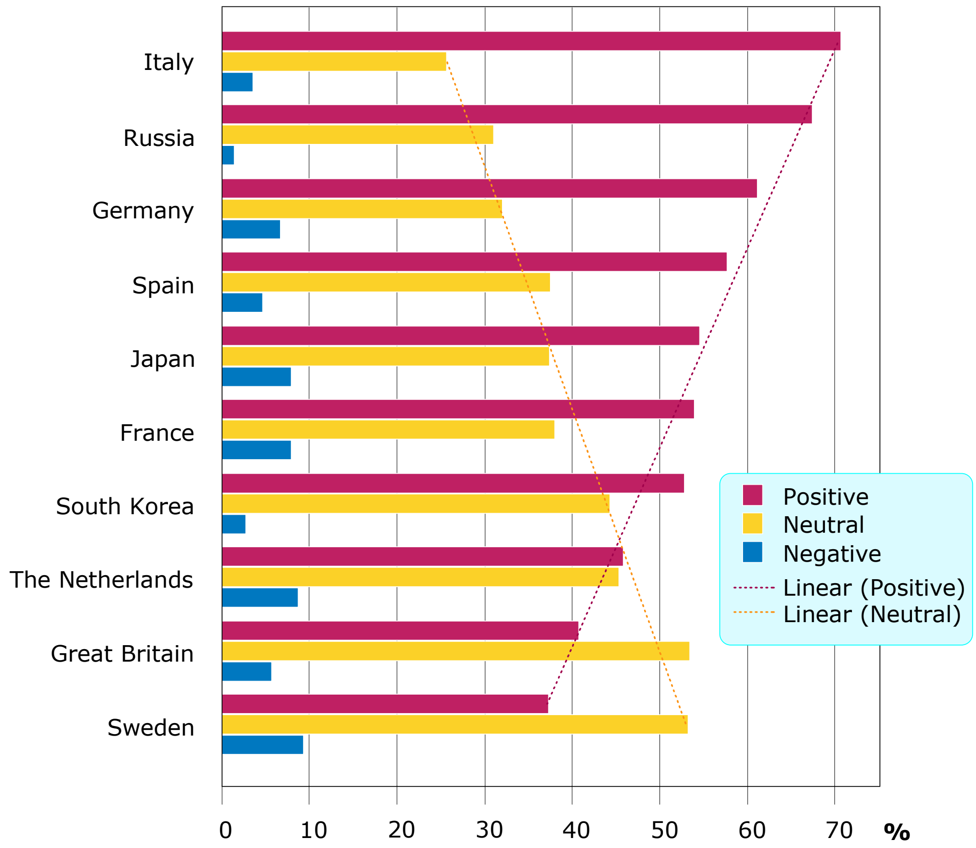
Interestingly, it seems that neutral and positive opinions were negatively connected to each other. The "hourglass" shape is clearly visible when looking at the results in Figure 3. If the views were positive, the share of neutral views was smaller and vice versa. In general, the amount of neutral views was remarkable. There were probably many respondents who did not have enough information of Helsinki. When someone has inadequate information, giving negative opinions seems unlikely. This might explain why there were very few negative views.

Some of the differences between the countries remained even when the background variables were controlled (Univariate ANOVA; results not presented here). Japan was the country to which all the others were compared. Sweden, Great Britain and the Netherlands differed significantly from Japan, that, as seen from Figure 3, is somewhere in the middle. Thus, respondents from the above mentioned three countries were the most negative, or to be precise, least positive. Neutral opinions were greatest amongst these respondents, and in the case of British and Swedish respondents, there were more neutral opinions than positive ones. When looking at the positive end, Italians and Russians had the most positive views of Helsinki even when gender, foreign experience and subjective income level were controlled. Gender, in itself, was not connected to views. Foreign experience and subjective income level had a positive effect.

It was not a surprise that lifestyle determinants had an effect on how respondents viewed Helsinki. Especially the component of new experiences has a positive effect. Putting it roughly, those who seek new experiences tend to have positive views more often than others. Income has some positive effects as well.

In general, differences between the countries are clear and they overcome the structural elements. It can be assumed that stereotypes lie deep and are different in different cultural environments. As discussed earlier, lifestyles are only partly connected to structural background determinants and thus have a significant role despite the background. Income was the strongest structural determinant, the effect being weak anyway. In a way, income draws boundaries when consumption in general is under scrutiny and this is the reason why income is important and cannot be forgotten here.

Figure 3. General views of Helsinki by respondents' country of origin



Statements concerning Helsinki

The questionnaire contained one open-ended question. Respondents were asked to write down three words that come to mind when thinking of Helsinki. This was the first question concerning Helsinki and thus the first time the respondents heard that the questionnaire actually was about Helsinki. The answers of Italian, Japanese, South Korean and Dutch respondents were not examined in this article.

The data elicited as a response to this question contains hundreds of different words. Despite this, the most commonly mentioned words stand out clearly. There were also great differences between respondents from different countries. The top five was, however, very stereotypical and very similar regardless of the country. "Cold" was mentioned almost a thousand times, which is a remarkable amount especially considering that part of the respondent countries were not included in the examination in this article. "Finland" came second and "Snow" third. The list continued with "Beautiful". Snow was mostly mentioned by the British, French and Spanish respondents– all these are countries where snow can be considered somewhat exotic.

Negative associations were rare (although of course "cold" could have been considered negative by some respondents). Most of the comments were either positive or neutral. Amongst British respondents, positive comments such as "interesting", "food", "nice" and "funny" occurred quite often. French and Germans mentioned "scenery", "Scandinavia" and "nature" more than others. Spanish respondents mentioned "culture" and "school" a number of times, and in addition to these, "darkness" was mentioned several times as well.

Swedes differed from the rest. Among them "Moomin trolls", "boat trip" and "shopping" were rather frequent associations. Russians, too, mentioned "shopping", but also "churches" and "Santa Claus".

Thus, cultural differences were evident here. Also the proximity of Helsinki obviously counts since Russians and Swedes mentioned a larger number of words than respondents from the other countries. They, of course, know more about Finland than, for example, Spanish or French respondents.

Table 1. 'Words that come to mind when you think of Helsinki.' Number of mentions by respondents' country of origin

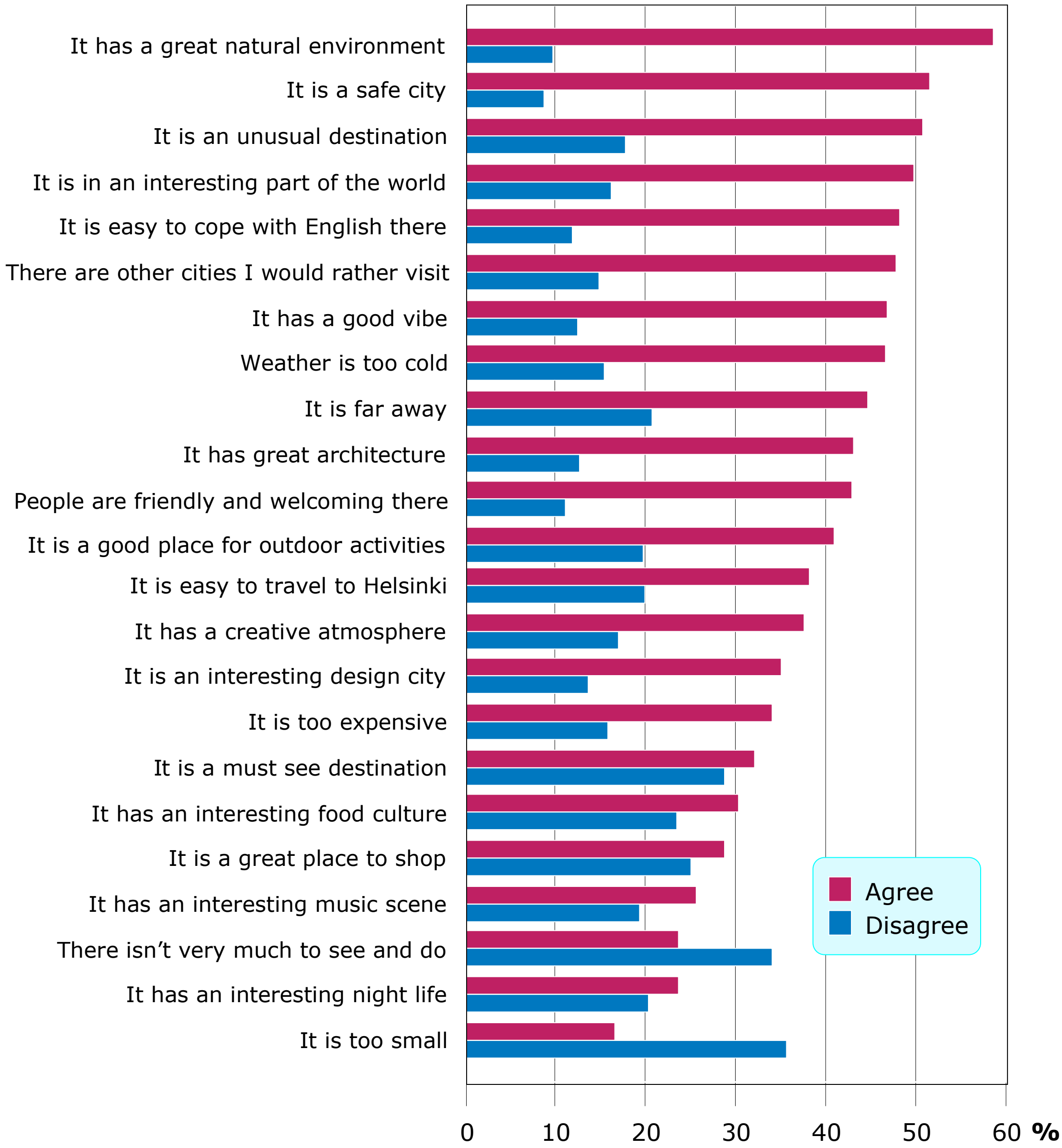
	Great Britain	France	Germany	Spain	Sweden	Russia	Yhteensä
Cold	**160**	**224**	**180**	**283**	**68**	**79**	994
Finland	**40**	**62**	**82**	30	**103**	**38**	355
Snow	**58**	**87**	38	**91**	15	**47**	336
Beautiful	32	34	29	**41**	16	35	187
Capital	13	38	26	10	42	26	155
Northern	5	40	**42**	21	3	10	121
Finnish language	9	5	16	5	**44**	37	116
Sauna	1	5	17	3	41	25	92
Beer	20	7	3	12	12	19	73
Sea/Baltic sea	13	7	15	11	3	21	70

In the next part, the respondents were asked to assess 23 statements and say how applicable to Helsinki they found each of these to be. Respondents evaluated the statements using the five point Likert scale. Some of the statements were purposefully quite stereotypical as we wanted to know whether these images often used in marketing are in line with the perceptions.

The results are presented in Figure 4. Bars of different colour indicate the shares of respondents who agreed or disagreed. The shares of those who could not decide are presented in Figure 5. About half of the respondents agreed that Helsinki has a great natural environment, is a safe city, is an unusual destination and is located in an interesting part of the world. There were respondents who disagreed, too, but a significant amount of respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

When compared to the open-ended associations, there were only a few images that actually matched; namely "It has a great natural environment" ("beautiful" in Table 1) and "Weather is too cold" ("cold" in Table 1). When the results were examined by looking at mean values, the results were somewhat similar although differences remained more in shade as opposite ends of the 1–5 scale obviously cancelled out each other. Results were thus quite neutral. The mean value of "Great natural environment" was the highest, 3.7, and "It is too small" had the lowest, 2.8.

Figure 4. Shares of respondents who agreed/disagreed with the associations concerning Helsinki



When approaching the bottom of the figure, the share of respondents who could not decide was remarkably high (see also Figure 5). And also in the case of the most common stereotypes, the shares of respondents without a clear opinion were quite remarkable. About a third of the respondents could not state an opinion about nature. Of course the questions of nature in the case of Helsinki – urban area as it is – is rather complex, but nevertheless, in the marketing materials, nature is still often present. It can well be asked whether concentrating on issues that are clearly recognised to be connected to Helsinki is perhaps a good course of action also in the future.

Now, as Helsinki wants to compete with other cities such as Copenhagen or Stockholm – both close to nature as well – the focus is shifting to another direction. Many of these new focus points are on top, when looking at Figure 5 that presents the shares of respondents who did not have clear opinions.

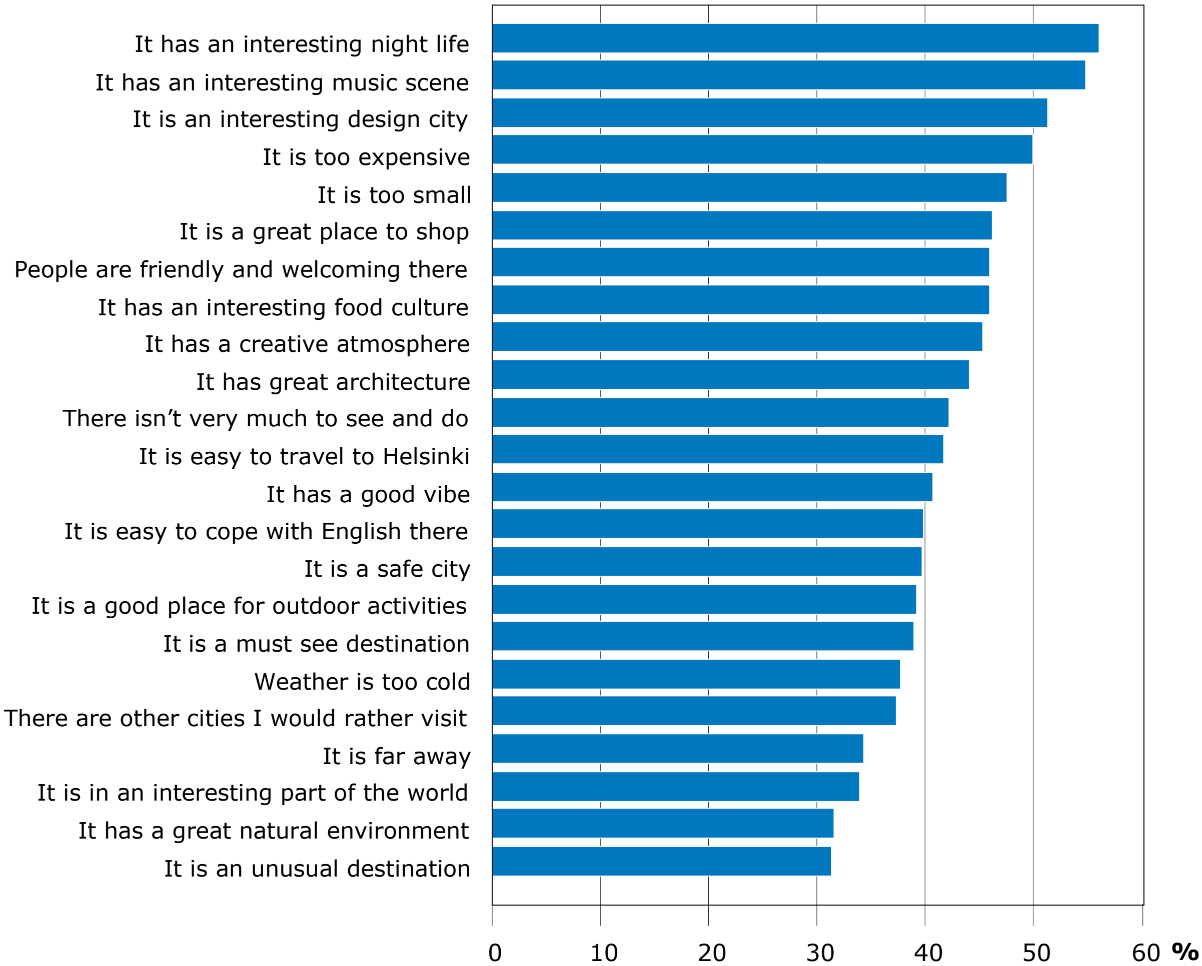
A great share of respondents did not know whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements concerning creativity, design, food culture, shopping, music or nightlife.

These were amongst the issues that at least according to the stereotypes make Helsinki's competitors interesting. Therefore, if Helsinki wants to market itself as creative and design-driven, or to highlight our food culture or shopping possibilities, there is much work to do.

Negative issues are another story. Only 17% of the respondents were of the view that Helsinki is too small (Figure 4). Thus, the relatively small size should not be considered as a disadvantage: 48% of the respondents could not give an opinion on this (Figure 3). What about weather, high prices or location? These are stereotypes that we Finns often associate Helsinki with. To some extent, these stereotypes are in line with reality in light of the data. A little less than half of the respondents feel that Helsinki is too cold or too far, and about one third consider that prices are high. But the results reveal the flip side too: 38% of the respondents did not have an opinion of the weather, 34% of the location and 50% of the prices.

In this study, these results are not compared to the marketing strategies of Helsinki to a greater detail. This was beyond the scope of this study. However, the results give information on which issues marketing professionals should concentrate on when the focus is on young people. There are many issues that are not known and these can be clearly found by analysing these data.

Figure 5. Shares of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the associations concerning Helsinki



Motives behind choosing a destination

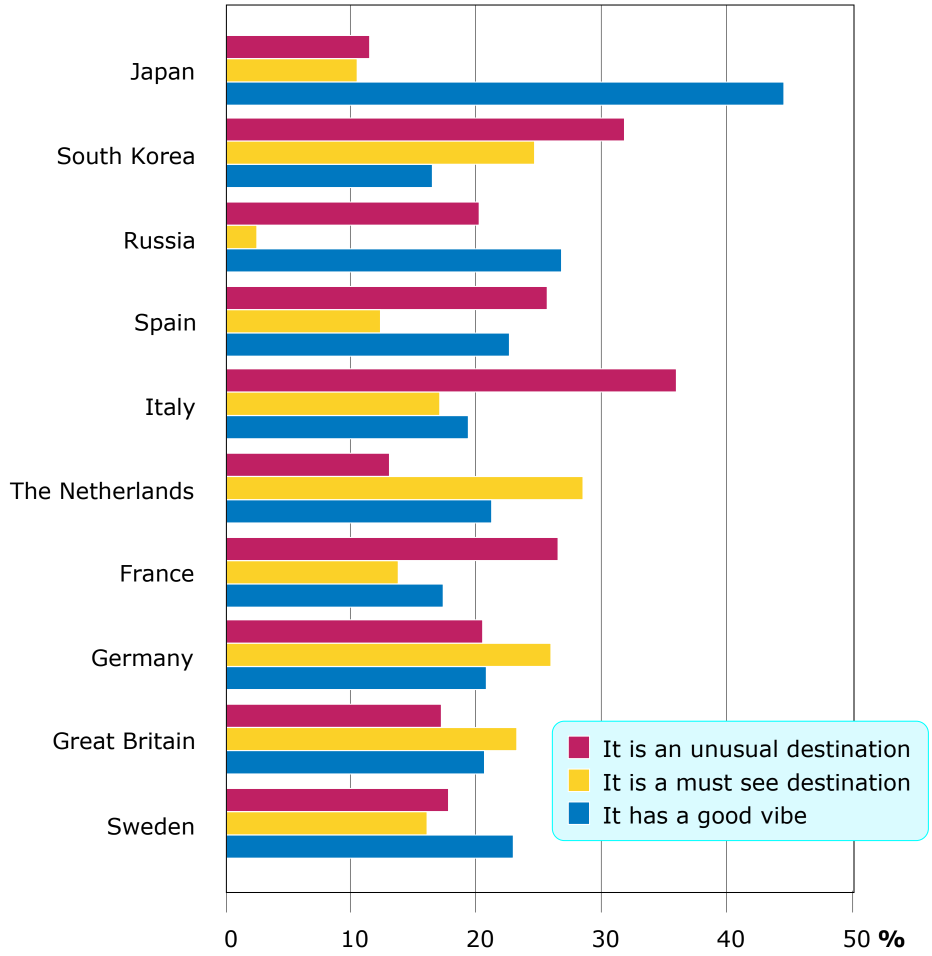
Now we know something about how young people think of the issues often associated with Helsinki. However, this knowledge is not much help if we are unaware of how important they consider these issues to be. If nightlife or design is not important for people when they choose their destination, it does not really matter how they see Helsinki's nightlife or if they know about Helsinki's design initiatives. Contrary, it seems that quite a large share of the respondents agree with the statements of nature and safety. It these, however, are not considered important, we should probably reconsider using these widely in marketing.

This problem was approached by asking respondents to choose five statements from the same list they were asked to evaluate in relation to Helsinki earlier. It was assumed that the first one they chose was the most important one. When examining these first choices, "good feeling", "unusual destination", "a must-see destination", "interesting part of the world" and "great architecture" formed the top five. Now when we compared these to the results presented in Figure 4, we can see that with the exception of "a must-see destination", all the others were associated with Helsinki relatively well.

The top three of these first choices are presented in Figure 6 by country. As can be seen, differences are remarkable. When looking at how the respondents rated "good vibe", Japan stands out clearly. Almost half of the respondents from Japan named "good vibe" as be the most important determinant when choosing a destination. This is significantly more than the shares of Russian respondents (27%) or Spanish and Swedish respondents (both 23%).

Dutch, German, South Korean and British respondents felt that they wanted to choose a must-see destination over anything. Only a few Russian respondents picked that option as their first choice. About a third of the Italian and South Korean respondents considered that an unusual destination is the most important determinant.

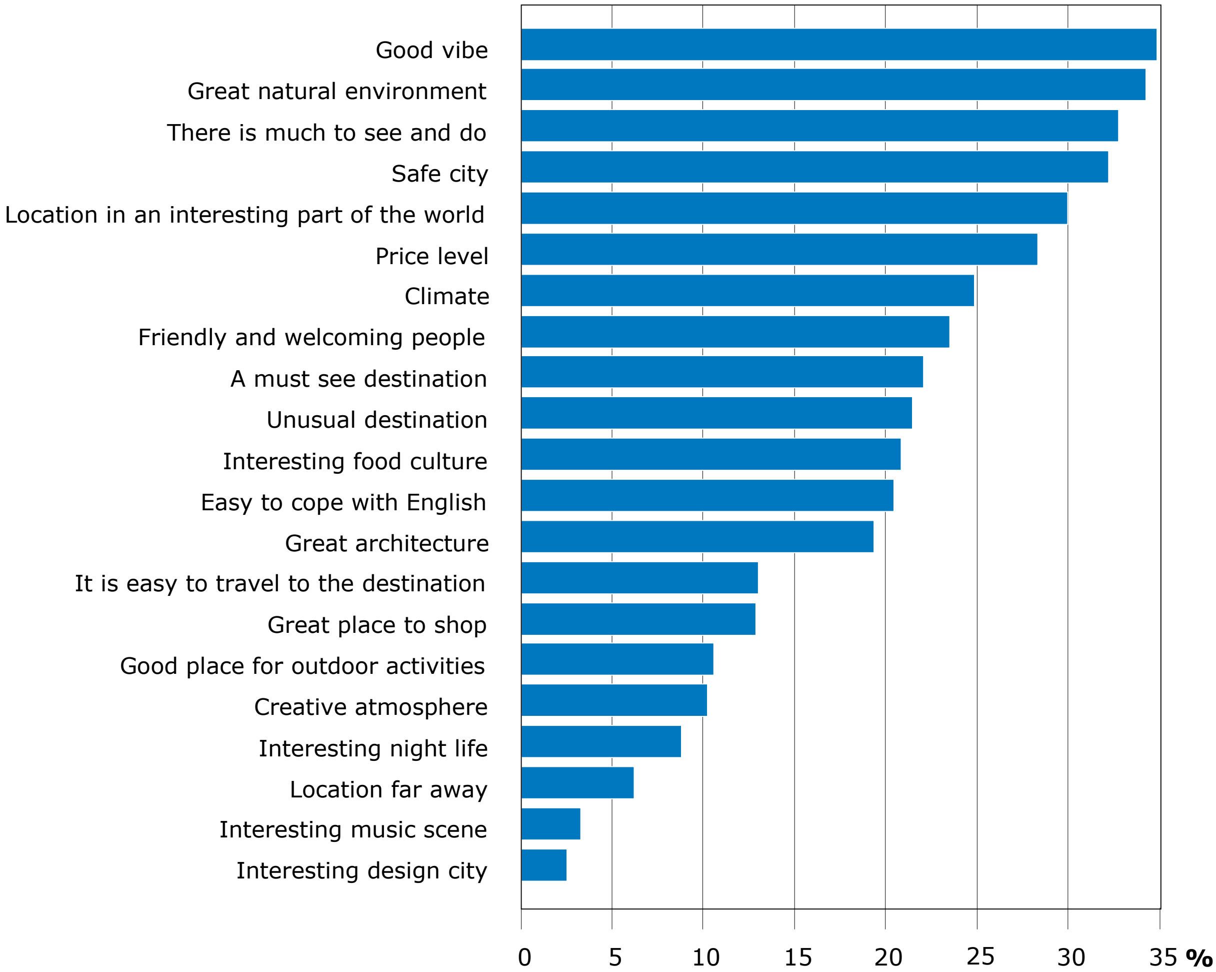
Figure 6. Top three statements that matter the most when choosing a destination. First choices by country. (% of the respondents by country of origin)



When all the five choices were summed together, the list turned out to be slightly different (Figure 7). Most of the choices on top were also associated with Helsinki (Figure 4). Some very interesting observations can be made regarding the issues at the bottom of the list. It could have been thought beforehand that issues concerning nightlife, creative atmosphere, shopping or music would have been more important. However, at least according to these data, young people do not seem to consider these issues important when choosing where to travel.

If nightlife or design is not important for people when they choose the destination, does it matter how they see Helsinki's nightlife or if they know about Helsinki's design initiatives? But this is not the matter at issue here. They may enjoy nightlife even if they do not mention it as an important factor. The question is about marketing and which issues to prioritise.

Figure 7. Statements that matter the most when choosing a destination. All five choices summed together. (% of all respondents)



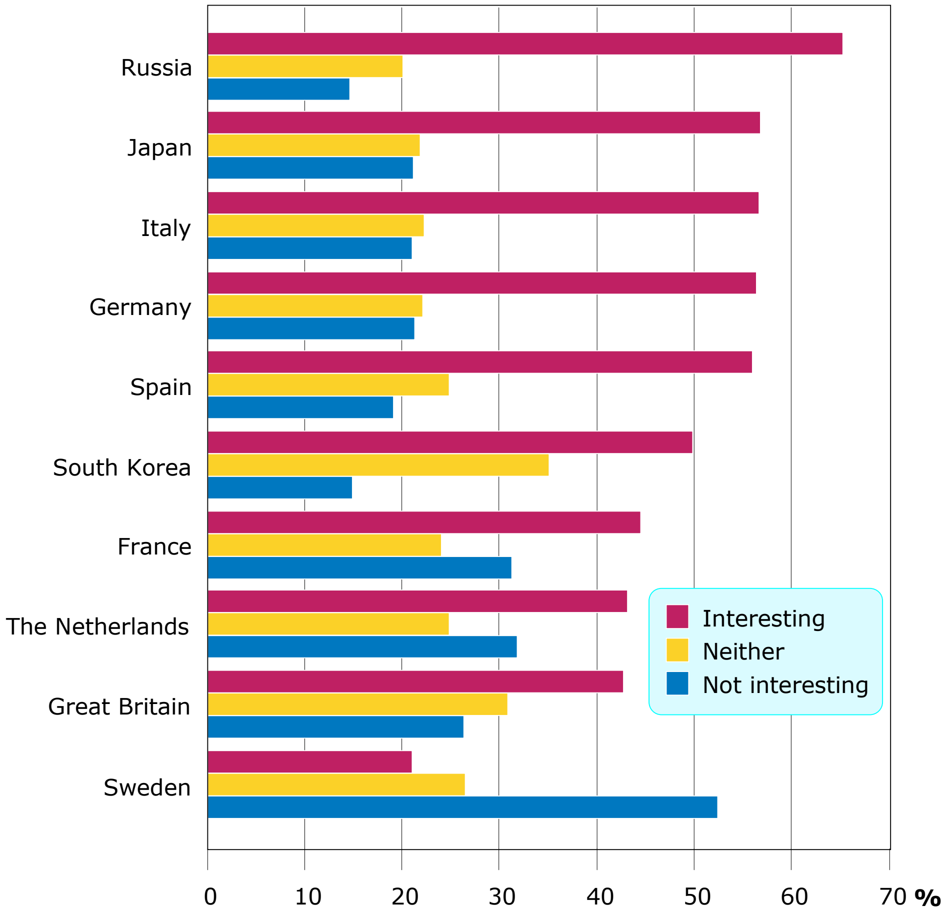
And finally, how interesting is Helsinki, after all, comparing to the competitors?

As shown above, the respondents were asked to evaluate their views of Helsinki on a negative-to-positive scale (Figure 1). It turned out that these views were mainly combinations of neutral and positive. The questionnaire contained also another question concerning general opinions and in this case, the respondents were asked to rate Helsinki together with other cities on a 1–5 scale ("not at all interesting" to "very interesting"). The purpose of this question was twofold. First of all, the results would complement the other findings such as those presented in Figure 1. Secondly, the aim was to position Helsinki into a matrix with its competitors. How interesting Helsinki is compared to, say, Copenhagen? Where does Helsinki stand?

The results are presented in Figure 8. Swedish and Russian respondents clearly stand out from the rest. Russian respondents considered Helsinki more often interesting than respondents from the other countries. 65% of Russian respondents stated that Helsinki is interesting whilst amongst the Swedes the share was only 21%.

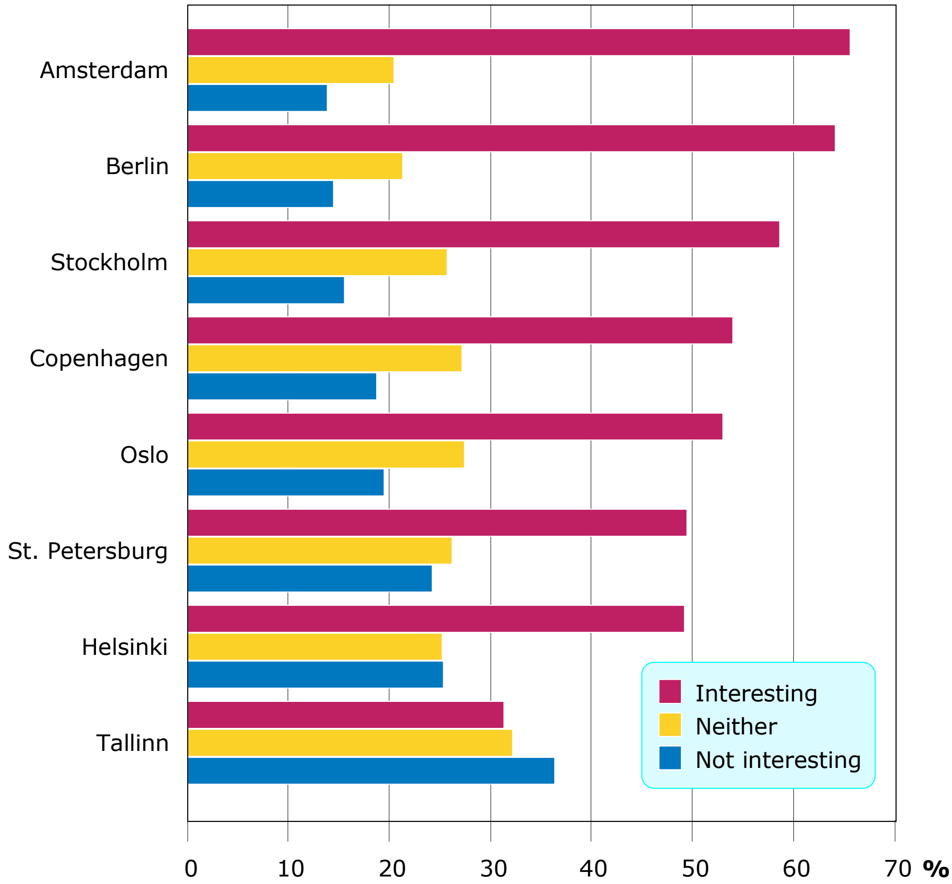
In general, it seems that here most of the respondents had an opinion. Only 25% of the respondents answered with a "3" (meaning that Helsinki was neither interesting nor uninteresting). This is a considerably lower share than, for instance, in the negative vs. positive evaluation where 40% of the respondents chose the neutral option. Thus, at least one conclusion can be drawn from this result. The positive views of the respondents do not necessarily mean that they consider Helsinki interesting, and vice versa, of course.

Figure 8. "How interesting do you think the following cities are as a holiday destination?" Scores for Helsinki (% of respondents by country of origin)



And then on top of everything, where does Helsinki stand when its competitors were evaluated using the same scale (Figure 9)? Amsterdam and Berlin were clearly the most interesting destinations. Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo came next. According to these results, Helsinki was in same league with St Petersburg whilst Tallinn was behind all the other cities. However, the differences are not substantial, and Copenhagen and Oslo, for example, are not far ahead of Helsinki. Moreover, a point to keep in mind is that the results of Helsinki are somewhat skewed by the fact that the ratings given by the Swedish respondents were markedly different from the assessments they gave to all the other cities.

Figure 9. "How interesting do you think the following cities are as a holiday destination?" Scores for Helsinki and its competitors (% of respondents by country of origin)



CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was to obtain more information on the preferences of young people around the world and to find out what kinds of perceptions they have on Helsinki. The extensive data was analysed thoroughly, but only the most important results could be presented here.

Young people form anything but a uniform group. Lifestyles and motives in terms of touristic behaviour vary a lot and when different nationalities are taken into account, the results is a complex matrix with a multitude of preferences. The observed young people, who were 16-25 of age, have of course many things in common. They seem to be interested in other cultures and they enjoy travelling. They want to shop and search for new experiences. They appreciate possibilities to travel and want to be successful at work and studies. In addition to these, traditional values bind people from different cultural backgrounds together. Family, relatives and other important people remain in the centre when values are examined.

When asked about Helsinki, a striking observation was that it was difficult for a substantial share of respondents to give opinions. On the one hand, negative opinions were rare but, on the other hand, neutral opinions were relatively common. It can be assumed that having negative views requires at least a certain degree of knowledge. Interestingly, positive and neutral views were somewhat contrary when examined by country.

Respondents were asked to write down three words that best describe Helsinki. Not surprisingly, the top five was dominated by rather stereotypical images such as "cold" or "snow". Even in a data of hundreds of different words, negative issues were almost absent. Cultural differences were clearly visible here. The variety of issues mentioned by Russians and Swedes, to whom Helsinki is more familiar, was remarkably greater than with the others.

When asked to evaluate different statements of Helsinki, neutral answers were frequent as well. Quite a remarkable share of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements concerning creativity, design, food culture, shopping, music or nightlife. Thus, if Helsinki wants to attract tourists with these, the word must be spread. However, when asked in a separate question pattern, these issues are not necessarily the most important determinants behind the choice of destination. They might have been assumed to have had more weight. Far more important were the propositions that Helsinki had a "good vibe", that it is an unusual destination and in an interesting part of the world.

Now what to do with these findings? Hopefully the results gained by analysing these unique data give information that helps marketing in the challenging task. From the viewpoint of marketing, it is good to know that young people's impressions of Helsinki are relatively positive, or, to be more precise, they are not negative. The differences between the countries must be taken into account similarly as different lifestyle segments. The same marketing strategies do not work everywhere. And it must be remembered that the positive views do not automatically mean that Helsinki is considered especially interesting. It seems that young people consider other cities – Helsinki's competitors – more interesting than Helsinki. Interestingly, the scores given to Helsinki by Russian respondents were the highest when respondents from different countries were compared. Russians form an important target group, and in the light of these results, this could be the case also in the future.

JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli saada lisää tietoa ulkomaalaisten nuorten preferensseistä ja näkemyksistä Helsinkiä kohtaan. Aineistoanalyyseistä vain tärkeimmät on esitetty tässä raportissa.

Nuoret muodostavat varsin heterogeenisen ryhmän. Heidän elämäntyylinsä ja preferenssinsä – myös matkustustottumuksia ajatellen – eroavat toisistaan ja kun tarkasteluun otetaan mukaan eri kansallisuuksia, tuloksena on varsin kompleksinen matriisi. Toki tutkimuksessa tarkasteltuja 16–25 –vuotiaita nuoria yhdistävät monet tekijät. Varsin yleisesti nämä nuoret ovat kiinnostuneita muista kulttuureista ja pitävät matkustamisesta. He haluavat shoppailla ja etsivät uusia elämyksiä. He myös arvostavat mahdollisuuksia matkustaa ja menestyä opinnoissa ja työelämässä. Näiden lisäksi eri maista tulevia nuoria yhdistävät monet perinteiset arvot, kuten perheen, sukulaisten ja tärkeiden ihmisten merkitys elämässä.

Kun vastaajilta kysyttiin näkemyksiä Helsingistä, yllättävän moni ei osannut ilmaista mielipidettään. Negatiiviset mielipiteet olivat harvinaisia, mutta neutraalit vastaukset hyvinkin yleisiä. Voidaankin olettaa, että negatiiviset näkemykset kaipaisivat taustalle tietoa tai kokemuksia. Sinänsä mielenkiintoista oli, että maakohtaisissa tarkasteluissa positiiviset ja neutraalit mielipiteet olivat jonkinlaisessa käänteisessä suhteessa toisiinsa.

Vastaajia pyydettiin myös kirjoittamaan kolme sanaa, joilla he kuvailisivat Helsinkiä. Ennakko-oletusten mukaan listan kärkeä dominoivat varsin stereotyyppiset sanat kuten ”kylmä” tai ”lumi”. Myös tässä yhteydessä negatiivisia assosiaatioita oli aineistossa vain vähän. Lisäksi kulttuurierot näkyivät selvästi. Esimerkiksi Suomea paremmin tuntevien venäläisten ja ruotsalaisten vastaajien joukossa mielenyhtymien kirjo oli huomattavasti laajempi kuin muilla.

Neutraalit arviot olivat yleisiä myös kun vastaajilta pyydettiin arvioita kuinka hyvin erilaiset väitteet kuvaavat Helsinkiä. Esimerkiksi luovuuden, designin, ruokakulttuurin, ostosmahdollisuuksien, musiikin ja yöelämän kohdalla neutraaleita vastauksia oli paljon. Toisin sanoen, jos Helsinkiä halutaan markkinoida näillä, sanaa pitää levittää. Toisaalta nämä seikat eivät välttämättä ole matkakohteen valittaessa tärkeitä. Tätä kysyttiin erillisessä kysymyksessä, ja em. ominaisuuksia huomattavasti tärkeämpinä pidettiin hyvää fiilistä, matkakohteen epätavallisuutta ja kohteen mielenkiintoista sijaintia.

Mihin näitä tuloksia sitten voi hyödyntää? Toivottavasti tämän ainutlaatuisen aineiston avulla löydetyt tulokset auttavat Helsingin markkinointia haastavassa kilpailutilanteessa. Markkinoinnin näkökulmasta on toki hyvä tietää, että nuorten mielipiteet Helsingistä ovat myönteisiä, tai paremminkin, että ne eivät ole negatiivisia. Maiden väliset erot tulee ottaa huomioon aivan samalla tavoin kuin erot elämäntyyleissä. Samanlaiset markkinointistrategiat eivät toimi kaikkialla. Pitää myös muistaa, että myönteiset yleisnäkemykset eivät välttämättä tarkoita sitä, että Helsinkiä pidettäisiin kiinnostavana. Aineiston valossa näyttää siltä, että vastaajat pitävät Helsingin kilpailijoita kiinnostavampina.

Kun maita verrattiin keskenään, venäläiset vastaajat antoivat Helsingille kaikkein parhaat arviot. Venäläiset ovatkin Helsingille hyvin tärkeä kohderyhmä, ja näiden tulosten valossa, tilanne tulee pysymään samanlaisena myös jatkossa.

SLUTSATSER

Syftet med undersökningen var att skaffa mera kunskap om unga människors preferenser världen runt och att ta reda på vilket slags sinnebilder de har av Helsingfors. Vi hade ett omfattande material som vi analyserade noggrant, men endast de viktigaste rönen kunde presenteras här.

Unga människor bildar en allt annat än enhetlig grupp. Livsstilar och motiv för turismbeteende varierar starkt, och om vi beaktar folks nationalitet blir resultatet en invecklad matris med en myckenhet olika preferenser. De unga som vi studerade, nämligen gruppen 16–25 år gamla, har förstås mycket gemensamt. De tycks vara intresserade av andra kulturer och de tycker om att resa. De vill shoppa och söka nya erfarenheter. De sätter värde på att kunna resa, och de vill ha framgång i arbete och studier. Förutom dessa faktorer binder traditionella värderingar samman folk av olika kulturell bakgrund. Familj, släktingar och andra viktiga människor förblir centrala när vi synar de ungas värderingar.

En slående observation när svararna tillfrågades om Helsingfors var att det var svårt för en betydande del av dem att ge en åsikt. Å ena sidan uttrycktes inte många negativa åsikter, men å andra sidan var neutrala omdömen relativt vanliga. Vi kan anta att det krävs åtminstone ett visst mått av kännedom för att kunna ha en negativ åsikt. Intressant nog var positiva och neutrala åsikter något motsägelsefulla då de synades landsvis.

Svararna ombads skriva tre ord som bäst beskrev Helsingfors. Föga överraskande dominerades ”fem i topp”-listan av ganska stereotypa bilder som ”kallt” eller ”snö”. Till och med i svar med hundratals olika ord nämndes nästan inga negativa saker. Kulturella skillnader var klart synliga här. Variationen av saker som nämndes av ryssar och svenskar, som ju bättre känner till Helsingfors, var remarkabelt större än bland de övriga.

Vid de frågor där man skulle bedöma olika påståenden om Helsingfors var neutrala svar också vanliga. En anmärkningsvärd andel av svararna varken höll med eller mot påståendena om kreativitet, design, matkultur, shopping, musik eller nattliv. Så om Helsingfors vill dra till sig turister med dessa faktorer måste ordet spridas. Men när svararna sedan svarade i ett annat frågemönster framgick att ovan nämnda frågor inte nödvändigtvis var de viktigaste faktorer som avgjorde destinationen. Man hade kunnat tycka att de skulle ha vägt tyngre. Mycket viktigare var omdömena att Helsingfors har ”a good vibe”, att det är en ovanlig destination och ligger i en intressant del av världen.

Så vad gör vi med dessa rön? Förhoppningsvis ger de resultat vi får av att analysera dessa unika data kunskap som hjälper stadens marknadsföringsmyndighet i sin krävande uppgift. Ur marknadsföringens synvinkel är det bra att veta att unga människors intryck av Helsingfors är relativt positiva, eller, precisare sagt, inte negativa. Skillnader länder emellan måste tas i betraktande, liksom också olika livsstilssegment. Samma marknadsföringsstrategier fungerar inte överallt. Och vi bör komma ihåg att positiva uppfattningar inte automatiskt betyder att Helsingfors upplevs som särskilt intressant. Det verkar som om unga människor uppfattar andra städer – Helsingfors konkurrenter – som intressantare än Helsingfors. Intressant nog var de vitsord som Helsingfors fick av ryska svarare de högsta då svarare från olika länder jämfördes. Ryssarna bildar en viktig målgrupp, och i ljuset av dessa rön kan så vara fallet även i framtiden.

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KUVAILULEHTI

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Helsinki's potential as a travel destination for young people

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Tiivistelmä

In the end of 2014, the marketing unit of the City of Helsinki started a project aiming to examine young people's opinions of Helsinki. The data was gathered by TNS Gallup in 10 countries by utilising the extensive internet panels in each country.

The main objective of the survey was to obtain information of how young people in the selected countries see Helsinki and what are the main differences and similarities between countries. This kind of research set-ting is new and unique and thus all the results are new.

Survey responses of young people from 10 countries portray Helsinki as a city with a great natural environment and as a safe city and an unusual destination. Although evaluated as a relatively interesting destination for young people, Helsinki lags slightly behind other Nordic capitals.

Asiasanat

Matkailu, turismi, kaupunkimarkkinointi, matkailumarkkinointi, markkinointi, tunnettuus, kaupunkibrändi

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STUDY REPORTS 2015

9

HELSINKI'S POTENTIAL AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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