



AARHUS
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A STUDY OF THE CO-BRAND AARHUS 2017

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Preface

rethinkIMPAIRCTS reports are an important outcome of the cooperation between Aarhus University and Aarhus 2017 in contributing with new knowledge on many different aspects of being European Capital of Culture. The reports will convey the results of the different research – and evaluation projects that will be conducted in the upcoming of, during and after 2017 as a part of rethinkIMPAIRCTS 2017. The aim is to make these new findings and insights accessible to a broad audience.

The following report sets out to explore the link between the image of Aarhus 2017 and the city of Aarhus. Thus, the ultimate goal is to find out how the image of Aarhus can benefit from the branding of European Capital of Culture in Aarhus 2017. The report 'The Study of the CO-Brand Aarhus 2017' is based on the final Master dissertation by Christina Kruse Møller & Laura Bender Thomsen at Aarhus University Spring 2015 conducted in cooperation with rethinkIMPAIRCTS 2017. The research is a contribution to the aim of creating more awareness of Aarhus by examining the local citizens' perception of the two brands; Aarhus and Aarhus 2017. From this, the authors reveal potential linkages that can strengthen the image of Aarhus. These findings are found in this report which is a result of the strategic cooperation between Aarhus 2017 and Aarhus University.

Introduction

Aarhus has been designated the European Capital of Culture in 2017, with the theme “Let's Rethink”. Part of the estimated long-term effects of Aarhus 2017 include increasing the awareness of Aarhus, the Central Denmark Region and their cultural offerings together with making the citizens in the region more active fellow citizens. Moreover, they aim to transform Aarhus from a city in Europe to a European city (Final application, 2012). Based on this, the authors of the report found it interesting to examine the current images of Aarhus and Aarhus 2017, as perceived by the citizens of Aarhus. Additionally, the positioning strategies of Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 have been investigated with the purpose of highlighting potential suggestions for improvement regarding the separate strategies. Finally, the two positioning strategies, including potential suggestions, are compared to examine whether opportunities exist in relation to strengthening or improving the image of Aarhus, through Aarhus 2017. These analyses were conducted in order to answer the following main research question: **“How can Aarhus 2017 assist in building the image of Aarhus?”**

Theory

Brand and brand equity - Several authors have defined what constitutes a brand (Keller, 2013; Ama.org; Kotler, 2009). **Based on these definitions, a brand can be defined as a feature that distinguishes a seller's offering from those of other sellers, based on both physical attributes but also the beliefs and expectations surrounding the offering.** The outcome of creating a successful branding strategy is positive effect on brand equity, which is the difference in value of the offering being branded compared to if it was not branded (Keller, 2013; Kotler et al. 2009).

This study analyses brand equity from the perspective of the customer and refers to the concept of Customer-Based-Brand-Equity (CBBE). This is partly because several authors have argued for the positive effects on strategy of using this approach (Keller, 2013; Esch et al., 2006) but also because it

matches several of the branding related long-term effects estimated by Aarhus 2017. These include increased level of awareness of Aarhus, the Central Denmark Region and their cultural offerings. Furthermore, Aarhus 2017 state in their application that they want to change the image of Aarhus from being a city in Europe to being a European city (Final application, 2012). By using the CBBE perspective on branding, the basis of these expected outcomes can be analysed making it relevant to the Aarhus 2017 project in relation to their current branding strategy.

Customer-Based-Brand-Equity

Brand equity measured from a customer perspective based on how they perceive the brand value.

(Keller 2013; Kotler et al. 2009).

The premise of CBBE:

"The power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds and hearts of customers"

(Keller, 2013:69).

Keller's definition:

"The differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand" (Keller, 2013:69).

Brand knowledge – Keller (1993, 2013) states that brand knowledge consists of two components: brand awareness and brand image.

Brand awareness Relates to the level of general knowledge of the brand and includes whether or not customers are able to recognise and recall the brand.

Brand awareness is measured in terms of both recognition and recall. In relation to recognition, customers are provided with a brand specific cue, for example the brand name. However, when recalling a brand only a category specific cue is provided, for example the category: soft drinks.

Keller (2013) also argues that there are particularly three advantages linked to a high level of brand awareness. These include facilitating the construction of an image, increases the chance of the brand being considered in a purchase situation and improves chances of brand being chosen especially in low involvement purchases (Keller, 2013).

Brand image

Based on brand awareness and refers to how customers perceive the brand. This perception is based on different associations that customers link to the brand in mind, thereby creating the image.

Regarding the image, Keller states that a successful brand should hold strong, unique and favourable associations, which differentiates the offering from those of other sellers (Keller, 2013). Associations can become linked to a brand in a variety of ways; through direct experience, marketing communications or word-of-mouth. Keller (2013) also argues that a brand can leverage secondary

associations by becoming linked to another entity such as country of origin, place where it is sold, or other brands. Linking two or more brands can be done by engaging in a co-branding activity, for example by creating a joint offering or being marketed together (Keller, 2013).

Advantages of co-branding

- Leveraging secondary associations
 - Stimulating sales from target groups of partner brands
 - Borrowing needed expertise
 - Saving costs on brand introduction
- (Keller, 2013; Simon in & Ruth, 1998; Lebar et al., 2005).

Disadvantages of co-branding

- Loss of control due to the partners' participation in the decision making process
- Possibility of being affected by actions of the other partners, of which they do not have any control (Keller, 2013)

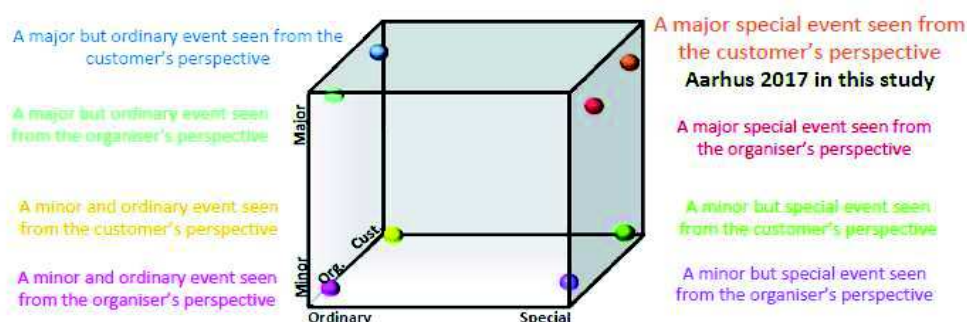
Positioning strategy – Kotler et al. (2009) define a positioning strategy as *“the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market”* (Kotler et al., 2009:361). This illustrates that the before mentioned brand knowledge and management of CBBE is based on a developed positioning strategy. According to Keller

(2013), developing a positioning strategy involves four specific considerations, which have been listed below:

- ❖ Identify potential target groups and evaluate their potential in terms of size and identifiability.
- ❖ Consider whether it is possible to actually target and reach the identified target groups and whether they will respond favourably to communications.
- ❖ Identify the brand's competitors
- ❖ Analyse how the brand is both similar to, and different from, competing brands. This includes identifying the points-of-parity (POPs) and points-of-difference (PODs).

Events as products – An event is an intangible product and an experience good, which cannot be inspected prior to purchase (Keller, 2013). Although researched extensively, there is much disagreement regarding how to define and categorise types of events (Bowdin et al. 2006a; Mossberg, 2000; Getz 1989, 2008). However, events are typically defined in terms of size and impact, called the major/minor dimension, after which a particular event can be further described using references to content (Hede and Kellett, 2011; Getz, 1997; Bowdin et al. 2006b; Ritchie 1984). Moreover, events can be characterised according to its degree of specialness, however this depends on whether the perspective is the organiser's or the customer's (Hede and Kellet, 2011; Getz, 2008).

By employing the often used categorisation continuum from minor to major, together with the perspectives and the perceived level of specialness, the authors of this report have developed the below mentioned framework. This was in order to incorporate the leading opinions regarding defining events as well as creating an overview of their connectedness.



Only the perspective of the customer corresponds with the CBBE concept used in this study. From this view, Aarhus 2017 is clearly a special event as it

creates an opportunity for a leisure, social and cultural experience beyond everyday experiences. Furthermore, Aarhus 2017 is a major event as it is expected to attract large crowds, media attention and funds to the region. It also involves large costs, incorporates many other events, and has a high degree of symbolism through its stated mind-set and theme. Additionally, the event is a prestigious nomination of international scale and it should lead to urban renewal. Based on these observations, Aarhus 2017 is defined as a major special event from the perspective of the customer and guest. According to Goldblatt (2002) and Getz (1997), the following factors need to be considered in relation to managing a major, one-time, special event:

- ❖ All events must go through the following five stages: Research, design, planning, coordination and evaluation (Goldblatt, 2002)
- ❖ Communicate clear and consistent messages to all stakeholders (Goldblatt, 2002)
- ❖ The leader must be a role model for both staff and volunteers (Getz, 1997)
- ❖ The event must signal uniqueness and a “must-see” attraction (Getz, 1997)
- ❖ Offer something extra which can only be experienced by attending the event (Getz, 1997)
- ❖ Consider the potential image effects of the theme, services, entertainment, settings, staff and volunteers (Getz, 1997).

According to the authors of this report, it is also important to note that packing is not a brand element and that associations cannot be established through direct experience. This means that focus should be on the remaining brand elements, as well as on brand contacts prior to the event is taking place. Furthermore, the number of brand contacts increases with the size of the event, which means that the image can be affected through multiple channels of communication that all need to be managed.

Destination branding – Developing and managing a destination brand is more complex than traditional branding because branding a destination involves many different target groups and stakeholders, each with personal agendas and objectives (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009; Morgan et al., 2004).

According to several leading authors within the field of destination branding, this type of branding requires:

Coordination and cooperation with stakeholders

- ❖ Strong leadership
- ❖ A strive for integration throughout the branding activities
- ❖ An established planning group
- ❖ A long-term perspective on branding
- ❖ Community support of the branding strategy
- ❖ A distinct place for the brand created in the minds of the customers

(Moilanen and Rainisto, 20009; Morgan et al., 2004; Jago et al., 2003)

Using events in destination branding – Pairing an event with a destination is argued by Brown et al. (2004) to be an act of co-operative branding. According to Kotler et al. (2009:431) and Keller (2013:269) *“co-branding occurs when two or more brands are combined into a joint product/market offering or marketed together in some fashion”*. Jago et al. (2003:5) also state; *“integrating a consumer’s images of an event into the destination’s brand is a form of co-branding”*.

Benefits of linking an event with a destination:

- ❖ Attracting tourists
- ❖ Generate revenue
- ❖ May create jobs
- ❖ Strengthen branding messages through media coverage
- ❖ Increase awareness of destination
- ❖ Strengthen/change the image of a destination

Jago et al. (2003) suggest that the possibilities of improving the awareness of a destination and its image are the main reasons why destinations link to events. Furthermore, they identified six factors, which they have termed critical success factors, in relation to ensuring the effectiveness of an event in enhancing the image of a destination. These include community support, cultural and strategic fit with destination, a point of differentiation, longevity or tradition, cooperative planning and media coverage.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The study has been divided into four main parts, where the first includes research on the level of awareness of ECoC. The second part involves an analysis of the image and positioning strategy of Aarhus, whereas the third part includes analyses of the awareness, the image and the positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017. Finally, part four involves an assessment of the six critical success factors are analysed and whether Aarhus 2017 can be used in relation to building the image of Aarhus.

AWARENESS OF EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

This section involves an analysis of the awareness of the ECoC brand with the purpose of answering the following research question:

- Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of the brand “European Capital of Culture”?

For this analysis, a questionnaire including 22 questions listed in a prearranged order was developed, with the objective of analysing the awareness level of both ECoC and Aarhus 2017. The target group for this study involves people living in Aarhus, which is why the questionnaire was in Danish. The design of the questionnaire included three parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of demographical questions where answers were used to evaluate upon the distribution of respondents.

The second part included questions linked to the awareness of the two brands; ECoC and Aarhus 2017, and therefore examines the respondents' abilities to recall or recognise the two brands.

In relation to questions examining abilities to recall either of the two brands, respondents were only provided with category specific cues such as *cultural offerings in Aarhus* for ECoC. The category specific cue provided when examining the respondents' abilities to recall Aarhus 2017 was *European Capital of Culture*. When examining the brand awareness based on the respondents' abilities to recognise either of the two brands, specific brand cues were provided, which in both cases consisted of the brand names “ECoC” and “Aarhus 2017”. The final part of the questionnaire, included questions relating

to the theme of Aarhus 2017 “Let’s Rethink”. This was in order to examine a deeper level of awareness towards Aarhus 2017. The questionnaire was distributed electronically and open for replies for four weeks. 325 completions were gathered and sorted, after which 160 completed questionnaires remained for further analysis.

In estimating the current brand knowledge of ECoC in terms of recall, both answers from the electronically distributed questionnaire were included together with records of the respondents answering the same question prior to participating in the later mentioned analysis of the image of Aarhus 2017. By combining these questions, 210 respondents answered the question of *“do you know of any current or future cultural offerings in Aarhus? – If yes, which?”* None of 210 the respondents mentioned ECoC directly, however, “Capital of Culture” was mentioned twice and “Culture-City” was mentioned 7 times. Whether or not these are considered actual representations of the ECoC brand, they were only mentioned 9 times out of a possible 210 times. **The respondents’ ability to recall the ECoC brand is therefore considered almost non-existent.**

In terms of recognition, where respondents were given a brand specific cue consisting of the brand name “European Capital of Culture”, 79.4% of the respondents stated that they have heard of ECoC. 19.4% had not heard of it and 1.3% answered, “don’t know”. **These results show that even though respondents are not able to recall the ECoC brand, almost 80% are able to recognise it.** When respondents were asked if they knew of any previous cities being nominated European Capital of Culture, 12.5% of the respondents answered yes and all but one were able to provide correct names of previous cities.

AARHUS

This section includes analyses of the image of Aarhus, their positioning strategy and a comparison of the two, with the objective of answering the following three research questions:

- Research Question 2: What is the current image of Aarhus, perceived by the citizens of Aarhus?

- Research Question 3: What is the current positioning strategy of Aarhus?
- Research Question 4: How does the positioning strategy relate to the current image of Aarhus?

The image of Aarhus

The image of Aarhus is examined using Brand Concept Maps (BCM). In using this technique, each respondent constructs a map based on what he or she associates with Aarhus. Following this, a consensus map is constructed based on an analysis of the individual BCMs. The collection of data and procedures of aggregating the individual maps were based on an article by John et.al (2006) who present a framework for making the image analysis possible in three different stages.

Stage 1: The Elicitation Stage

- ❖ Involves eliciting salient associations linked to Aarhus
- ❖ Done by asking randomly selected people living in Aarhus the following open-ended question: *"What do you associate with Aarhus?"*
- ❖ The associations mentioned most times are included in a set of salient associations

Stage 2: The Mapping Stage

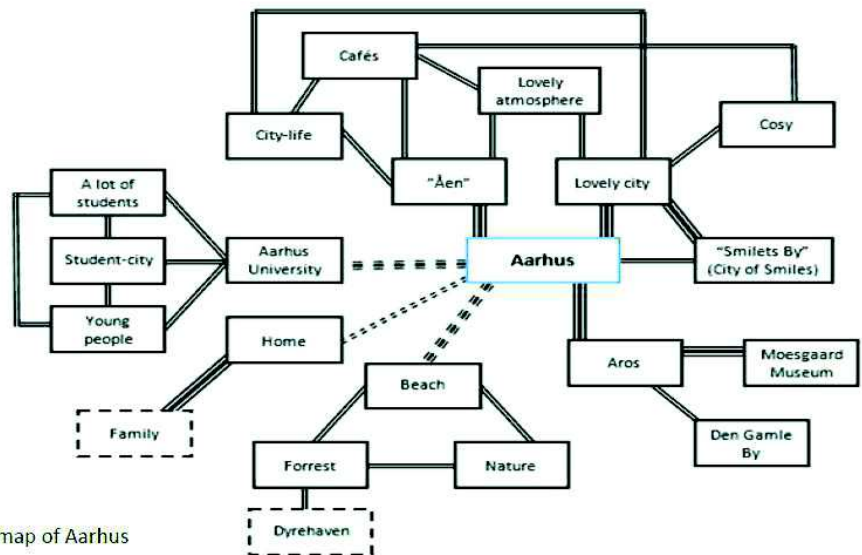
- ❖ Each participant choose his/her associations from the set of salient associations and links them to the brand name placed in the middle of the map
- ❖ The strengths of links between associations are indicated by lines with three indicating a strong link
- ❖ Finally, the participant has the option add new associations not covered by the salient associations

Stage 3: The Aggregation Stage

- ❖ Involves analysing the individual maps to create a consensus map illustrating the image perceived by the participants
- ❖ Count the frequency of mention for each association, number of times it is linked directly and number of times it is linked indirectly to the brand, which is called an interconnection
- ❖ Calculate ratios of first-order mention and types of interconnect

The maps were collected in two different locations in Aarhus to ensure that participants were selected randomly. Furthermore, the locations were select-

ed so that participants were able to make their maps on a table with no interruption. Pictures were taken of the final maps, resulting in 31 individual Brand Concept Maps for Aarhus. The consensus map illustrating the image of Aarhus is shown below:



Consensus map of Aarhus

Additional information regarding the favourability and uniqueness of the core brand associations was collected through an additional questionnaire where associations were rated using a seven-point likert scale. 32 completed questionnaires were gathered and used in the further analysis and evaluation of the image of Aarhus.

The map shows 18 core brand associations, which are those mentioned most frequently across the individually constructed BCMs. **The strongest associations are those linked directly to the brand and include “Lovely City”, “Åen”, “Smilets By” and “Aros”.** These associations have been evaluated as favourable and the last three are unique to Aarhus. The dotted lines represent a lack of consistency between the groups of associations and the way they are connected to the brand of Aarhus. This is for example the case regarding the group of associations involving Aarhus University, which may indicate that this group of associations is important to the image of Aarhus but not related to the brand in any specific way. The remaining core associations involve “Home” and a group of associations describing the surrounding environment of Aarhus. Although these were all rated as favourable, none of them were considered unique. **Additionally, the analysis indicates that “Aros” represents**

cultural attractions and that “Åen” represents a group of favourable associations linked to this area of the city centre.

Results show that the image of Aarhus involves three favourable, unique and strongly linked associations: “Åen”, “Smilets By” and Aros.

The positioning strategy of Aarhus

The city has clearly defined its target groups, together with the stakeholders responsible for communicating with the end target groups. Moreover, the competition is broadly defined to include medium sized university-cities in Europe. Aarhus is similar to these because they are able to offer the same, which is being young, a university-city and culture. In order to differentiate Aarhus from other cities, they focus on their four key differentiators mentioned below:

- ❖ A city that takes on big challenges
- ❖ A city that works together
- ❖ A city that is hungry to experiment and rethink conventional ways of doing things
- ❖ A city with pragmatic determination to do things better

In relation to the BCM constructed by Line Gerstrand Knive, it is indicated that Aarhus also wants to keep the association “Smilets by”. In addition to this, a second unofficial slogan, “The world’s smallest metropolis”, should also be linked to the brand via the association “Smilets by”. Line Gerstrand Knive also added a new association “A growing city”, and linked this to the brand of Aarhus, through the association “Aarhus University”. It is however important to note that none of their stated key differentiators are represented in their BCM, which indicates that they are not established in terms of actually being part of the image they want to achieve.

Regarding the previously mentioned factors facilitating successful destination branding, Aarhus has a planning group, the City Branding Team. Moreover, they cooperate and coordinate activities with stakeholders and attempt to ensure community support of the branding strategy. **Their perspective on branding is however not considered long-term by the authors of this report, as their developed action plan only covers the years of 2015 to 2018.** Line Gerstrand Knive also confirms this in the interview. Furthermore, they **may also be dealing with a lack of long-term political support** as Line Gerstrand

Knive stated that each mayor might influence the current branding strategy differently.

Results indicate that the positioning strategy is well defined however none of the four differentiators are mentioned in terms of associations and as such not part of the image. Moreover, the perspective on branding seems to be short-term and they may lack long-term political support.

Comparing the positioning strategy with the image of Aarhus

Comparing the perceived image of Aarhus with the BCM constructed by Line Gerstrand Knive showed that most associations were included on both maps. In addition, Aarhus' POPs of being a young, cultural, university-city are very much present in the perceived image of Aarhus. Although these associations are not unique, they are still very important in relation to identifying the type of city Aarhus is.

The association "Smilets By" was not explicitly mentioned as part of their positioning strategy, however, it was still present and strongly linked to Aarhus on both the consensus map and the map constructed by Line Gerstrand Knive. Furthermore, respondents evaluated "Smilets By" to be both favourable and unique, which implies that **"Smilets By" may actually be a point-of-difference of Aarhus**. Furthermore, a group of associations involving the city-centre was present on both maps. Especially "Åen" was evaluated to be both unique and favourable, which may suggest that this is also a POD of Aarhus and that the citizens of Aarhus are positive advocates of the area.

In the city's local action plan for the branding of Aarhus they refer to several must-win battles. One of these involve changing the perception of Aarhus as a city in Europe to a European city. As the consensus map illustrates, no references to Europe have been included which means that in order to change this perception, Aarhus also needs to establish and link associations involving Europe. Finally, no associations referring to the key differentiators were included in either of the two maps. This indicates that no associations have been established regarding these important elements of the strategy.

Results indicate that Aarhus needs to focus on establishing and linking associations regarding their key differentiators and the European dimension. Moreover, they should consider including the area surrounding “Åen” as a POD in their strategy.

Aarhus 2017

This part of the report involves analyses of the awareness level and image of Aarhus 2017, together with an examination of the positioning strategy with the purpose of answering the following questions:

- Research Question 5: What is the level of awareness of Aarhus 2017?
- Research Question 6: What is the current image of Aarhus 2017, perceived by the citizens of Aarhus?
- Research Question 7: What is the current positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017?
- Research Question 8: How does the positioning strategy relate to the current image of Aarhus 2017?

Awareness of Aarhus 2017

Information regarding the awareness level of both ECoC and Aarhus 2017 was collected through the same questionnaire, which is why the data collection method for this part will not be discussed any further.

The analysis of the respondents' abilities to recall the Aarhus 2017 brand involved to questions with the following category specific cues: “*current or future cultural activities in Aarhus*” and “*future European Capitals of Culture*”. When provided the first cue, 13.8% of the respondents recalled Aarhus 2017. However when the cue involved ECoC, 34.4% of the respondents were able to recall the brand. **This indicates that providing the respondents with a cue relating to ECoC may improve their ability to recall Aarhus 2017.** Examining the respondents' abilities to recognise the brand involves providing them with a brand specific cue, which in this case was the brand name “Aarhus 2017”. **In this case, 75% of the respondents indicated that they recognised the brand.**

Additionally, the awareness level of the theme was investigated with the purpose of examining a deeper level of brand knowledge. Results of this investigation show that when asked directly about the theme, only seven out of 160 respondents recalled “rethink” or “gentænk”. To examine the respondents’ ability to recognise the theme, they were asked to recognise the right theme from a list of different options including the correct theme “Let’s Rethink”.

What the respondents thought was the theme:

- 2.7% chose RETHINK (The old title of the theme)
- 3.4% chose Let’s Rethink (The new title of the theme)
- 13.4% chose Keep Smiling (Suggested by the authors of this report)
- 25.8% chose Aarhus for Progress (Previous slogan of Aarhus no longer in use)
- 52.7% stated that they could not recognise the theme

These results therefore indicate that a deeper awareness level of Aarhus 2017 is close to non-existent.



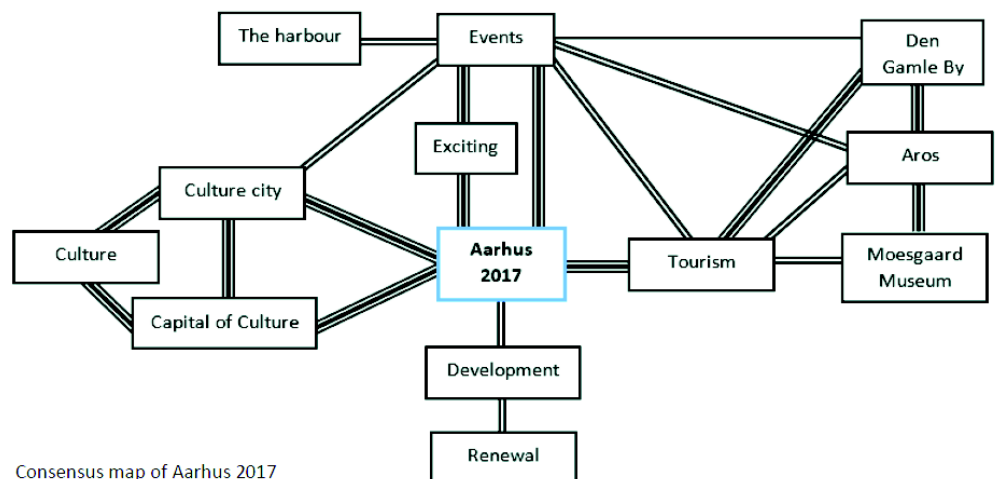
Image of Aarhus 2017

This part of the study involved new participants to ensure that any prompted associations regarding the image of Aarhus, did not affect the associations chosen and linked to the brand; Aarhus 2017. Moreover, as awareness of a brand is necessary in order to create an image, each participant’s level of awareness was examined prior to mapping the image. The participants already knowing about Aarhus 2017 were asked to map the image as previously mentioned, whereas participants not knowing about Aarhus 2017 were provided a brochure from Aarhus 2017 after which they too were asked to map their newly established associations. By including the so-called “non-knowers”, the authors were also able to study any potential differences in how the image is perceived, depending on the level of awareness.

Examining the two consensus maps for “knowers” and “non-knowers” showed that they were relatively similar. The main difference relates to the associations “Capital of Culture”, which was only linked directly to the brand by the group of respondents referred to as “knowers”. The “non-knowers” on the other hand, linked “Culture-city” directly to the brand. **This indicates that increasing the level of awareness of Aarhus 2017 also increases the more unique association “Capital of Culture”, which was also evaluated a favourable association.** Another difference between the two maps involved “Events”. The “knowers” linked this association directly to the brand, where the “non-knowers” only linked “Events” with “Exciting”. This may suggest that increasing the level of awareness of Aarhus 2017 also creates a stronger link between the brand and “Events”.

Based on the similarities between the two maps and the authors’ belief that an actual image consists of people with varying degree of brand knowledge, it was decided to continue the analysis of the image by combining all individual BCMs to one consensus map, including both “knowers” and “non-knowers”.

This map is illustrated below:



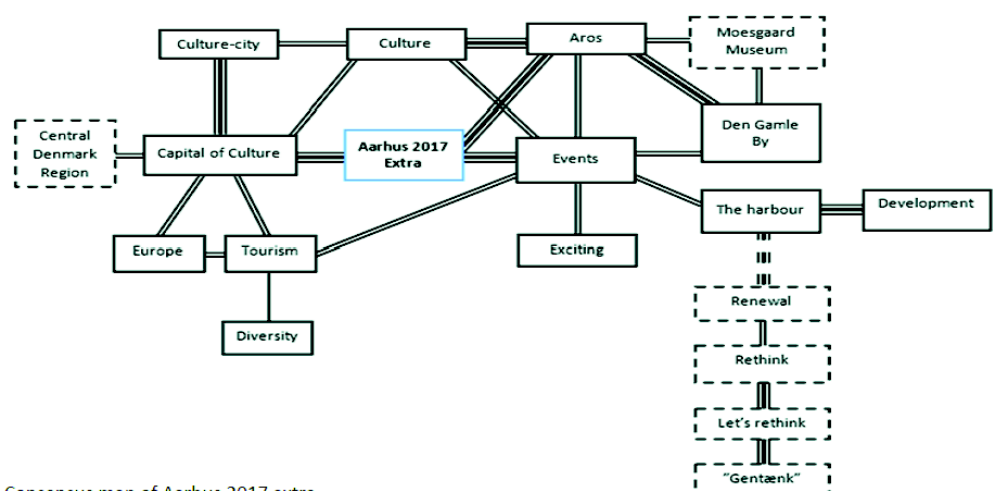
The consensus map shows that Aarhus 2017 has six directly linked, core associations. “Events” now seems to be a central association, which may be due to lack of uniqueness and therefore linked to several other associations in mind. The map also shows that “Development” and “Renewal” are linked with moderate strength. These were evaluated by the authors as strongly related and favourable, but not unique to brand of Aarhus 2017. Moreover, part

of the image of Aarhus 2017 involves the three attractions; “Moesgaard Museum”, “Aros” and “Den Gamle By”, which have all been linked to Aarhus 2017 through “Tourism”. “Tourism” was not considered a unique association but the authors argue that the three attractions are relatively unique. Additionally, the image highlights that by combining the two types of respondents, both “Culture-city” and “Capital of Culture” are strongly associated with Aarhus 2017. However, as previously mentioned, only “Capital of Culture” is considered unique.

Results indicate that increased awareness of the brand may strengthen the brand’s link with the favourable and unique association; Capital of Culture. Additionally, “Events” and “Tourism” are strongly linked and favourable associations but not evaluated as unique. They may however be important points-of-parity and define the category of this brand.

Results regarding Aarhus 2017extra – As the initially identified salient associations did not refer to any elements of the theme or the partners involved, the authors decided to carry out a subsequent investigation into how the perceived image would look like if the respondents were provided with extra associations in the mapping stage. *This means that the extra associations have a low level of awareness, as they were not identified in the elicitation stage. They may however affect the image and as such provide information in relation to how the image of Aarhus 2017 could be improved if these associations are focused upon.* The extra associations include diversity, sustainability, Let’s Rethink, Rethink, GentænK, The Central Denmark Region, democracy and Europe.

This analysis involved 20 individually constructed BCMs and the consensus map is illustrated below:



Results show that by providing participants with more associations to choose between, the number of directly linked core associations is reduced to three, including: “Capital of Culture”, “Aros” and “Events”. Moreover, “Europe” and “Diversity” became core associations. **“Culture-city” is no longer associated directly with Aarhus 2017, which may indicate that the extra associations have further defined “Capital of Culture and as such made it a stronger association compared to “Culture-city”.** Additionally, “Central Denmark Region” is added as a secondary association and “Tourism” is now linked to “Capital of Culture”, “Europe”, “Diversity” and “Events” instead of directly to the brand and the cultural attractions. The previous analysis of the awareness level of Aarhus 2017 concluded that not many respondents were able to recognise or recall the theme. This conclusion is supported by the image of Aarhus 2017, where the three associations are interconnected but neither strongly linked to other core associations nor to the brand “Aarhus 2017”. They are however still included in the map as this highlights possible ways in which these associations can be strengthened in their relation to Aarhus 2017.

Results from the subsequent study show that increasing the level of awareness of particularly, “Europe”, “Diversity” and “Central Denmark Region” may have further defined the desirable association “Capital of Culture”. Moreover, the results show that no associations involving the theme have become core associations. This supports previous findings relating to the low awareness level of the theme.

Positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017

Examining the positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017 showed that they have defined several target groups, which are favourable in terms of size but may be too broadly defined, making it difficult to target them precisely and ensuring favourable responses from most. Moreover, they do not seem to have identified any competitors. **Although they may not have any direct competitors, they may still experience competition from other events or activities satisfying the same needs.** Furthermore, each target group may have different needs, which further increases the number of potential competitors.

To illustrate the number of potential competitors existing on different levels, the authors have developed below mentioned figure:



Because they have not evaluated upon specific competitors, they have not explicitly developed any PODs or POPs. However, the authors of this report assume that the management of Aarhus 2017 do consider how they want to be perceived, as they have intentions to improve or enhance specific associations linked to Aarhus and the region.

In order to examine these implicit thoughts, Bent Sørensen, the Head of Communication of Aarhus 2017 was asked to complete a BCM based on what they would like Aarhus 2017 to be associated with. **Examining the BCM showed that Aarhus 2017 should be strongly linked to “Capital of Culture”, which is further linked to “Let’s rethink”, “Culture” and “Renewal”.** Furthermore, the cultural attractions are shown to be important associations but in no specific order. “Tourism” is also an important association and further linked to “Development” and “Exciting”. Another aspect of the image involves a European dimension, which includes links to democracy and sustainability. Moreover, Bent Sørensen also added two new associations to the European dimension including “Knowledge-sharing” and “Learning”.

Factors facilitating successful branding of an event – As previously mentioned, branding an event like Aarhus 2017 involves signalling the uniqueness of the event. **It is therefore important that Aarhus 2017 identify their PODs and communicate that it is a once in a lifetime opportunity.** Furthermore, it is important that they continue to encourage participation and consider how every element from theme to volunteers can possibly affect the image. Additionally, focus should be on establishing associations relating to the brand name, logo and theme, and through unplanned and planned communications prior to the event.

Results indicate that the target groups may be too broadly. Additionally, Aarhus 2017 have not defined any competitors, POPs or PODs. Further analysis did however indicate that desired associations include “Capital of Culture”, “Let’s rethink”, “Tourism”, the cultural attractions and associations involving a European dimension.

Comparing the positioning strategy with the image of Aarhus 2017

The purpose of comparing the positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017 with the perceived image is to evaluate upon the current effectiveness of the strategy and potential ways of improving the image of Aarhus 2017.

Comparing the positioning strategy with the perceived image first show that **“Capital of Culture” is an important association in the positioning strategy and evaluated as favourable and relatively unique**. This is why “Capital of Culture” is considered a more valuable association compared to “Culture-city”. In relation to this, results from the image analysis indicate that increasing the awareness of Aarhus 2017 strengthens its link with “Capital of Culture” while reduces its link with “Culture-city”. Moreover, increasing the awareness of the associations “Europe”, “Central Denmark Region” and “Diversity” also seems to further the strength of the link between “Capital of Culture” and Aarhus 2017. The association “Europe” is also part of the positioning strategy, which means that increasing the awareness of the European dimension may accomplish several goals. This also includes changing the perspective on tourism from previously being linked to cultural attractions and instead being linked to “Capital of Culture”, similar to how Bent Sørensen placed the cultural attractions and “Tourism” in his map.

Examining the positioning strategy also highlighted the importance of the association “Let’s rethink”, which the authors argue is a unique association. This association was however not included in the elicited salient associations, nor was it included as a core association in the 2017extra consensus map. Although a high number of respondents were neutral in evaluating the theme association, 50% still rated it as very positive or positive. According to Keller (2013), a brand element such as a theme must be memorable, likeable and meaningful. In this case, the theme seems to be likeable, however it is not memorable and several respondents stated in the questionnaire that it was difficult to understand. **This means that focus should be on increasing the awareness of the theme, making it memorable, and perhaps specifying the theme to increase the meaningfulness as this association could result in a strong, favourable and unique association.**

Additionally, the authors suggest that the management of Aarhus 2017 further specify their potential customers. **Moreover, the identified needs of the target groups should be used in identifying their main competitors as well as how to differentiate themselves from this competition.** If, as was indicated previously, several target groups with differing needs are constituting multiple frames of reference for identifying competition, the most important customers and their needs should be focused upon. Once this differentiation has been further elaborated upon, associations linked to the intended image can be created and established in the minds of the potential customers of Aarhus 2017. This is argued to help ensure Aarhus 2017 a more consisting image of strong, favourable and unique associations.

Results suggest that focus should be on increasing the awareness of the brand and the theme together with specific associations including “Europe”, “Central Denmark Region” and “Diversity”. Additionally, it is suggested that Aarhus 2017 focus on defining their competitors followed by an identification of their points-of-difference. This may also prove useful in relation to communicating the uniqueness of the event.

Using Aarhus 2017 as an image builder for Aarhus

This section covers an analysis of the six factors previously mentioned in relation to facilitating the successful use of an event in destination branding. It therefore also answers the final research question:

- Research Question 9: Are the stated criteria in relation to using Aarhus 2017 as an image builder fulfilled?

According to Jago et al. (2003), six factors influence the successful use of an event in having a positive effect on the image of a destination. These have been analysed and are mentioned on the following page.

Community support – Examining this factor showed that their communication strategy involves a great focus on ensuring support from the citizens, but results from the awareness analysis of Aarhus 2017 showed that most respondents are not familiar with the theme. However, when they were explained about the content of the theme, close to 80% indicated a positive attitude. Examining the answers further also revealed that the theme may need to be

expressed in a more simple, clear and concrete fashion to ensure that people fully understand the theme.

Cultural and strategic fit – Aarhus is positioned as a cultural city and the respondents included references to both the culture of Aarhus and the attractions. This is why a cultural fit with the ECoC event is argued to exist. A strategic fit between Aarhus and ECoC is also argued to exist. This is based on their POP of culture and their previously mentioned key differentiators. ECoC focuses on bringing countries in Europe closer together while influencing the long-term development of a city, which in the case of Aarhus will be through experimentation and rethinking.

Differentiation – Jago et. al. (2003) argue that using events in destination branding is especially useful when the event differentiates the destination from competing destinations. In addition to this, Chalip and Costa (2005) state that events are also effective image builders when they manage to highlight associations desired by the destination. In this case, Aarhus 2017 is part of what differentiates Aarhus from other destinations, however this is not sustainable as Aarhus 2017 is a one-time event. Instead, authors argue that long-term effects should be created through highlighting desired associations of Aarhus, including associations favourable and unique to the destination. In the case of Aarhus, previous analysis showed that these associations are “Smilets by”, “Let’s rethink” and the cultural attractions. Additionally, associations linked to Europe and the four differentiators, also seem to be desired associations of Aarhus.

Longevity/tradition of event – EcoC was established in 1985 with the purpose of bringing European citizens closer together. They have specified several criteria for hosting the event and applications are later reviewed by a panel of independent experts to ensure consistency between the ECoC events and the ECoC brand. This illustrates that ECoC has a long history and clear profile and not affected by too many co-branding activities.

Cooperative planning – In relation to cooperation, the destination name has been included in the name of the event: Aarhus 2017. However, the analysis indicated that Aarhus or at least the City Branding Team has limited influence in relation to for example the marketing communications. Although ECoC’s influence is also limited, the authors of this report argue that due to their con-

tinuous reviews and potentially recommending Aarhus 2017 for the Melina Mercouri Price, ECoC has more influence compared to Aarhus. Strengthening the cooperation between Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 and allowing the two positioning strategies to be closer linked, would ensure that the right associations are highlighted and as such positively affect the future image of Aarhus. This also means that Aarhus would have a greater influence in relation to what and how elements of Aarhus 2017 are covered by the media.

Based on above mentioned evaluations, it can be concluded that the criteria facilitating the successful use of Aarhus 2017 in improving the image of Aarhus are fulfilled. It is however, important to note that the level of cooperation between Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 should be strengthened. This especially involves ensuring a consistency between their positioning strategies and identifying ways of highlighting the desired associations of Aarhus.

Conclusion

Results show that the current level of awareness of ECoC is high in terms of recognition, however the majority of the respondents were unable to recall the brand. Regarding the image of Aarhus, three core associations are favourable, unique and directly linked including: “Åen”, “Smilets by” and “Aros”. Additionally, the image includes groups of associations linked to the students and the surrounding environment of Aarhus. Their positioning strategy is well defined although the City Branding Team has not mentioned the four differentiators in relation to their desired image and associations. Moreover, the perspective on branding seems to be short-term and they may lack long-term political support. The comparison of their positioning strategy with the perceived image of Aarhus suggests that Aarhus should focus on establishing links to their four key differentiators and Europe. Furthermore, they should consider including the area surrounding the river in the city centre in their positioning strategy, as this is a strong, favourable and unique association of which the citizens may already be positive advocates.

Regarding the awareness of Aarhus 2017, results show that the majority of the respondents recognised the brand. Additionally, their ability to recall the brand seems to improve when provided a cue involving ECoC. However more than 90% of the respondents were unable to recall or recognise the theme. In relation to the image analysis of Aarhus 2017, results indicate that increased awareness of the brand may strengthen the brand's link with the favourable and unique association: Capital of Culture. Additionally, “Events” and “Tourism” are strongly linked and favourable associations but not evaluated as unique. They may however be important points-of-parity and define the category of this brand.

Adding the extra associations to the list of salient associations resulted in two new core associations: “Europe” and “Diversity”. Furthermore, “Culture-city” is no longer linked directly to the brand, which may indicate that the extra associations have further defined the subtitle; Capital of Culture, making this stronger than “Culture-city”. The results show that no associations involving the theme have become core associations. This supports previous findings relating to the low awareness level of the theme.

Examining the positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017 showed that the target groups may be too broadly defined. Additionally, Aarhus 2017 have not defined any competitors, POPs or PODs. Further analysis did however indicate that desired associations include “Capital of Culture”, “Let’s rethink”, “Tourism”, the cultural attractions and associations involving a European dimension. Comparing these results to the analysed image shows that Aarhus 2017 should focus on establishing links to the European dimension as “Europe” is only present in the image when added by the authors to the list of salient associations. This may also further define “Capital of Culture” into the main association used to describe Aarhus 2017. Finally, focus should be kept on increasing the awareness of the theme “Let’s Rethink”.

In relation to using Aarhus 2017 as an image builder of Aarhus, the six criteria are argued by the authors to be fulfilled and Aarhus 2017 therefore has the potential of ameliorating the image of Aarhus. The current level of cooperation between Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 may however need to be improved, in order to ensure that the desired associations of Aarhus are highlighted.

The generalizability of the results have not been discussed, as this was not part of the study’s objectives. The goal of this report was instead to establish meaning through the responses of the participants and as such produce a picture based on their replies. This picture may change depending on the involved respondents, which means that attempting to reproduce the reality is not a goal, as this would involve all citizens in Aarhus.

Suggestions for future initiatives

The suggestions for future initiatives are based on the conclusion of the original report as well as specific suggestions developed for the thesis defence in June 2015.

General suggestions

- ❖ It is suggested that the level of cooperation between Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 is increased to ensure consistency between the two strategies and realise the potential of using Aarhus 2017 as an image builder of Aarhus.

Suggestions developed for Aarhus 2017

- ❖ The authors suggest that Aarhus 2017 further develop and specify their positioning strategy. This will create a clear strategy for what needs to be focused on in their marketing communications alongside the creation of guidelines for how the remaining elements of the event may, and occasionally should, affect the perceived image.
- ❖ Focus on increasing the awareness of the theme “Let’s Rethink” and examine how to make it memorable and perhaps how to increase its meaningfulness. This could potentially also improve Aarhus’ links to associations involving two of their key differentiators: “A city that is hungry to experiment and rethink conventional ways of doing things” and “A city that takes on big challenges”.
- ❖ Regarding strengthening the link with Europe, Aarhus 2017 should employ a consistent use of the subtitle; European Capital of Culture. This could for example be done through radio spots as the “Europe” association only needs an increased level of awareness, which could be achieved by repeated exposure without explanation. Furthermore, Aarhus 2017 should attempt to manage communications out of their control while also highlighting the European dimension of relevant events. Making this a strong and favourable association of Aarhus 2017 may then make it possible for Aarhus to leverage it and as such itself be linked to Europe.

- ❖ Finally, Aarhus 2017 should focus on highlighting the desired associations of Aarhus, as this may strengthen some of Aarhus' strong, favourable and unique associations, which could further its differentiation from competing destinations.

Suggestions developed for Aarhus

- ❖ Aarhus should focus on establishing associations involving their four key differentiators as no associations referring to these were present in the current image
- ❖ The authors further suggest that the identified strong, favourable and unique associations are included in national or international branding strategies as the respondents seemed to be positive advocates of these associations and may therefore also support these branding strategies
- ❖ Additionally, Aarhus should focus on strengthening the link with Europe. This could for example be done by translating the strong, favourable and unique association "Smilets by" into: "The City of Smiles", or consistently use English phrases in relation to other events in Aarhus. Moreover, they could assess the favourability of the phrase: "The World's Smallest Metropolis" as this may also lead to a favourable and unique association.

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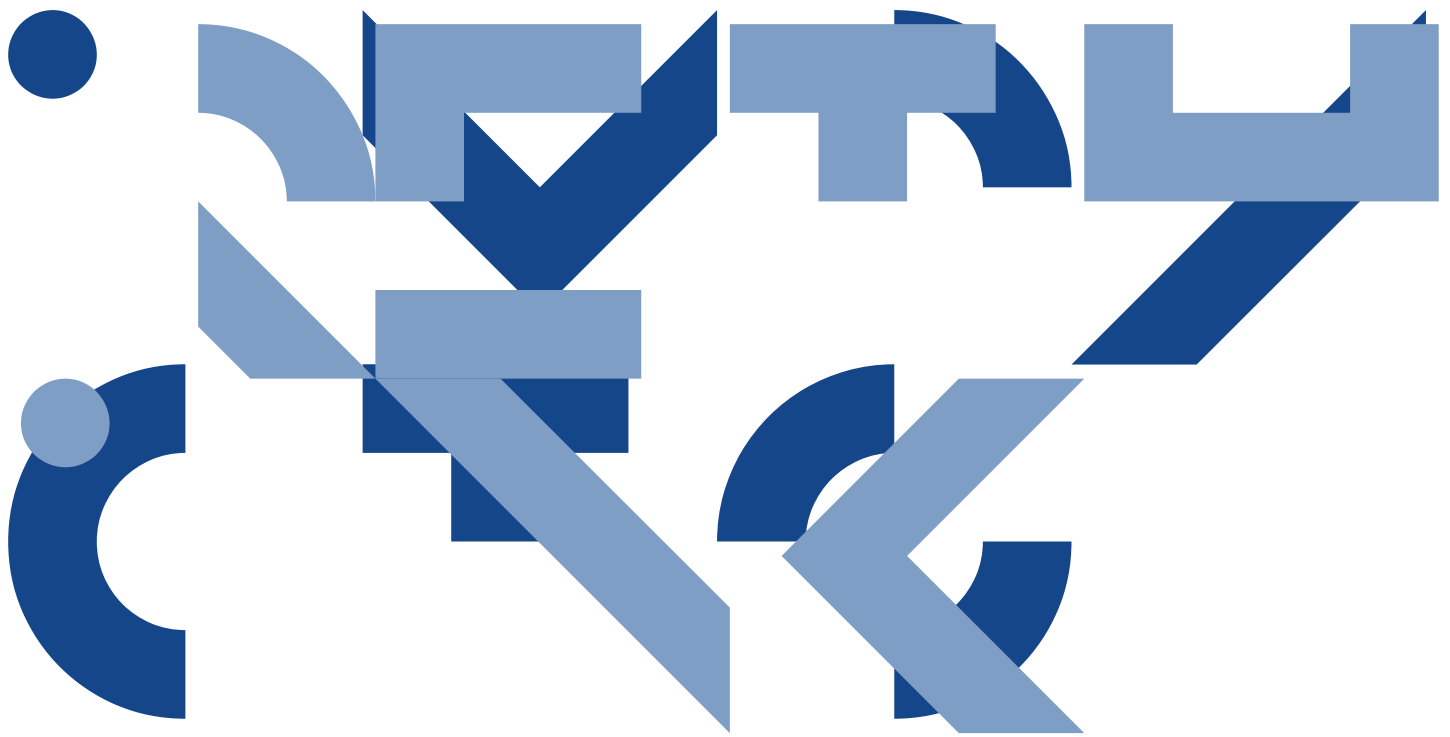
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This study analyses Aarhus citizens' brand knowledge of the co-brand, Aarhus 2017, which is a combination of the two brands: Aarhus and European Capital of Culture (ECoC). The purpose of this report is answering the following main research question: "How can Aarhus 2017 assist in building the image of Aarhus?" In order to analyse this, brand knowledge studies regarding brand awareness, brand image and positioning strategies of Aarhus and Aarhus 2017 have been conducted. The data collection included an online questionnaire regarding awareness levels, individually collected Brand Concept Maps for the images and a second questionnaire involving the favourability and uniqueness of associations. The positioning strategies are analysed based on expert interviews.

Findings show that ECoC has a high level of awareness in terms of recognition but not recall. The image of Aarhus includes three directly linked, strong, favourable and unique associations: "Aros", "Smilets by", and "Åen". Comparing the associations to Aarhus' current positioning strategy identified a need to focus on associations involving Europe and their key differentiators. The awareness level of Aarhus 2017 is high in terms of recognition but limited in relation to recall, especially regarding their theme: Let's rethink. The image of Aarhus 2017 includes the following six directly linked associations: "Tourism", "Culture-city", "Capital of Culture", "Events", "Exciting" and "Development". By adding extra associations to the salient associations, "Europe" also became a core association and "Culture-city" was no longer directly linked. Comparing these results to the current positioning strategy of Aarhus 2017 identified a need to focus on "Europe" and "Let's Rethink".