



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

Turku School of
Economics

Country image of Finland

The experiences of international students

International Business

Master's thesis

Author:

Aino Puustinen

Supervisors:

D.Sc. Niina Nummela

D.Sc. Anna Karhu

17.5.2024

Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: International Business

Author: Aino Puustinen

Title: Country image of Finland: the experiences of international students

Supervisors: D.Sc. Niina Nummela, D.Sc. Anna Karhu

Number of pages: 86 pages + appendices 3 pages

Date: 17.5.2024

International students hold great potential for contributing to Finland's growing need of skilled workers. Therefore, attracting and retaining these students is of high importance. Country images, as subjective attitudes among foreign publics, offer a theoretical lens for studying international students' experiences and attitudes. Moreover, there is a research gap on the country image of Finland from the perspective of international students. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore how international students experience the country image of Finland.

Country image consists of beliefs (cognitions) and emotions (affects), which influence behavioural intentions (conations). Country image influences international students' destination country choices as a halo construct. When an individual has experience of a country, country image as a summary construct combines these experiences. This is consistent with literature on international students' post-graduation intentions, and therefore, country image is expected to influence post-graduation intentions through experiential knowledge. Personal values and experiences affect the formation of the overall evaluation through cognitions, while cultural intelligence and integration to the host country affect the interpretation of firsthand experiences.

This study was conducted as qualitative research with an interpretative approach. The data was gathered by interviewing international degree-students and graduates in Finland and analysed thematically. The five themes emerged from the data and aimed for interpreting the central phenomena connected to the aim of the study as wholes. The themes discussed the role of information in choosing a destination country, living quality in comparison to home countries, dealing with cultural differences, the roles of job search and politics in creating uncertainty, and the students' post-graduation intentions.

This study supports previous research by arguing that country image can influence international students' destination country choices as a halo construct significantly, and, to an extent, post-graduation intentions as a summary construct. The students' high motivation to look for information before choosing a destination country was also consistent with previous studies. Living quality was the most important aspect of Finland's country image, which emphasizes how students interpret country cognitions into affects according to their own personal background. On the other hand, difficulties in finding employment and tightening immigration policies had created feelings of not being welcome and lowered equality perceptions. Cultural intelligence and personal motivation may help with integration and in the formation of a positive country image.

The findings of this study suggest that to attract and retain students who are dedicated to stay in the country, it is important for Finland to hold on to high living quality factors, such as safety, and family well-being. The effect of positive word-of-mouth could possibly be grown by enhancing international students' experiences. It is suggested that policymakers and employers could work together to improve international students' working opportunities. Moreover, it seems that policymakers could re-evaluate some of the tighter immigration policies and consider what type of message they send to international students.

Key words: Country image, international students, Finland, destination country, post-graduation intentions, country image changes, politics.

Pro gradu -tutkielma

Oppiaine: Kansainvälinen liiketoiminta

Tekijä: Aino Puustinen

Otsikko: Suomen maakuva kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden kokemusten näkökulmasta

Ohjaajat: KTT Niina Nummela, KTT Anna Karhu

Sivumäärä: 86 + liitteet 3 sivua

Päivämäärä: 17.5.2024

Osaavan työvoiman tarve kasvaa Suomessa. Yksi ratkaisu on houkutella kansainvälisiä opiskelijoita ja etsiä keinoja, joilla heidät saadaan jäämään tänne. Maakuva on ulkomaalaisten subjektiiviset asenteet maata kohtaan, joten se tarjoaa teoreettisen kulman tutkia kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden asenteita ja kokemuksia. Suomen maakuva ei ole aikaisemmin tutkittu kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden näkökulmasta. Tämän vuoksi tämän pro gradu -tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten kansainväliset opiskelijat kokevat Suomen maakuvan.

Maakuva koostuu uskomuksista (kognitiot) ja tunteista, jotka vaikuttavat käyttäytymisaikomuksiin. Maakuva vaikuttaa kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden kohdemaan valintaan sädekehäkonstruktiona (halo construct). Siinä vaiheessa, kun opiskelijalla on kokemusta kohdemaasta, maakuva tuo nämä kokemukset yhteen. Maakuva yhteen vetävänä konstruktiona (summary construct) on linjassa kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden valmistumisen jälkeisiä aikomuksia käsittelevän tutkimuksen kanssa, joten odotus on, että maakuva vaikuttaa opiskelijoiden aikeisiin jäädä Suomeen kokemustiedon kautta. Henkilökohtaiset arvot ja kokemukset vaikuttavat tunteiden muodostumiseen kognitioiden kautta. Toisaalta kulttuurinen älykkyys (cultural intelligence) ja yksilön integraatio kohdemaahan vaikuttavat siihen, miten opiskelijat tulkitsevat kokemuksiaan.

Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena, ja lähestymistapana on interpretivismi. Data kerättiin haastattelemalla Suomessa opiskelevia kansainvälisiä tutkinto-opiskelijoita Suomessa, sekä jo valmistuneita. Data analysoitiin temaattisesti. Muodostetut viisi teemaa käsittelevät tiedon roolia kohdemaan valinnassa, elämänlaatua verrattuna kunkin kotimaahan, kulttuurieroja, työnhaun ja politiikan vaikutusta epävarmuuteen sekä aikomuksia jäädä Suomeen.

Tämän tutkimuksen johtopäätökset tukevat aikaisempaa kirjallisuutta osoittamalla, että maakuva voi vaikuttaa merkittävästi kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden kohdemaan valintaan sädekehäkonstruktiona ja jossain määrin valmistumisen jälkeisiin aikomuksiin yhteen vetävänä konstruktiona. Kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden korkea motivaatio etsiä tietoa kohdemaasta ennen opiskelumaan valintaa on linjassa aikaisemman kirjallisuuden kanssa. Elämänlaatu on maakuvan tärkein osa-alue, mikä korostaa sitä, miten opiskelijat tulkitsevat uskomuksia tunteiksi oman, henkilökohtaisen taustansa mukaan. Toisaalta työnhakuun liittyvät haasteet ja maahanmuuttopolitiikan kiristyminen ovat aiheuttaneet opiskelijoille tunteita siitä, etteivät he ole tervetulleita ja heikentäneet käsityksiä tasa-arvosta Suomessa. Kulttuurinen älykkyys ja henkilökohtainen motivaatio saattavat puolestaan edistää integraatiota ja parantaa maakuva.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella ehdotan, että Suomen kannattaa pitää tiukasti kiinni hyvän elämän peruseriaatteita, kuten turvallisuudesta ja perheiden hyvinvoinnista. Niiden avulla voidaan houkutella Suomeen sitoutuneita kansainvälisiä opiskelijoita ja edistää heidän jäämistään maahan. Opiskelijoiden kokemuksia parantamalla on mahdollista lisätä myönteistä suullisesti leviävää tietoa (word-of-mouth). Suosituksena on, että päättäjät ja työnantajat tekevät yhteistyötä parantaakseen kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden työllistymistä. Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella vaikuttaa siltä, että joitain maahanmuuttopolitiikan tiukennuksia kannattaa harkita uudelleen. Olennaista on miettiä, minkälaisen viestin ne antavat kansainvälisille opiskelijoille ja muulle osaavalle työvoimalle.

Avainsanat: Maakuva, kansainväliset opiskelijat, Suomi, opiskelumaan valinta, valmistumisen jälkeiset aikomukset, maakuvan muuttuminen, politiikka.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	9
1.1	Background for the study	9
1.2	Country image of Finland	11
1.3	Aim of the thesis	13
2	Country image	16
2.1	Defining country image	16
2.2	The components of country image	18
2.2.1	The cognitive component of country image	18
2.2.2	The affective component of country image	19
2.2.3	The interplay of the components	20
2.3	Country image for international students	24
2.3.1	Country image in choosing a destination country	24
2.3.2	Evolving country image	27
2.3.3	Country image and post-graduation intentions	30
2.4	Synthesis and the Finnish context	34
3	Methodology	38
3.1	Research approach	38
3.2	Data collection	38
3.3	Data analysis	42
3.4	Evaluation of the study	43
3.5	Research ethics	44
4	Findings and discussion	47
4.1	The role of information in choosing a destination country	47
4.2	Living quality in comparison to home countries	50
4.3	Dealing with cultural differences	53
4.4	The roles of job search and politics in creating uncertainty	57
4.4.1	Difficulties in finding employment	57
4.4.2	Tightening immigration policies	60
4.5	The students' mindsets between dedication and mobility	63

5	Conclusions	68
5.1	Theoretical contributions	68
5.2	Policy recommendations	72
5.3	Limitations and suggestions for future research	74
	References	76
	Appendices	87
	Appendix 1 – Interview questions	87
	Appendix 2 – Interview consent form	88
	Appendix 3 – Data management plan	89

Table of figures

Figure 1: Finland's NBI ranking 2012-2022	11
Figure 2: Finland's rankings in NBI aspects 2021-2022	12
Figure 3: Nearby concepts	17
Figure 4: The 4D CI model	21
Figure 5: High-involvement hierarchy country images	22
Figure 6: Interplay of the CI components	23
Figure 7: CI and institution image in destination country choices	25
Figure 8: Evolution of CI	30
Figure 9: CI as a summary construct	33
Figure 10: Interviewees' CI and staying intentions	64

Table of tables

Table 1: Summary of the interviewees	39
Table 2: Operationalization of the interview questions	40

1 Introduction

1.1 Background for the study

The population of Finland is aging, and it is expected to start decreasing in 2034. That would have a wide variety of effects, such as fewer people of working age compared to retirees, which can cause problems for the welfare state. (Tilastokeskus 2021.) Attracting more migrant workers has been suggested to be a part of the solution (e.g. Kauppalehti 27.6.2023; Finnish News Agency 16.11.2022). For instance, the Confederation of Finnish industries EK argues that the yearly number of work-based immigrants should be doubled from 20 000 to 40 000. While the current government of Finland states to agree with the need for more skilled migrant workers (Valtioneuvosto: Vahva ja välittävä Suomi), many see that the suggested tighter immigration policies are not in line with the targets (e.g. EVA 21.6.2023; Kauppalehti 27.6.2023).

Since international degree-students will potentially stay permanently in the destination country after their studies, and their degree is easily recognized there, they are an example of “the ideal migrant” from the perspective of the destination country (Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 307; Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 191). Moreover, international education as a phenomenon has experienced tremendous growth in recent years (Hendriana et al. 2023, 143). The number of international students in Finland has also been growing; in 2022 until the end of October a record number of 7060 residence permits were approved for students coming from outside the EU (Finnish News Agency 11.11.2022). Finland gets fewer international students than its neighbouring countries, but a higher percentage of them stay to work (Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 305). In order to keep up with the demands of an aging population, the Confederation of Finnish industries EK suggests that the number of international students should grow from 5000 to 15 000, and that 75% of them should stay to work, while currently around half of them stay.

Since it is important to get international students to come to Finland in the first place, and to make them want to stay, the factors that affect their decision making must be properly looked into. A student can make the decision to study in a particular country because of a wide variety of reasons, some of them being more practical, such as having family in that country, and some more abstract, such as admiring the country because of its

fascinating culture (Juusola et al. 2021, 37). In this thesis, I will concentrate on the country image that a student has of a particular country. Country image is a potentially powerful tool to differentiate products and services in the global market (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 140), and it affects international students' choice of destination country (e.g. Chiou 2003, 950; Ahmad & Buchanan 2017). However, when an international student has already moved to the destination country, the process of evaluating the country does not end, and they may have uncertainty about their post-graduation intentions. This is where country image can also play a role because a person's previous experiences have caused them to have a certain image of a country, and that can influence their decision-making. Therefore, country image can be a tool for understanding the perceptions of an international student, both before and after moving to the destination country.

There is an extensive amount of research about country image and the effects it has on decision-making in different contexts in a wide range of fields of study (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a). Country image has also been researched from the perspective of international students (e.g. Hendriana et al. 2023; Morrish & Lee 2011) and has been seen to influence the decision about where to study (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017; Bamber et al. 2019). The factors behind the decision about a destination country (e.g. Perez-Encinas et al. 2021; Cheung et al. 2019), and post-graduation staying intentions (e.g. Calikoglu & Amblee 2018; Istad et al. 2021) have been studied, which can be applied to the country image perspective as well. There is some research on the country image of Finland (e.g. Hakala et al. 2013; Ryan 2008; Valaskivi 2016) but overall, the number of studies is quite small. As far as I am aware, the concept of country image has not been directly applied to international students in Finland. However, studies about the reasons why students have chosen to come to Finland and about their experiences as well as post-graduation intentions include some country image elements (e.g. Juusola et al. 2021; Tuominen & Kolho 2023; Nikou et al. 2023). Additionally, country images can be very context-bound (Baker & Ballington 2002, 161; Brijs et al. 2011, 1266). This adds up to the importance of continuously conducting research about country image in different contexts. Moreover, Finland is relatively unknown internationally (Country image annual report 2023). Therefore, in this thesis country image will be researched from the perspective of international students, observing how they experience it, in order to answer this research gap and to stay topical on such an evolving issue.

1.2 Country image of Finland

Finland has been actively branding itself in order to promote its products and services abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that since a better country image would promote the political, cultural, and economic success of the nation, it is important that the strengths of Finland are known internationally. (UM: Maakuvatyö 2024.) Currently, the strengths of Finland's country image include equality, environmental protection, and values (Country image annual report 2023).

There are many studies measuring country images, out of which the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI) is the most widely followed (Country image annual report 2023). The survey is conducted in twenty major economies that have important roles in international relations, business, culture, and tourism, and it asks questions about 60 nations that are selected based on their political and economic importance. In 2023, Finland was placed 15th on this list. (The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index 2023.) During the past decade, NBI has shown slow but steady improvement in Finland's country image, as illustrated in figure 1 showing the rankings and scores of Finland from 2012-2022. While the rankings have improved only slightly, with 2023 reaching the 15th place again, the scores have increased significantly.

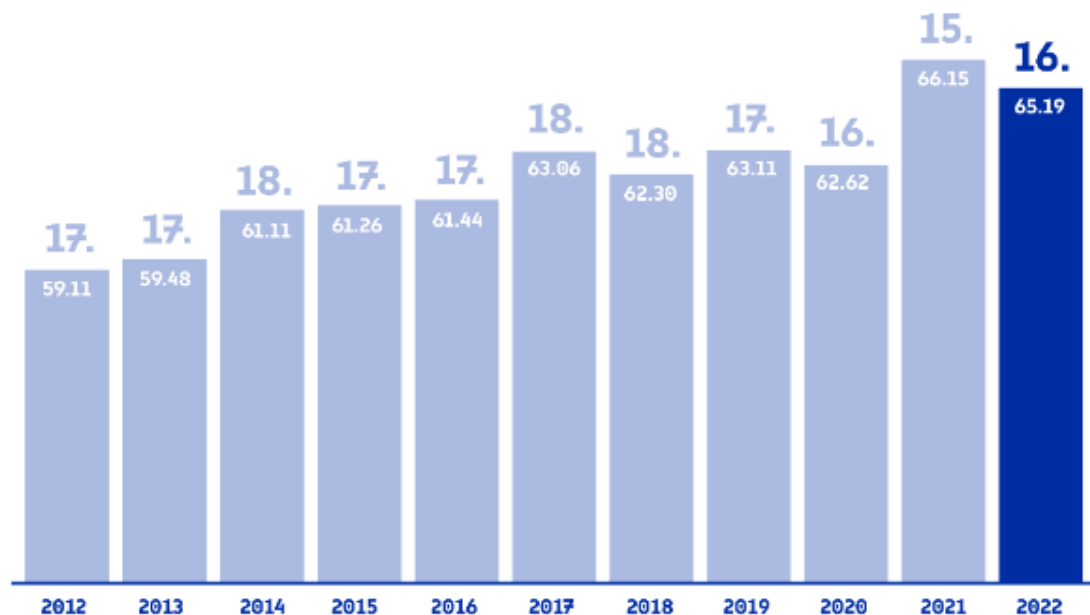


Figure 1: Finland's NBI ranking 2012-2022 (Country image annual report 2023, 8)

NBI measures nation brand as an outcome of six aspects: exports, governance, culture, people, tourism, and immigration and investment (The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index 2023). As shown in the following figure, in 2022 and 2021, Finland's ranking in governance was the best out of its six NBI survey aspects.

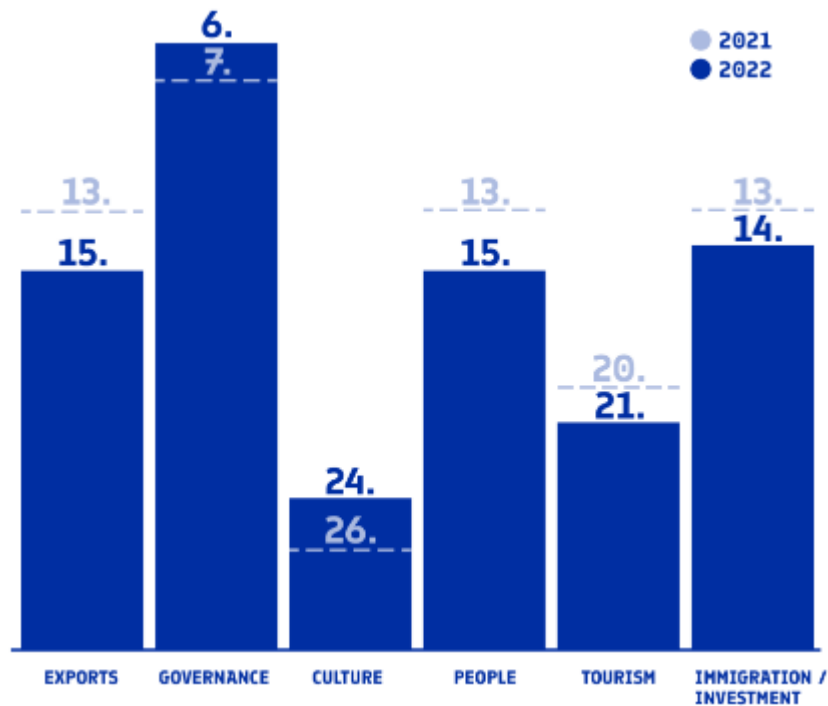


Figure 2: Finland's rankings in NBI aspects 2021-2022 (Country image annual report 2023, 9)

As discussed, Finland performs weakly in culture-related questions and in country awareness (Country image annual report 2023; Hakala et al. 2013, 548). When it comes to public awareness, Finland ranked 35th out of 60 countries in 2022 NBI survey, with 63% of the respondents knowing at least something about the country (Country image annual report 2023). Not communicating enough was identified already in 2010 to be the country's main weakness (UM: Maakuvaraportti 2010). When countries are evaluated based on more objective criteria instead of individuals perception, Finland's performance has often been better (Country image annual report 2023). For example, the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (2023) ranked Finland as sixth out of 134 countries in 2023. This underlines the imbalance between subjectively perceived country image and the actual performance.

Media attention plays a crucial role in the formation of public awareness of countries. Finland's top ranking in the World Happiness Report since 2018 has offered headline visibility in many countries, and this has resulted in happiness appearing in open surveys related to Finland (Country image annual report 2023). Finnish education has received international attention, and it is one of the key characteristics of the country's image. Takayama et al. (2013, 319) even argue that the "Finnish education system established itself as the world symbol of educational excellence", and that is why it has been applied to policy debates around the world and is associated with having a 'good society'. When it comes to more topical media topics, for Finland 2022 was a year of "exceptional visibility, which shaped its image around the world" (Country image annual report 2023). This was due to the war in Ukraine, Finland's NATO process and the ex-prime minister Sanna Marin. Almost all this media coverage has been neutral or positive, and neutral news has often caused positive reactions, because a Finland's favourable country image guides how news is interpreted. (Country image annual report 2023.)

In conclusion, the country image of Finland is positive, but not very strong. The country is known for equality, respect for nature, and values. While lack of awareness remains an issue, growth in visibility has offered opportunities to enhance positive perceptions of Finland. Since there are many positive aspects in the country image of Finland that can be communicated internationally, the country image development opportunities are to be found in growing awareness.

1.3 Aim of the thesis

Attracting, and retaining international students is of societal importance for Finland, as argued in chapter 1.1. Moreover, country image of Finland from the perspective of international students represents a prominent research gap (see chapter 1.1). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to study country image of Finland from the perspective of international students' experiences to create an understanding of the phenomenon and where and how it can possibly be improved. The main research question is "*How do international students experience the country image of Finland?*" Therefore, the emphasis is on subjective experiences and their background factors. In order to answer the main research question, the following sub questions will be discussed:

- What are the key elements of country image for an international student?

- What is the role of country image in international students' decision-making?
- How has the country image of Finland for international students evolved over time?

The evolution of country image will be studied in different stages of students' decision-making process, which includes how the students' initial image of Finland has formed before choosing to study there, as well as how their experiences in the country have shaped it. This study concentrates on international degree-students that complete an entire degree in their destination country, leaving out credit-mobility students that study abroad only for a fixed period of time (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535). Only international degree-students are interviewed. This is because international degree-students stay in the host country at least for two academic years, and therefore are expected to hold greater potential for staying in the host country after their studies.

This thesis and interviews are placed on a specific time and place, and country images are context-bound (Baker & Ballington 2002; 161; Brijs et al. 2011, 1266). For example, the tighter immigration policies in Finland are topical issues influencing people's perceptions. This should be considered when applying the conclusions of the study in further research. Moreover, the number of the interviewees is limited because of schedule for finishing the thesis. Even when several people from diverse backgrounds were interviewed, there is a possibility that different views might have emerged if the interviewee group were different.

The structure of the thesis is the following. The introduction discusses the background and motivation for the study, the country image of Finland on a general level, and the aim of the thesis in this chapter. Chapter 2 concentrates on country image from multiple perspectives relevant to this study. First, country image is defined and differentiated from its nearby concepts in chapter 2.1. Chapter 2.2. reviews the key elements of country image and their interplay applying the two-component view of country images consisting of cognitions and affects. Country image from the perspective of international students is discussed in chapter 2.3, from the aspects of its role in choosing a destination country, changes in country image, and its connection to post-graduation intentions. A synthesis of the theoretical framework is formed in chapter 2.4 and applied to the Finnish context. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology for this study by presenting the qualitative research approach, interview data collection, thematic analysis, evaluation of

the study and research ethics. A thematic analysis is performed in chapter 4, where the findings are presented and analysed utilizing both the theoretical framework and bringing more literature into discussion. Finally, chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the thesis as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

2 Country image

2.1 Defining country image

Country images can have a variety of effects, and therefore researchers in a wide range of scientific fields have become interested in it. The central fields of study in which CI (country image) has been researched are business studies, social psychology, political science, and communication science. In business studies the focus has been on the concepts of nation branding and country of origin, while social psychology concentrates on the perspectives of intergroup relations and collective identity research. Political science CI research is concerned with international relations, usually regarding the concept of public diplomacy. In communication science, CI has been studied in international communication and media content and the effects of them. (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 63–64.)

Because of these multiple perspectives of CI research, the definitions of the concept have also been diverse. Starting with the definition of ‘image’, Barich and Kotler (1991, 95) define an image to be “the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person or group of persons has of an object.” In CI context, the object would be a country. Maher and Carter (2011, 559) and Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015b, 111) define country image to be the attitudes that foreign publics hold towards a country. From a product perspective, country image is also described as “the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country” (Nagashima 1970, 68). A narrower definition states that country images are cognitive beliefs associated with the products and services of a country (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 140). Alternatively, country images are described as “a product of mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place” that result “from its geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features” (Kotler & Gertner 2002, 251).

Country of origin is often discussed in similar contexts as country image. Country of origin effect refers to “how consumers perceive products originating from a particular country” (Chiou 2003, 935) and therefore it is almost the same as Nagashima’s (1970, 68) description of a country image from a product perspective. Originally, country of origin has been referred to as the “made in” label of products (Nagashima 1970, 68).

However, with more complex global supply chains, the concept has been updated to also include the country in which the company wants it to appear that its products are made (Baker & Ballington 2002, 160). For instance, Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993, 4) state that “made-in can mean manufactured-in but also assembled-, designed- or invented-in, made by a producer whose domicile is in, and often wanting to look like it was made-in.” Since country of origin is supposed to refer to the country from which the product or service is from, country of origin effect describes the effect of country image, but often from the perspective of a specific product or service.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015b, 111) emphasize that country images are international rather than national and perceived rather than communicated. Figure 1 illustrates how that differentiates it from its nearby concepts, country reputation, country identity, and country brand. While country reputation is also international, it leans on communication. Emler (1990, 181) describes the nature of reputations by stating that they are “social, not individual judgements”. Country identity is the collective identity of locals based on the individual level (Rusciano 2003, 361), while country brand consists of nationally communicated self-representations (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 111).

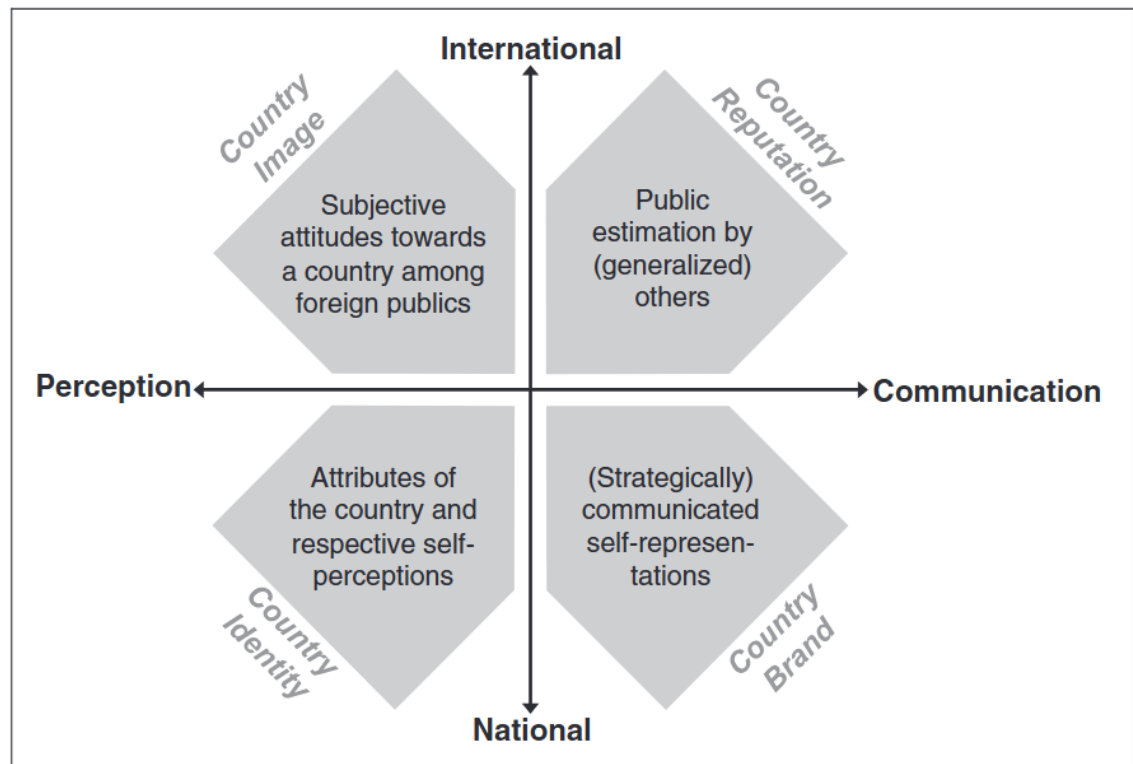


Figure 3: Nearby concepts (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 111)

As illustrated in the figure above, country image is different from its nearby concepts, because while it occurs among foreign publics, it forms on an individual level. In this thesis, the definition of country image as subjective attitudes towards a country among foreign publics is applied (Buhmann & Inghoff 2015b, 111). This subjective nature of CI emphasizes the experiences of international students rather than generalizing their attitudes. Since country image consists of attitudes, the components of CI will be discussed in the following chapter utilizing attitude theory.

2.2 The components of country image

Traditionally, country images have been conceptualized according to the ‘three-component’ view on attitudes (Smith 1947), where CI consists of three dimensions: cognitions (beliefs), affect (emotions), and conations (intended/actual behaviour) (e.g. Laroche et al. 2005; Parameswaran & Pisharodi 1994). However, because the components are not independent of each other (Verlegh & Steenkamp 1999), more recent studies on attitudes have applied a two-component view (e.g. Zajonc & Markus 1982) and hierarchy sequency models (e.g. Liska 1984). Therefore, the recent CI research also has moved on to suggest that country images consist of two components: cognitions and affect, which is also applied in this thesis. (Buhmann & Inghoff 2015a; 2015b; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009.)

2.2.1 The cognitive component of country image

Country images are multidimensional by nature. According to Buhmann and Inghoff (2015a, 67), the cognitive component of country images consists of specific beliefs about the functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions of a country. The functional dimension regards the competences and competitiveness of a country, such as its political and economic effectiveness and performance. For instance, when it comes to Finland, the functional dimension could be about how successfully the Finnish economy is performing and how effectively its policies are working. The normative dimension has to do with the integrity of a country and its norms and values, such as how equality is valued in Finland. The aesthetic dimension concentrates on the attractiveness of the country from the perspectives of culture and scenery. In the Finnish context, this could be about the peaceful nature. (Buhmann & Inghoff 2015a, 67; Cuddy et al. 2007, 643.)

Country cognitions have also been described to consist of country facets and people facets (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 736). Heslop et al. (2004, 1182) specify the construct even more, by dividing product-based country cognitions into people description (trustworthiness, friendliness), country description (stability, wealth, role in world politics), people competencies (work ethic, educated) and country competencies (technology level, skill level of workers). These ways of dividing the cognitions differentiate between the people and the country, which enables for example observing an appreciation for a country because of its kind people, even when that country would not perform particularly well economically. On the other hand, if the perception of a country's people would be hostile, that could damage the country image even if the country is otherwise perceived as successful. An example of this is the anti-immigration atmosphere and media discussion in the Netherlands (YLE 21.11.2023).

In this thesis, country cognitions are divided into functional, normative, and aesthetic beliefs as well as into country facets and people facets. Since different people can experience country cognitions differently, the affective component influencing this will be discussed in the following subchapter.

2.2.2 The affective component of country image

The affective stage of attitudes allows the cognitive beliefs to interact with the subjective experiences and views of an individual, while they process information (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737). In the country image context affects can be described as an "overall evaluation" of a country or "general feelings" towards a country (Nadeau & Olafsen 2015, 297; Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 115). Comparing the abstract nature of these descriptions to the country cognitions as "specific beliefs" emphasizes the key difference between the two components. The home country culture and the personal values of an individual influence the experienced country image, and therefore these types of factors interact with country cognitions in the affective phase to form an overall evaluation (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737). For example, if Finnish people are seen as quiet, this might create concerns for international students about being lonely in Finland. On the other hand, someone who values peace and quietness might see this as a benefit.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a, 62) name the fourth dimension of country image, emotional dimension, to form the affective component. The emotional dimension consists

of “general feelings of sympathy and fascination for a country” (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 115). Functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions influence the formation of the emotional dimension, but the strength of the effects vary (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 62). For instance, if an individual values beautiful nature highly, the aesthetic dimension may have a more significant role in influencing the emotional dimension.

Moreover, culture and personal views of a consumer affect how they evaluate foreign goods. Highly ethnocentric consumers are more likely to choose a domestic product over a foreign one. The US is an example of a highly ethnocentric and protectionist culture, and therefore local goods are favoured. Animosity towards a country can also predict consumer choices, especially when the choice is between two foreign goods. Such hostility can occur between countries for example in cases of war. (Cheah et al. 2016; Klein 2002, 358.)

Affects in CI have received significantly less attention in literature compared to the cognitive component (Hendriana et al. 2023, 144; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009; 737). Some even disregard the affective component by defining country image to only consist of cognitive beliefs (e.g. Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 140). That is even when the emotions of a person can have a significant role in the formation of the overall country image and in purchase decisions (Cheah et al. 2016, 190), not to mention the big decision of moving abroad to study. Therefore, the affective component is considered to be of importance in this study. Studying CI from the perspective of experiences enables taking the background factors of country affects as an overall evaluation and general feelings into account.

2.2.3 The interplay of the components

While there are multiple ways to conceptualize country images, in this thesis, the components of country image will be studied applying the 4D model of Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a; 2015b). This model was chosen, since it differentiates between the CI dimensions in detail, and was considered to suit studying both international students’ perceptions and the Finnish context. Figure 4 illustrates the 4D model’s division between the CI dimensions.

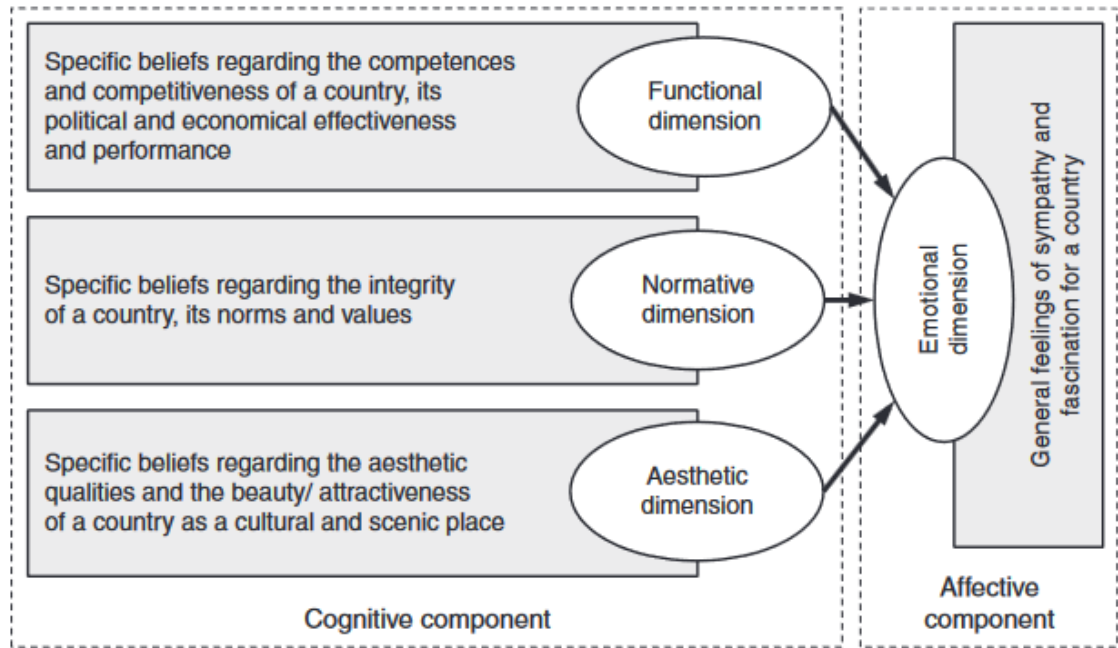


Figure 4: The 4D CI model (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 67; 2015b, 115)

As discussed, Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a; 2015b) divide CI into functional, normative, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions. The cognitive component consists of functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions, which influence the emotional dimension that forms the affective component. The interplay of the cognitive and affective components will be further discussed in this chapter in order to clarify their role in how international students' experience the country image of Finland.

Even when the structure of country image seems quite simple, its internal components are seen to not always relate in a consistent way, which makes the effects of it more complex (Brijs et al. 2011, 1266). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009, 735) argue that the interplay between the country image components depends on the situational context. Nevertheless, there are some specific conditions under which separate or joint effects of affect and cognitions have been seen to occur. For example, when beliefs and feelings are against each other, feelings often have a more significant role (Lavine et al. 1998, 418). Batra and Ahtola (1990, 169) and Kempf (1999, 46–47) find that intended behaviour towards hedonic objects depends more on affect than cognitions, while cognitions have a bigger role when it comes to functional objects.

When it comes to high-involvement services, such as studying abroad, the decision-making process is informed since the consumer is motivated to learn about the topic. Therefore, in this conceptual model, country cognitions influence country affect, which influences country conations, as illustrated in figure 5. First, an individual forms beliefs about the country by gathering relevant information and then develops feelings about that country based on those beliefs. Finally, the person forms conations and/or engages in relevant behaviour, for instance moves to a certain country to study. (Brijs et al. 2011, 1259; Cuddy et al. 2007, 643; Roth & Diamantopoulos & 2009, 735.) If a student is looking for information about the quality of education in different countries, these country cognitions will be internalized first, which forms country affect according to what the student values. If high-quality education is important for them, the cognitions related to that will form overall affect and influence their choice of a destination country. In the following figure, this hierarchical two-component view is demonstrated as well as the role of country norms.

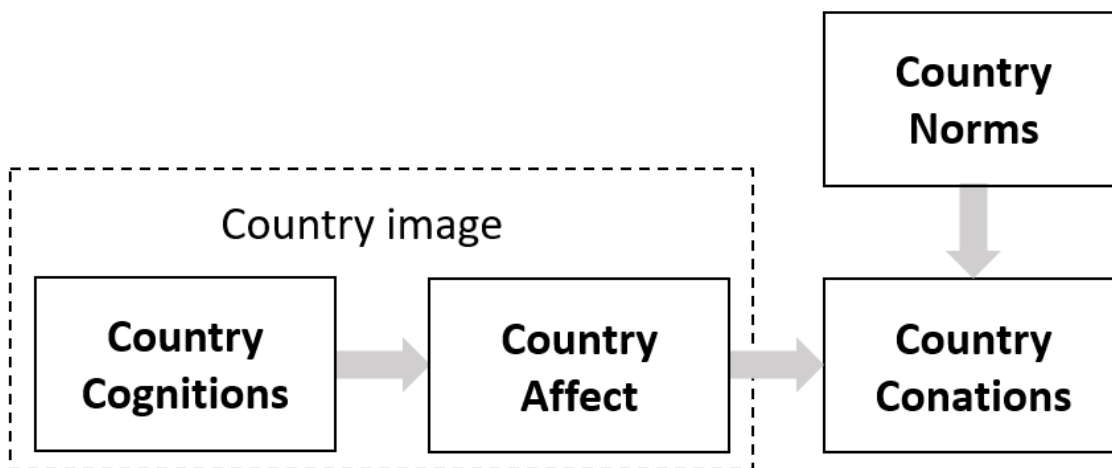


Figure 5: High-involvement hierarchy country images (adapted from Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 735)

As figure 5 illustrates, country cognitions influence overall country affect. Moreover, the subjective experiences and views of an individual interact with cognitions to form affect. In this study, country norms are considered to be part of the personal views and experiences of an individual, as figure 6 illustrates. While country norms influence an individual's values and opinions, and through them interpretations of their experiences, that may occur in different ways to different people. This perspective allows taking the variety of international students' backgrounds into consideration, and therefore, the

emphasis is on how individuals experience differences between home and host country norms.

To conclude the discussion about the components of country images in figure 6, it can be stated that CI consists of two components, country cognitions and country affect (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b; Maher & Carter 2011; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009; Zajonc & Markus 1982). Cognitions can be divided into different dimensions in multiple ways, and in this thesis the conceptualization of country cognitions consisting of functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a; 2015b) will be applied. All of the mentioned dimensions can be further divided into country facets and people facets, as Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009, 736) argue country cognitions to consist of. Therefore, country and people facets are combined with the four dimensions framework in figure 6 in order to provide a framework of the different components of country image and their interplay.

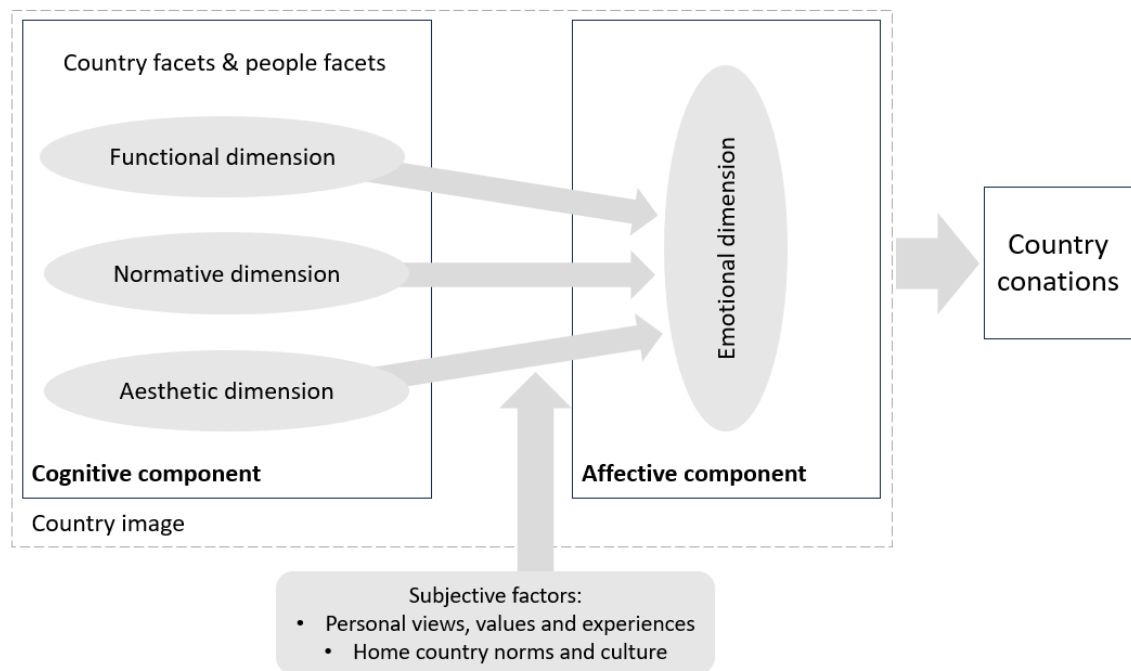


Figure 6: Interplay of the CI components (adapted from Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a; 2015b; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009)

Now the components of country image and the interplay of them are conceptualized according to the context of the high-involvement product of studying abroad. While the effects of each component can vary, in the context of international students, choosing a destination country is expected to be highly informed, and therefore be driven by

cognitions. On the other hand, when an international student is already studying in the host country and thinking about their future plans after graduation, they might have formed a stronger emotional connection with a place, which may enhance the role of affects in their decision-making. These situations will be further discussed in the following chapter, where the framework will be utilized from the perspective of international students.

2.3 Country image for international students

2.3.1 Country image in choosing a destination country

Higher education is a feature of every individual country and is tightly connected to the culture of a country (Bourke 2000, 124). If the compared universities in different countries are of relatively similar quality, the actual differentiating factors will relate to the destination country, for example the cost of living, country attractiveness and the convenience of location (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017, 664). Since students are motivated to look for information about possible destination countries, country image becomes an important tool to guide the decision-making process and is a significant factor in the choice of study destination for international students (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139; Ahmad & Buchanan 2017; Bamber et al. 2019; Cheung et al. 2019). When going abroad, students tend to decide a country first, and an institution after that (Bourke 2000, 131).

When applying the CI concept into a study destination country, the destination country should be considered a product (Hendriana et al. 2023, 155). Since international education is often physically far away, students can face difficulties in evaluating the destination country before making their choice to move there (Hendriana et al. 2023, 145; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 142). Therefore, CI can be used to manage risk (Chiou 2003, 950). Here, the effects of CI can be described to be a halo construct; when a student is not that familiar with how studying in a specific country will be, country image affects one's cognitions about service attributes, and these cognitions contribute to the student's attitudes towards studying in the country (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139).

Because country images affect the behaviour of central stakeholders abroad, it has a positive relationship with the intention to engage with the country in question (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 62; Heslop et al. 2004, 1187). Central stakeholders in this case would include students, their families, friends, agents, and home country institutions. Students

can both look for information themselves and have people they trust as an additional source of information to influence their choices. (Morrish & Lee 2011, 526.) Since looking for familiarity is a way of managing uncertainty in high-risk decision-making situations (Chiou 2003, 950), it is more likely for a student to choose a country that they, or someone close to them, are familiar with (Morrish & Lee 2011, 523). Rudd et al. (2012, 136) argue that students tend to favour destinations with a community of people from their own country, which can add to the sense of familiarity.

Country image is directly associated with brand image, and in the education industry the brand image is institution image, “students’ overall perceptions of institution quality” (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 140). As illustrated in figure 5, CI can influence institution image, and on the other hand, institution image can influence CI (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 143). The influence of the host country’s CI is found to be significant in explaining international students’ choice for their study destination also through institution image (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017, 663; Bamber 2014, 61; Cheung et al. 2019, 1553; Yousaf et al. 2020, 174).

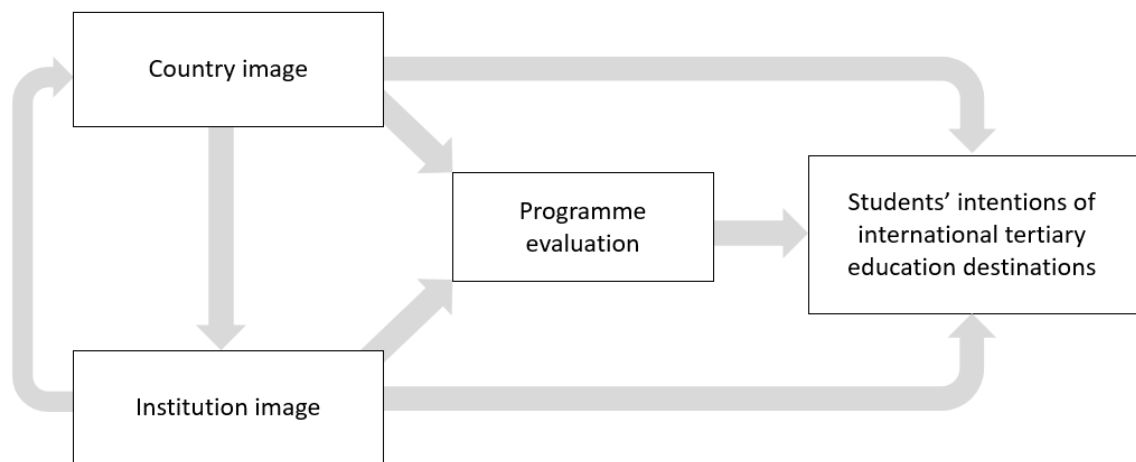


Figure 7: CI and institution image in destination country choices (adapted from Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 144)

As figure 7 illustrates, the influence of institution image is similar to that of CI, both affect programme evaluation and students’ intentions of international tertiary education destinations. While cognitive and affective components of country image influence institution image, the effect of cognitive component is more significant (Hendriana et al. 2023, 153). Good cognitive country image attracts students who emphasize academic issues and career prospects, which are the most important factors in international students’

destination country choices (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535). This is because a degree from a highly valued university is seen as a way to get access to better future career opportunities (Morrish & Lee 2011, 525; Hendriana et al. 2023, 145). In the study of Morrish and Lee (2011), Chinese students associated the power of the country with the power of the university, and therefore view that large countries with long history of good education, such as the USA and the UK, are attractive study destinations. Malaysian students share similar motivations and therefore the reputable British institutions attract them (Hendriana et al. 2023, 145). Emphasizing technological advancements, good quality education, and the high standard of living are ways for especially developed countries to develop favourable cognitive country images in the eyes of international students. This emphasis on cognitive country image benefits developed countries, and accordingly, they have been the preferred destination countries. (Hendriana et al. 2023, 154.)

Even when academics and career opportunities are widely appreciated among international students, the important cognitions go beyond them. For example, while New Zealand is considered to have high quality education institutions, it is an attractive study destination especially because it is perceived as clean, green, safe, and English-speaking (Morrish & Lee 2011, 520). While the official language of a country can sometimes be a fact rather than an image that would include uncertainty, there can be images connected to language as well. For example, if English is not the native language of a country, the concerns might be about how well one can survive there with English only, or do they need to learn the local language as well.

While the role of the cognitive component is inevitable, many studies tend to overly simplify purchasing decisions to be determined by cognitions only. The affective component has a direct effect on students' intentions to study in a certain country and students might choose a country to study in simply because they like the country. (Hendriana et al. 2023, 154.) Hendriana et al. (2023, 154) found that when students had a positive emotion towards Australia, they also favoured Australian institutions even if the quality of education would be slightly lower than somewhere else. As discussed, the affective component influences institution image less than the cognitive component does (Hendriana et al. 2023, 154). However, when the affects and cognitions are not in line, the affective country image may have a bigger effect on institution image (Cai et al. 2012, 1668; Cheah et al. 2016, 190-191, Hendriana et al. 2023, 154).

According to Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015a, 73), students develop affect towards a country based on functional, normative, and aesthetic cognitions, but the feelings are not only an outcome of them. Instead, facts are intertwined with the values and experiences of an individual. (Hendriana et al. 2023, 154.) This makes the context important, and in the case of international students it would often be their home country, which will naturally be the basis to which they compare the destination country. For example, people from developing countries tend to view developed countries as better than their home countries, which contributes to more positive emotions towards that country in other aspects as well than the specific positive sides that an individual knows of (Hendriana et al. 2023, 145). The affective component and the functional dimension of cognitions influence behavioural tendencies directly (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 73).

Even when international students clearly share some specific factors that motivate them, they are not a homogeneous group, and their motivations should not be expected to be either; the role of different factors can stem from a very subjective perspective. One of the main motivations for Chinese students to study abroad is “to gain life experience and a better perspective and understanding the world” (Morrish & Lee 2011, 522). This can mean quite different things to different people, depending on what type of experience and understanding they are aiming for.

2.3.2 Evolving country image

Country images are generally considered to be quite stable, since they might have formed in an individual’s mind over a period of years (Herz & Arnegger 2017, 1170). The more psychologically attached consumer is to a country, the less likely the image of that country is likely to change (King et al. 2015, 22). However, it is possible for country images to change over time, either resulting from long-term factors such as economic development, or major events such as hosting the Olympics (Heslop et al. 2008, 356; Herz & Arnegger 2017, 1169).

Moreover, comparatively unknown countries represent a possible exception to the rule of stability, since consumers might have stereotypical abstract feelings towards the country instead of a concrete image (Herz & Arnegger 2017, 1169). When an unfamiliar country is connected to new characteristics, the image may change (Richards & Wilson 2004, 1947). Weakly established country images based on affects are more likely to change than strong country images based on cognitions, because the affective component is more

likely to change than the cognitive component (Heslop et al. 2008, 372; King et al. 2015, 22; Chen et al. 2014, 250).

Sonnevend (2019, 698) argues that highly mediatized communication atmosphere is connected to quick image-transformations. Hang and Wang (2015, 73) suggest that people's evaluations of other countries are widely based on media coverage, and accordingly, media can have a significant effect on country images (Parrey et al. 2019, 101). Media acts as a part of organic image, which is created through different media channels and information from relatives and friends. Moreover, recommendations from family and friends are seen to influence international students' choices and to be a way to manage risk (Morrish & Lee 2011, 523). Organic image sources are considered to be more reliable than those of induced image. This is because induced image is generated by organizations and institutions, who have a direct motivation to communicate in a favourable manner. (Parrey et al. 2019, 101.) Therefore, negative media coverage will strengthen perceived risk, while induced image can help to manage that risk (Serrano-Acros et al. 2021, 17).

Being a part of the induced image efforts, nation branding is a process, which aims proactively for managing the country image and country reputation (Parrey et al. 2019, 91; Fan 2010, 101). It can for instance include communication campaigns or simply creating something that raises attention. South Korea has for example managed to enhance its nation brand with popular culture products, such as K-pop (Lee & Kim 2021, 389). As Anholt (2009, 174) argues, "background reputation can only be significantly altered by policies, not by communications." When the actions of a country contradict with its communication, there can be legitimacy issues (Saifer 2021, 572). However, there are examples of temporary image shifts through a certain type of messaging: in 2015 nuclear negotiations between Iran and United States, Iran presented itself as rational and calm, when previously the country was perceived as unpredictable and even aggressive (Sonnevend 2019, 696). Sonnevend (2019, 697) argues that this "helped to normalize Iran as an acceptable political partner in the international area" momentarily, even without building on shared moral foundations.

There are multiple political events that can influence the evaluations of a country, such as collaborations, conflicts, and animosity (Alvarez & Campo 2020, 38). For instance, the historical and current political conflicts between China and South Korea have resulted

in the citizens of both countries evaluating the other country more negatively and decreased travel intentions (Stepchenkova et al. 2020, 1381). On the other hand, giving aid to a country is argued to result in the receiving country to perceive the image of the sending country more favourably and increase travel intentions (Gohary et al. 2022, 9). An example of enhancing country image via mutual benefit is South Korea's public diplomacy and nation branding campaign, where the country shared both material and immaterial resources in order to both help other countries with the pandemic and to get a better position on the world stage (Lee & Kim 2021, 392).

Politics may also cause country image shifts on a more of a personal level since politics can change fast and create uncertainty. Openness of the society and the level of discrimination are among the considerations of international students (Morrish & Lee 2011, 526), and they have faced prejudice and unequal treatment (Zhou et al. 2011, 83). In Finland, international students have not only faced discrimination in everyday encounters with Finnish people, but also in political speeches and official documents (Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 449). This emphasizes how discrimination can be a political issue instead of being only about individual citizens' behaviour.

Figure 8 summarizes the potential key drivers for country image changes. Since country image can stem from organic image or induced image, changes can occur through them as well. Media attention can change country images fast and is considered to be more reliable than induced image sources such as nation branding efforts. The aim of nation branding is to enhance country images, but communication requires substance in order to work sufficiently. While country images are often relatively stable, unknown countries' images may be an exception to this rule. One of the reasons for this is that affective components are more likely to change than cognitive components, and more stable country images are based on cognitions, while less stable country images are driven by affects. Politics can create changes in country images both through international relations and societal factors.

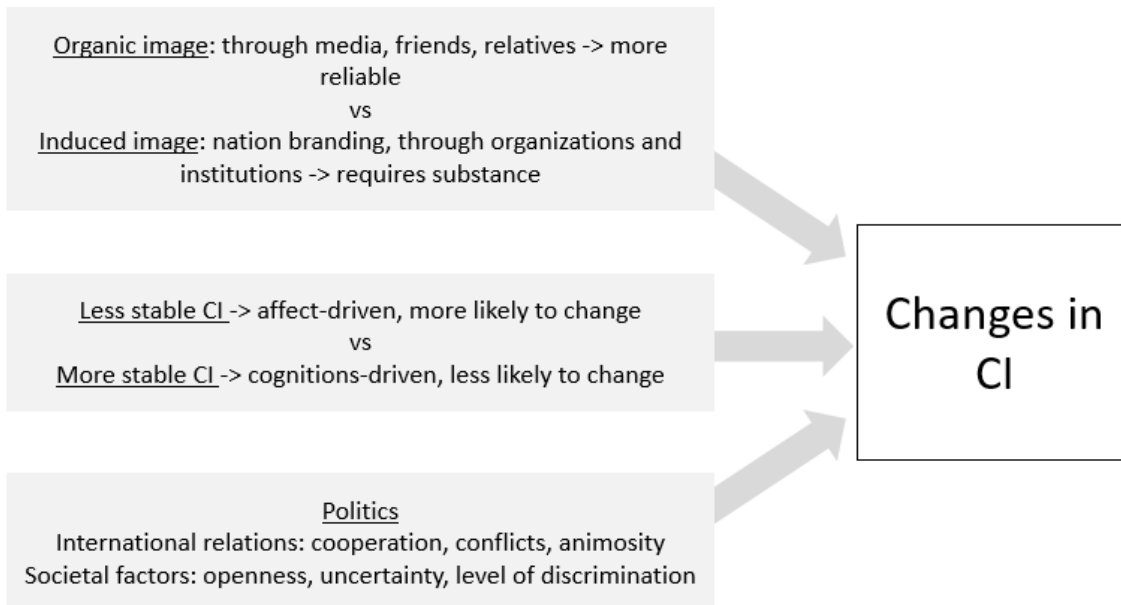


Figure 8: Evolution of CI

Discussing changes in CI offers us an insight into the perceptions of international students in their decision-making processes. Since there is time between their initial decision to study in a certain country and the decision about whether to stay in the host country after graduation, there is potential for country image changes for external reasons. However, their direct experiences in the host country are also possible drivers of CI changes, which will be further discussed in the following subchapter.

2.3.3 Country image and post-graduation intentions

During their studies, international students are gaining experiential knowledge on the destination country. Furthermore, when a student has become familiar with the destination country, it can be more attractive to look for work opportunities there, instead of starting from scratch elsewhere (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 187). While the decision whether to stay in the host country after graduation is often shaped by situational dynamics rather than calculative thinking (Istad et al. 2021, 1336; Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 191), many factors influencing post-graduation intentions and the actual decision have been identified in literature. This subchapter will discuss them from the perspective of country image effect as a summary construct, where a student has experience of studying in the destination country. Here, CI summarizes the experiential knowledge and influences future evaluations. (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139.)

Overall life satisfaction during studies is seen to influence intentions to stay in the host country after graduation (Istad et al. 2021, 1335; Nghiêm-Phú 2016, 338), which is consistent with CI as a summary construct: positive experiences lead to positive expectations. Furthermore, Baruch et al. (2007, 107) find that satisfaction with the university has a positive relationship with the intention to stay in the host country. Istad et al. (2021, 1335) emphasize the multidimensional connection between international students' satisfaction and intentions to stay in South Korea by stating that the likeliness to stay is higher "if they feel safe and have conveniences in daily life, have a satisfactory experience with integration in the host society and social interactions with local residents, while also having positive experiences with professors as lecturers and advisors." Also, Chelliah et al. (2019, 124) underline the experienced safety, since it is seen as an important determinant that can either encourage or discourage behavioural intentions connected to the host country.

The role of social adjustment and integration to the host society are emphasized in literature as important factors that influence the satisfaction of international students and their intentions to stay in the host country (Chelliah et al. 2019, 124; Lu et al. 2009, 300; Istad et al. 2021, 1335). Arli et al. (2023, 12) define sociocultural adaptation to be "behavioural competence in a particular culture" and it has been seen to result in higher levels of well-being for immigrants (Martinet & Damasio 2021, 467). The longer the student stays in the host country, the more likely they are to experience positive adaptation outcomes (Pan 2015, 75). Cultural differences and language barriers are among the central challenges of international students (Alloh et al. 2018, 13; Zhou et al. 2011, 82; Pan 2015, 74), which underlines that being able to deal with them would be related to satisfaction and staying intentions. Accordingly, also language factors influence the eagerness to migrate permanently (Lu et al. 2009, 297).

However, Arli et al. (2023, 12) argue cultural intelligence to be more important than sociocultural adaptation in the creation of positive country images for immigrants. Cultural intelligence is defined as the "system of interacting knowledge and skills, linked by cultural metacognition that allows people to adapt to, select and shape the cultural aspects of their environment" (Thomas et al. 2008, 127). Since sociocultural adaptation stems from behavioural competence, its effect may remain only on the changed behaviour (Arli et al. 2023, 12). Cultural intelligence acts as a tool for understanding different cultures on a deeper level and for facilitating better interplay between cultures, and

therefore contributing to better evaluations of a country. (Arlı et al. 2023, 12.) This is in line with the study of Pan (2015, 74), where students' understanding of their own acculturation process and their interest in it was argued to help with accomplishing positive outcomes. Arlı et al. (2023, 13) conclude the roles of adaptation and cultural intelligence in the following way: "the so-called global citizens with exposure to multiple cultures and who can think global and act local will likely have high cultural intelligence and in turn, a positive image of a new country."

While people from the country of origin, such as relatives, enhances individual's adaptation to a new environment (Zhou et al. 2011, 82), creating a locally rooted social network can help more with integration (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 190). However, prejudice and discrimination towards international students has not only impacted their mental health but also hindered adjustment to the school (Zhou et al. 2011, 83). They might face feelings of isolation and homesickness (Alloh et al. 2018, 13; Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi 2018, 124) and they generally have lower levels of social happiness and a sense of belonging (Van Horne et al. 2018, 364). The receptiveness of the host country can be an issue causing uncertainty for international students (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 189).

The most important practical factors enhancing the chance to stay are finding a job or meeting a significant other in the destination country (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 187). Since career opportunities are among the main factors influencing international students to choose a particular country (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535), their motivations might be similar to migrants who move abroad to work. Traditionally, wages and unemployment rates are viewed as the main determinants of migrating for work, but institutional and social factors, such as education and healthcare, also have an influence (Geis et al. 2013). For example, international students in Denmark perceive their gains for staying in there to be good work-life balance, relaxed work culture, supportive welfare system and high income (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 187). Also, Baruch et al. (2007, 107) argue that the international students' perceptions of the destination country's labour market influence the staying intentions significantly.

As argued in this subchapter, international students' perceptions of the host country guide their post-graduation intentions. When it comes to country image effect models, in experiential hierarchy the consumer is guided by their experiences after having consumed

the product. In the experiential hierarchy model country affect influences conations and behaviour through that, and cognitions form from them. However, experiential hierarchy is based on hedonic consumption, where consumers are expected to act purely based on their emotional reactions. (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 735.) Since the decision-making process of international students is highly informed (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139), experiential hierarchy cannot be directly utilized in explaining the post-graduation intentions of international students. Nevertheless, the basic idea of direct experiences guiding future evaluations can be applied to the context of international students' post-graduation intentions, as illustrated in figure 9 that summarises this subchapter. While important direct experiences can be about anything that an individual considers valuable, life satisfaction and satisfaction in the university as well as finding employment or significant other were identified to be the most significant ones. Integration and cultural intelligence are expected to influence how experiences are interpreted, and through that what types of future evaluations form.

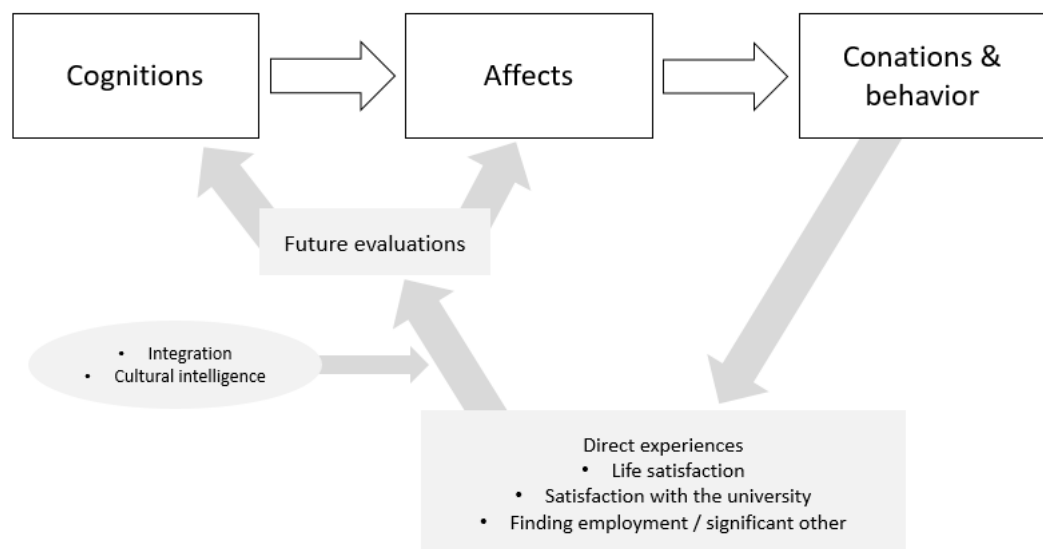


Figure 9: CI as a summary construct

After discussing the factors influencing post-migration intentions, it is good to note that the actual decision whether to stay in the host country after graduation is a more of a contextual decision influenced by situational dynamics (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 191). However, the aim of this thesis is to study experiencing CI, and the role of it in different stages of international students' decision-making. Since most of the students have not yet made their decision whether to stay in the host country or not, it is relevant to focus on

post-graduation intentions from the perspective of CI instead of aiming for explaining the actual decisions.

2.4 Synthesis and the Finnish context

In this chapter, the theoretical framework will be summarized and applied to the Finnish context. This is done because country images can be very context-bound (Baker & Ballington 2002, 161; Brijs et al. 2011, 1266). Additionally, the experiences of international students in Finland have not been studied directly from the perspective of country image. Therefore, the literature concerning international students in Finland will be combined with already discussed country image literature.

Country image consists of cognitive and affective components, while conations are an outcome of them (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009). Country cognitions include functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions of a country (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 67), that can be further divided into country facets and people facets (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 736). Country affects are general feelings towards a country (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 115). The values and experiences of an individual interact in the affective stage of attitudes, and this forms the overall evaluation (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737).

Country image influences international students' destination country choices as a halo construct. Since studying abroad is a high-involvement purchasing decision, students are motivated to look for information and the cognitive and affective components are in a hierarchy (Brijs et al. 2011, 1259; Cuddy et al. 2007, 643; Roth & Diamantopoulos & 2009, 735). (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139.) When CI is a halo construct, it influences students' beliefs about studying in Finland. Overall, the strengths of Finland's country image include equality, environmental protection, and values, while public awareness and culture are weaknesses (Country image annual report 2023). In the research of Jokila (2019, 10), it was noted that Finnish institutions aim to define studying abroad "not only as education but also as relocation and overall experience". This could be an ideal setting for country image. When trying to attract international students, Finnish authorities emphasize the roles of future employment, standard of living, high quality education and community (Jokila 2019, 10). For example, the website Study in Finland which is operated by the Finnish National Agency for Education, describes life in Finland in the

following way: “Finland is a safe country where everyday life works, and nature is always close by” (Studyinfinland.fi: Life in Finland).

The next question is how international student perceive the country image of Finland before choosing it as their destination country. Cognitive factors influencing international students’ choices of a destination identified in literature include for example academic issues, career prospects (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535), immigration policy, rate of racial discrimination, safety, nature, and language (Morrish & Lee 2011, 526). The functional cognitions about the reputable education system and post-graduation working opportunities are the most significant reasons for international students’ choices to come to Finland (Juusola et al. 2021, 19; Nikou et al. 2023, 12; Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 44). Additionally, Nikou et al. (2023, 12) emphasize “Finland’s reputation as a safe and stable country with a high standard of living” in explaining international students’ attraction, leaning more towards the normative dimension of cognitions. The advanced Finnish economy and technological development may also be functional cognitions that attract students (Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 446).

When it comes to the affective component of CI, it should be noted that students may choose a specific country simply because they like it (Hendriana et al. 2023, 154). Also, Calikoglu and Amblee (2018, 450) report a variety of personal motivations for international students’ decision to come to Finland, such as their desire “to know about the world rather than their home country” and to “get to know different cultures, people and education systems.” Therefore, the interest towards Finland can also stem from being unfamiliar with the country. Comparisons between home and host country are expected to influence students’ evaluations, because country cognitions interplay with the personal experiences and views of an individual to form affects and the overall country image (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737).

Relatively unknown countries hold potential for country image changes (Herz & Arnegger 2017, 1169), which is the case when it comes to Finland (Country image annual report 2023). Also, the role of stereotypes may be more significant when country image is weak (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000, 57). Quick image transformations can stem from media (Sonnevend 2019, 698), and media as a part of the organic image is considered to be more reliable than induced image efforts such as nation branding (Parrey et al. 2019, 101), which requires substance to be reliable (Anholt 2009, 174). Finnish

education has gained an international reputation, since it has been discussed in foreign countries' media in the context of their own policy issues, aiming for learning something from the Finnish system (Takayama et al. 2013, 319). Finland has also gained media visibility from its continuous top ranking in World Happiness Report, which has impacted perceptions towards the country (Country image annual report 2023). The current Finnish government has struggled with racism scandals, which has created concerns about possible country image effects, especially in the eyes of skilled migrants (e.g. YLE 12.7.2023; Helsingin Sanomat 24.7.2023; Suomen Yrittäjät 26.8.2023).

From the perspective of this study, the firsthand experiences of international students in the host country during their studies are expected to be the most significant factors in the evolvment of CI. Here, CI becomes a summary construct combining the experiences to guide post-graduation intentions (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139). In other words, positive experiences enhance CI and staying intentions, while negative experiences lower them. However, it is important to note that the actual decision whether an international student stays in the host country is complex and connected to situational dynamics and personal factors (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 192). Out of them, finding a job, or a significant other are the most important ones to increase the probability of staying in Finland (Mathies & Karhunen). Such significant factors are most likely to also influence CI positively. Social adjustment and integration influence CI through enhancing satisfaction (Lu et al. 2009, 300; Istad et al. 2021, 1335), and cultural intelligence may contribute to more positive country images (Arlı et al. 2023, 12). While having Finnish friends is considered important for integrating, many international students perceive it to be difficult (Li 2020, 13; Tuominen & Kolho 2023).

When it comes to Finland, nature, safety, clean environment, studying opportunities and freedom have been evaluated positively by international students (Tuominen & Kolho 2023). Also, students with children have generally higher staying intentions (Juusola et al. 2021, 37; Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 306). On the other hand, Nikou et al. (2023, 12) found challenges such as difficulties in adapting to the Finnish culture, limited job opportunities and high cost of living to negatively influence post-graduation staying intentions. Finding employment seems to be the area where international students struggle the most (Tuominen & Kolho 2023; Li 2020, 8; Nikou et al. 2023, 12). Also, social bias and intolerance have created challenges for international students in Finland and they still face a certain degree of exclusion (Li 2020, 15). Students have noticed discrimination not

only in everyday encounters with Finns, but also in political speeches and official documents. (Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 449.) When asked about what state policies could influence international students' intentions to stay in Finland, they listed policies promoting the openness of the society to be one of them (Juusola et al. 2021, 25). The current Finnish government has proposed stricter immigration policies, for instance longer waiting time for a citizenship, a citizenship test and a so-called "three-months rule", where the employer must notify Finnish immigration service, if a migrant loses employment, and if they cannot find a job in three months, they will be deported (Valtioneuvosto: Maahanmuutto- ja kotoutuspolitiikka). Moreover, the Finnish government states that it is moving towards non-EU/ETA students paying the full coverage of their tuition fees (Valtioneuvosto: Korkeakoulutus ja tiede).

In conclusion, CI influences as a halo construct in choosing a destination country, and as a summary construct in post-graduation intentions. Personal values and experiences influence the formation of the overall evaluation through cognitions, while integration and cultural intelligence affect the interpretation of firsthand experiences in the host country. Discussing the theoretical framework from the Finnish perspective offers insights into the specific, contextual characteristics of Finland, which will guide the analysis in chapter 4.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research approach

This research was conducted as a qualitative study. It is a broad term, which includes “different data collection and analytical approaches with the aim of providing cultural and contextual description and interpretation of social phenomenon” (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 1). Brannen et al. (2010, 13) argue that qualitative approach suits studying migration particularly well, because mixed cultural identities and backgrounds have a central role. Moreover, the aim of this thesis is to study how international students experience CI, and qualitative approaches emphasize experiencing while aiming to understand how and why something occurs (Doz 2011, 584).

This thesis discusses country image from different perspectives, its components, how they form and what type of effects country image can have. Accordingly, one of the uses of qualitative research is that it can help to communicate a theory by showing its applicability and to illustrate and underline the key elements and relationships in it. Qualitative research can also allow the researcher to discover the importance of a specific theoretical aspect in explaining the phenomenon. (Doz 2011, 584.) This is what the analysis in chapter 4 aims to do.

Qualitative research observes reality as constructed by individuals and embraces the ontological assumption of multiple truths (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz et al. 2013, 93). When there are multiple different truths, and the truths are formed through the experiences of individuals, the philosophical paradigm is called interpretivism (Ryan 2018, 13). Interpretivism is often associated with qualitative research, since it also emphasizes the unique experiences and understandings of people (Goldkuhl 2012, 10). The data collected in this research are subjective truths, and they are valuable as such. The interviewees’ answers have formed through their experiences and knowledge, and those background factors are also a topic of interest in this thesis.

3.2 Data collection

The data for this thesis was collected by interviewing, since it was considered to hold various benefits for the study. First of all, qualitative interviews are a powerful data collection tool which allows the data to be thick and descriptive, which is preferable in

qualitative research (Doz 2011, 586). Moreover, interviewing is especially suitable for studying human phenomena, since participants can discuss their views directly (Cote & Turgeon 2005, 74). Qualitative interviews enable in-depth discussions, and the uniqueness of experiences is acknowledged. Therefore, interviewing is suggested when a study aims for understanding subjective perspectives of individuals, as this thesis does. (King 1994, 14-16.)

One of the benefits of interviews as a data collection tool is that the interviewees can be chosen to suit the aim of the study, for example because they have experience of a specific phenomenon (Puusa 2011, 76). Accordingly, the interviewees for this study were chosen because they were currently international degree-students in Finland or had been recently. There were no additional criteria, since the availability of participants was limited. The interviewees were contacted in different ways; some were referenced to the researcher directly, while others were found through email lists. In total, ten international students and graduates were interviewed. This was considered to be a suitable number, since the interviewees' answers began to remind those of previous participants. Therefore, a saturation point was reached. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

International students are not a homogeneous group, and therefore, the interviewees' diverse cultural backgrounds were considered. They were from a variety of countries, mostly South Asian and Southeast Asian, which are reported according to regions to ensure anonymity. Most of the participants were undergraduate students in business. Two interviewees had graduated from a master's program in Finland and were currently postgraduate students. Additionally, two medical graduates were interviewed. In chapter 4, all of the interviewees will be referred to as students, except for when their status is of importance for the analysis. Table 1 summarises the interviewees' background factors when it comes to region of origin, age, and level of studies.

Table 1: Summary of the interviewees

	Region of origin	Age	
P1	South Asia	30-35	Undergraduate student in business
P2	Eastern Europe	30-35	Undergraduate student in business
P3	South Asia	40-45	Undergraduate student in business
P4	Southeast Asia	40-45	Postgraduate student
P5	South Asia	30-35	Undergraduate student in business

P6	South Asia	40-45	Undergraduate student in business
P7	Southeast Asia	30-35	Undergraduate student in business
P8	Southeast Asia	30-35	Postgraduate student
P9	Southeast Asia	30-35	Medical graduate
P10	Western Africa	30-35	Medical graduate

The first interview was held in October 2023, and the rest from January to March 2024. Most of the interviews were in Zoom, apart from one student who preferred to meet face-to-face. Four of the participants were interviewed individually, and six of them in pairs. While pair or group interviews were the preferred way, schedule difficulties resulted in some individual interviews as well. The pair interviews were more like a discussion, and the participants commented on each other's answers. This was beneficial because it was easy to identify on which points they agreed and disagreed. The pair interviews lasted around one hour and 10 minutes, while the one-on-one interview times were significantly shorter, ranging from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. There were no interruptions.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed the best method to enable the interviewees to discuss the factors influencing their views. This means that the researcher has some defined questions beforehand, but then probes further as the interviewee responds (Peters & Halcomb 2015, 6). Semi-structured interviews can act as a means to ensure that the participants share the same types of information, while allowing the possibility of follow-up questions. This allows the researcher to be more flexible, and dive deeper into the experiences of individuals. (Belotto 2018, 4.) As the operationalization table below illustrates, interview themes stemmed from the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2 in order to answer the research questions. These themes were further developed into more specific interview questions (see appendix 1).

Table 2: Operationalization of the interview questions

<i>Research question</i>	<i>Sub-questions</i>	<i>Theoretical background</i>	<i>Interview themes</i>
How do international	What are the key elements of	Interplay of CI components,	Specific beliefs & overall emotions towards Finland

students experience the country image of Finland?	CI for an international student?	important factors of CI for international students	Factors in choosing a destination country and post-graduation intentions
	What is the role of CI in international students' decision-making?	The influence of CI in choosing a destination country and in post-graduation intentions	Reasons for choosing Finland
			Post-graduation intentions and their background factors
How has the CI for international students evolved?	CI as a summary construct, changing CI, organic & induced image	Expectations compared to reality	
		Experiential knowledge	
		Information sources	
		Dealing with cultural differences	
		Politics	

To give more space to the views of the interviewees, it was decided that the pre-defined interview questions would remain quite open-ended and broad, to allow for more precise follow-up questions to be asked (see appendix 1). This was deemed a way to see what the participants themselves want to discuss, which might give valuable insight into what they considered to be the most prominent issues. In many interviews this was the case and allowed participants to share more detailed accounts. At times, however, the questions appeared to be too broad, and the interviewees struggled to answer the question.

McGrath et al. (2019, 1003) advice researchers doing qualitative interviews to build rapport with one's interviewees. This can be done for instance by sending a brief summary of the research project to the interviewees beforehand to let them know what will be discussed and what to expect (McGrath et al. 2019, 1003). This was included in the email that was sent to potential interviewees. Furthermore, sending a consent form (see appendix 2) acted to inform the interviewees of what they are expected to do as well as their rights.

3.3 Data analysis

The data is analysed thematically, in which the researcher constructs themes across the data set in order to identify, analyse, and point out repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke 2006, 79). Theming was chosen as a data analysis method, since themes capture and bring the experiences together into a meaningful whole, while also enabling considering the context (DeSantis & Ugarriza 2000, 362). Moreover, theming is often associated with qualitative and interpretative approaches (Beck et al. 2010, 1452; Braun & Clarke 2006, 81). Themes are the end products of thematic analysis. They capture “something important about the data in relation to the research question” and represent “some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.” (Braun & Clarke 2006, 82-83.) A theme can be described as “the subjective meaning and cultural-contextual message of data” (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 2), and as the summary of the experiences of participants when faced with a specific phenomenon (Colorafi et al. 2016).

The most widely accepted framework for performing thematic analysis includes six steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, creating initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke 2017, 297). This process was also utilized in thematic analysis for this thesis. After doing most of the interviews, the researcher familiarized herself with the data, and created short summaries of the key points, that further developed to act as codes. Similar codes were connected to each other, and constantly compared as Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019, 4) suggest, and they started to form five wider wholes that were considered to be the initial themes that explain the data. A theme is shaped when repeating ideas based on similarities and differences in the data can be found (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 9). The themes emerged from the data, and they discuss wider phenomena related to experiencing CI. However, the theoretical framework shaped the data since it guided the formation of interview questions (see table 2).

After forming the initial themes, the connection between the research questions and the themes was evaluated. Furthermore, a couple more interviews at this stage acted to evaluate the themes and they were constantly compared to data. Such an iterative process is recommended for thematic analysis, to ensure that the interpretation of data is accurate (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 6). Finally, the themes were defined and named, and after that the thematic analysis was reported. Utilizing both narrative descriptions and

representative data extracts, such as quotations, acted to describe the data and to justify why the explanation provided by the researcher answers the research question (Braun & Clarke 2006, 83). Thematic analysis is both a descriptive and interpretative method, since it summarizes data, but also interpretation has a crucial role in constructing themes (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 7). Therefore, it was deemed best to report the themes by combining findings and discussion, where the findings are reported and analysed based on the theoretical framework as well as bringing more literature to the discussion.

3.4 Evaluation of the study

This chapter will evaluate the study utilizing the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 290-331), where trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be assessed from four perspectives: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were chosen because of their clear structure and wide range of perspectives, which were deemed to suit the study.

Credibility refers to whether the used material is adequate, and if the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon is consistent with the actual phenomenon. This was ensured by reviewing a wide range of CI literature from different perspectives and interpreting the data according to that. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 296, 301-306.) When it comes to the credibility of the interviewees, there is no reason to believe that they would not have spoken truthfully. The possibility of some of the interview questions being too personal was addressed by telling the interviewees that they can decline to answer questions. However, this did not occur.

Transferability is about how the research results can be generalized to apply them in similar situations. Discussing the qualitative research approach (see chapter 3.1) explains that the aim of the study is to understand subjective experiences rather than to aim for objective generalizations. The relationship between this study and previous research will be discussed in analysis and conclusions, which improves transferability. Furthermore, the context-boundness of CI is considered throughout the study, and that should be taken into account when applying the results in future studies as well. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 297, 316.)

Dependability refers to the extent to which the research depends on outside factors and emphasizes that these factors should be discussed (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 299-300). As

discussed, in thematic analysis the role of the researcher is central. However, most of the interview questions were quite broad, something that other researchers studying country image from the perspective of international students could ask as well. When it comes to the research time, changing immigration policies in Finland were topical at the time of the interviews, which may have influenced interviewees experiences compared to if they would have been asked about the immigration policies for instance two years from now.

Confirmability refers to objective interpretation. While thematic analysis cannot be fully objective, making the research process more transparent by reporting the stages of it in detail (see chapter 3.3) improves confirmability. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 318-319.) Neutrality of analysis was improved by following the guidelines of theming literature, and by analysing the data according to the extensive theoretical framework.

Communicating the background assumptions of the study and minimizing their effects improves the trustworthiness of a study (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 290-331). Interpretivism argues that researchers can never fully distance themselves from their own values and beliefs and therefore they are collecting, interpreting, and analysing data according to their own perspective (Ryan 2018, 17). This does not mean that the research is biased, but rather that the inevitable role of the researcher should be discussed. In this thesis, the experiences of international students are researched because they are considered important as such, but also from the perspective of them choosing to study in Finland and possibly staying in the country after graduation. As argued in the introduction of this thesis, highly skilled workers benefit Finland, especially because of its aging population.

3.5 Research ethics

In addition to trustworthiness, a study can also be evaluated from the perspective of research ethics. While research can create conflicts, for example between the rights of participants and making generalizable results that benefit others, research ethics concentrates on doing good and avoiding harm (Orb et al. 2000, 93). ALLEA (2017), All European Academies, describe ethical guidelines by stating that “good research practices are based on fundamental principles of research integrity.” This study will be evaluated according to the ethical research guidelines of ALLEA (2017), which consist of the principles of reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability.

Reliability is about ensuring the quality of the study. This must be implied in all stages of research: designing the study, methodology, analysis and how the resources are used. (ALLEA 2017.) The second principle of research integrity is honesty in “developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way” (ALLEA 2017). Both of these principles are followed by discussing the quality and transparency of the study in detail in the previous chapter 3.4.1 utilizing the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 290-331). Furthermore, having open-ended interview questions enables being open to new perspectives even when the researcher has previous knowledge about the topic. Thematic analysis also emphasizes the role of context in order to provide deeper understandings of the study phenomenon (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019, 8). Therefore, it can be argued that the study design is favourable at least to some parts of honesty, reducing the risk of oversimplifying. When it comes to artificial intelligence, the AI-based Microsoft writing assistant was utilized in this study to correct grammatical errors and to improve language.

The third principle of ALLEA (2017) for research integrity is “respect for colleagues, research participants, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage and the environment.” The research community is respected by referencing to previous research using proper reference manners, and also by applying previous studies in a truthful way. When data is gathered by interviewing, the treatment of participants is central. First of all, the data management for this study followed the University of Turku guidelines by only gathering personal information when needed, and by protecting the data from external access. Moreover, a data management plan (see appendix 3) was formed and followed. (Utuguides: Tutkimusdata ja datanhallinta.) The participants need to voluntarily consent to the interview while they are aware of what this includes (Orb et al. 2000, 94). This was done by first sending the possible interviewees a description of the study and the preliminary schedule, and after that, a consent form (see appendix 2) including their rights and the terms of the study. All of the participants consented to the terms.

Respect for participants is also important in case of cultural differences (Aluwihare-Samaranayake 2012, 69). This was taken into account by telling the interviewees that they can decline to answer questions if they do not feel comfortable. In order to respect participants, also power dimensions should be considered in interviews (McGrath et al. 2019, 1003) The interviewee is a native Finn, and the interviewees are immigrants in Finland, which is a possibility for a power difference to occur. However, the topic of the

study is international students' experiences, which could be expected to make the interviewees feel like their views will be reported truthfully, instead of using their answers against them in any way.

The fourth principle of research integrity is accountability. The researcher is accountable for the research "from idea to publication, for its management and organization, for training, supervision and mentoring, and for its wider impacts." (ALLEA 2017.) The author of this study fully commits to this and will answer to all questions about the study. When the research is conducted in an ethical way, as discussed above, it also enhances the extent to which one can be accountable for their research.

4 Findings and discussion

4.1 The role of information in choosing a destination country

The role of information in choosing a destination country emerged from the interview data as a significant theme. This chapter offers insight into experiencing country image by discussing the key elements of country image, how country image has evolved at the time of choosing a destination country and how country image has influenced international students' decision to study in Finland.

Most of the interviewees had either looked for a lot of information about Finland before choosing to study there or had personal contacts who recommended Finland. One interviewee had direct experience about Finland because of doing an Erasmus exchange in the country, while another interviewee became initially interested in Finland through listening to Finnish artists and searched for information about Finland after that. These findings are in line with studying abroad being a high-involvement product, where the consumer is likely to be motivated to learn about the destination country beforehand to guide their decisions (Brijs et al. 2011, 1259; Cuddy et al. 2007, 643; Roth & Diamantopoulos & 2009, 735). Also, country images are utilized to manage risks when students struggle to evaluate the host country (Hendriana et al. 2023, 145; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 142) and recommendations from family and friends influence international students' destination country choices (Morrish & Lee 2011, 523).

Three participants decided to study in Finland without looking for that much information about the country beforehand. One of them decided to come to Finland because of a degree that a specific Finnish university offered and preferred to not have presumptions about the country. Therefore, there was no need for that much further information to help with the decision-making process.

When it comes to sources of information for forming a country image, both organic image sources and induced image sources were utilized. Media had influenced the initial country image, and some of the interviewees described having seen news about the high quality of Finnish education. This could be expected, since Finnish education has been used in policy debates around the world (Takayama et al. 2013, 319). The participants who had personal contacts in Finland, such as relatives or friends, said that that was a significant reason for their initial interest towards the country. Also, the official websites and

information provided by authorities was an important source of information for many, and especially reading about other international students' experiences in Finland was mentioned. These types of induced image efforts were utilized even though organic image sources are generally more reliable than induced image efforts (Parrey et al. 2019, 101). This may have been because the messages of organic sources and induced sources were of similar kind. One student described their decision-making process in the following way:

And then, it was a match for me, because I was studying on the internet, and I came to find out that Finland has a lot of positive sides when it comes to international students. I checked all the YouTube videos, the blogs and so many things, and those actually helped me to decide, okay, I can consider Finland for study. – Undergraduate student in business, South Asia

Most of the interviewees had chosen Finland as their destination country first, and the institution after that, which is how the decision-making process usually works (Bourke 2000, 131). Therefore, country image was a significant tool in guiding students' destination country choices, as many previous studies argue (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017; Bamber et al. 2019; Cheung et al. 2019). Here, country image is a halo construct, where CI influences beliefs about a specific service or product (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139).

Some of the participants appreciated Finland because its country image seemed favourable especially for students. There, functional country cognitions seem to have been most influential, creating positive feelings towards Finland. However, most of the students emphasized functional and normative cognitions that were connected to Finnish society from a wider perspective, which influenced the overall evaluation of the country. Here is an example of a South Asian student putting effort into weighing multiple perspectives about countries rather than just education:

I was thinking to migrate to another country for my higher education, plus at the same time to give a better life for my baby. Then I was thinking, what's the best country for me? I was searching along with my husband, and we were looking into few countries, actually English-speaking countries, and many more European countries. Based on our research, based on our analysis, we found that Finland is the best destination. This was because I identified that Finland is the first in the happiest index ranking, has the best education in the world, and in terms of corruption also. – Undergraduate student in business, South Asia

This way of gathering information may be a way to tackle the issue of lacking awareness towards Finland, since Finland often performs better when countries are evaluated based on more objective criteria than subjective country images (Country image annual report 2023). Some of the interviewees said that they used to know almost nothing about Finland and formed a proper idea about the country only after actively looking for information about it. While O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy suggest that the role of stereotypes would be more significant when country awareness is weak, the participants had not internalized that many stereotypes towards Finland before gathering information themselves. Some held positive stereotypes, for instance one student from Eastern Europe had an abstract idea of Western countries as better, and another student from Southeast Asia described having generalized European countries to be quite good places. These general feelings influence country conations as a part of the affective country image (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 115). Stereotypes that could be perceived more negatively, such as the quietness of Finnish people, were found around the same time as all of the positive information. That may be why their influence was less significant.

While comparatively unknown countries' images may be more likely to change (Herz & Arnegger 2017, 1169), this was not found from the interview data at the stage of choosing to study in Finland. Instead, many of the interviewees' attitudes towards Finland seem to have properly formed only after looking for information or hearing about Finland from people they know. Before students' decision of a destination country, the country image of Finland seems to have evolved from positive stereotypes to positive, more informed attitudes.

As expected, almost all of the interviewees had either looked up a lot of information about Finland or had personal connections in the country before choosing to study there. While organic image elements seemed to have had the most significant role, also induced image sources were utilized in the decision-making process. The country image evolved by students first internalizing functional and normative cognitions that influenced the formation of the overall evaluation and created a positive country image. This made them want to study in Finland, and therefore, the role of country image as a halo construct was significant in choosing a destination country. For couple, the decision was more degree and institution oriented than country oriented.

4.2 Living quality in comparison to home countries

Factors connected to living quality were brought up by almost all of the participants and were among the key elements of Finland's country image. The influence of living quality was apparent in the formation of country image as a halo construct before choosing to study in Finland, but also in how they currently perceive the country image of Finland. Reasons behind that are discussed in this chapter by aiming for understanding how a specific aspect of country image evolves and how it is experienced.

Living quality was clearly the most important reason for choosing and liking Finland, and the participants talked about it the most passionately. Even when there was no significant difference between perceptions of living quality before and after living in Finland, gaining experiential knowledge on it seems to have strengthened the image. Factors connected to living quality included safety, family's well-being, good governance, equality, happiness, freedom, nature, and peacefulness. Nikou et al. (2023, 12) had similar findings, suggesting that international students are attracted by "Finland's reputation as a safe and stable country with a high standard of living." While some of the mentioned factors are clearly functional cognitions, they are also connected to the normative dimension of cognitions, because they seem to signal Finland's values.

The role of living quality in interviewees' answers was somewhat surprising, because many previous studies emphasize academic and career motivations to be the main factors in choosing a destination country (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535; Hendriana et al. 2023, 145), also when it comes to students choosing Finland (Juusola et al. 2021, 19; Nikou et al. 2023, 19; Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 44). However, some possible explanations for this were identified from the data.

The most important aspect in valuing living quality highly was how most of the students discussed living quality in comparison to their home countries. They perceived Finland to perform better. This is an example of cognitions interacting with the personal experiences and views of an individual in the affective component of country images (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737), since it demonstrates how the interviewees had evaluated Finland according to their own background. Also, this emphasizes the subjective nature of country images (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b, 111). Some of the students described having wanted to study abroad and build a life there because of difficulties in their home country. These findings are similar to the study of Calikoglu and

Amblee (2018, 451) in Finland, where most international students from developing countries were motivated to study abroad because of the academic or economic conditions of their home country. All of the interviewees were interested in staying in Finland after graduation, or had already done so, and therefore were considering more long-term factors than they might have, if they would have viewed studying abroad as primarily temporary.

An interviewee from South Asia stated living quality to be the main factor in choosing a destination country, even before income levels, while another interviewee from Southeast Asia described their decision to study in Finland to be quality of life oriented rather than education oriented. Two interviewees said that they had good jobs in their home country but felt like it was not the best place for them from the perspective of living quality. One of them described these motivations for leaving their home country in the following way:

At some point, you will feel like it's really a matter of what really matters, right? And for me it's about quality of life in the sense that we have equality, we have some sense of security or some sense of fairness. I want to have some autonomy of freedom in what I want to do with my life. And in my home country, to be honest, I had a good opportunity there. But at the same time, I felt like it's not the best country to live in because it's really polluted. And there's some kind of political stance or social norms that I don't feel like I fully align with. I don't want to just limit myself in that kind of environment, and that's what I mean with quality of life. How to build or how to create the meaning or the purpose of life and what kind of environment would allow me to do that? – Postgraduate student, Southeast Asia

Most of the interviewees appreciated safety in Finland in comparison to their home country, and this was an especial concern for the ones with children. One interviewee from South Asia stated that one of their main motivations to study abroad was to have a safer environment for their child. Another student stated safety to be the most important factor in choosing to study in Finland. Safety was also connected to the trust between people, and to the overall wellbeing in the society, which is an example of positive normative cognitions.

Even when high quality education was also a factor in many participants' decision to come to Finland, the emphasis was mostly on children's education. While the interviewees with children valued children's free and good quality education highly, in this analysis that would be connected to living quality rather than academic motivations, since it enhances family's well-being more than personal development. Descriptions of

university education were positive, but they remained on quite of an abstract level as motivators. These images may have stemmed as a halo effect from the overall reputation of Finnish education because country images influence institution images (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139).

Good governance system in Finland was also mentioned by many interviewees. This is consistent with Finland's NBI results (Country image annual report 2023). The common impression was that "everything works", which is also one of the main messages of institutions aiming to brand Finland as a study destination country (Studyinfinland.fi: Life in Finland). Factors such as equality, fairness, and low levels of corruption were mentioned. These positive attributes are connected to the normative and functional dimensions of Finland's country image. One interviewee said that they had heard a lot of success stories about Finland, for example about the low mortality rate, and said that everything is based on research. On the other hand, two interviewees said that good practices based on research may have created bureaucracy. This may be one of the challenges for the functional dimension of Finland's country image.

As expected, based on Country image annual report (2023), many interviewees had read about Finland being listed as the happiest country in the world. While some expressed hesitation towards it, others valued it highly. Happiness may have created more abstract, positive emotions and fascination towards Finland, and therefore it could be a part of the affective CI component (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 62). One interviewee saw happiness to be connected to Finland being a place where people are able to create their own lives freely how they want, and described the Finnish society in the following way:

In a larger sense, it (society) is considerate of people who want to create their own lives the way they see it and being able to do it. And I think that's exactly why it's the happiest country. People take that happy word maybe misconstrued into something else, but if you think about it happiness is being able to do what you want to do with your life and being able to do it without having to compromise anything else. It's very nice to be able to do that here, even as a foreigner and an immigrant trying to look for a place here. – Medical Graduate, Southeast Asia

Living quality factors were also present in environmental aspects and accordingly, environmental protection is one of the strengths of Finland's country image (Country image annual report 2023). Study in Finland website emphasizes how "nature is always close by" (StudyinFinland.fi: Life in Finland). This may be connected to the aesthetic

dimension of cognitions. Society's way of valuing nature and having it nearby also in cities was appreciated by some of the interviewees, as well as overall clean environment in comparison to their home country. Many said peacefulness to be a notable difference compared to their home country, but something that they value about Finland. These factors are connected to the norms and values of Finland, and accordingly, are part of the normative dimension of its country image (Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a, 67).

As discussed, living quality was an important part of Finland's country image for the interviewees, both in CI as a halo construct and as a summary construct. Personal experiences seemed to have strengthened this image. For many, valuing living quality highly stemmed from cognitions interacting with personal experiences and values, since they compared Finland and their home country. Living quality factors were mostly connected to functional and normative dimensions of CI, but happiness influenced the emotional dimension and nature being close by may be an aesthetic cognition.

4.3 Dealing with cultural differences

All of the participants had encountered significant cultural differences. While some of them had experienced cultural shock, most of them had positive experiences with cultural adaptation, which results in higher levels of well-being, satisfaction and staying intentions (Martinet & Damasio 2021, 467; Chelliah et al. 2019, 124; Lu et al. 2009, 300, Istad et al. 2021, 1335). According to CI as a summary construct (see figure 9), experiences guide future evaluations and country image. Therefore, this chapter will discuss how country image has evolved through firsthand experiences and the factors that may have enhanced them when it comes to dealing with cultural differences.

The quietness and privacy of Finnish people was brought up by all interviewees from non-European countries, making it arguably the most significant cultural difference for them. For instance, a South Asian interviewee described the lack of small talk to be scary for many people from their home country, because small talk is like 'oxygen' there. The Eastern European participants' perceptions of cultural differences differed from the rest, being more connected to work ethic. Since most of the participants were from non-European countries and shared similar experiences, this chapter will mainly focus on those perspectives of quietness and privacy of Finnish people.

Since the cultural differences for all non-European participants were evident, it is somewhat surprising that those differences did not appear as major challenges for most of them. For instance, Martinet and Damasio (2021, 467) find perceived cultural distance to influence social well-being negatively. However, some factors were identified from the data that could explain the students' positive experiences and through them a positive CI effect.

First of all, most of the participants demonstrated high levels of cultural intelligence, which is argued to contribute to more positive country images (Arli et al. 2023, 12). They were eager to learn and understand why people act differently in different countries, which was also used as a coping tool by the interviewees with difficulties in cultural adaptation. This may be because international students can be especially interested in getting to know new cultures, which was found as a motivating factor for studying in Finland by Calikoglu and Amblee (2018, 450). Moreover, participants with previous international experience seemed to be especially adaptive to the new environment, viewing new cultures as adventures and learning opportunities. Since beliefs interact with personal values and experiences to form emotions (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737), students who value learning may interpret cognitions more positively than others. One interviewee from South Asia said that they had been a bit sceptical about privacy in the past, but during their time in Finland they had got used to it, and nowadays think that privacy is needed. While cultural intelligence is a tool for understanding different cultures rather than necessarily changing one's manners, this is an example of having an open mind towards new perspectives and country image evolving because of that.

In previous literature, language barrier has been seen to hinder international students' sociocultural adaptation and job search in Finland (Nikou et al. 2023, 12; Tuominen & Kolho 2023; Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 448). When CI influences as a summary construct, these types of negative experiences would worsen country image. Most of the interviewees were very motivated to learn the Finnish language since it has long-term benefits, even when some described being able to operate well in the society with English only. Also, Laitinen et al. (2023, 129) argue that even when the first steps of integrating to the Finnish society may be in English, learning Finnish or Swedish remains important for long-term integration. The interviewees' high levels of motivation to learn Finnish demonstrate their dedication to integrating to the Finnish society, which would enhance CI as a summary construct. One of the students was already fluent in Finnish, and after

learning the language they were able to identify its benefits on how they are treated and how they are able to socialize with Finns better. While finding employment is crucial for adapting to the host country for long term, the role of language skills in getting a job will be further discussed in chapter 4.4.

As discussed in chapter 4.1, most of the interviewees had either looked for information about Finland or heard about the country from their personal contacts. Therefore, they were quite familiar with the main Finnish cultural characteristics before experiencing it themselves and were able to take that into consideration when choosing a destination country. The interviewees were especially aware about the stereotype of Finnish people being introverted, and accordingly expected that. This may have been a way to mentally prepare for cultural differences. Couple of the interviewees had met more outgoing people than what they would have expected, one of them stating that they were happy to live in Eastern Finland because they felt that people were more social than in some other parts of Finland.

While Finns were perceived as quiet and private, interviewees also saw locals to be helpful as long as you ask for help. The common experience was that Finnish people are trustworthy and friendly and tend to open up once you get to know them. Trustworthiness is connected to the normative dimension of cognitions and has also been one of the strengths of the country image of Finland (The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index 2023). Overall, the people facet of CI seems to have been strong compared to previous literature. For instance, in the study of Nshom et al. (2022, 36) immigrants viewed Finns to be unwelcoming because of their lack of interest to socialize. There may be couple of reasons why the images differ. First of all, the interviewees clearly had had positive contact experiences with Finns in their study and work environments, which has been seen to create immigrants' more positive attitudes towards locals and make the immigrants feel more welcome (Nshom 2023, 161; Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahi 2015, 134). University studies may have created positive interaction between international students and locals. Additionally, international students have had opportunities to seek for advice from university staff. For other types of immigrants than students, these types of resources and interactions may be more difficult to reach. While the cultural differences could be interpreted as hostility, it seems like interviewees have been able to utilize their cultural intelligence in differentiating between what is perceived as friendly in different countries.

This may have resulted in their better understanding of Finnish people and more positive images.

Many participants liked Finnish culture and had not therefore experienced it as difficult. For instance, one student from Southeast Asia described adapting to the Finnish culture to be a positive cultural experience rather than a challenge. Another interviewee from South Asia said that they really love the privacy in Finnish culture. Some interviewees described feeling at home in Finland because they thought that they are also more on the introverted side. This is an example of students' cognitive beliefs about the quietness of Finns interacting with their personal preferences (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737), which had resulted to positive attitudes about an issue that appears as a challenge for others. One of the interviewees described their attraction to Finnish quietness in the following way:

When I learned about Finland, from different sources before coming here, I learned that people are very quiet. And of course, the population is lower. Of course, the surroundings are very quiet. And I don't like much of noise. But in (South Asian country), people like nice and I'm from a town, where people are kind of very loud, they're chatting all the time. Yeah, I like it here. So, it's roadmap with my inner self, since I'm a quiet person, so I can relate myself to the surroundings. – Undergraduate student in business, South Asia

The students with children said that their children had adapted to the new environment quickly, which had also bolstered the parents' experiences. Accordingly, students with children have had higher intentions of staying in Finland. Therefore, previous studies argue that the well-being of the entire family should be considered when aiming for enhancing international students' staying rate in Finland. (Juusola et al. 2021, 37; Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 307.)

When CI is a summary construct, experiences guide future evaluations and country image, and integration and cultural intelligence influence how experiences are interpreted into future evaluations. Overall, while admitting that the cultural differences are evident, participants' cultural intelligence had clearly enhanced their experiences. They were interested in learning and adapting to the Finnish culture, which had helped many of them to overcome also quite significant differences. Knowing something about the culture beforehand, personal preferences, positive perceptions of locals and children's quick adaptation were identified as factors that may have been of advantage in dealing with cultural differences and in enhancing the CI of Finland as a summary construct.

4.4 The roles of job search and politics in creating uncertainty

All of the interviewees wanted to stay in the country for longer term, and therefore, were holding images of Finland as a place where they could migrate to permanently. Now that the students were already in Finland, some of them described Finland to be welcoming for traveling and studying, but not for longer term integration. This was because of difficulties in finding employment and tightening immigration policies. Both issues were considered surprising and because of them, one interviewee said that they came to Finland thinking it has long term options, but that “the dreams already started fading.” Therefore, the country image of Finland had changed for some of the interviewees, which is consistent with direct experiences guiding future evaluations in CI as a summary construct. International students evaluate the host country during their studies, and these negative experiences may decrease their staying intentions (Nikou et al. 2023, 12).

Immigrants’ lives often include uncertainty before getting a permanent citizenship status (Nshom et al. 2022, 36) and many of the students viewed the Finnish system as EU-centric. This experience acted together with difficulties in finding employment and tightening immigration policies to create and enhance uncertainty among participants. The following subchapters discuss this evolvement from the perspectives of job search and politics, as well as connect the specific factors to the components and dimensions of CI.

4.4.1 Difficulties in finding employment

Many of the interviewees mentioned post-graduation work opportunities as a factor that they consider when choosing a destination country, as suggested by previous studies (Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535). However, most of the interviewees saw finding employment after graduation that matches their career ambitions to be their biggest challenge in Finland. This is supported by previous studies (e.g. Nikou et al. 2023, 12; Tuominen & Kolho 2023; Li 2020, 8). While some of the interviewees had struggled in finding employment themselves, some had expectations of difficulties because of hearing about that from other international students in Finland. The two medical graduates were the only ones who did not mention having experienced any type of job insecurity, which could be expected since doctors are highly demanded in Finland (The Finnish Medical Association 2022).

Strict language barriers were identified to be the main barrier in finding employment, which is also supported by previous studies (e.g. Nshom et al. 2022, 35; Li 2020, 10). Functional cognitions connected to language were among the interesting findings from the data. Almost all of the interviewees were currently looking for English-speaking jobs. While they were aware that their employment opportunities would be better if they were fluent in Finnish and were actively studying the language, many viewed being able to work in Finnish as more of a long-term plan than a requirement for staying in the country. This may be because the students had firsthand experience on Finns speaking English well, which might have created expectations of Finns being able to speak English at work as well. The two medical graduates were an exception to this since they had known right from the beginning that they would eventually have to work in Finnish and therefore, were the most prepared to learn the language. Also, in the study of Calikoglu and Amblee (2018, 451) international students felt that they must learn Finnish in order to stay in the country, but Li (2020, 9) suggests that being able to work in English may be enough in some cases. Using English has become more common in Finland for decades (Juusola et al. 2023), and therefore, a similar direction could be expected. However, the images that most of the students had been holding about the role of Finnish language in job search seemed to not match reality, at least for now.

A country's economic conditions and through that the ability to offer employment are a part of the functional country cognitions, which have suffered resulting from difficulties in job search. Also, the imbalance between expectations and reality when it comes to language requirements is a part of the functional dimension of country cognitions. However, difficulties in finding employment had shaped a variety of normative cognitions related to equality, which is considered to be one of the key strengths of the CI of Finland (Country image annual report 2023). For instance, one student mentioned the contrast between companies' equality statements and reality, suggesting that immigrants are not treated equally. Many felt like they were not even given a chance in job search.

When it comes to language requirements, many perceived them as unfair, which may suggest an influence on the normative dimension of country cognitions. For instance, one interviewee saw strict language requirements to limit out the best candidate simply because the company does not want to speak English. Another interviewee shared the frustration, stating that Finnish is required even when the job would not include speaking

any languages, suggesting that language requirements might be connected to other factors than the actual work performance. In the study of Li (2020, 10), international students felt that language requirements are used to exclude foreigners in Finland. As discussed in chapter 4.3, all of the interviewees were actively studying Finnish and many expected better language skills to improve their position in the labour market.

Another aspect in finding employment that may decrease perceptions of equality is the importance of networking in Finland, which was mentioned by a couple of interviewees. For instance, one of them said that they are used to job opportunities to be based on skills, but here they are based on who you know. They found the role of social ties in finding employment and career development to be somewhat surprising, which is consistent with the findings of Alho (2020, 11). Being employed through one's networks is one of the key characteristics of Finnish labour market, which has often put immigrants in a less favourable position in trying to find employment (Alho 2020, 18). When asked why networking is difficult, one student said that it might be because Finns tend to professionally network with each other rather than including international students. Also, Alho (2020, 18) suggest that networking is difficult for international students, because locals are more aware of the system, and they may have formed social ties in Finland for their entire life.

Some interviewees felt that their education and previous experience are not valued in Finland, which is connected to normative country cognitions through equality. One of them said that employers do not perceive international students' work experience in their home countries as valid, and therefore that cannot be used when applying for jobs. This was also the experience of immigrants in Finland in the study of Nshom et al. (2022, 35). The interviewees emphasized that higher education should have value from the perspective of personal development and that they have a lot to offer to companies as well. One interviewee described their frustration in lack of opportunities in the following way:

We have a higher education, we have proper jobs, but when we move to Finland, what job is available for us? Some very entry thing, some job that maybe local people don't want to do. And that's why it is a waste of human resources. -- I feel very pity, to be honest. I used to work in a hotel, in a restaurant. Most of us are master's students, some of us are doctoral students. And we did have good jobs in our home countries. Of course it's a trade off, but sometimes I feel like we are second class here in terms of job opportunities. – Postgraduate student, Southeast Asia

This quote also demonstrates an emotional reaction of “feeling like second class”, which hampers the affective component of CI. While it can be challenging to differentiate between normative country cognitions and the emotions that result from cognitions, the interviewees also described difficulties in finding employment to have created abstract emotions. For example, many students said that Finnish people always come first. Moreover, one interviewee felt like companies simply do not want international students. Employment and career opportunities are of huge importance when it comes to feeling like a member of the host society. If these opportunities are insufficient and combined with discrimination, it makes the adjustment process more difficult and may create resentment towards the host country. (Nshom et al. 2022, 36.)

Most of the interviewees were from non-EU/EEA countries, and therefore their right to stay in Finland was based on finding a job in due time after graduation. Many of the interviewees seemed to be under a lot of pressure, which was also the case in the study of Alho (2020, 11). Besides stress, some participants described experiencing uncertainty and feelings of depression resulting from difficulties in finding employment. Since life satisfaction in host country influences CI as a summary construct, these negative emotions may influence the country image of Finland from the perspective of international students.

Almost all of the participants experienced at least some level of uncertainty about their job opportunities in Finland. These difficulties may be explained by not meeting language requirements, difficulties in networking, employees not perceiving international students’ previous experience as valid, and discrimination towards foreigners. While employment opportunities are among the functional cognitions of CI, discussing the background factors for difficulties in finding employment also highlighted many normative cognitions as well as emotions. Country image effects may have occurred through perceiving Finland more negatively when it comes to equality, welcomeness, and suitability for staying for long term.

4.4.2 Tightening immigration policies

The Orpo government’s changes in immigration policies had influenced most of the interviewees’ perceptions of Finland negatively. Topics of concern for the interviewees included longer waiting times for becoming a citizen, the three-months-rule and higher tuition fees. The interviewees did not express negative emotions towards a citizenship test, because they did not see it being an issue for them.

While almost all of the interviewees expressed some negative feelings towards at least some of the Orpo government's tighter immigration policies, some had more negative feelings than others. Longer citizenship waiting times were especially disappointing to the ones who were very committed to staying in Finland. One of them said that relatively short citizenship waiting time was one of their reasons for choosing Finland. Couple of the interviewees also held positive expectations that maybe the policies will not change that radically after all. While admitting that some of the policies will make immigrant's life more difficult, one interviewee showed understanding towards the tighter immigration policies by saying that global issues have put Finland into a 'defence mode'. Only one interviewee had not followed Finnish politics at all and was therefore not aware of any changes.

For many of the interviewees, the new immigration policies had created an abstract feeling of there being more problems for immigrants in future, expressing concern about the direction where Finland is going. This is an example of experiences and beliefs guiding future evaluations and shaping country image through emotions. While the policy changes as such might not be decisive factors in the decision whether to stay in Finland or leave, changing policies had created an expectation of a similar direction in future as well. Openness of the society is among the considerations of international students (Morrish & Lee 2011, 526), and in the study of Juusola et al. (2021, 25) international students said that policies promoting the openness of the society could enhance their intentions to stay in Finland after graduation. The new policies do not do that and may form quite of an opposite image from the perspective of international students.

The students described a variety of emotions resulting from the tightening of immigration policies, such as being concerned, demotivated, uncomfortable, as well as simply not feeling welcome. These influence as parts of the affective component of CI and seem to have stemmed from cognitions about how the Finnish government perceives international students and other immigrants. One of the students described this interpretation and its effects on country image in the following way:

If all these new rules come into the execution, obviously, the image will be different. It's very simple, if a government is imposing rules which indirectly or directly mean that, hey, international immigrant, you are not really motivated, you are not really encouraged to stay here, we don't really inspire you anymore. So, obviously, the image will be different. – Undergraduate student in business, South Asia

Having made a lot of sacrifices in order to come to Finland was also mentioned, implying that the new policies seem unfair compared to the student's own effort. When discussing politics, many of the interviewees emphasized how they really want to work and contribute to the society instead of relying on social benefits. This created an impression that they felt the new policies to view them as a burden, one of them saying the following:

What is happening right now just makes me feel like we are unworthy. And like I said, we're not here just to be on the social welfare to become a burden of the society. We want to contribute and want to make Finland continue to be a great country. So, I really hope, of course it may be just a fool's hope, that one day our value is fully or properly recognized and valued. And I feel like the mess so far has made us feel like our future or our life here becomes more uncertain. – Postgraduate student, Southeast Asia

Even when international students are perceived as 'desired' immigrants by the policymakers, they experience similar discrimination and prejudices than immigrants as a broader category (Lulle & Buzinska 2017, 1375; Calikoglu & Amblee 2018; Li 2020, 15), which was mentioned by a couple of interviewees. This has also occurred in political speeches and official documents in Finland (Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 449). Couple of the interviewees said that generalizing immigrants has resulted in negative assumptions, and that the new policies are built on these assumptions. One of them described their experiences in the following way:

It does kind of hurt when I do get the sentiment attached to that word (immigrant). And I do feel like whoever said it might say it with some negative feelings. It leaves a bad taste in the mouth; they didn't try to figure out the difference between (different types of immigrants). – Medical graduate, Southeast Asia

Many of the interviewees thought that the new policies would be detrimental for Finland because the country needs more skilled workers in future and therefore should realize the potential that migrant workers hold. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, attracting more migrant workers has been suggested to be a part of the solution for Finland's aging population (Kauppalehti 27.6.2023; Finnish News Agency 16.11.2022). Some said that they believe that the new policies will make Finland less attractive for international students and skilled migrants. In their opinion, longer waiting times for becoming a citizen combined with higher tuition fees would make Finland a study destination country for only the rich. They said that the rich have a variety of countries with better post-graduation work opportunities, and therefore, might not choose Finland.

Resulting from tightening immigration policies, many of the students expressed concern about the direction where Finland is going, which is an example of experiences and beliefs influencing future evaluations and country image. The new policies had created feelings of not being welcome and experiences of negative assumptions. Therefore, the impact on CI was mostly on the affective component, while also normative cognitions seemed to have changed. As discussed, international students' lives can include a lot of uncertainty, and difficulties in finding employment and tighter immigration policies add up to that. This may make the overall situation challenging. When students are evaluating the host country during their studies and CI is a summary construct, negative experiences worsen country image and may influence staying intentions.

4.5 The students' mindsets between dedication and mobility

All of the interviewees held both positive and negative images of Finland. As discussed, living quality was valued highly as mainly functional and normative cognitions, forming positive overall emotions. However, difficulties in finding employment and tightening immigration policies had created negative functional and normative cognitions as well as emotional reactions. While there were no objective criteria for evaluating the country image of Finland from the students' perspective, discussing staying intentions and their background factors offered insights into the students' overall evaluation of the CI. All of the interviewees were at least interested in staying because they liked Finland. Therefore, a positive CI seems to have enhanced or created most of the students' staying intentions during their studies. Because CI as a summary construct combines experiences, cognitions and affects into the overall evaluation and influences behavioural conations, staying intentions may be in line with how positive the country image is. However, the decision of international students whether to stay in the host country after graduation is complex, including a variety of personal and situational factors (Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 191). Therefore, the role of CI in staying intentions will be discussed in this chapter.

All of the interviewees apart from the medical graduates described their post-graduation intentions to include at least some level of uncertainty. The uncertainty was mainly connected to finding employment that matches their professional ambitions, which is a functional country cognition. This is consistent with the findings of Juusola et al. (2021, 29) arguing that trust in finding employment has a positive relationship with international students' intentions to stay in Finland after graduation. While no one besides the medical

graduates was especially trustful in finding employment, the ones who viewed their employment opportunities the most negatively had lower staying intentions than the ones who had more neutral perceptions. Not trusting in one's future employment in Finland was often connected to negative job search experiences, which is consistent with CI as a summary construct.

Figure 10 illustrates perceptions about the interviewees' future intentions between mobility and staying as well as how they viewed the country image of Finland. Since the uncertainty in staying intentions was mostly connected to finding employment, and it is impossible to know how the job search will go, the continuum from mobility to staying mostly illustrates students' own mindsets rather than the actual probability of staying. The ones who were content with their current job are an exception to this. It is also important to note that all of the interviewees viewed the country image of Finland quite positively, and therefore, the differences between their perceptions were partly not that significant.

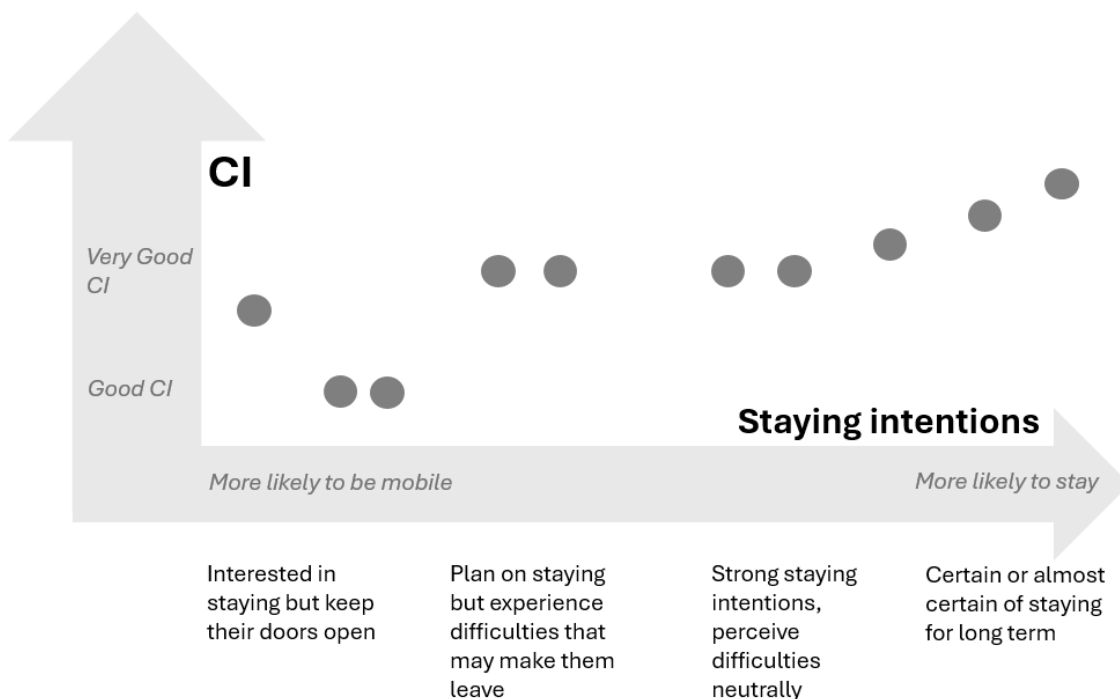


Figure 10: Interviewees' CI and staying intentions

As figure above illustrates, country image and staying intentions were somewhat connected for many. Especially the three interviewees who are most likely to stay, were holding very positive images of Finland. This was because their experiences in Finland

had been good from various perspectives, and they also had found jobs that matched their personal or professional interests, which was the key difference between them and the rest of the interviewees. As discussed in chapter 4.4.1, finding employment had been the most significant challenge for the interviewees, and therefore, overcoming that barrier can create positive emotions and reduce stress. Moreover, finding a job is one of the most significant factors that increase international students' probability to stay in the host country (Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 305; Mosneaga & Winther 2013, 187).

However, figure 10 also shows that even when CI would be good or very good, difficulties decreased staying intentions. Two of the ones who were most likely to be mobile had faced that many difficulties that their country image of Finland had suffered. This had also influenced staying intentions, because previously they had been planning to stay, but currently they described how they are going to “see how it goes”. Also, one of the students in the mobility end saw Finland to be a very good place to live in but thought that other countries could have significantly better career opportunities. They said that they do not want to waste their time in looking for a job in Finland for long, and described weighing their options in the following way:

I also keep my doors open. Because there is a lot of garden out there, and what would be the right place for me to blossom? So, Finland for me is a perfect country to live in. But if we can get some kind of employment or we can have something that feels like we actually belong to this country, then we will settle down. Education is perfect: free education and a lot of opportunities. And I have an amazing support from (their employer). That's why I have one solid leg here. Another leg is not very certain: am I able to be employable? Where am I in that type of job market? – Postgraduate student, Southeast Asia

Another interesting perspective that figure 10 highlights, are the students who plan to stay but experience difficulties that may make them leave. The difficulties were mainly those of finding employment, which had naturally led to more negative expectations of their future prospects in Finland. However, they liked Finland as a country that much that they were putting a lot of effort into overcoming difficulties in order to stay in Finland. For instance, one of them said that for the next two years they will only focus on finding a job and learning Finnish, and then see how it goes. They were planning to live on their savings, which would take an extensive amount of money if the job search actually took two years. Wanting to stay that much shows an extraordinarily strong level of dedication, and not everyone has the financial resources for that long of a job search period.

Therefore, the ones who “plan on staying but experience difficulties that may make them leave” might be among the most dedicated ones, and the positive CI seems to have significantly enhanced their dedication.

Almost all of the interviewees were ready to put a lot of effort into finding a job. They had also started to integrate to the Finnish culture, for example by learning Finnish language and the local ways of operating. All of these factors influence CI as a summary construct, and through it, behavioural conations such as staying intentions. One interviewee viewed Finland as an incredibly good country but said that one might have to put a lot of effort into getting into the society, describing this in the following way:

I would put it in the way that Finland is a castle with very welcoming people who would let you do what you want to do. But there's a big moat in between you and that castle, and that moat is all this bureaucracy and the language. It really feels kind of like a waterfall where you're building up all this effort until once you reach the top, everything just flows through. Once you break that top area everything is open for you. That's what I would say. – Medical graduate, Southeast Asia

Besides employment, also family factors such as having children or a local partner have been identified in previous literature to increase international students' staying intentions (Juusola et al. 2021, 37; Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 305-306). While the interviewees with children were not more eager to stay in Finland than others, they valued the country from the perspective of their children, which contributed to the positive county image. Couple of the interviewees had Finnish partners, but both of them emphasized that they are still going to move to another country if they cannot find jobs here with which they are content. Instead of making the participants stay directly, the influence of a Finnish partner may be more indirect, for instance enhance integration and create positive images towards the country. Mosneaga and Winther (2013, 190) suggest that a locally rooted network promotes integration and in the study of Nshom (2023, 160), it was seen that when immigrants experience positive encounters with Finnish people, it leads to “more favourable perceptions of Finnish attitudes towards immigrants”. Both having children and having a Finnish partner may increase interaction with locals and make the student feel more welcome, which can enhance country image.

All of the interviewees were eager to stay in the country for a longer period of time, because they saw Finland to have a variety of benefits. Furthermore, their perception of CI as a summary construct was positive, which had created the intentions to stay. CI and

staying intentions were connected for many, especially for the ones who had jobs with which they were content. However, even when CI was positive, difficulties in finding employment had decreased staying intentions. Also, CI acted as a motivator for dedication in overcoming challenges. While family factors did not directly make the students want to stay in Finland, they might have influenced the overall country image positively.

5 Conclusions

The country image of Finland from the perspective of international students is considered important from the perspectives of both societal significance and a research gap. This study was conducted by first forming a theoretical framework that combines country image literature (eg. Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015a; Buhmann & Ingenhoff 2015b; Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009) with studies about international students' destination country choices (e.g. Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002; Hendriana et al. 2023, 155; Juusola et al. 2021, 19) and post-graduation intentions (eg. Istad et al. 2021; Baruch et al. 2007; Nikou et al. 2023). This further guided the thematic analysis of the data that was gathered from interviewing international students and graduates in Finland. While the themes discussed the different phenomena as wholes, in this chapter the conclusions are presented directly according to the research questions.

The purpose of this study is to understand how international students experience the country image of Finland. Accordingly, the main research question is "How do international students experience the country image of Finland?" To answer this question, three subproblems are discussed:

- What are the key elements of country image for an international student?
- What is the role of country image in international students' decision-making?
- How has the country image of Finland for international students evolved over time?

These research questions are answered in this chapter, dividing them into theoretical contributions and policy recommendations. Finally, limitations and future research suggestions are discussed.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This thesis addresses a prominent research gap in country image literature, since as far as I am aware, the country image of Finland has not been studied from the perspective of international students. Therefore, this study contributes to the CI literature by highlighting an underrepresented topic of study. Country images are very context-bound, and therefore the processes and factors related to them are an important topic of study. Additionally, to

my knowledge, CI has not been utilized directly in studying international students' post-graduation intentions. Since CI as a summary construct (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139) is consistent with previous studies on international students' post-graduation intentions (e.g. Istad et al. 2021; Nghiê-m-Phú 2016), these were combined in the theoretical framework.

The first sub question "What are the key elements of country image for an international student?" was answered by discussing the functional, normative, and aesthetic country cognitions, as well as the overall country effect, and their influence on CI. Factors connected to living quality were by far the most important elements of Finland's country image for the interviewees, both in CI as a halo construct and CI as a summary construct. These factors included safety, family's wellbeing, good governance, equality, happiness, nature, and peacefulness. Even when some of these cognitions are functional, they were interpreted to signal what Finland values, and therefore they could also be part of the normative dimension of CI. They created affects and influenced the overall CI.

The significance of living quality in CI as a halo construct was somewhat surprising, because even when Nikou et al. (2023, 12) also recognize it, the majority of previous studies argue academic and career motivations to be the most important factors in choosing a destination country (e.g. Perez-Encinas et al. 2021, 2535; Hendriana et al. 2023, 145; Juusola et al. 2021, 19; Nikou et al. 2023, 19; Calikoglu & Amblee 2018, 44). While high-quality education was one of the motivations for choosing Finland, the emphasis was on children's education while expectations of university studies remained on quite of an abstract level.

When it comes to country affects, it should be noted that the interviewees' valuation of living quality stemmed widely from comparisons to their home countries. For some, difficulties in their home countries were why they wanted to study abroad and stay there after graduation. Accordingly, cognitive beliefs interact with the personal views and experiences of an individual in the affective component of CI (Roth & Diamantopoulos 2009, 737). Therefore, the subjective nature of CI should be considered rather than generalizing international students' motivations. These findings reflect those of Calikoglu and Amblee (2018, 451), where most international students from developing countries were motivated to study abroad because of the academic or economic conditions of their home country.

Living quality being important in post-graduation intentions is more consistent with previous studies; when CI is a summary construct, experiences of life satisfaction influence future evaluations, CI, and post-graduation intentions (Istad et al. 2021, 1335; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139). Additionally, bad experiences in job searches, and hearing about such bad experiences from others had created negative functional and normative cognitions, which had further formed negative emotions about feeling welcome and valued by the host country.

The second sub question “What is the role of country image in international students’ decision-making?” was discussed both from the perspectives of choosing a destination country and post-graduation intentions. As previous studies (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017; Bamber et al. 2019; Cheung et al. 2019; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139) argue, country image as a halo construct had influenced most of the interviewees’ decision to study in Finland. While the role of institution image was less significant than CI, institution image descriptions indicated being influenced by the general CI, which is consistent with previous literature (Ahmad & Buchanan 2017, 663; Bamber 2014, 61; Cheung et al. 2019, 1553; Yousaf et al. 2020, 174). The importance of CI compared to that of institution image may have been because many of the students had been planning all along to stay in Finland after graduation, and were therefore considering long term factors, such as living quality and the well-being of their entire family.

In post-graduation intentions, CI as a summary construct combines experiential knowledge into future evaluations (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139; Istad et al. 2021, 1335). Accordingly, the interviewees perceived the country image of Finland positively overall, which had contributed to their intentions to stay. While CI and staying intentions were somewhat connected (see figure 10), trust in finding employment was more important in explaining the level of staying intentions. This is consistent with the findings of Juusola et al. (2021, 29). Viewing the country image of Finland positively through experiences seems to have resulted in remarkably high levels of dedication and motivation to put effort into integrating and finding employment. This indicates that the problem in international students’ leaving Finland after graduation could be connected to external and situational factors rather than how they see the CI of Finland. To my knowledge, CI has not been studied previously from the perspective of international students’ post-graduation intentions, and therefore, these findings offer new insights into the CI discussion.

The third sub question “How has the country image of Finland for international students evolved over time?” was answered by discussing the process of experiencing CI. Before choosing a destination country, the students’ view on the CI of Finland seems to have evolved from positive stereotypes to positive, more informed attitudes. Most of the interviewees chose to study in Finland because of looking for a lot of information or getting recommendations from somebody they know. This is consistent with studying abroad being a high-involvement service, where the student is motivated to look for information to support their decision-making (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139). Moreover, recommendations from family and friends influence international students’ destination country choices (Morrish & Lee 2011, 523). While the role of organic image sources was more significant than that of induced image, induced image sources were also considered to be reliable, which offers a new perspective on the findings of Parrey et al. (2019, 101). This may have been because the Finnish institutions’ nation branding efforts were in line with the general CI of Finland.

After already living in Finland, the CI had evolved according to experiences and beliefs influencing future evaluations and CI as a summary construct (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth 2002, 139). The interviewees said that many of their expectations had turned out to be true, which had strengthened those aspects of CI, such as those of living quality. However, difficulties in finding employment and tightening immigration policies had created and enhanced uncertainty by influencing country image negatively when it comes to equality, welcomeness, and suitability for staying for long term. Many expressed concerns about the direction where Finland is going when it comes to immigration policy, which is an example of experiences and beliefs influencing future evaluations and country image. This highlights how an individual can also be affected from other factors than the ones that affect them directly.

Even when all participants had encountered significant cultural differences during their time in Finland, most of them did not perceive them as challenging. This was somewhat surprising, because Martinet and Damasio (2021, 467) argue perceived cultural distance to influence social well-being negatively. However, the students demonstrated high levels of cultural intelligence, which helped them to understand Finnish culture and enhanced their experiences. Accordingly, cultural intelligence is argued to contribute to more positive country images (Arli et al. 2023, 12). Other factors that might have helped with dealing with cultural differences include being motivated, looking for information

beforehand, positive interactions with locals, personal preferences of liking the Finnish culture, and children's quick adaptation.

To summarize the theoretical contributions, it can be said that international students experience the country image of Finland in all of the abovementioned ways. The significance of different CI elements is influenced by the personal experiences and values of an individual. CI influences as a halo construct in choosing a destination country and as a summary construct in post-graduation intentions, while in post-graduation intentions situational factors can also be important. International students' CI evolves because of gaining experiential knowledge. Research in a specific context can offer new insights, and accordingly, in this study some of the conclusions seem to challenge the prominent views in previous studies.

5.2 Policy recommendations

Besides the theoretical contributions, studying international students' experiences offers practical understanding into their CI and decision-making. Since the number of international students is growing (Finnish News Agency 11.11.2022), and they hold potential for staying in the country after graduation (Mathies & Karhunen 2021, 307), they could be a part of the solution for Finland's aging population and the growing need for skilled workers. Therefore, this chapter utilizes the results of this study to form recommendations for Finnish policymakers in order to both attract and retain international students.

The students' CI of Finland was widely based on living quality factors, which can be perceived as core pillars of life. In living quality, Finland performs well, especially when it comes to safety, freedom, and clean environment. While another interviewee group might have had different motivations, the students who are motivated by factors other than personal development, may hold greater potential for being dedicated to stay in Finland after graduation instead of looking for a best possible employment opportunity in any country. Therefore, the students who are motivated by living quality could be of particular importance for Finland, and Finnish policymakers could aim to hold on to these core principles of good life in order to keep on attracting and retaining these students.

Lack of awareness is one of the weaknesses of the CI of Finland. This might not be an especially significant issue from the perspective of international students, because they

are often motivated to look for information to support their choice of a destination country. When it comes to organic image, Finland's positive media attention and recommendations from family and friends had influenced students' decision to study in Finland. Therefore, the topics of positive media attention should be held on to. Moreover, positive word-of-mouth holds potential for attracting international students. This effect could be grown by enhancing the experiences of international students in Finland. Institutions' nation branding efforts were also considered reliable, possibly because they were consistent with the overall CI of Finland. Therefore, these communication efforts seem to be viable as they currently are.

While all of the students wanted to stay in Finland, difficulties in finding employment were detrimental to their CI and staying intentions. Overall, the mindsets of employers and policymakers seem to differ significantly when it comes to international students. Therefore, policymakers could look for ways to help both students and employers in this, for example by training. It seems that the students are dedicated to integrating by learning the local ways of operating and the Finnish language, but nevertheless, lacking in these skills puts them in a less favourable position in the eyes of employers. It is suggested that Finnish society could put more effort into adapting as well and to be more open-minded. One practical way to improve international students' employment opportunities could be to implement traineeship programs specifically for international graduates that combine language training with cultural and professional training from the perspective of a workplace. This could be a steppingstone for future opportunities as well and a way for employers to get to know international students and realize their potential.

While Finnish language is important in many jobs, the strictness of language requirements could be re-evaluated and possibly specified more. Since there are many examples of multilingual working environments, the problem may be Finnish employers' and employees' hesitation towards using English. Language training could be helpful for everyone, and seeing the benefits that international students hold may help the employers' motivation to adapt more. Since biases and discrimination can influence international students' employment opportunities, policies promoting equality such as anonymous recruitment could improve the situation.

The tightening of immigration policies had worsened CI for many. Especially those who were the most dedicated to stay were disappointed in longer citizenship waiting times.

Also, higher tuition fees were a concern, some said that Finland would become a destination for the rich only, who also have options with better post-graduation employment opportunities. This study indicates that these policies have negative effects from the perspective of international students who are already making a significant effort to be able to stay in Finland, and therefore, it is recommended that such policies are re-evaluated.

It is important to note that the students were not only impacted by the policies that influence them directly, but that the overall tighter immigration policies acted together to create an expectation of a similar direction in the future as well as negative feelings, such as not being welcome. This worsened CI and enhanced uncertainty together with difficulties in finding employment. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that Finnish policymakers could consider what type of message their immigration policy sends to international students and other skilled migrants.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Even when this thesis was conducted carefully based on academic literature and methodological guidelines, it does have some limitations. However, these limitations also offer possibilities for future research to explore.

Since this study concentrates on how international students experience of country image, it does not measure country image and its changes in an objective manner. Additionally, discussing the interviewees' reasons for choosing Finland relied on their memory. Therefore, future studies could implement a quantitative, longitudinal study, which would measure the country image of Finland before and after arriving to the country. While ten was deemed to be a suitable number of interviewees because it was somewhat of a saturation point, it was also a question of schedule and availability. It is possible that a different group of interviewees would have had different experiences, and therefore, future studies could have more interviewees in different fields of study.

Because degree-students were considered to hold greater potential for staying in the host country for a longer period of time, only they were interviewed. This excluded credit-mobility students. In order to get a wider perspective of all international students in Finland, credit-mobility students could also be included in future studies. All of the interviewees were in Finland at the time of the interviews and therefore, had considered

the CI of Finland to be good enough. While that offers an interesting perspective on how they have experienced the country image of Finland, it excludes students who did not want to study in Finland. Their perspective on CI could be different and that could be researched in future.

Even when the results of this study offer insight into how international students in general can experience country images, it should be noted that country images are context-bound. Therefore, some perspectives of this study are bound to the Finnish context on a specific time. Since the country image of Finland from the perspective of international student seems to be a topic that is yet to be researched, there are limited studies to which this thesis can be compared. Therefore, this study can guide future research to utilize similar approaches for country images.

References

- Ahmad, Syed – Buchanan, Frederick (2017) Motivation factors in students' decision to study at international branch campuses in Malaysia. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 42 (4), 651–668.
- Alho, Rolle (2020) 'You need to know someone who knows someone': international students' job search experiences. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, Vol. 10 (2), 3–22.
- ALLEA 2017: The European code of conduct for research integrity. <<https://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017.pdf>>, retrieved 3.11.2023.
- Alloh, Folashade – Tait, Desiree – Taylor, Clare (2018) Away from home: a qualitative exploration of health experiences of Nigerian students in a U.K. university. *Journal of International Students*, Vol. 8 (1), 1–20.
- Aluwihare-Samaranayake, Dilmi (2012) Ethics in qualitative research: a view of the participants' and researchers' world from a critical standpoint. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 11 (2), 64–81.
- Alvarez, Maria – Korzay, Meral – Andreu, Luisa – Gnoth, Juergen – Kozak, Metin (2008) Influence of politics and media in the perceptions of Turkey as a tourism destination. *Tourism Review*, Vol. 63 (2), 38–46.
- Anholt, Simon (2009) The media and national image. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 5 (3), 169–179.
- Arli, Denni – Pekerti, Andre – Kusumansondjaja, Sonny – Sendjaya, Sen (2023) The mediating effect of sociocultural adaptation and cultural intelligence on citizens and migrants: impact on perceptions of country images. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 92, Article 101728, 1–18.
- Baker, Michael – Ballington, Lorna (2002) Country of origin as a source of competitive advantage. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 10 (2), 157–168.
- Bamber, Matthew (2014) What motivates Chinese women to study in the UK and how do they perceive their experience? *Higher Education*, Vol. 68 (1), 47–68.
- Barich, Howard – Kotler, Philip (1991) A framework for marketing image management. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 32 (2), 94–104.
- Baruch, Yehuda – Budhwar, Pawan – Khatri, Naresh (2007) Brain drain: inclination to stay abroad after studies. *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 42 (1), 99–112.

- Batra, Rajeev – Ahtola, Rajeev (1991) Measuring the hedonic and utilitarian sources of consumer attitudes. *Marketing Letter*, Vol. 2 (2), 159–170.
- Belotto, Michael (2018) Data analysis methods for qualitative research: managing the challenges of coding, interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *Qualitative Report*, Vol. 13 (11), 2622–2633.
- Bourke, Ann (2000) A model of the determinants of international trade in higher education. *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 20 (1), 110–138.
- Brannen, Mary – Thomas, David – Dominie, Garcia (2010) Bicultural individuals and intercultural effectiveness. *European Journal of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management*, Vol. 1 (4), 315–333.
- Braun, Virginia – Clarke, Victoria (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3 (2), 77–101.
- Brijs, Kris – Bloemer, Josée – Kasper, Hans (2011) Country image discourse model: unraveling meaning, structure, and function of country images. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 64 (12), 1259–1269.
- Buhmann, Alexander – Ingenhoff, Diana (2015a) Advancing the country image construct from a public relations perspective: from model to measurement. *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 19 (1), 62–80.
- Buhmann, Alexander – Ingenhoff, Diana (2015b) The 4D model of the country image: an integrative approach from the perspective of communication management. *The International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 77 (1), 102–124.
- Cai, Huajian – Fang, Xiang – Yang, Zhilin – Song, Hairong (2012) Implicit consumer animosity: as primary validation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 42 (7), 1651–1674.
- Calikoglu, Alper – Amblee, Naven (2018) International students experiences in non-native-English-speaking countries: postgraduate motivations and realities from Finland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, Vol. 13 (3), 439–456.
- Cheah, Isaac – Phau, Ian – Kea, Garick – Huang, Yu An (2016) Modelling effects of consumer animosity: consumer’s willingness to buy foreign and hybrid products. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 30, 184–192.
- Chelliah, Shankar – Khan, Mohammed Jamal – Krishnan, Thilagavathy – Kamarulzaman, Muhammed Erzat Bin Md – Goh, Ning Ee (2019) Factors influencing satisfaction and revisit intention among international exchange

- students in Malaysia. *Journal of International Education in Business*, Vol. 12 (1), 111–130.
- Chen, Nan – Ji, Shaojun – Funk, Daniel (2014) An extended study on destination image decay of sport tourists over time. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, Vol. 2 (4), 241–252.
- Cheung, Alan – Guo, Xin – Wang, Xiaorui – Miao, Zhuang (2019) Push and pull factors influencing Mainland Chinese Med students in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 33 (7), 1539–1560.
- Chiou, Jyh-shen (2003) The impact of country of origin on pretrial and posttrial evaluations: the moderating effect of consumer expertise. *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 20 (10), 935–954.
- Colorafi, Karen Jiggins – Evans, Bronwynne – Pati – Debajyoti (2016) Qualitative descriptive methods in health science research. *HERD*, Vol. 9 (4), 16–25.
- Confederation of Finnish industries EK: Työperusteinen maahanmuutto vaalikaudella 2023–2027. <https://ek.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/EK_Tyo%CC%88pera%CC%88inenMaahanmuutto1.pdf>, retrieved 23.4.2024.
- Cote, Luc – Turgeon, Jean (2005) Appraising qualitative research articles in medicine and medical education. *Medical Teacher*, Vol. 27 (1), 71–75.
- Country image annual report 2023. <<https://toolbox.finland.fi/strategy-research/maakuvan-vuosikatsaus-2023/>>, retrieved 12.2.2024.
- Cowley, Paul – Hyams-Ssekasi, Denis (2018) Motivation, induction, and challenge: examining the initial phase of international students' educational sojourn. *Journal of International Students*, Vol. 8 (1), 109–130.
- Cuddy, Amy – Fiske, Susan – Glick, Peter (2007) The BIAS map: behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 92 (4), 631–648.
- DeSantis, Lydia – Ugarriza, Doris (2000) The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, Vol. 22 (3), 351–372.
- Doz, Yvez (2011) Qualitative research for international business. *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 42 (5), 582–590.
- Emler, Nicholas (1990) A social psychology of reputation. *European Review of Social Psychology*, Vol. 1 (1), 171–193.

- Erlingsson, Christen – Brysiewicz, Petra (2013) Orientation among multiple truths: an introduction to qualitative research. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, Vol. 3 (2), 92–99.
- EVA 21.6.2023: Maahanmuutto on hallitusohjelman heikoin lenkki.
<<https://www.eva.fi/blog/2023/06/21/maahanmuutto-on-hallitusohjelman-heikoin-lenkki/>>, retrieved 11.2.2024.
- Fan, Ying (2010) Branding the nation: towards a better understanding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 6 (2), 97–103.
- Finnish News Agency (STT Info) 11.11.2022: Ennätysmäärä kansainvälisiä opiskelijoita on muuttanut Suomeen tänä vuonna.
<<https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/69957060/ennatysmaara-kansainvalisia-opiskelijoita-on-muuttanut-suomeen-tana-vuonna?publisherId=69817837>>, retrieved 11.2.2024.
- Finnish News Agency (STT Info) 16.11.2022: Suomi tarvitsee 28 vuoden ajan vuosittain yli 50 000 maahanmuuttajaa.
<<https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/69957496/suomi-tarvitsee-28-vuoden-ajan-vuosittain-yli-50-000-maahanmuuttajaa?publisherId=69819513>>, retrieved 11.2.2024.
- Geis, Wido – Uebelmesser, Silke – Werding, Martin (2013) How do migrants choose their destination country? An analysis of institutional determinants. *Review of International Economics*, Vol. 21 (5), 825–840.
- Gohary, Ali – Shah, Aakash – Chan, Eugene (2022) Do political actions affect country image and travel intentions? The case of COVID-19. *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. ahead-of-print, 1–14.
- Goldkuhl, Göran (2012) Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, Vol. 21 (2), 135–146.
- Hang, Gang – Wang, Xiuli (2015) From product-country image to national image: “made in China” and integrated valence framing effects. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, Vol. 9 (1), 62–77.
- Hakala, Ulla – Lemmetyinen, Arja – Kantola, Satu-Päivi (2013) Country image as a nation-branding tool. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 31 (5), 538–556.
- Hendriana, Evelyn – Awang, Khairil Wahidin – Yusof, Raja Nerina Raja (2023) The roles of the country’s cognitive, affective, and personality aspects in

- international students' decision-making. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, Vol. 33 (2), 143–160.
- Herz, Marc – Arnegger, Julius (2017) Country image formation, stability, and change: a longitudinal assessment of consumers' image of Azerbaijan. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 34 (9), 1169–1183.
- Heslop, Louise – Lu, Irene – Cray, David – Phau, Ian – Chao, Paul (2008) Modeling country image effects through and international crisis. *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 25 (4), 354–378.
- Heslop, Louise – Papadopoulos, Nicolas – Dowdles, Melissa – Wall, Marjorie – Compeau, Deborah (2004) Who controls the purse strings: A study of consumers' and retail buyers' reactions in an America's FTA environment. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 57 (10), 1177–1188.
- Helsingin Sanomat 24.7.2023. <<https://www.hs.fi/talous/art-2000009737627.html>>, retrieved 6.3.2024.
- Istad, Felicia – Varpahovskis, Eriks – Miezan, Ekra – Ayhan, Kadir Juna (2021) Global Korea Scholarship students: intention to stay in the host country to work or study after graduation. *Politics & Policy*, Vol. 49 (6), 1323–1342.
- Jokila, Suvi (2019) International student recruitment strategies in Finland and China: an analysis of website content. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Vol. 3 (4), 1–17.
- Juusola, Henna – Nori, Hanna – Lyytinen, Anu – Kohtamäki, Vuokko – Kivistö, Jussi (2021) Ulkomaiset opiskelijat suomalaisissa korkeakouluissa: Miksi Suomeen on päädytty ja kiinnostaako työskentely Suomessa opintojen jälkeen? <<https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163013>>, retrieved 6.9.2023.
- Kauppalehti 27.6.2023. Suomen pitäisi houkutella, ei torjua maahanmuuttoa. <<https://www.kauppalehti.fi/uutiset/suomen-pitaisi-houkutella-ei-torjua-maahanmuuttoa/ee8918f9-a0c6-4ccc-b23e-01775fa15fa6>>, retrieved 11.2.2024.
- King, Ceridwyn – Chen, Nan – Funk, Daniel (2015) Exploring destination image decay: a study of sport tourists' destination image change after event participation. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 39 (1), 3–31.
- King, Nigel (1994) The qualitative research interview. In: *Qualitative methods in organizational research: a practical guide*, eds. Cassell, Catherine – Symon, Gill. Sage Publications, 14–36. London.

- Klein, Jill Gabrielle (2002) Us versus them, or us versus everyone? Delineating consumer aversion to foreign goods. *Journal of International Business*, Vol. 33 (2), 345–363.
- Kotler, Philip – Gertner, David (2002) Country as brand, product, and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective. *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 9 (4), 249–261.
- Laitinen, Mikko – Leppänen, Sirpa – Rautionaho, Paula – Backman, Sara (2023) Englanti Suomen kansalliskielten rinnalla: kohti joustavaa monikielisyyttä. <<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-055-4>>, retrieved 7.3.2024.
- Laroche, Michel – Papadopoulos, Nicolas – Heslop, Louise –Mourali, Mehdi (2005) The influence of country image structure on consumer evaluations of foreign products. *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 22 (1), 96–115.
- Lavine, Howard – Thomsen, Cynthia – Zanna, Mark – Borgida, Eugene (1998) On the primacy of affect in the determination of attitudes and behavior: the moderating role of affective-cognitive ambivalence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 34 (4), 398–421.
- Lee, Seow Ting – Kim, Hun Shik (2021) Nation branding in the COVID-19 era: South Korea’s pandemic public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 17 (4), 382–396.
- Li, Hanwei (2020) How to retain global talent? Economic and social integration of Chinese students in Finland. *Sustainability*, Vol. 12 (10), Article 4161, 1–19.
- Lincoln, Y. S. – Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications, California.
- Liska, Allen (1984) A critical examination of the causal structure of the Fishbein/Ajzen attitude-behavior model. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 47 (1), 61–74.
- Lu, Yixi – Zong, Li – Schissel, Bernard (2009) To stay or return: migration intentions of students from people’s republic of China in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 10 (3), 283–310.
- Lulle, Aija – Buzinska, Laura (2017) Between a ‘student abroad’ and ‘being from Latvia’: inequalities of access, prestige, and foreign-earned cultural capital. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 43 (8), 1362–1378.
- Maher, Amro – Carter, Larry (2011) The affective and cognitive components of country image: perceptions of American products in Kuwait. *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 (6), 559–880.

- Martinet, Érica Henke Garcia – Damásio, Bruno Figueiredo (2021) Relationships between cultural adaptation and immigrants' well-being. *Psico-USF*, Vol. 26 (3), 467–481.
- McGrath, Cormac – Palmgren, Per – Liljedahl, Matilda (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, Vol. 41 (9), 1002–1006.
- Mathies, Charles – Karhunen, Hannu (2021) Do they stay or go? Analysis of international students in Finland. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 19 (3), 298–310.
- Morrish, Sussie Celna – Lee, Christina (2011) Country of origin as a source of sustainable competitive advantage: the case for international higher education institutions in New Zealand. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 19 (6), 517–529.
- Mosneaga, Ana – Winther, Lars (2013) Emerging talents? International students before and after their career start in Denmark. *Population, Space and Place*, Vol. 19 (2), 181–195.
- Mähönen, Tuuli Anna – Jasinskaja-Lahti, Inga (2016) 'Meet me halfway': socio-cultural adaptation and perceived contact willingness of host nationals as predictors of immigrants' threat perceptions. *Journal of Community & Applied social psychology*, Vol. 26 (2), 125–135.
- Nadeau, John – Olafsen, Anja (2015) Country image evaluations and migration intentions. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 11 (4), 293–308.
- Nghiêm-Phú, Bình (2016) Country image, country attachment, country loyalty, and life satisfaction of foreign residents in Vietnam. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Vol. 16 (4), 329–344.
- Nikou, Shahrokh – Kadel, Bibek – Gutema, Dandi Merga (2023) Study destination preference and post-graduation intentions: a push-pull factor theory perspective. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. Vol. ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print), 1–21.
- Nshom, Elvis (2023) Intergroup contact, perceived attitudes, and immigrants' attitudes towards locals: the case of immigrants living in Finland. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 23 (4), 157–165.
- Nshom, Elvis – Sadaf, Shomaila – Khalimzoda, Ilkhom – Ahmad, Israr (2022) Perceived challenges living and integrating into Finnish society: a study among

- immigrants in Finland. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 22 (3), 31–42.
- Orb, Angelica – Eisenhauer, Laurel – Wynaden, Dianne (2000) Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. Vol. 33 (1), 93–96.
- O’Shaughnessy, John – O’Shaughnessy, Nicholas (2000) Treating the nation as a brand: some neglected issues. *Journal of Macromarketing*, Vol. 20 (1), 56–64.
- Pan, Jia-Yan (2015) Predictors of post-migration growth for Chinese international students in Australia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 47 (July 2015), 69–77.
- Papadopoulos, Nicolas – Heslop, Louise (1993) *Product-country Images: impact and role in international marketing*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Parameswaran, Ravi – Pisharodi, Mohan (1994) Facets of country of origin image: an empirical assessment. *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 23 (1), 43–56.
- Parrey, Shakir Hussain – Hakim, Iqbal Ahmad – Rather, Raouf Ahmad (2019) Mediating role of government initiatives and media influence between perceived risks and destination image: a study of conflict zone. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, Vol. 5 (1), 90–106.
- Perez-Encinas, Adriana – Rodriguez-Pomeda, Jesus – de Wit, Hans (2021) Factors influencing student mobility: a comparative European study. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 46 (12), 2528–2541.
- Peters, Kath – Halcomb, Elizabeth (2015) Interviews in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, Vol. 22 (4), 6–7.
- Puusa, Anu (2011) Haastattelu laadullisen tutkimuksen menetelmänä. In: *Menetelmäviidakon raivaajat: Perusteita laadullisen tutkimuslähestymistavan valintaan*, eds. Puusa, Anu – Juuti, Pauli, 73–87. Johtamistaidon opisto, Turku.
- Richards, Greg – Wilson, Julie (2004) The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 41 (10), 1931–1951.
- Roth, Katharina – Diamantopoulos, Adamantios (2009) Advancing the country image construct. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 62 (7), 726–740.
- Rudd, B. – Djafarova, E. – Waring, T. (2012) Chinese students’ decision-making process: a case of a business school in the UK. *The international Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 10 (2), 129–138.

- Rusciano, Frank Louis (2003) The construction of national identity: a 23-nation study. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56 (3), 361–366.
- Ryan, Gemma (2018) Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. *Nurse Researcher*, Vol. 25 (4), 14–20.
- Ryan, Jason (2008) The Finnish country-of-origin effect: the quest to create a distinctive identity in a crowded and competitive international marketplace. *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 16, (1–2), 13–20.
- Saifer, Adam (2021) Philanthropic nation branding, ideology, and accumulation: insights from the Canadian context. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 173 (3), 559–576.
- Serrano-Across, María Del Mar – Sánchez-Fernández, Raquel – Pérez-Mesa, Juan Carlos (2021) Analysis of product-country image from consumer’s perspective: the impact of subjective knowledge, perceived risk and media influence. *Sustainability*, Vol. 13 (4), 1–25.
- Smith, Mahlon (1947) The personal setting of public opinions: a study of attitudes toward Russia. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 11. (4), 507–523.
- Sonnevend, Julia (2019) Charm offensive: mediatized country image transformations in international relations. *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 22 (5), 695–701.
- Srikatanyoo, Natthawut – Gnoth, Juergen (2002) Country image and international tertiary education. *The Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 10 (2), 139–146.
- Stepchenkova, Svetlana – Dai, Xiangyi – Kirilenko, Andrei – Su, Lijuan (2020) The influence of animosity, ethnocentric tendencies, and national attachment on tourists’ decision-making processes during international conflicts. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 59 (8), 1370–1385.
- Studyinfinland.fi: Life in Finland. <<https://www.studyinfinland.fi/life-finland>>, retrieved 1.11.2023.
- Suomen Yrittäjät 26.8.2023. <<https://www.yrittajat.fi/tiedotteet/yrittajagallup-rasismikeskustelu-vaikuttaa-suomen-maakuvaan/>>, retrieved 6.3.2024.
- Takayama, Keita – Waldow, Florian – Sung, Youl-Kwan (2013) Finland has it all? Examining the media accentuation of ‘Finnish education’ in Australia, Germany and South Korea. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, Vol. 8 (3), 307–325.

The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index 2023.

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-10/NBI_2023_Press_Release_Supplemental_Deck_WEB.pdf> retrieved 12.2.2024.

The Finnish Medical Association 2022: The doctor situation in healthcare centers.

<https://www.laakariliitto.fi/site/assets/files/5223/2022_terveyskeskusten_laakaritilanne_final3.pdf>, retrieved 4.5.2024.

The Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2023.

<<https://www.insead.edu/system/files/2023-11/gtci-2023-report.pdf>>, retrieved 13.2.2024.

Thomas, David – Elron, Efrat – Stahl, Günter – Ekelund, Bjørn – Ravlin, Elizabeth – Cerdin, Jean-Luc – Poelmans, Steven – Brislin, Richard – Pekerti, Andre – Aycan, Zeynep – Maznevski, Martha – Au, Kevin – Lazarova, Mila (2008) Cultural intelligence: domain and assessment. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, Vol. 8 (2), 123–143.

Tilastokeskus 2021. <https://www.stat.fi/til/vaenn/2021/vaenn_2021_2021-09-30_tie_001_fi.html>, retrieved 6.9.2023.

Tuomi, Jouni – Sarajärvi, Anneli (2018) *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi: Uudistettu laitos*. Tammi.

Tuominen, Riikka – Kolho, Piia (2023) Kansainväliset osaajat Suomeen – mahdoton tehtävä? <<https://unlimited.hamk.fi/muut/kansainvaliset-osaajat-suomeen-mahdoton-tehtava/>>, retrieved 26.10.2023.

UM: Maakuvaraportti 2010.

<https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/maakuvaraportti_2010/a84dd65c-47ea-5c2e-8b83-7d87c4b88fc3?t=1525688953572>, retrieved 12.2.2024.

UM: Maakuvatyo (2024). <<https://um.fi/maakuvatyo>>, retrieved 12.2.2024.

Utuguides: Tutkimusdata ja datanhallinta.

<<https://utuguides.fi/tutkimusdata/tietosuoja>>, retrieved 6.5.2024.

Vaismoradi, Mojtaba – Snelgrove, Sherill (2019) Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Forum, Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 20 (3), Article 23.

Valaskivi, Katja (2016) Circulating a fashion: performance of nation branding in Finland and Sweden. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, Vol. 12, (2–3), 139–151.

Valtioneuvosto: Korkeakoulutus ja tiede.

<<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitukset/hallitusohjelma#/5/3>>, retrieved 4.5.2024.

Valtioneuvosto: Maahanmuutto- ja kotoutuspolitiikka.

<<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitukset/hallitusohjelma#/10/3>>, retrieved 6.3.2024.

Valtioneuvosto: Vahva ja välittävä Suomi.

<<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hallitukset/hallitusohjelma#/4/4>>, retrieved 11.2.2024.

Van Horne, Sam – Lin, Shuhui – Anson, Matthew – Jacobson, Wayne (2018)

Engagement, satisfaction, and belonging of international undergraduates at U.S. research universities. *Journal of International Students*, Vol. 8 (1), 351–374.

Verlegh, Peeter – Steenkamp, Jan-Benedict (1999) A review and meta-analysis of

country-of-origin research. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 20 (5), 521–546.

YLE 12.7.2023. <<https://yle.fi/a/74-20040668>>, retrieved 6.3.2024.

YLE 21.11.2023. <<https://yle.fi/a/74-20061097>>, retrieved 16.5.2024.

Yousaf, Salman – Fan, Xiucheng – Laber, Fahad (2020) Branding China through the

internationalization of higher education sector: an international students' perspective from China. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, Vol. 30 (2), 161–179.

Zabkar, Vesna – Zeugner-Roth, Katharina (2015) Bridging the gap between country and destination image: assessing common facets and their predictive validity.

Journal of Business Research, Vol. 68 (9), 1844–1853.

Zajonc, Robert – Markus, Hazel (1982) Affective and cognitive factors in preferences.

The Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 9 (2), 123–131.

Zhou, Yuchun – Frey, Christopher – Bang, Hyeyoung (2011) Understanding of

international graduate students' academic adaptation to a U.S. graduate school. *International Education*, Vol. 41 (1), 76–100.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview questions

- Background information, introduction:
 - From which country you are from? How old are you? What are you studying?
- What type of factors are important to you when choosing a country to study or work in?
- Why have you decided to come to Finland?
- What type of beliefs did you have towards Finland before coming here?
 - Where do you think those beliefs came from?
- What type of emotions did you have towards Finland before coming here?
 - Where do you think those emotions came from?
- Have these beliefs and emotions changed after coming here?
 - How have they changed?
 - Why have they changed?
- Have you noticed something entirely new that you like or do not like?
- What are the biggest cultural differences between your home country and Finland?
 - How have you dealt with them?
- What is the overall feeling that you have towards Finland right now, if you had to summarize it?
- Do you have any opinions about our current government?
- Do you feel like Finland is an open and welcoming country?
- What type of future plans do you have, are you interested in staying in Finland? Why?
- Is there something that you would like to add?

Appendix 2 – Interview consent form

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within one week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. I agree to my interview being recorded. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the master's thesis. The data will be anonymized, and the researcher and the possible other participants in the interview group will be the only persons to know my identity.

I understand that interview notes and original audio recordings may be retained until 01.09.2024. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information.

Appendix 3 – Data management plan

1. Research data

The research data contains personal details and information, such as the names, ages, and email addresses of the interviewees. I have gathered the data myself.

2. Processing personal data in research

The use of personal details and information complies with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Finnish Data Protection Act. The data is controlled by the researcher only.

3. Permissions and rights related to the use of data: self-collected data

The use of personal data was described to the interviewees in the consent form as well as in the interview situations.

Data type 1: Interview recordings

Permission to use the data was confirmed by the participants with an interview consent form.

Data type 2: Interview transcriptions

Permission to use the data was confirmed by the participants with an interview consent form.

4. Storing the data during the research process

During the research process, I will store the data in the OneDrive cloud service provided by the university to ensure data security and backup files, as well as in my personal, password-protected computer.

5. Documenting the data and metadata

5.1. Data Documentation

To document the data, I will use multiple separate documents where I will record the different versions of the data, such as the main points of the data, as well as the phases of the analysis.

5.2. Data arrangement and integrity

In order to keeping my data in order and intact, as well as prevent any accidental changes to it, I will keep the original data files separate from the data I am using in the research process, so that I can always revert back to the original, if needed.

5.3. Metadata

I will not store my data into a public archive/repository, and therefore I will not need to create any metadata.

6. Data after completing the research

I am responsible for the data even when the research process has ended. The data will be managed according to the agreements I have made with the interviewees in the consent form (see Appendix B), destroying all of the data 1.9.2024 by latest. The researcher's rights to the university OneDrive will expire, which is why the integrity of the data will be ensured by destroying it.