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THE ROLE OF PERCEPTION IN COUNTRY BRANDING: THE BRAND OF ESTONIA

Bachelor's thesis

Programme TVTB, specialisation Marketing

Supervisor: Liis Ojamäe

I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 9,	535 words from the introduction to the end of the conclusion.
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ABSTRACT

The author is primarily focused towards finding the connection between Estonia's nation branding

attempts and the influence it has on the perception of Estonia in order to understand and maximize

the potential of the nation brand. The research aims to investigate the evolving perceptions of

Estonia as a Nation Brand among international students, with a specific focus on both the overall

brand image and the role of digitalization in shaping these perceptions. These research questions

will guide the study towards exploring the factors influencing international students' perceptions

of Estonia, both in terms of its general brand image and its digitization efforts:

1. How has the perception of Estonia's country brand evolved among foreign students in

Estonia?

2. How do foreign students perceive Estonia's digital society with respect to country

branding?

The study discusses Estonia's nation branding campaigns while highlighting the role of perception

as well as differentiating Estonia's campaigns from nation branding campaigns around the world.

The study contains a qualitative thematic analysis aimed towards international students studying

in Estonia in order to understand the effect of Estonia's branding efforts before analysing their

results and future implications. The key takeaways of the research include the importance of

digitalization as a catalyst for globalisation, positive shift in Estonia's global awareness and

competitive advantage in creating link of Estonia's unicorn start-ups towards its county brand.

Keywords: Country-branding, Perception, Thematic-analysis, Digitalization

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INTRODUCTION

The global trend in international student mobility has witnessed a significant increase growing from approximately 250,000 in 1965 to an estimated 3.7 million in 2018 (De Wit et al., 2018). Notably, there is a discernible shift among international students towards non-traditional destinations for higher education purposes. The USA, Australia, and the UK are experiencing growth in the cross-border delivery of higher education, while continental Europe lags behind in this emerging market. Concurrently, this shift towards non-traditional destinations is accompanied by prevalent perceptions of migration as a potentially problematic phenomenon (Nada et al., 2019). Nation branding is a concept that is deeply perceptive. The statement is supported by Barr (2011) as he describes nation branding to be a combination of likeness and respect instead of a fixed formula for success that is destined to build said respect. Students' knowledge levels about the host country emerge as a significant factor across diverse countries underlining the significance of information accessibility and awareness on the selection of a study destination (Mazzarol, 2002).

The literature review explores general pre-existing nation branding learnings while placing a focus on understanding the perception aspect in nation branding and the means to deliver success. The argument will be further explored in detail throughout the study. However, there is a limited exploration of the nuanced experiences in the case of Estonia, particularly, involving international students and their evolving perceptions during their stay in a foreign country. The author argues that the specific context of Estonia as a case study remains underrepresented in the current body of literature on nation branding. The reseach aims to analyze the change in the perception of fellow students towards Estonia after first-hand experience and in doing so attempting to contribute into the knowledge base upon which more informed decisions can be made subsequently providing a better framework for future country branding campaigns.

Within university settings, international students are sometimes perceived as presenting challenges that demand solutions, raising questions about how diversity, often embodied by international students, may be viewed as disruptive to the regular functioning of institutions. The increasing

interest in non-traditional destinations and the perception of migration as problematic form a complex interplay between student choices, perceptions of migration, and institutional responses. This intricate relationship constitutes a compelling research problem that warrants further investigation (Nada et al., 2019). The idea of nation branding can be further explained as the clarity of a country's core beliefs and conveying these ideas to the outside world. These ideas when combined and collected form perceptions (Morgan et al, 2012).

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the complexities of nation branding, there is a noticeable gap concerning the perceptions of international students and the role of digitalization in shaping a nation's brand. While critics acknowledge the existence of nation brands, the contention revolves around the feasibility and methodology of branding a nation. The debate still exists in how one defines and interprets nation branding and this ambiguity poses a challenge in communicating a clear image to the global audiences. Fan (2010) also notes that the image of a nation is intricate and fluid, defying the clarity implicit in the term 'brand image.' This complexity proves to be a challenge in the realm of nation branding.

With the use of the research questions, the study aims to delve into the specific case of Estonia, aiming to understand how international students perceive Estonia's country brand, particularly focusing on the impact of digitalization. Collecting data using a sample of seven international students currently residing in Estonia through online semi-structured interviews, the study conducts a qualitative thematic analysis in order to analyze the perception of students with respect to Estonia's country brand. Thematic analysis uncovers various themes that are responsible for highlighting the effects of Estonia's digitalisation efforts towards the country's international image.

The author would like to express gratitude to the individuals who generously shared their insights and experiences during the interviews conducted for this research. Their willingness to contribute valuable information has significantly enriched the depth and quality of this research. The author further extends a profound gratitude towards their supervisor, [Liis Ojamäe], as well as the predefence committee for their support, guidance, and expertise throughout the entire research process. Their constructive feedback and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the development of this thesis.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Fundamentals of Nation branding

A brand in business terms can be defined as a mark or trait of a product/service that helps distinguish itself from its competitors and while doing so, convey their message to potential consumers in order to be successful. In 1996, This term was elevated to the global scale as a British brand consultant, also regarded as the father of nation branding, coined the term "Nation branding" as reiterated by Nadia Kaneva (2011). The process involves the creation of a distinctive personality and creating a country's own identity and reputation using an extensive set of tools and strategies. Nation branding as a tool has the ability to influence a country's image positively in order to boost the nation's economy, tourism, foreign investment and more (Barr, 2011). Jansen (2008) advocates for "brand visibility" as a crucial element for Estonia's nation branding attempts instead of the past attempts of psycho-sociological reengineering.

Nation branding can be divided into two main elements, namely, tangible and intangible. These elements form the basis for perceptions of locals and tourists in the instance of no other information apart from the nation brand elements. Tangible elements include names, logos, symbols, etc as compared to intangible elements such as personality, reputation, (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). Brand reputation that can be described as the perception of the quality attached to a brand is considered the more permanent construct as compared to the ever evolving brand image of a country and also encompasses more value between the country's citizens or residents. (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2020)

Nation-building is another process which aims to streamline a country's national identity by increasing unity as well as cohesion among the citizens. Barr (2011) stated the example of China using nation branding as means for nation-building. They used the concept to promote their self-image towards a desired direction and unify the support for the governments and their policies.

China is largely known to be culturally rich as well as technologically advanced and this contributes to their successful nation branding process (Barr, 2011). The author hints at a potential paradox with respect to assigning a nation to a brand or vice-versa. The paradox exists due to the existence of the concept of national identity. National identity can be defined as the feeling of "belonging or being" as defined by Tolia-Kelly (2009) and contributes to the paradox during the creation of the brand image when the desired brand image comes against the pre-existing notion of national identity. This is evidence of the gap in the understanding and usage of assigning nations a particular brand (Handayani & Rashid, 2013).

In terms of country image, nation branding plays a major role as it forms the reputation of a country by using people, symbols or taglines in order to create a distinct personality. (Rojas-Mendez, Khoshnevis, 2022). It is essential to explore the concept in the context of globalisation as a means for improving foreign investment, politics, tourism, etc. Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) argue that while nation branding has become a crucial strategy for countries to assert cultural identity, it can also be used as a means to promote conventional, narrow minded agendas instead of more inclusive and coherent ones in order to fully achieve globalisation and interconnection among communities. Country branding, recognized as a tool for gauging value and uniqueness within organizations, has evolved into a pragmatic approach for elevating a country's global significance. The concept of country branding has emerged as a method to achieve and ensure the authenticity of nations on the global stage, serving the purpose of differentiation and authenticity for potential stakeholders (Alakbarli, 2022), the students assuming the role of stakeholders in the context of this research.

Successful nation branding can only be achieved via long-term and well-planned efforts involving a variety of stakeholders looking to achieve a common goal. Another significant factor is the fulfilment of sustainable market competition on the global scale. Hassan & Mahrous (2019) reiterate the need for governmental collaboration with business and private investors in order to maintain a coordinated approach. The biggest reasoning for this can be due to the vast number of fragments that must be cared for, such as, negative stereotypes or perception and the overall relationship between different stakeholders. Therefore, in this context, it can be concluded that nation branding requires an inclusive and collaborative approach in order to be successful in promoting their shared vision.

The concept of nation branding is a complex and multi-dimensional procedure and requires more critical research than has been done. Kaneva (2011) argues that the brief history of nation branding has produced minimal and overly simplistic scientific research. Furthermore, while positive effects have been highlighted, enough impetus has not been given towards the drawbacks or negative factors in the field of nation branding. Anholt (2002) highlights the lack of understanding among governments in separating their nation's services among different sectors, for example, export, tourism, etc. from the image of the country that cannot be promoted without the promotion of each sector individually. Kaneva (2011) also believes in the contradictory nature of nation branding and reiterates the need to deep-dive in a critical sense highlighting the key areas where research can be extended including the relationship of nation branding with nationalism, marginalised communities.

Destination marketing is the process of promoting a place to visitors using a variety of channels such as social media, conventional advertising as well as public relations. Destination/Country branding is inherently a key element of this larger process as it is shaped and refined into bigger and more complex marketing and communication strategies (Pike & Page, 2014). Furthermore, there are organisations responsible for the process and implementation of these marketing strategies. They are known as Destination marketing organisations or DMOs. Visit Estonia is one such organisation that promotes the national identity of Estonia in order to boost tourism and in doing so attract businesses and investment. They focus on the country's physical (nature & climate), cultural aspects, the history of the big cities and much more. The big understanding lies in the fact that branding plays a crucial role within destination marketing and can help in creating a rather strong image for any nation (Kasapi & Cela, 2017).

The importance of communication is also highlighted by Kaneva (2011) as she observed that most campaigns tend to lean towards simple or conventional representation of their country that may lead to a misinterpretation by the audiences. Engagement can be defined as the range of any certain communication. It consists of mediums such as social media and conventional promotion to widen the range of the audiences in order to maximise the output of their message. Lastly, the knot to tie ensures a smooth execution of procedures lies with the stakeholder as well as the government and related businesses. This is a great example of effective destination marketing as it promoted Tallinn as a cultural city and managed to attract tourists.

Primarily, nation branding aligns its focus towards internationals along with attracting foreign investment and potential trades, however, the concept must also focus towards the citizens in order to streamline their brand, in turn, creating an "umbrella platform" (Rojas-Mendez & Khoshnevis , 2022). The significance of the umbrella nature of this process is further clarified by Lee Kyung-Mi in a 2011 study on Korea's brand development as an essential method without which the core message may well be lost and the output becomes seemingly uncoordinated in its execution across various industries present in the country (Rojas-Mendez & Khoshnevis, 2022). The author interprets this theory as the basic relationship between a product and the company values.

1.2. The Case of Estonia

From post-eurovision song contest success to their e-residency brilliance, Estonia has never been shy of innovation and technology. (Same & Solarte-Vasquez, 2014). Estonia has gone through numerous branding campaigns undergoing a progressive transition to become a modern, high-tech and digital nation distancing itself successfully from its past Soviet state. The first such campaign was organised by Estonian Enterprise (DMO) following their success in the Eurovision song contest called "Welcome to Estonia". Estonia's image globally began to be distinguished as its own, especially in terms of technology. The authors concluded that the general image of Estonia remains positive with the key elements of safety, modernness and innovation while highlighting the negative aspects such as lack of cultural diversity and perception of being cold or distant. Ultimately, the suggestion references digitalization and innovation as the key to moving forward and creating a strong nation brand on a global stage.

Brand Estonia was the beginning of a nation branding campaign with the goal of creating a new and positive image and attracting tourism, foreign interest and streamlining the country's population in order to boost economic development. (Jansen, 2008). The key motive behind Brand Estonia involved spreading the core message by announcing to the world that Estonia is reborn and Estonia welcomes visits and investments. The key themes used in the campaign can be observed in themes, for instance, "IT nation" corresponds directly with the perceptions of the respondents of this study as observed in the analysis section.

The three key elements of communication strategy in nation branding can be understood clearly using the example of Ott Vatter and his execution of the communication strategy for the Tallinn

European Capital of Culture event in 2011. The key elements encouraged tourists to visit Tallinn and promoted the capital as a cultural destination. The importance of communication is key in every field of business as it affects the consumer's understanding of the product/service and their response to the situation. Vatter (2014) suggested identity, engagement and collaboration as his key elements leading to the success of the event. Storytelling can become a great means to identity formation and that was the aim of the concept of "Stories of the Sea". In highlighting the rich maritime culture of Tallinn, the use of stories about the sea and the workers was used to formulate the identity.

The concept of "Estonia" evokes diverse images, with spatial and territorial elements, such as islands, hills, rivers, and swamps, being prominent. Beyond the physical landscape, abstract associations include themes of occupation, freedom, independence, and the nuanced nature of Estonian culture. The multifaceted perceptions range from personal experiences of visiting the country to broader views of Estonia as a socio-cultural unit or a political-administrative entity known as the Republic of Estonia, marked by distinctive border posts and unique politics (Linnap, 2014).

In 2014, Estonia introduced e-residency as a means to nation branding allowing people to become e-residents or digital residents of Estonia (Eesti Rahvusringhääling,2020; Heller, 2017)). In an effort to gain foreign businesses and investment, E-residents get access to services such as registering their businesses, online banking, taxes and more offering individuals abroad and even outside of the EU to participate and establish their businesses in Estonia without actually setting foot inside Estonia. Kimmo and Pappel (2018) discuss the obvious benefits of this move in terms of nation branding by suggesting that it puts the technology and innovation factor of the country under the spotlight while gaining foreign talent and investments. In 2018, Global Estonian revealed that 99% of the country's governmental services are online. This statistic indicates that e-residents can fully take advantage of this tool and the government should ensure the continual of the program in order to grow bigger and attract more individuals to showcase Estonia's digital prowess. It is crucial to understand that the success of a brand is not solely affected by how it is branded, but from the quality of the product or service. This can be understood better from the following example by Anholt where he states, "Nike's successful brand image is not the result of excellent branding. It is the result of excellent products." (Anholt, 2002). Estonia, a country of 1.3 million citizens supported Anholt's theory to perfection as it launched its digital residency program in 2014, allowing foreigners to become E-residents and avail Estonian services, in turn, encouraging

them to partake in virtual start-ups supported further by lower-tax rates and liberal regulations with respect to technology (Heller, 2017).

In the last decade, the programme has gained popularity among entrepreneurs and investors from all across the world making the country borderless in a digital sense. The commodification of the state will always induce implications with the traditional form of residency/citizenship and the actual citizens of the state as suggested by Tammpuu & Masso (2018). They further argue that the traditional sense of a state/country is redefined into a marketplace product catering more towards the global opportunities.

The author highlights the possible scrutiny in the sense of sovereignty and nationalism as it directly challenges the concept of a nation to that of being virtual or borderless while acknowledging the potential of fresh perspective and offers numerous opportunities for the global economy. The Covid pandemic was a clear indicator of the potential of Estonia's strength in digital infrastructure as it became the fastest growing nation brand during the peak of the pandemic in 2021 with a 38% increase (Brand Finance Statistics, 2021)

While the positives are abundant, the program has dealt with a fair bit of criticism. A core limitation is found at the early stages of an e-residency application due to the requirement of digital signatures. Most countries are not as technologically mature as Estonia and as a result, do not provide the service of digital signatures. Another limitation comes in the form of physical presence required in order to perform identification processes (Kimmo & Pappel, 2018). Naturally, this creates a hurdle for individuals who do not have access to the Estonian embassies in close proximity. There are more limitations namely. Tax customs board's approval, user interface and more (Kimmo & Pappel, 2018).

Start-up Estonia, a governmental initiative, endeavours to catalyse the growth of the Estonian start-up ecosystem, aspiring to serve as the cradle for numerous successful start-ups in the years to come. In 2018, a noteworthy infusion of 330 million euros bolstered Estonian start-ups, with prominent entities such as Bolt and Starship Technologies leading the pack, as indicated by the Estonian start-up database (Vonoga, 2022). The government's steadfast support for this initiative stems from a strategic vision wherein the Estonian economy is poised for sustained success through the cultivation of ideas and innovation. This contrasts with potential pitfalls, such as succumbing to the allure of cheap labor outsourcing that has affected other regions in Eastern

Europe. Furthermore, recognizing the potential of small nations to carve out distinctive identities, the government sees the success of tech companies as a means to enhance Estonia's global image (Ehl, 2013).

1.3. Rise of International Students in Europe

The increased focus on international students in Europe is driven by the dual goals of financial augmentation and the promotion of cultural diversity. This strategic shift is part of a broader trend, with the move towards English language education being the longest-standing among various factors that have contributed to the influx of foreign students to Western Europe. The adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction has played a significant role in attracting students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, contributing to the multicultural environment sought by European institutions. This linguistic shift is intertwined with the broader motivations of enhancing both the financial sustainability of higher education systems and the cultural vibrancy of campuses (Labi, 2007).

Russell (2005) contends that, in the realm of higher education, the perceived excellence or reputation of an institution often outweighs its actual quality in influencing the decisions of prospective students and scholars. The emphasis, according to Russell, should be placed on the perceived service quality by the customers, such as students and scholars, as it can serve as a critical factor in differentiation. This perspective raises questions about the relationship between an institution's reputation, perceived service quality, and the decision-making processes of those considering offers. Addressing these questions is crucial in understanding the dynamics of university choices and the impact of perceived excellence on the perceptions and choices of stakeholders within the higher education landscape.

Donkor's (2020) study illuminates significant motivations driving students to pursue higher education in Europe. Key incentives include the allure of scholarships (75%), a perceived higher quality of education (68%), and the availability of relevant study programs (55%). Cultural attraction, international economic opportunities, and prospects for future employment, as well as a better lifestyle, also contribute to students' motivations. Conversely, factors such as common language, environmental considerations (climate and temperature), geographical proximity, migration prospects, and social costs were perceived as less motivating. This research, aligned

with the broader aims, underscores the multifaceted considerations influencing students' decisions to study in Europe. The study further pinpoints Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Spain as the most sought-after destinations, providing valuable insights into the patterns and preferences of students exploring higher education opportunities in Europe. The literature contributes to the overall understanding of the factors shaping international students' choices and informs the exploration of motivations within the specific context of Estonia's country brand perception. The literature underscores the significance of international strategic alliances or coalitions as a vital source of competitive advantage, particularly in the realm of international marketing. Coalitions offer several benefits, including the ability to achieve economies of scale, access crucial resources like distribution channels, capital, and local knowledge, mitigate risks, and shape competition dynamics (Mazzarol, 1998).

Various factors contribute to students' decisions to study abroad, with push factors representing intangible and intrinsic desires for travel, while pull factors arise from the perceived attractiveness of a destination, encompassing tangible resources. Push factors include intrinsic motivations such as a desire for higher education, perceptions of the quality of tertiary education, and the availability of study programs Eder (2010). In this context, Eder further addresses that the better knowledge or awareness a student has of a particular host country, the more likely they will select it as a study destination.

The decision-making process for international students selecting a study destination comprises distinct stages. Initially, students must opt for international study over local options, influenced by various "push" factors within their home country. Subsequently, in the selection of a host country, "pull" factors become pivotal, differentiating one host country's attractiveness from another. (Mazzarol, 1998). In an exploration of the factors influencing students' destination choices for exchange study abroad, the study revealed that university promotion and encouragement serve as significant push factors. Specifically, the university's active promotion encourages students to pursue study abroad opportunities. The outcomes of exchange studies contribute to students' personal development through intercultural communication, language skill enhancement, and travel experiences. Importantly, these acquired skills and experiences are viewed as valuable additions to their resumes (Lee, 2013). The final stage involves choosing an institution, with additional "pull" factors, such as an institution's reputation, market profile, range of courses, strategic alliances or coalitions, teaching programs, staff expertise, innovation, information

technology integration, resources, alumni base size, and promotional efforts, influencing the decision-making process (Mazzarol, 1998).

Muntasira et al. (2009) emphasize the initial push factor in the decision-making process for studying abroad: the promotion and encouragement provided by the university. This promotional effort encourages students to embark on exchange studies, fostering their personal development. The experiences gained through intercultural communication, language practice, and travel are perceived as enhancing students' CVs, underscoring the long-term impact of university-initiated promotion on students' educational choices. Additionally, students' knowledge levels about the host country emerge as a significant factor across diverse countries, reinforcing the impact of information accessibility and awareness on the selection of a study destination (Mazzarol, 2002). This synthesis provides valuable insights into the decision-making processes of international students, aligning with the overarching research aim of understanding perceptions and decision factors related to Estonia's country brand.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data and Sample

The study has its focus set on gaining a deeper understanding of the role perception plays within the concept nation branding. Moreover, the research aims to explore the perception of Estonia's nation brand in the eyes of long-term international students. In order to develop the methodology, the author used the approach of Saunders' (2007) Research Onion. Subsequently, the research follows an interpretivist philosophy which aligns it perfectly with the constructive and inquiring nature of the study. The overall approach adopted for the research is inductive in nature. This is due to the author's research aims bending more towards the formation of a theory using the research questions as a basis of in-depth exploration into the perception aspect of nation branding. Moreover, this approach allows flexibility while performing literature review which is crucial due to the complex nature of the concept of nation branding. The collection of data from the participants is diverse and opinionated to a large extent due to the qualitative research motive.

A hybrid method of purposive and network sampling was used for creating the pool of participants. This method was deemed best due to the strong network international students in Estonia. While ackowledging the risk of research bias, the researcher is supported in the selection of the sampling method due to the pre-requisites present for participant selection in the form of minimum time spent in Estonia (2 years) and foreign nationality in Estonia. In using this method, it became possible to collect a diverse group of participants with respect to their nationalities, length of experience in Estonia as well as their field of study.

In order to assemble respondents, the researcher began a dialogue among students present at the Taltech campus. The initial dialogue took place in person in order to be informative and effective in explaining the research goals as well as collect authentic leads within the student network. Furthermore, the integretity of the research was ensured that the students potrayed characteristics suitable for the data collection. It is essential to clarify that the final semi-structered interviews

were conducted online in order to utulize the automatic live transcirption feature on MS Teams. Diversity of participants was crucial for the author and was subsequently ensured by the collecting participants of over 5 nationalities in the final sample of 7 participants. This sample consisted of 7 Taltech students, ranging between the ages 21-26 years old, 3 of whom specialize in IT (cyber security) and 4 pursue an engineering degree at the university (Table 1). The participants' field of expertise is relevant in order to collect meaningful data during the interviews aligning with the theme of the second research question revolving around Estonia's digital society.

Table 1. Table heading including students' nationalities and longevity in Estonia (years)

	Nationality	Residing in
		Estonia (years)
Participant A	Indian	2.5 +
Participant B	Armenian	2+
Participant C	Spanish	2+
Participant D	Iranian	3+
Participant E	Slovenian	2+
Participant F	Indian	2+
Participant G	Indian	7+

Source: (Author, 2023)

This interview guide is structured to systematically explore international students' perceptions of Estonia across various dimensions (Appendix 2.). Beginning with background information and global perceptions, the guide delves into the significance of nation branding, the evolution of perceptions during their stay, and the impact on daily life. Additionally, it addresses specific aspects such as the E-residency program, business culture, historical perspectives, and perceptions of Estonian start-ups and companies. This comprehensive guide is designed to capture a nuanced understanding of how international students perceive Estonia in its cultural, technological, historical, and business contexts. It provides a framework for in-depth qualitative exploration, aligning with the research questions and the broader goal of understanding the multifaceted nature of Estonia's image from the perspective of this particular demographic. The interview plan can be seen in the appendix section.

2.2 Analysis Method

Qualitative data are collected and crafted from a limited number of sources, yet the volume of generated data tends to be substantial. The establishment of a well-organized system for handling research data enhances the credibility of the research findings. Furthermore, effective management of qualitative data and resources plays a crucial role in ensuring procedural precision and maintaining the overall quality of the research process (Ngulube, 2015). This study performs a qualitative data analysis using semi-structured interviews in order to extract data from participants while giving them a wide range of freedom in expressing their opinions and perspectives. The use of semi-structured interviews is useful in more than one way. Due to the qualitative nature of the research questions, semi-structured interviews provide a wide range of flexibility and diversity to the participants to freely express their experiences and opinions. Furthermore, this method encourages deeper exploration of the topics discussed due to the back and forth conversational nature of the interviews. Inherently, this strategy satisfies the inductive nature of the overall approach due to the abundance of themes and patterns it unfolds giving rise to new potential theories and discussion aspects.

Prior to the interviews, the participants were informed about the nature, length and means to conduct the interview. Due to the longer time frame of the semi-structured interviews. The schedule was set in advance. Confidentiality and anonymity was also ensured to all participating individuals. The individual interviews conducted lasted approximately 40-45 minutes on average and took place using Microsoft Teams. The feature of automatic live transcription was used in order to collect word-to-word data for the purpose of performing thematic analysis as the next step of the study. (Electronic appendix 1.)

During the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer began with an initial setup question in order to introduce a particular theme followed by a few counter questions upon receiving the initial answers in order to thoroughly explore each subject. It must be stated that while the interview guide acted as the basis of the semi-structured interviews, the conversational nature of the interviews demanded flexibility and the need to adapt the interview guide to the needs of each semi-structured interview in a unique order & manner. There was an emphasis towards flow of conversation. The data analysis process followed a thematic approach, this consisted of identifying, analysing and creating themes within the qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2006). The

In the adopted research methodology, rooted in a specific philosophical theory, (Melnikovas, 2018). Points out that social phenomena exhibit both causal and interpretive characteristics The understanding of themes in qualitative data requires researcher judgment, as themes may vary in prominence across different data items. Clarke and Braun (2006) argue that the significance of a theme is not solely reliant on quantifiable measures but rather on its relevance to the overall research question. The analysis method employed in this study involved the compilation of data from seven semi-structured interviews, utilizing transcripts for organization.

The data underwent a cleaning process and responses were structured to facilitate comparison (Electronic appendix 3.). Following this, the researcher systematically examined the data based on the interview guide, identifying common keywords and codes across responses. The research continued to follow the steps advised by Clarke and Braun and the identified codes were then transformed into cohesive themes for subsequent analysis and discussion. Given the inductive nature of the research, the thematic analysis revealed recurring themes and crossovers, prompting the researcher to refine and adjust the identified themes. Sub-themes serve as nuanced components within a broader theme, offering a means to structure extensive and intricate themes. Additionally, they prove valuable in illustrating the hierarchical relationships and depths of meaning inherent within the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2006). To ensure the reliability of the themes, a thematic analysis was conducted using the entire dataset from one interview. This iterative process contributed to the robustness of the identified themes and facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the research questions.

3. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

3.1. Formation of codes & underlying themes

Upon conducting thematic analysis, the grouped data was filtered through in order to obtain recurring codes present in the interview transcripts. These codes form into larger themes to be analysed and discussed based around the research questions. Throughout this section of analysis, the tables consisting of codes and themes are followed by a closer examination of the specific themes resulting from the codes providing a targeted analysis based around the interview questions.

• Intl. students' initial perceptions of Estonia (Table 2)

Table 2. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Small nation, introverted people, beautiful landscapes, positive initial perception.	Positive Initial Impressions of Estonia
Neutral first impression, efficient services, small country.	Neutral Initial Impressions
Limited knowledge before arrival, influenced by family experiences, lack of prior knowledge, uncommon visibility compared to other countries.	Limited Preconceptions

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

Participants share positive initial impressions of Estonia, focusing on its natural beauty, small size, and introverted culture. Participants expressed neutral or mixed initial impressions and the perception of Estonia as a small rural country. As observed by the following extract from the interview with participant B:

- "My first impression was quite neutral, not positive or negative. It's just like a small country in the rural area in the north, minding his own business developing like, you know, and in its own bubble"

Themes encompass participants' limited preconceptions, influences from family experiences, lack of prior knowledge about Estonia, and its uncommon visibility compared to more widely recognized countries.

- "It's a small country located in northern Europe and not too much more because I had seen some really positive things on social media"
- Country image and brand's Reputation (Table 3)

Table 3. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Limited knowlede, Low awareness of Estonia.	Limited Awareness and Pre-existing Knowledge
digital country, developed, most things accessible online,	Distinct Identity
Positive business culture, good branding, underdogs, hidden gem	Positive Business Culture and Underdog Perception

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

The repeating first theme, reflecting the evolution from limited pre-existing knowledge to a distinct digital country identity and positive business culture, underscores the transformative impact of living experiences in Estonia. As participants immerse themselves in the local environment, their perceptions become more nuanced, indicating a dynamic shift from initial limited knowledge.

The second theme delves into Estonia's digital country perception and the expectations of high digitalization standards. This connection between digitalization and nation branding sheds light

on how international students perceive Estonia's technological landscape. The positive association with digitalization contributes significantly to the country's branding as technologically advanced. The technological advancements in Estonia not only influence how the country is perceived but also play a crucial role in shaping its international image.

- Participant G: "They know what it is. It's good in tech. Technology is the brand behind it, and outside of Europe, it's more like an underdog in a way. It's like it's like one of those. Niche, but really good quality, but a very unknown sort of brand in let's say some commodities."
- Evolution of international students' perceptions (Table 4)

Table 4. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Impressive technology, online voting, attractiveness to international students	Advancement of technology
Positive influence on daily life, convenience	Shift in Views
Easy access to services, comfort in online processes.	Usefulness for Internationals

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

The data highlights Estonia's impressive technological advancement, especially in online voting, which serves as a key factor attracting international students to the country. Estonia's digital society has a positive influence on daily life, bringing convenience and leading to a positive shift in the views of international students living in the country. The ease of access to services, particularly for international residents, contributes to the overall comfort in online processes, showcasing the convenience of Estonia's digital infrastructure.

As stated by Participant A & B, respectively,

- "We just came here because we saw that Estonia is so far ahead in technological advancement."

- "The country's digital society and technological advancements are impressive. It influences daily life positively, making things convenient. For international students, the experience likely shifts their view positively compared to their initial impressions."

Participants also highlight the positive impact of Estonia's digital society on their daily lives. The convenience in handling bureaucratic processes, accessing services online, and the efficiency in government-related tasks contribute to an improved quality of life. This theme demonstrates a direct connection between the technological infrastructure and its influence on the daily routines of international students. As stated by Participant C,

- "By the end, I could get into my own personal page, government page. You can see your residence location. Vaccinations. You can have all of that online, just logging in with your ID with Estonia."

Participant E acknowledges the evolution in perception from being initially unaware of many digital services to recognizing their capabilities. This theme reflects a learning curve and an increasing awareness among international students about the extent of digital services available in Estonia.

- "I mean, my perception changed a lot through my stay because at the beginning, I was not aware of many of these services, the influence on my daily life is huge."

Participant G provides an intriguing comparative perspective, stating that Estonia's technology, such as digital voting and quick processes like renewing a driver's license, surpasses that of some countries in Western Europe. This theme adds a layer to the analysis suggesting that the perception of Estonia's digital society is not only evolving but also exceeding the standards set by certain Western European nations.

- "You don't have to go far to see how forward in technology this is compared to some countries in Western Europe. Renewing a driver's license in Estonia takes about 2 minutes. You can do it sitting on your couch at home on a weekend, and it will be done. But I'm pretty sure in Germany or even my home country, it takes longer."

• The influence and potential of the E-Residency Programme (Table 5)

Table 5. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Positive perception, family connection, potential future use, usefulness for opening a business.	Positive perception & Future Consideration
Potential compromise of security.	Security Concern/ Risk mitigation

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

Participants showcased a positive sentiment towards the E-residency program, considering it a good concept with practical benefits for individuals and the country. Recognizes the potential for business development and appreciates the opportunities it provides while acknowledging a lack of awareness about the program. This is observed in an extract of Participant A:

- "Actually, my dad is an E resident of Estonia as well. He recently.. I don't know the process, but he just told me. Yeah, I got the E residency from Estonia and he seems to be very happy about it."

Participant F expressed deep fascination with the idea of E-residency, highlighting its role in showcasing the country's digital infrastructure strength. The digital prowess was acknowledged and appreciated by the participants, however, this was argued in similar proportions by Participants F & G stating concerns about the potential compromise of security and further discussing the need for public-private cooperation in the context of the E-residency program. Points out internal reservations within banks, indicating a consideration for risk mitigation. This can be better understanding with the help of the following extracts from Participant F &G, respectively:

"You have to like to ensure integrity of the data. That's a lot of stuff, and it's not. It's not really that easy to do it digitally. It has the potential to compromise security of the infrastructure"

- "So now you come into a situation where, yes, the country is saying that you can have any residency, but most of the banks are not officially and not publically, but internally sort of wanting to take as little risk as possible."

The identified themes provide insights into how international students perceive Estonia's E-residency program, focusing on its technological aspects, potential business applications, and the overall impact on Estonia's brand perception. These themes contribute to understanding the dynamics of changes in brand perception and the role of innovative programs in nation building.

• Perception of Estonia with respect to its soviet past

Table 6. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Rapidly growing economy, peaceful atmosphere	Growth and Independence
Safe, cold, beautiful, interconnected with the past, Soviet buildings	Identity and Stability
Slow-moving change, South of Finland	Disassociation

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

The analysis of participants' perceptions reveals a multifaceted identity of Estonia, encapsulating themes of rapid economic growth, celebration of independence, deliberate efforts to disassociate from its Soviet past, and a commitment to building a new narrative. The narrative surrounding Estonia portrays it as a rapidly growing economy, attributed to positive government initiatives, fostering a peaceful atmosphere. Independence emerges as a prominent theme, showcasing a deliberate celebration and a commitment to maintaining a distinctive identity despite historical roots. This can be observed in the interview extract from Participant D:

- "I think it is growing in its own direction in a rapid pace but also due to its proximity, it is perhaps still perceived with Russia from an outside perspective."

The participants described Estonia as safe, cold, and beautiful, acknowledging the remnants of the Soviet past in its architecture. However, there is a consistent narrative of distancing from the past and crafting a new identity marked by resilience, exponential growth, and a sophisticated digital infrastructure. The focus on science and innovation is highlighted as a unique aspect of Estonia's journey, contributing to a positive evolution in brand perception among international students. The geopolitical theme underscores participants' active efforts to disassociate Estonia from its Soviet and Russian past. The preference for introducing Estonia as "South of Finland" reflects a strategic move to reshape its image, acknowledging slow-moving change and the significant role of individuals in deciding or changing perceptions. These themes collectively provide nuanced insights into how international students perceive Estonia's past, present, and the ongoing efforts to redefine its identity. Participant G stated with intent:

- "I usually introduce it as, yeah, we're South of Finland, not next to Russia because you do your part to sort of disassociate this old past."
- Influence and Role of Estonia's Business Culture (Table 7)

Table 7. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
Promotion, startup culture, hackathons, abundant startup organizations	Entrepreneurship Freedom
Forward-Thinking Business Culture, Technology and Innovation	Focus on Technology & Innovation

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

Participants A and B acknowledged Estonia's active promotion of the startup culture positively influences their opinion of the nation. We can understand it clearer with the extracts from Participant A & B, respectively,

- "There's like a lot of hackathons, startup events and stuff where you can actually socialize with people, connect with maybe potential partners or investors."

- "Estonia's business culture has been influential. Despite being a small country, it focuses on technology and innovation. This forward-thinking approach positively shapes my opinion of the nation."

Participants F and A appreciate Estonia's business culture for providing freedom and flexibility in pursuing entrepreneurship..

- "I also wanted to pursue something more practical in what I'm studying and what I'm passionate about. And I had the freedom to do that. Even the companies here, or even the place that I work here right now, they're really open to it."

Participant G highlights Estonia's education system's emphasis on technology and innovation, advanced e-Government solutions, and a strong focus on digital literacy, contributing to a positive perception.

- "The country has a strong focus on digital literacy. The universities are well-respected and there's a proactive approach to preparing students for the modern workforce."

The themes align themselves with the first research question by emphasizing the positive influence of Estonia's business culture in the formation of positive perceptions.

The interview prompts were designed in a manner to introduce and understand the students' perspective of the Estonian Business Culture, specifically, the start-up culture. The conversation continued by prompting a discussion on the successes of the county's unicorn startups and related nuances. (Table 8)

Table 8. Table headings include formation of codes and respective themes

Codes	Themes
International recognition of Estonian startups, initial location of startup	Limited Awareness
Success of Bolt and Starship, no connection to Estonia, government support.	Positive perception on brand connection

Source: (Parashar, 2023)

Themes identified include recognition and positive perception of Estonian startups, particularly mentioning Bolt and Starship, on an international level. Acknowledgment of Estonia as a hub for innovative companies and the success of startups contributing to changing global perceptions. This can be seen in the extract from Participant C's interview.

- "I can give you the example of Bolt, Starship. These are companies that were created in Estonia and are now global, which is amazing."

This perception of successful startups and their contribution towards the brand of Estonia was exclusively discussed in each interview due to the variables involved. Participants expressed the opinion that there is a lack of connection between the success of companies like Bolt and Starship and Estonia's brand on an international scale. Participant E used personal examples to elaborate on the confusion of learning about the origins of a brand for the first time.

- "We thought it was like from the US or something, so I don't think, uh, that the branding of these startups is super connected to Estonia's brand as a nation."

Participant D expressed desire for Estonia to give more value towards its technological achievements, specifically mentioning Skype's origins as a startup in Estonia.

- "Skype was once a startup, starting from Estonia. They are all so proud of this technology, but no one talks about its initial point that it was installed here."

Furthermore, the lack of connection was discussed in an analytical manner in order to attempt to extract the perceptions of the participants. Participant G raised the issue of the challenges related

to globalization, suggesting that successful Estonian startups lose their Estonian branding when they move to other markets or get acquired by international companies.

- "You never knew that Skype was Estonian because it was marketed as a Microsoft Company. So it's like, uh, it's American."

This data did not align with the research questions. However, It sparked a suggestion and a possible direction to explore in order to maximize the potential based on the cooperation of the public and private sector, combined. This notion is discussed in more depth in the next and final chapter of the analysis section as results are discussed with respect to the literature background.

3.2. Discussion

In examining international students' initial perceptions of Estonia, a range of comprehensive themes emerged, delving into factors such as size, nature, technology, culture, language, decision-making processes, and the impact of social media on shaping perceptions. The participants engaged in discussions about Estonia's global brand image, shedding light on its digital nature and acknowledging challenges in gaining recognition, particularly when compared to larger European countries. Notably, the theme of global image intricately intertwines with the technology theme in a cause-and-effect manner, emphasizing the interplay between Estonia's digital identity and its overall global perception. This nuanced exploration of nation branding aligns with the work of brand consultant Nadia Kaneva (2011), who, building on the foundation laid by a British brand consultant in 1996, elevated the concept to a global scale, coining the term "Nation branding." Nation branding involves crafting a distinctive personality, establishing a country's identity, and shaping its reputation through a comprehensive set of tools and strategies. As Barr (2011) underscores, the positive influence of nation branding extends to various aspects, including the nation's economy, tourism, and foreign investment.

Jansen (2008) advocates for the pivotal role of "brand visibility" in Estonia's nation branding efforts, emphasizing its importance over past attempts at psycho-sociological reengineering. The literature also posits that nation branding can be dissected into tangible and intangible elements.

Tangible elements coexist with intangible elements like personality and reputation (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019). Mariutti and Giraldi (2020) stressed the enduring nature of brand reputation, describing it as a more permanent construct compared to the ever-evolving brand image of a country, with significant value attributed among citizens or residents. This synthesis highlights the convergence between the empirical findings on Estonia's global image and the theoretical underpinnings of nation branding, while also acknowledging the challenges and emphasizing the crucial role of brand visibility in shaping perceptions. The literature review not only supports but enriches the understanding of the observed interplay between global image and technology themes in Estonia's nation branding efforts.

In exploring the global brand image of Estonia, participants in the study emphasized its digital nature while acknowledging the challenges of recognition, particularly in comparison to more prominent European nations. The intricate connection between the global image and technology emerged as a recurring theme, suggesting a cause-and-effect relationship within the discussions. This observation aligns with Anholt's perspective, as he contends that a successful brand image, exemplified by Nike, is not solely the outcome of skillful branding but is rooted in the excellence of the products themselves (Anholt, 2002).

Interestingly, Kimmo and Pappel (2018) shed light on the potential benefits of Estonia's focus on technology in the context of nation branding. They argue that emphasizing the country's technological prowess not only puts it in the global spotlight for innovation but also serves as a magnet for foreign talent and investments. This resonates with the participants' discussions on the interplay between Estonia's global image and its technological landscape.

While the study participants recognized the significance of Estonia's digital nature in shaping its global image, the findings suggest a need for increased efforts to overcome challenges of recognition. The comparison to Anholt's perspective emphasizes the importance of not only branding but also the inherent qualities of the nation itself. Furthermore, the alignment with Kimmo and Pappel's insights underscores the potential strategic advantages of foregrounding technology in the nation branding efforts.

In the exploration of Estonia's evolving nation branding, the identified themes within the context of the research questions delve into the nation's historical facets. Notably, the positive narrative encompasses elements such as economic growth, the commemoration of independence, resilience, and advanced digital capabilities, collectively contributing to a favorable evolution in brand

perception, particularly among international students. This positive transformation aligns with the broader perceptions of "Estonia" outlined in existing literature. The multifaceted images associated with the concept of "Estonia" include spatial and territorial elements, such as islands, hills, rivers, and swamps, along with abstract associations of occupation, freedom, and the nuanced nature of Estonian culture (Linnap, 2014).

However, the nuanced nature of Estonia's brand perception also involves deliberate disassociation from historical associations and an emphasis on crafting a new narrative within the nation branding efforts. This strategic move is in line with the initiation of Brand Estonia, which marked the beginning of a nation branding campaign with the explicit goal of reshaping Estonia's image positively. Jansen (2008) highlights that Brand Estonia aimed to attract tourism, foreign interest, and streamline the country's population to bolster economic development. The campaign strategically conveyed the message that Estonia is reborn and open to visits and investments.

While the research findings and literature both underscore the importance of positive branding for Estonia's global image, there is a nuanced interplay between historical associations and the deliberate crafting of a new narrative. This suggests that the effectiveness of nation branding involves not only celebrating positive aspects but also actively managing and shaping perceptions by strategically disassociating from certain historical elements (Linnap, 2014; Jansen, 2008).

The study's findings indicate a positive shift in global awareness regarding Estonia's emergence as an innovative hub, attributing this transformation to the success stories of start-ups like Bolt and Starship. Despite this positive trend, the analysis underscores opportunities for growth, specifically recommending the active promotion of Estonia as the birthplace of thriving start-ups to bolster the nation's overall brand image (Author, Year). This suggestion aligns with the government's strategic vision, as highlighted by Ehl (2013), emphasizing sustained economic success through the encouragement of innovation and the avoidance of potential pitfalls associated with labour outsourcing common in other Eastern European regions.

The government's unwavering support for fostering innovation resonates with the participants' call for enhanced collaboration between Estonia's public and private sectors. This synergy is identified as crucial for meeting the demands of international students, who express a preference for strengthened cooperation to elevate Estonia's global recognition, particularly within the context of its success in the start-up industry. Recognizing the potential of small nations to carve out

distinctive identities, the government views the success of tech companies as a strategic avenue to augment Estonia's global image (Ehl, 2013).

While the study emphasizes the need for active promotion to maximize the impact of Estonia's start-up successes on its overall brand perception, Ehl's (2013) insights shed light on the government's strategic stance and the potential pitfalls that Estonia seeks to avoid. This convergence highlights the symbiotic relationship between the study's recommendations and the government's vision, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing Estonia's global image. Further research could delve into the specifics of implementing such promotional efforts and the potential challenges associated with them.

Furthermore, the themes underscore the crucial role of Estonia's digitalization in shaping its international image, connecting directly with the second research question. The recognition of technological advancements and the convenience associated with digitalization contributes significantly to the positive perception of the country. The positive impact on daily life and the accessibility of services through digitalization enhance Estonia's brand as a technologically advanced and user-friendly nation. In summary, the themes collectively support the notion that living experiences in Estonia positively impact international students' perceptions, leading to a more favourable view of the country. The integration of digitalization into daily life emerges as a key factor, reinforcing Estonia's image as a technologically progressive and user-friendly nation.

CONCLUSION

The initial research aims encompassed exploring into the realm of Nation Branding to gather meaningful conclusions with respect to the perception aspect in the field of the study. The author underlined the complicated, to an extent, heavily debate-oriented nature of Nation branding and its qualitative aspects due to number of variables involved and the presence of the perception aspect. The analysis and discussion section of the study, entailing the summaries of the themes recognized during the thematic analysis, provided further clarity into those particular themes. This conclusive section of the study states the key findings discussed earlier while underlining the visible links towards the initial conceptions in an attempt to gauge the success of the study.

In the pursuit of understanding the nuanced dynamics of nation branding, this study dived into the perceptions of international students in Estonia, particularly focusing on the impact of digitalization. The research questions guided an exploration into the evolution of international students' perceptions about Estonia as a brand and their views on Estonia's digitalization in the context of nation branding. The study aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledgeupon which more informed decisions can be made The literature review highlighted the constant debate regarding the feasibility and methodology of nation branding. While critics acknowledge the existence of nation brands, defining and interpreting nation branding remains ambiguous, posing a challenge in conveying a clear image globally. The complex nature of nation branding, as highlighted by Fan (2010) and Jansen (2008), emphasizes the need for nuanced examinations within specific contexts. The existing literature, while offering general insights into nation branding, lacks a focused exploration of the perceptions of international students and the role of digitalization in shaping a nation's brand.

The findings and discussions presented a multi-faceted view of Estonia's nation brand, unveiling positive perceptions among international students. The Discussion appoints the catalyst role to Estonia's digitalization efforts. Moreover, uncovering the significance of creating a particular mindset and culture to achieve results. The study unveiled a positive shift in global awareness of Estonia as an innovative hub, fuelled by the success of start-ups such as Bolt, Starship Technologies and others. However, the analysis suggested room for growth, advocating for the

active promotion of Estonia as the origin of successful start-ups to enhance the nation's overall brand image. The author reiterates this suggestion interpreting it as having potential to be explored in details in future studies. The results of the analysis showcased the evolution of the perception of the country's brand in the eyes of international students' with their demands directed towards Estonia's public sector & private sector cooperation in order to strengthen the country's pull and realise the global recognition that is due on the basis of their success in the start-up industry.

The author reflected upon the limitations of the study, primarily involving the scope and the inability to generalize the findings to a bigger scale due to the specific context of international students. Furthermore, the author reflects on the data collection acknowledging the possibility of self-reported perceptions due to the high subjectivity factor with the element of perception.

In conclusion, his study has addressed the specific research questions and contributed to reducing the gaps in the literature. By focusing on the perceptions of international students and the impact of digitalization on Estonia's nation brand, this research provides a nuanced understanding within the broader discourse on nation branding. The findings call for continued research in this direction, emphasizing the need for context-specific explorations to enhance the comprehension of other nation branding elements using the case of Estonia.

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Electronic Appendix 1. Interview Transcripts

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bxZYbogWZulUAiLbHe87X-gP7Uw9GC1To8-2_ZHEfOU/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix 2. Interview Plan:

Interview Guide

Section 1: Arrival and Initial Impressions

- How long have you been in Estonia, and could you share your initial perceptions or early impressions of the country?

Section 2: Nation Branding and Global Image

- What are your thoughts on Estonia's country image or reputation on a global scale? (Think of Estonia as a brand)

Section 3: Evolution of Perceptions During Stay

- How has your perception of Estonia evolved throughout your stay, especially in terms of the digital society and technological aspects? How does it influence your daily life?

Section 4: E-Residency and Business Culture

- What are your thoughts on Estonia's E-residency program? Would you consider learning or making use of this tool if it satisfies your business needs?
- How did your experience with Estonia's business culture influence your overall opinion of the nation?
- How do you feel Estonian startups/companies, such as Bolt, Starship, etc., are perceived on an international level in terms of awareness and popularity?

Section 5: Historical Perspective and Growth

- How do you perceive Estonia with respect to its Soviet past and its growth since then?
- "Any additional thoughts or insights you'd like to share?"
- Thank the participants for their time and participation

Appendix 3. Grouped data

 $\underline{https://docs.google.com/document/d/1No0oSf-}$

 $\underline{TfshAStGk0pGVSnAyDBnMRdN5lAvTvlxW0sk/edit?usp=sharing}$

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