

# *German tourists and their use of guidebooks in Sweden*

*The influence of guidebooks on the choice  
of tourist destinations and travel routes*

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## Sammanfattning

### Bakgrund

I denna rapport studeras resehandböcker om Sverige som säljs på den tyska marknaden. Vilken bild sprids av Sverige och hur påverkar böckerna turisternas val av destinationer i Sverige? Studien bygger på en analys av nio tyska resehandböcker samt övernattingsstatistik för den tyska besöksgruppen. Ett vanligt besöksmönster som vi ser hos den tyska turistgruppen är att antalet turister avtar med distansen till hemlandet, enligt distance decay-teorin. Hypotesen som ställs i denna rapport är att resehandböcker påverkar detta mönster.

### Syfte och mål

Denna rapport syftar till att öka kunskapen om resehandböckernas inverkan på vårt resande. I den första delstudien studeras representationen av Sverige i de tyska resehandböckerna. I den andra delen undersöks böckernas inverkan på vilka destinationer och attraktioner som besöks. Kunskap om detta är viktig för förståelsen om hur vi sprider information inom turismen och för hur viktigt det är för en destination att turisterna har kunskap om denna.

### Resultat

- Resehandböckerna bidrar till att ge en stereotyp bild av Sverige. Ofta ges en förenklad bild av de svenska turistregionerna. Böckerna tar upp bestående bilder samt bidrar till att skapa nya, generaliserade föreställningar av en region.
- Böckerna påverkar turisternas resande till och inom Sverige. Detta är mest tydligt när det gäller nöjesparker och kulturella attraktioner.
- Resehandböckerna påverkar distance decay-mönstret. Generellt sett har vi ett minskat antal tyska övernattningar från syd till norr i Sverige. Dock är det så att de regioner som utpekats som turistiskt intressanta i böckerna också besöks mer av tyska turister.
- Böckerna bidrar till en turistisk attraktionskugga. Fokus i resehandböckerna ligger ofta på utpekade områden. Regioner som är lokaliserade tätt intill dessa områden har en tendens att förbigås
- Resehandböckerna har ett större inflytande i norra Sverige än i södra. Detta stöder antagandet att böckernas inflytande växer proportionellt med avståndet från turistens hemort
- Flera resehandböcker delar in Sverige i olika och delvis egna regioner. Dessa områden förses också med olika egenskaper.

## Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Guidebooks in tourism .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Sources of tourist information.....	4
2.2	Historical overview on guidebooks.....	5
2.3	Different types of guidebooks.....	6
2.4	The readers of guidebooks .....	7
<b>3</b>	<b>The influence of guidebooks on the choice of destination .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	The effect of guidebooks.....	9
3.2	The interrelation between image and choice of destination.....	11
3.3	Information acquisition and the question of neutrality .....	12
<b>4</b>	<b>The influence of non-information elements on the choice of destination ...</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1	Attraction shadow .....	14
4.2	The effect of Distance Decay and the making of space on the choice of destination .....	14
<b>5</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Tourist regions in the guidebooks.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Tourism patterns, distance decay and guidebooks .....</b>	<b>22</b>
7.1	Space dedicated to the tourist regions in the guidebooks .....	22
7.2	Presented attractions in the guidebooks .....	24
7.3	The relation between appearance in the guidebooks and statistical data.....	28
7.3.1	All tourist regions – an overview.....	28
7.3.2	Differences between the three lands of Sweden .....	29
7.4	Distance Decay .....	31
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>37</b>

# 1 Introduction

The importance of guidebooks can be supposed to have increased in recent years, as tourist experience has constantly become more individualistic (Ioannides et al. 1997, p. 239). The remarkable expansion of guidebooks during the last 150 years confirms the impression of tourism as both an individuating as a knowledge-generating occurrence (Koshar 2000, p. 204). Both tourism industry and researchers are of the opinion that there is an interrelation between the usage of guidebooks and the definite choice of destination, but there are no exact affirmations on this. Previous research has predominantly focused on content analysis and textual images of touristic destinations (McGregor 2000, p. 29). The support to the importance of guidebooks, which has been stated, thus cannot be seen as unproblematic. The conclusion that there is a connection between travel guidebook and travel behaviour often has to be seen as a by-product in tourism studies.

Guidebooks inform the reader about landscape, culture and society of the destination, as well as about practical questions like lodging possibilities, restaurants and transfers. The connected academic question to this is: Do guidebooks play a crucial role for the traveller in selecting tourist attractions? The hypothesis raised in this article expresses that the selections which are made in the guidebooks will influence both what the tourists are, and what they are not going to see.

However, the study of the meaning of guidebooks has so far been a subject for a relatively small group of researchers (Lew 1991, Bhattacharyya 1997, Scott 1998, Gilbert 1999, Heimtun 2001, Scherle 2001, Lo et al. 2002, Siegenthaler 2002, Tideswell et al. 2002, Money et al. 2003). This is true for the choice of destination and tourist attraction of individual tourists and also for the tourist industry. Until now, only little research has been conducted on the way information in general and guidebooks in particular have influenced tourists in their travel behaviour. But knowledge in this field is necessary to improve the understanding of tourists' travels and choices.

Besides the researchers, one could argue that the tourism industry itself shows an interest in the importance of guidebooks. For this target group, it is important to have a more accurate ground for future planning and investments. Today, many entrepreneurs are establishing new companies within the tourism sector. Additionally, many of them are sponsored by external organisations like e.g. the European Union. This is especially the case in peripheral areas, where tourism is often seen as part of a natural procedure towards a tertiarised economy and is considered as a mechanism for economic development (Hudson et al. 1992, p. 64). The question is if new companies, which are located outside declared tourism regions in the guidebooks, have a good chance of succeeding. If a destination is not pointed out as attractive and interesting in the guidebooks, will the sights, which are located here, be visited?

Tourism has by many economics been called one of the world's largest industries (Hall 2002, p. 1; World Travel Organisation 2003). A high number of workplaces has been created in tourism in the last years, and its importance for the gross national product is becoming even more important. Precise knowledge in this research field is an important basis for marketing measures and product development. Tourism sellers need to know

how to disseminate information. This includes that the target group must be recognised and determined (Money et al. 2003, p. 191f.).

Another factor which directs the tourists' choice of destinations is the distance of the tourist attraction from the travellers' homes. According to the distance decay theory, the number of visits at destinations decreases, as the tourists' distance to the home region increases. The aim of this article is to examine to what extent distance decay is influenced by the information which is provided in the guidebooks.

For this analysis, several guidebooks on Sweden, which are sold on the German market, were selected. German travellers constitute the second largest foreign tourist group in Sweden (Turistdelegationen 2004, p. 32). In addition, Germans are known to intensively use guidebooks before and during their holidays (F.U.R. 2003, p. 14). In a first step, a content analysis was conducted. In a second step, the results were compared to overnight statistics in order to estimate if the number of tourists in the different regions concurs with the dimension of identified attractions here.

## 2 Guidebooks in tourism

”If tourists do not know about travel ways, attractions, services, and facilities, and do not know how to get to them, tourism does not occur” (Gunn 1972, p. 129).

It is more than thirty years ago that Gunn made the avowal that knowledge about destinations and their availability is of great importance for the tourist, and thus also for the tourism industry. If a destination is not in the mind of a person who is going to travel, this person will not even think of going to this place. Guidebooks have in the course of time influenced tourists’ travels according to both choice of destination and to attractions which are going to be visited. All of these modes have their specific influence in a certain time period before and during the journey. Once the person has decided where to travel, guidebooks are the strongest source of information. Here, guidebooks are found to exert a strong influence on the traveller, both what the construction of the place and which places are chosen as probable destinations is concerned. Hence, guidebooks make unfamiliar places known and accessible. According to McGregor (2000, p. 35), at the same time they play a restricting role on the variability of explorations of the traveller. If not mentioned, the destination will probably not be visited. There will also be constraints on both degree and variability of the voyage.

Reading guidebooks is a way of risk reducing. The search for information is an evident activity with the aim to reduce uncertainties. Reading about the destination before and during the journey makes the destination more predictable. By knowing what to expect, guidebooks contribute to reducing anxieties. Many of the journeys undertaken nowadays are aimed at experiencing something new, indicating that many tourists are located in the borderland between known and unknown. This means that there is a greater need for advanced planning, as the tourists probably know less about the destination than about a holiday region geographically close to them. Furthermore, the possibility to visit the destination twice is often not given; therefore the tourists most likely want to make the travel experience as intensive as they can. Here, guidebooks offer a great help for the tourists (Jacobsen 1999, p. 68). In this way, guidebooks can be seen as a contemporary representation of the longing for liberated meaning.

Travelling exposes holiday-makers to new destinations, attractions, people(s) and experiences. No matter how well organised a journey may be, and no matter how hard the travellers may try to be in command of the capriciousness of contact during the voyage, there will always be possibilities for authentic novelties. Nowadays it is a common condition that travellers cross both cultural, social, geographical and individual boundaries. It is this unpredictability which makes the refuge into prejudgements and well-known reactions easier. When unable (or unwilling) to cross these patterns of former behaviour, or when not capable of transforming recent experiences into new opinions, the tourist easily falls back onto previous concepts. The function of guidebooks in this process can be twofold, resulting from its initial task to reduce the risk of the unknown. On the one hand, it enables the readers to select attractions, which have hitherto been unknown to them. In this way, guidebooks are a help in the tourists’ creative self-organisation. Travel literature thus plays a part in the formation of new cultural proficiency. On the other hand, guidebooks contribute to highlighting those

attractions which have already been mentioned and visited many times before (Koshar 2000, p. 206f.).

## **2.1 Sources of tourist information**

Sources of information can be divided into various groups. Two cases are taken up here, which have been introduced by Jacobsen and Heimtun. Further divisions can be found in Gunn (1972, p. 116ff.) and Money et al. (2003, p. 192).

According to Jacobsen (1995, p. 59ff.), information can be split up into an internal and an external group. *Internal* information comprises alternatives, criteria of choice, images (of e.g. places, regions or travel products) and accessibility. Particularly when international holidays are concerned, travellers habitually undertake *external* searches for data. This information can be received from one or several of the following points (arranged in order of importance): the tourist's own experience<sup>1</sup>, friends and relatives, guidebooks, travel brochures, newspapers and magazines, TV and radio, advertisements, travel agents and trade fairs. In this connection, Prentice's and other researchers' opinion should be mentioned, that orally passed information (word of mouth) is of special importance in tourism marketing (Prentice 1989, p. 375ff.). For the tourist's decision making, catalogues and brochures constitute a central point. Note that the decision making happens before the actual preparing takes place. At a later stage, the importance of catalogues and brochures is lessened. Also, their significance increases with the tourist's age. Habitually, the most experienced travellers are the least enthusiastic to look for new information (Jacobsen 1995, p. 65). The fact that catalogues and brochures have the most effective impact on experienced tourists can be mentioned here. For this group, searching for information both before and during the journey not only has a functional purpose, but belongs to their life style and contributes to a certain way of handling the vacation. The process can be seen as an effort to brace their cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984, cited in Jacobsen 1995, p. 66).

Another division which is taken up here is Heimtun's (2001, p. 3) and Jacobsen's, Heimtun's and Nordbakke's (1998, p. 10) separation between commercial and non-commercial information. According to Heimtun, guidebooks stand at the border between commercial and non-commercial publications. The explanation for this statement is that many books are written by independent people who partly are critical to mercantile proposals. There is also more general information about history, culture and nature on the tourist destination. On the other hand, the content of the travel guides is often influenced by tourism organisations and entrepreneurs. This means that the data is commercially influenced. At this point, it should not be forgotten to mention that guidebooks reflect the perspectives and interests of both and the market for which the book is written (Lew 1991, p. 124). Some texts go as far as to be adapted to certain socio-demographic groups. For the reader, it can occasionally be difficult to separate between the sorts of information presented. The question posed here is to what extent guidebooks form the image of a lace compared to other, more commercialised publications. Gartner (1993, p. 197ff.) states that travel guides have a greater impact on

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<sup>1</sup> This is an important factor if the travellers have already visited the destination before. If the travel to this place for the first time, this feature is rather insignificant.

the tourists' images, as their credibility is considered fairly high, if compared to factual commercial information.

## **2.2 *Historical overview on guidebooks***

Guidebooks have been read ever since the antiquity. The changes in the outlook of guidebooks mirror both the shifting travel habits and the changing traffic situation. Researchers do not agree entirely on which the first travel guides were, but it can be supposed that a group of people wrote texts about destinations for travellers. These texts focussed on topography, artefacts and relevant customs of the people. The most prominent text in this epoch was "Periegesis tes Hellados", which was a description of Greece (Scherle 2001, p. 336). According to Habicht (1985, p. 31), travellers were supposed to be influenced by the presentation and to follow the described route.

The next step in the development of guidebooks took place during the time of pilgrim travels. There was a diversified range of publications for the pilgrims, displaying the way to holy places. Among the most famous examples are the texts on Rome, the "Mirabilia urbis Romae", which were published from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Scherle 2001, p. 336).

The next step took place in the early modern times, when a new type of guidebook genre emerged. These are also the first guidebooks which can be compared to those read today. They were written for the target group which performed the Grand Tour. Travellers were supposed to visit a huge range of destinations and to learn for their future. That the themes which were taken up in these guidebooks were manifold is hardly astonishing. Many people travelled for months or even years, and thus themes like medical advice or the portrayal of systems of government were not unusual (Jacobsen 1999, p. 65, Scherle 2002, p 336f.).

As in the course of time more and more people could afford to undertake journeys, the market for guidebooks grew. This coincides with the era of incisive social changes, like the transformation from the agricultural to the industrial society. As a broad middle class developed, also the premises for travelling altered. Compared to voyaging aristocrats, both time and money were limited factors. Within travelling, this meant a demand for information not solely focussing on art and way of life of the higher classes in society, but more on practical advice for the travellers.

It was in the 1820s that these first "modern" guidebooks were available on the market. Here, the reader could find lists of attractions and also detailed description of a travel route. The guidebooks written by John Murray III were the forerunners of the travel literature as it is known today. It was Murray's father who coined the term handbook. The German publisher Karl Baedeker was one of the first persons who further developed this genre. The text was predominantly orientated after the demand of bourgeois readers. Baedeker's first guidebook concerning Sweden and Norway was published in 1879 (Jacobsen 1999, p. 65f.; Scherle 2002, p 337). According to Buzard, it is due to the efforts of Baedeker and Murray, that it today is distinguished between the objective and informative guidebook and the more impressionistic travelogues (Buzard 1993, p. 66).

The fact that travel has become a mass phenomenon today is reflected in the differentiation and specialisation of guidebooks. This genre is i.a. divided after destinations, travel motives and target groups (Wagner 1990, p. 30f.). Presently, a trend to literary travel journals can be stated. This development can be seen as a consequence of the emotionalisation and personalisation of touristic structures (Scherle 2001, p. 337).

### **2.3 Different types of guidebooks**

At this point, a closer look at the term guidebook is taken. Currently, the term is not sufficiently defined. This situation derives from the fact that guidebooks are a conglomeration of various literature categories. Common elements of guidebooks are scientific-like descriptions of the destination, collections of geographical maps and pictorials, but also restaurant, hotel and camping guides, etc. Thus, it is difficult to distinguish travel guides from other types of travel books, nonfictions and reference books. This multitude of titles and categories of guidebooks not only demonstrates the various distributor concepts, but also reveals the great shattering between the (German) publishing houses (Steinecke 1988, p. 13ff.). According to Schwarzer (1987, p. 213), it is impossible to categorise guidebooks due to the widest range of different texts within this genre. Still, some researchers have tried to classify different groupings. The most important categorisations are introduced below, arranged after time of publication.

Steinecke (1988, p. 18ff.) divides the guidebooks according to both target group and function. Here, the six units of target group are presented.

- **Everyone:** Here, no specific segmentation is done. These guidebooks are targeted at virtually all readers. 14% of all sold guidebooks on the German market belong to this group.
- **Specific socio-demographic groups:** Target groups are usually the middle aged with medium income. 14% of the guidebooks belong here.
- **Special interest groups:** This market segmentation after interest groups is the most common. Behind this general term, there is a wide range of different contents, like information specially focussed on art or on nature. This group concludes 38% of the guidebooks.
- **Activity groups:** This category focuses on special groups of readers. Examples are hikers or city tourists. 13% belong to this group.
- **Transport users:** In general, all means of transport are meant here. As the most common means of transport for German travellers is the car, many guidebooks focus on this, though. 9% of all guidebooks belong here.
- **Individual travellers:** Target group is everyone, who wants to discover a destination on his own. These guidebooks include 13% of all travel handbooks.

Jacobsen (1999, p. 71) divides today's guidebooks into four categories. The first group of books focuses on common and already well known tourist attractions. The second group can be called "off-beat". It concentrates on attractions and travel routes which are slightly outside the best well known. These destinations receive the most attention. The third group of guidebooks can be compared to mainstream-books, but in this case, it is tried to distance oneself from conventional suggestions. Target group is the anti-tourist, who can be described as someone who does not want to do and to see what most other tourists do. Last, some guidebooks are directed at so called travellers. These are

individual tourists who like moving on their own, aiming at finding authentic attractions.

Scherle (2000, cited in Scherle 2001, p. 340) has grouped guidebooks according to theme and target group. There are four groups of guidebooks, all are going to be described here.

- **Novice:** This guidebook gives a first overview of the tourist destination. Usually, the book is divided into two parts, one for general information and one for regional aspects. Both parts give relatively brief information, often presented as keywords in tables. The readers are presented the highlights of the prescribed destination, while background information is rather limited. According to volume and price, there are only small differences between the different guidebooks.
- **Generalist:** A broad range of themes is offered here. Due to the comprehensive portrayal of the different destinations, the reader is given a far-reaching insight. Both the general and the specific part of the book are relatively complex. Often, the book also consists of a section which takes up practical information. This kind of handbook is often associated with the “classic” guidebook (like Baedeker). Readers are often relatively educated.
- **Alternative:** Within this group, focus is laid on the so called off-beat attractions offside the “beaten tracks”. An important part of these books consists of practical information. This is hardly astonishing, as readers are often persons who travel to and through the destination individually and who want to get to know different places by themselves. Often, authors of these guidebooks represent themselves as insiders, and they frequently write in a personal style, also including personal experiences.
- **Thematic:** The thematic guidebook focuses on a certain theme, thus the target group is comparatively restricted. This concentration conveys a less intensive overview on the destination. Today, a successive diversification and specialisation within guidebooks takes place.

Therkelsen and Sørensen (unpublished paper, p. 7) have listed four characteristics of guidebooks, declaring that guidebooks are firstly written for visitors, and not in the first hand for residents of the represented area. Secondly, a guidebook consists of instrumental information for the reader. Furthermore, it portrays a certain geographical region or place, which is most often mentioned in the title. Fourthly, a guidebook also evaluates the area in question.

## **2.4 The readers of guidebooks**

The usage of guidebooks depends on a great variety of factors. The ones which are going to be mentioned here are temporal and socio-demographic aspects. *Temporarily*, the preparation for a journey can be seen as a process which consists of four phases: First, a general contemplation of travel destinations is undertaken (first phase), followed by the compilation of information about certain destinations (second phase). After the decision where to travel has been made (third phase), the actual preparation takes place (fourth phase). Within this process, the usage of guidebooks increases from the first to the last phase. It can also be stated, that a large part of travellers make use of their guidebook when already travelling. This means that the guidebook often is first

employed when the tourists are on their way or have already arrived at the destination (Steinecke 1988, p. 6f.).

There are also obvious *socio-demographic* characteristics of guidebook readers. The following presentation refers to German travellers, but can also be transferred onto tourists of other nationalities. The education of guidebook readers is above average, 40% of the users have finished high school and/or university. Compare this figure to the group of all travellers: 17,5%. At the same time there is a large proportion of younger vacationers. 40 % are under 30 years (cf. all travellers: 32%). Also the ability to speak foreign languages lies over the average. As well does the income. 34% belong to households with a higher income (cf. all travellers: 25%). According to the occupation, 50% of the guidebook users have a leading position or are white collar workers (cf. all travellers: 41%).

This sociodemographic structure also influences the travel behaviour. Guidebook readers have shown to be active on their holidays. For the most part, travels are undertaken because of a collection of different motives. Often, sightseeing is combined with sporting activities, cultural and educational visits. While pure pleasure and relax journeys are relatively rare, a big group of guidebook readers (40%) are package tourists. Generally, guidebook readers use the aeroplane as double as often as non readers to reach their destination. Comparing regular flights, the difference is particularly high (cf. 16% to 5%) (Steinecke 1988, p. 5ff.).

Therkelsen and Sørensen (unpublished paper, p. 13f.) have found out that most of the people who are interested in background information about the tourist destination read at least one guidebook before and/or during the holiday. In their analysis, they divide guidebook readers into three groups, one containing *The Information Addict*, another *The Planner*, and a third one *The Functional Minimalist*.

*The Information Addict* reads at least one guidebook plus additional information. As these tourists are interested in both cultural and historical background and practical information, they invest a lot of time to read the guidebook. *The Planners* also consume guidebooks and additional information, but their intention is rather to receive practical information. Thus, their reading is fairly focussed, concentrating on certain parts of the guidebooks which offer the pragmatic information they are looking for. *The Functional Minimalist* uses only one handbook, which is besides read in a limited way. The guidebook can be said to be used as a lexicon, in order to find practicalities and to identify attractions.

Therkelsen and Sørensen come to the conclusion that it is not definitely clear if reading guidebooks influences the tourist's behaviour. Rather, it is the way in which it is read which affects the future experiences. Still, it is important to note that all tourists who were included in the study were searching for information, and that members of all three groups used the guidebook to plan which attractions and places were to be seen and which were possibly not. The difference in this research study was the sort of information the tourists were looking for. A smaller group searched for information about historical and cultural backgrounds, but the totality of interviewed tourists was interested in hints about which attractions to visit and how to structure the day.

### 3 The influence of guidebooks on the choice of destination

#### 3.1 *The effect of guidebooks*

Guidebooks are, along with e.g. travel brochures, word of mouth-method and destination documentaries, an important medium for information dissemination. Just like other forms of travel literature, guidebooks serve as both functional and symbolic objectives for tourist attractions. For some destinations, especially when located far away from the tourist's home country, travel literature can even be seen as the most important information medium (Dilley 1986, p. 64).

According to MacCannell (1999, p. 41), an attraction is an empirical relationship between a sight, a tourist and a marker. A marker (the signifier) serves with information about a particular sight. Here, guidebooks play an important role. In many cases the tourists' first contact with a sight is not the sight itself, but a representation thereof (110). The tourists might read or hear about a certain destination and then decide to go and see it. The assortment of what is seen as a "true sight" (42) is often not made individually by each tourist, but is selected collectively. Modern (often international) tourism holds its own moral constitution, which can be described as collective sense, picking out certain sights which must be seen. Therefore, the tourists actually have only modest difficulties in deciding which sights ought to be visited. An example for this is the Mona Lisa in the Louvre (42).

Interestingly, some sights hardly seem worth seeing without the associated marker. This is the case if e.g. a guide shows the tourist a historic place where certain events have taken place which cannot be seen anymore (e.g. a battle). In fact, MacCannell does not consider the sight itself to constantly be the most important aspect in sightseeing. Some marker involvement might be more important than the sight. Additionally, particular sights are barely worth seeing without the information. Accordingly, some tourists choose not to focus on the sight, but on the information about it, placed right in front of it. But of course, there are limits to how well markers are able to cover hardly or non-existent sights (113ff.). MacCannell asserts that if "a sight is not mentioned in any guides, it is unmarked, it is not an attraction from the standpoint of institutionalized tourism, and it is not likely to be visited much by tourists" (61). Hence, expectations are affected, influencing the tourists on what they want to see and how they want to move.

Reading the investigations, it can be assumed that there is a close relationship between the tourist destination and attractions described in the text and the actual travel behaviour of the person who reads the guidebook. Most researchers have concentrated on content analysis, studying and evaluating which attractions are brought up in the guidebooks, how culture is presented or how presentation of certain places changes through time (see e.g. Lew 1991 Bhattacharyya 1997, Gilbert 1999, Heimtun 2001, Siegenthaler 2002). The work by Therkelsen and Sørensen (unpublished paper) focuses on the way in which tourists read and use their guidebooks.

In recent research studies (see, Lo et al. 2002, Siegenthaler 2002, Tideswell et al. 2002, Money et al. 2003), a close correlation between guidebook and travel behaviour has been stated. This includes the route choice: many guidebooks provide the reader with prepared route proposals. By mentioning and describing destinations, guidebooks make

unfamiliar places known and accessible. At the same time they play a restricting role on the variability of explorations of the traveller: if not mentioned, the destination will probably not be visited (McGregor 2000, p. 35). Agreiter (2003), researching on the image of Germany in English, French and Italian speaking guidebooks, is more hesitant, maintaining that a clear correlation cannot be thoroughly stated.

Guidebooks address tourists who are planning to follow the prescribed routes and to visit the mentioned attractions (Fussell 1982, p. 203). Schmidt (1984, p. 74f., cited in Jacobsen 1999, p. 68) is of the opinion that some of the travellers even wish to undergo the same experiences as the writer of the guidebook did. According to Cohen (1985, p. 14), guidebooks are similar to travel guides, as they both lead and direct tourists to and through various tourist destinations. Cohen affirms that a guide will structure tourists' attention during their trip and calls this influence a "manipulative significance". Also Jacobsen (1999, p. 69) likens tourist guides to guidebooks. He confirms that guidebooks have a signifying influence on the tourist's choice of both destination and travel route. Guidebooks have, from the very beginning, contributed to forming and extending the "beaten track[s]", which are the touristic main paths to and through a destination. Indeed, guidebooks are a functional instrument for discovering tourist destinations. They act as a catalyst of the individual preference and selection. For German travellers, the Baedeker guidebook can be regarded as the first grand synthesizer and manipulator of tourists' experiences for the last 150 years (Koshar 2000, p. 204).

Comparing the studies which are presented in this article, it can be stated that guidebooks indeed have an influence on how and where tourists travel. What is left out or only vaguely presented in the guidebook is considered as unimportant and/or uninteresting by many tourists, leading to the fact that many visitors overlook or ignore certain aspects either of the attended place or of the whole sub-destination. An important function of the guidebook is to provide the tourist destination or attraction with meaning. This is achieved when the tourist reads about the attraction in the guidebook and thus gives the attraction a further meaning. By this method, a momentary instability is attained, which conclusively assigns the journey with its meaning. If one takes a look on the variety of guidebooks which have been published during time, those places can be identified which have pulled the searching tourist to places filled with meaning (Koshar 2000, p. 210f.).

Adler (1989, p. 1369) claims that guidebooks work as a script for the tourist. This testimony is supported by a study made by McGregor (2000, p. 35), in which the dynamic relation between guidebook and tourists is analysed. McGregor discovered that guidebooks exert a great amount of power over the tourists and which destinations they prefer to visit. In his survey, only few tourists indicated that they went to see places which were not mentioned in their guidebooks. Last, according to Scott (1998, p. 89), tourists even refer to their guidebooks as bibles.

Indeed, guidebooks represent a substantial source of obtained knowledge of which the authors of guidebooks think that they are essential for making the journey successful. Just like other forms of travel literature, guidebooks serve as both functional and symbolic objectives. According to Lew (1991, p. 126) and Scott (1998, p. 89), guidebooks provide the tourists with spatial and social information and both identify and popularise certain places as tourist attractions. Thus, they both determine the

tourist's starting point as well as provide vector points in advising and guiding the traveller out. Hereby the tourists are given propositional presentations of what the destination is like and which attractions are worth seeing and experiencing, thus separating desirable from undesirable experiences. In this way, information directs the tourists in their spatial movements to and through the tourist destination. All these declarations strengthen the hypothesis of this article, that guidebooks influence tourists in their spatial movements.

Consequently, one can speak of a placed framework which imposes the choices of the reader. This can also easily be seen at the symbols which are used in the guidebooks: Already in the 1820s a system of exclamation marks was used to sign the most important attractions. This system is still utilised. The publishing house Baedeker has a similar system, using one or two stars in the guidebooks (Jacobsen 1999, p. 65f.). This has prompted Boorstin (1964, p. 106) to speak of "star-gazers rather than explorers". Jacobsen et al. speak of a checklist-tourism, having arisen since the beginning of the broad usage of guidebooks (1998, p. 16).

### **3.2 *The interrelation between image and choice of destination***

Another field which is widely recognised is destination image and how this is formed (Cohen 1993, Gartner 1993, Carter 1998, Baloglu et al. 1999, Lee et al. 2002). It can be supposed that guidebooks, which are read before travelling to the tourist destination, strongly contribute to building the pre-visit image of a place. Comparing the touristic image of a destination, as it is described in the guidebooks, with the reality of this place, one can find incongruity at varying levels of intensity, though.

Guidebooks – along with other forms of information – construct a great variety of touristic images unambiguously intended for the attention, acquisition or purpose by tourists. However, it is important to notice that these images are formed with the impact of numerous other perspectives, which can be cultural, political, ethnological etc. (Cohen 1993, p. 36ff.). In this discussion, the importance of image formed by other sources should not be forgotten: Films, advertisements and friends are some of the factors which form the tourists' image (Riley et al. 1998; Kim et al. 2003). The connecting question is how image affects tourists' spatial behaviour.

Concerning the dissemination of images, a number of dimensions has to be acknowledged. The picture of a country (or a region) which is distributed by guidebooks is influenced by the author, and partly also by guidelines of the publishing house. Furthermore, the readers' individual perceptions of the text are important. Besides, these are mixed with their own idea and knowledge of the destination in question. Additionally, publishing houses are subdued to market economy. This implies that a certain number of books has to be sold, otherwise the publishing house will go into liquidation. Indeed, authors determine which destinations and attractions will be of interest for the readers. But what is written also has to do with the expectation interest of the group of buyers.

In the presentation of a tourist region, clichés and prejudices are often utilised. Here, it is important to remember that not the objective appropriateness of the representation is the most important factor for the readers, but the tourists' ability to cope with the presented region (Agreiter 2000, p. 4ff.). McGregor (2000, p. 34f.) suggests that there is

a fairly good correspondence between images of a tourist destination and the actual travel behaviour. People are likely to spend their holiday at destinations of which they have heard and/or read that they provide the type of recreational opportunities they wish for. This fact emphasises the importance of travel literature as one of the most significant means of disseminating information and images of both travel destinations and their opportunities. Many texts offer a suggesting claim about what the place in question is like. Additionally, guidebooks disseminate certain images of places and attractions, which means that tourists arrive at the destination with a certain idea about this place, which is connected with a particular picture.

This statement can be connected with a testimony made by Urry (1990, p. 1f.), confirming that the tourist gaze depends upon elements like social group and historical period. The author of this article adds another influence, which is the information about the destination that the tourists have received before they travelled to this place. This also goes in line with the conclusions made by McGregor (2000: 39), declaring that guidebooks elect the attitudes of a certain destination which the tourists will rate as different from what they are used to do. How the tourist will experience this situation is generally connected with the information received prior to the visit, and relates in particular to the content and way of presentation in the guidebook. In McGregor's research, it was found that tourists compare an attraction/a destination with how it was described in the guidebook. Here, it is important how much text is written about the destination and if the text consists of photographs. Interestingly, attractions which were not or only shortly mentioned in the guidebook, did not receive much attention either. In many cases, these were objects which could be found in the tourist's home country, too (43).

### **3.3 *Information acquisition and the question of neutrality***

Until now, wide-ranging research has been conducted on the patterns of information acquisition (Jacobsen 1995, Fodness et al. 1997, Vogt et al. 1998, Lo et al. 2002, Money et al. 2003). Studies on perception have for a long time been studied in the field of psychology. Today, the approach can additionally be seen as both geographically, sociologically and economically. Nonetheless, the inducement of travel and destination information on the actual decision has been fairly disregarded. Tourism organisations, destinations and transport companies spend a huge amount of money on the dissemination of information and on the building of images conducive for holiday travel. Still, little hard data exists on the effect of information spreading and advertising on changing travel patterns (Smith 1983, p. 149).

For the reader, it can occasionally be difficult to separate between the different sorts of information which are presented. The question posed here is to what extent travel guides form the image of a place compared to other, more commercialised publications. Gartner (1993, p. 200) states that guidebooks have a greater impact on the tourists' images, as their credibility is considered fairly high, if compared to commercial information. Nevertheless, economic reasons might be leading the mentioning or ignorance of information.

In the guidebooks, there is a limited number of pages on which different places and attractions are presented to the reader. But who chooses the exact content in the guidebooks? In which way can tourist destinations influence their presentation in the

books? Although these are unanswered questions, it can be assumed that the information which is disseminated can hardly be called neutral. Instead, it will induce the tourist, no matter if this is intended by the author of the travel guide or not.

## **4 The influence of non-information elements on the choice of destination**

Guidebooks are, however, not the only factor influencing tourist choices. The internal logic of the trip, and in particular the round trip, forces the tourist to move on, leaving certain attractions unvisited aside. This is often a result of geographical location and distance to the tourists' home regions.

### ***4.1 Attraction shadow***

One factor which induces the tourists' choice of attraction is the geographical location of the attraction. Here, both location in relation to other tourist destinations is of importance, as well as the distance from the tourists' homes. Depending on where tourist attractions are located, the effect on both number and type of tourists varies. In order to clarify this argument, one has to take a closer look at the characterisation of attractions first. According to Leiper (1990, p. 374), there are three types of attractions. While primary attractions are decisive for the choice of destination, secondary attractions support the selection of both destination and travel route, without being the main motive for travelling to this place. Tertiary attractions are very often recognised first when already travelling to a destination. Interestingly, not the attraction itself is primary, secondary or tertiary, but the tourist decides how important the single attraction is (Kamfjord 1999, p. 148).

Of course, the distance between attraction and the tourists' country of origin matter. A secondary or tertiary attraction which is located far away from the tourists will only seldom be a touristic magnet for them. A primary attraction, however, has a greater chance of causing tourists to travel here. This can easily be seen with some great tourist attractions in the world, e.g. the pyramids in Egypt, which are visited by thousands of tourists from all over the world each year. Other examples are the Louvre in Paris or the castle of Neuschwanstein in southern Germany.

However, the importance of an attraction (estimated by the number of tourists visiting it) is not only dependent on the distance to the tourists' homes, but also on the distance between the different attractions themselves. A secondary or tertiary attraction which is located close to a primary one might receive fewer tourists than if they were located further away. According to Flognfeldt (2002, p. 4), the minor attraction is lying in the primary attraction shadow. The attraction which is better known so strongly attracts tourists, that the minor tourist destinations in its surrounding are understood as less worth visiting. This means, that also guidebooks are involved when determining which attractions are worth visiting and which are not, as tourist destinations are – or are not – pointed out here.

### ***4.2 The effect of Distance Decay and the making of space on the choice of destination***

Guidebooks are found to exert a strong influence on the traveller, both what the construction of the place and which places are chosen as probable destinations is

concerned. A great range of intervening components influences route choices, though. These elements include distance decay, market access, time and budget availability, trip characteristics and demographic attributes. In this article, focus has been laid on distance decay and market access.

The distance decay theory is a model having been widely applied in tourism research (Greer et al. 1979, Hanson 1980, Paul et al. 1992, McKean et al. 1995, Hanink et al. 1999, Zhang et al. 1999). Having been recognised as one of the principal laws in geography, this conception proposes that spatial activity declines inversely with the distance which has been covered, the time and money which have been spent, and the effort which has been made (Bull 1991, p. 46f.). In this theory, it is assumed that the consumers are rational, which means that they always choose the most proximate option. This means that attractions located close to the tourists will be visited most often. Tourist destinations which are located at a great distance from the tourists' home regions have to offer both exoticness and uniqueness in order to overcome distance (Prideaux 2002, p. 379). The specific about distance decay models in tourism is that the existing demand does not decline immediately, but that a minimum of travel distance is needed to make the tourist feel adequately removed from his home surroundings (Greer et al. 1979, cited in McKercher et al. 2004, p. 40).

Originally, the distance decay curve is based on the presupposition that all attractions are evenly dispersed. Of course, in empiric data it is assumed that the actual curves have to be well adapted to the spatial reality. For example, if there exists a limited number of attractions along a travel route, this can make the demand "plateau" for a certain distance from this route (McKercher 1998a, p. 219). Or, as a second example, certain tourist destinations can exert a special attraction once the distance to the consumer exceeds a certain distance from home. In this case, a secondary peak in the distance decay curve can occur (Hanink et al. 1999, p. 490). It is believed that guidebooks contribute to affecting the progression of the curve.

The other model which is mentioned here is market access, a concept which can actually be derived from the distance decay theory. The difference here is that market access measures the attractiveness of similar tourism destinations on the basis of their relative proximity to their markets of origin. It is assumed that the destinations which submit similar attractions have a stronger significance on the tourist demand than the distance. Whereas the distance decay model focuses on consumer orientation, market access concentrates on destination orientation. Thus, the characteristic of the latter is the comparison with similar destinations (McKercher et al. 2004, p. 43; McKercher 1998b, p. 39).

According to this theory, those destinations obtaining a solid market access, possess several competitive benefits compared to destinations with a deficient market access. Firstly, tourists who want to minimise travel time to these destinations can at the same time maximise the time spent at the destination itself. Secondly, these destinations have good possibilities of attracting tourists who are virtually on their way past this destination, heading for another. Thus, a secondary destination event is produced. Last, those destinations having a deficient market access frequently attract those tourists who visit this place repeatedly, and those who intend to stay for a longer period of time. An example for a visitor group which is attracted by destinations with a stronger market

access is a family travelling with children. An example for a group attracted also by weaker market access is couples or seniors (McKercher et al. 2003, p. 160).

The dissemination of geographical information always implies that the writers' perception of space is involved. This is true for guidebooks as well as for writings in other subjects (Gregory 2000, p. 767ff.). While absolute space stands for a certain surface, the abstract meaning of space includes peoples' relations to it. This means that space is conceived as relative and relational (Heldt Cassel 2003, p. 26). Hence, there are spatial relations, caused by underlying political and economic motives. Accordingly, place can be defined as a part of space which bears significance, meaning that it is related to peoples' experiences and interpretations (Duncan 2000, p. 582ff.).

There is a wide-ranging apprehension that places are no certain unities, but rather socially created constellations (Heldt Cassel 2003, p. 27). This indicates that a place receives its meaning in peoples' thoughts about the place and in their experiences they have had with it. Thus, place is related to peoples' ideas and conceptions. This can also be said to be true for regions which are the underlying units in this analysis.

## 5 Methodology

This research project analyses German guidebooks on Sweden. Apart from Norway, Germany is the biggest origin market of tourists in Sweden, what the number of guest nights is concerned (Turistdelegationen 2004, p. 32). Because of the according importance of this tourist group for the Swedish tourism industry, this group of tourists was chosen for the study. Another reason for this decision is that German tourists regularly use guidebooks before and during their holidays both abroad and in their home country (F.U.R. 2003, p. 14).

The first step in this study involved the selection of guidebooks. The aim was to choose those guidebooks which are sold in high numbers on the German book market. In this way, it could be guaranteed that the guidebooks are read by a great number of people and thus have a high influence on the German tourist group in Sweden. As it was impossible to receive any information about sales figures of the single guidebooks, sales managers at publishing houses were interviewed about the relative position of their guidebook on the market. Additionally, the sales figures of German internet book sellers were analysed, selecting the guidebooks which were sold most.

By this method, a selection of 9 guidebooks could be produced, which contained the best-selling figures. All guidebooks which were written about Sweden were taken into consideration – including books about the whole of Scandinavia, where Sweden is presented in a single part, and about certain regions of Sweden. In the selection for this study, out of nine guidebooks about Sweden, one describes the whole of Scandinavia and two are dedicated to the south of Sweden. The calculations were then carried out by weighting the regions, which were described in the several books, differently.

As all books use their own division of Sweden, a general division had to be established. The overlying division which was chosen consists of 41 tourist regions (cf. figure 1), each consisting of a number of communities. Thus it was possible to divide up all the mentioned attractions into these tourism areas. In the first part of the study, the space, which was dedicated to a single attraction, was estimated. Thus it could easily be seen how varied the supply in the different tourism regions is presented in the guidebooks. In the second part of the study, the content of these pages and lines was analysed more thoroughly. The attractions described in the guidebooks are represented in Table 1. A categorisation can be problematic, as there are always several ways in categorising the attractions. The different groups were kept relatively large in order to reduce the risk of placing attractions in the wrong category.

In a third step, the results of the content analysis were compared to overnight statistics of German visitors in Sweden and Swedish population statistics. The statistics used were taken from Statistics Sweden (SCB) on the year 2002. These lodging statistics are not complete, therefore some modifications had to be made. In order to receive a thorough picture of German overnight stays, three statistics were combined: the number of German guest nights at hotels, hostels and camping sites. In the Swedish statistics, those communities with less than five lodging owners are not registered. These missing values were substituted by the value of that community in the region, where the least Germans lodged in 2002. No statistics could be included on German tourists staying either with friends and relatives, or in cottages.

By the procedure which was employed here, two questions could be examined. Firstly, it was of interest if the number of pages dedicated to the single region correlates with the number of German tourists stay overnight here. Secondly, it could be analysed if the number of Swedes living in this region have an influence on how important this region is thought to be for the writers of guidebooks. These calculations were carried out by linear regression.

**Figure 1**

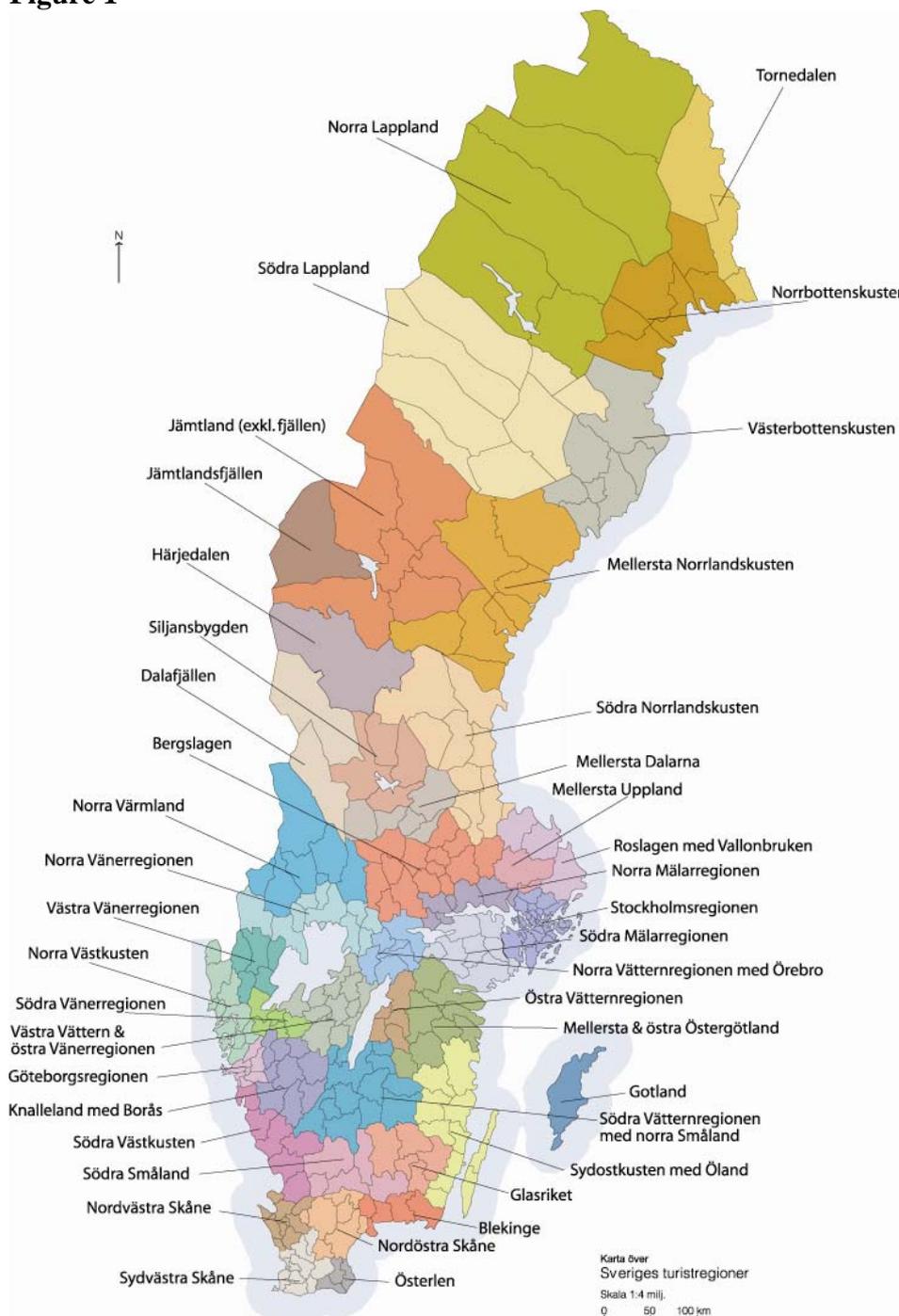


Figure 1: The 41 tourist regions in Sweden

## 6 Tourist regions in the guidebooks

None of the analysed guidebooks present the whole of Sweden as only one region. Instead, the country is divided into several sub-destinations. The fact that a region is not a definite, clearly outlined area can easily be agreed on in respect to the tourism regions which are mentioned in the travel literature. In the nine guidebooks, a great amount of different divisions have been applied for the tourist destination Sweden. No municipal boundaries have been taken into consideration in the guidebooks. This ignorance supports the fact that these political boundaries are rarely of importance on the demand side in tourism, but that other divisions, particularly attraction-defined, are of interest for the tourist.

The grouping of regions which are presented in the guidebooks is constructed after a range of different principles. In some books, a tourist region consists of a rather long area along a recommended travel route from one place to another. This kind of presentation is created particularly for tourists moving by car. A range of attractions is described along the road which the tourist is supposed to travel. This implies that the defined region is relatively narrow, as the tourists are expected to travel along one road in order to reach the target region in a reasonable period of time. Detours from this road are suggested as long as the attraction is not too far away from the main route.

Four out of nine guidebooks offered the reader suggestions on travel routes. Some of these itineraries were adjusted to day trips, others were designed for a journey lasting for several days. One guidebook offered one huge route through Sweden, which was divided into several subgroups. A comparison of all travel itineraries which were presented in the guidebooks displayed that routes in southern Sweden were principally shorter than those in the north of the country. The shortest recommended route was 65 km long and located between the cities Malmö and Ystad. The longest route was 890 km, leading the tourist from Östersund in the middle of Sweden, to Karesuando in the utmost north. Generally, the recommended tours were 120 to 700 km long. On the average, a suggested tour was 383 km long.

The Swedish division of the country into counties, provinces and lands (Swedish: *landsdel*) is also utilised in the guidebooks. In some cases, only one division is used, in others different divisions are mixed. Interestingly, the two provinces whose names are best known are used most: Many German tourists who are travelling to Sweden have heard about the provinces Småland and Lapland. These names are fairly popular in the guidebooks. In the analysis, the use of the names was not always correct, though. Generally, it can be said that these two regions are roughly enlarged. This means, that parts of Sweden are said to belong to Småland and Lapland, which actually do not belong to these provinces. In the Lapland case, towns at the Gulf of Botnia were claimed to belong to this administrative province. In the Småland case, quite huge areas outside the province were incorporated.

The reasons for this incorrect representation can be twofold. Firstly, the authors might not know the correct place and location of the provinces. Secondly, and this case seems more plausible, the usage of these names is a marketing method. Many people have heard these names and associate it with something positive and, in the Lapland case,

exotic. By this kind of presentation in the guidebooks, the tourists get the impression that rather huge parts of Sweden really correspond to this personal knowledge.

Writers of other guidebooks have made their own division of Sweden. The number of areas reaches from three to ten regions. Here, it has to be acknowledged that a division into three regions was found in a guidebook about South Sweden. In guidebooks presenting the whole of Sweden, five regions was the minimum. One guidebook presented all regions as tours along the road. Here, 25 regions were portrayed. On the one hand, administrative borders were chosen. This is the case in one guidebook with the three lands of Sweden (Norrland, Svealand and Götaland). Political regions were always combined with self-appointed areas. These could be geographical areas like the west coast, the region around the great lakes, or the islands in the Baltic Sea.

But there is also another way of creating and presenting Swedish tourism regions in the guidebooks. In this case, not geographical reasons influence the construction of regions, but thematic motives. These regions reflect the author's conception of Sweden. This means that general perceptions, as they already exist, are picked up and re-distributed to the readers of guidebooks. Examples for this are "Land of elks", "Kingdom of red cottages" or "Sapmi" in combination with "The people of the sun and the wind".

The above representations show two outcomes. It can be assumed that the created regions influence tourists, who are reading these portrayals, in their choice of both destination and travel route to and within this area. Tourists might restrict their travels to the different regions which are identified in the guidebooks. Thus, guidebooks contribute to making space. Secondly, guidebooks establish expectations. Initially, they mirror pictures which already exist. Many Germans have heard about the huge forests in Sweden. Reading about a region which in the guidebook is called "Middle Sweden – region of the everlasting singing forests", confirms these people in their idea about this part of Sweden. But guidebooks also play an important role in the reshaping of images. Kiruna, a town with 23.300 inhabitants, can for example be presented as a pulsating place ("Kiruna – pulse of the north").

All these different categorisations of Sweden demonstrate that administrative boundaries do not play an important role in the tourists' point of view. These boundaries are of interest rather when it is important to count guest nights or arrivals. What is more significant for the tourist, are regions, especially when these are thematically defined. For the travellers, the attractions are of importance – not community borders. The fact that guidebooks are contributing to making space is an interesting fact in this connection. When different sub-divisions are presented as one area in the books, this makes the tourist feel that this really is a clearly defined region.

Not only the fact that there exists a great number of different regionalisations in the guidebooks, is of interest, but also that these regions are presented in a certain order. In geography, areas are usually presented in a pattern from north to south. In the German guidebooks about Sweden, this is not the case. There are two prevalent forms of presenting Swedish regions in these books. Either, the Stockholm region is presented first. In this case, the outstanding role of the Swedish capital is demonstrated. Or, as in the most cases, the presentation of the regions takes place from south to north. This arrangement demonstrates the predominant attitude that tourists enter Sweden at a port in the South and thereafter move northward.

In connection to this, it can be noted that a southward displacement of the different destinations within Sweden prevails. Although Sweden is located roughly between the 55<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> latitude and the geographical middle of Sweden thus is located approximately around the 62<sup>nd</sup>/63<sup>rd</sup> latitude, this is not really of importance in the guidebooks. In the analysis it was found out, that middle Sweden in most cases means a region situated far in the south of this coordinate. This displacement goes in line with the concentration of inhabitants, industry and touristic sights in the southern parts of Sweden. In some cases, middle Sweden means the region between the towns Karlstad and Örebro, both located between the 59<sup>th</sup> and the 60<sup>th</sup> latitude. This attitude goes in line with the Swedes' attitude towards their mental map of Sweden.

In many guidebooks, Northern Sweden begins at the 61<sup>st</sup> latitude. Additionally, it is not always the case that the whole of Sweden is presented. In one guidebook, the most northern destination which is described is Idre – a town at the 62<sup>nd</sup> latitude. This means, that there are roughly 800 km left to the northern boundary, which are neither described nor mentioned in the guidebook. With the fact that was presented in the chapter 2 of this article, this might mean that destinations in this region are barely visited, because the tourist does not get to know about this area in his guidebook.

## 7 Tourism patterns, distance decay and guidebooks

### 7.1 *Space dedicated to the tourist regions in the guidebooks*

The range of pages which is dedicated to the single tourist regions in the guidebooks is broad. In the single guidebooks, some regions are not mentioned at all, while a concentration takes place on others. Summarising all the guidebooks and thus making an average within the single regions, the minimum is 0,2 % of all pages, while the maximum is some 21 % of all pages dedicated to the different regions. Already this rough comparison shows how dissimilarly the tourist regions are shown in the guidebooks.

As was already expected, Stockholm is mentioned the most. 20,8 % of the space was dedicated to this region. Out of the ten regions which are described most in the guidebooks, eight are located in Southern Sweden, one in middle and one in northern Sweden. Surprisingly, the region which inhabits the second position is Northern Lapland, which is located in the utmost northwest of the country. This is a clear break in the trend for the general condition. As can be seen in figure 2, most guidebooks point out attractions in the southern part of the country, while only 19 % of all books are dedicated to the eight northern tourist regions, which occupy more than 50 % of the state area. Northern Lapland is, as will be shown later, described in an exotic and colourful way, offering the guidebook readers what can be described as the opposite of what can be found in their home region. It is common that guidebooks emphasise exoticness. This is the case with those features which do not exist in the home country or which are different from there.

Other regions which are described extensively are those located in southern coastal areas. This coastal strip reaches from the Norwegian border in the west to the Stockholm region in the east of Sweden. Northwards from here, coastal areas do not take an outstanding position. In the southern part, six out of ten coastal tourist regions are within the top ten regions in all compared guidebooks. As will be shown below, according to the guidebooks, these regions offer a great variety of attractions, where sun and beach takes a protrude position. Another tourist region which is presented as a region with outstanding bathing possibilities is Gotland. The reason why not more pages are dedicated to this region (2 %) is possibly that Gotland is an island, thus making a trip with either ferry or aeroplane necessary to reach the destination. Additionally, Gotland is a destination where sun and bath play an important role for the Swedish tourists. These features can, from a German perspective, be found in many other places, not at least in their own home country. Thus, it is not surprising that this tourist region does not take such a significant position as it does for the Swedes.

**Figure 2**

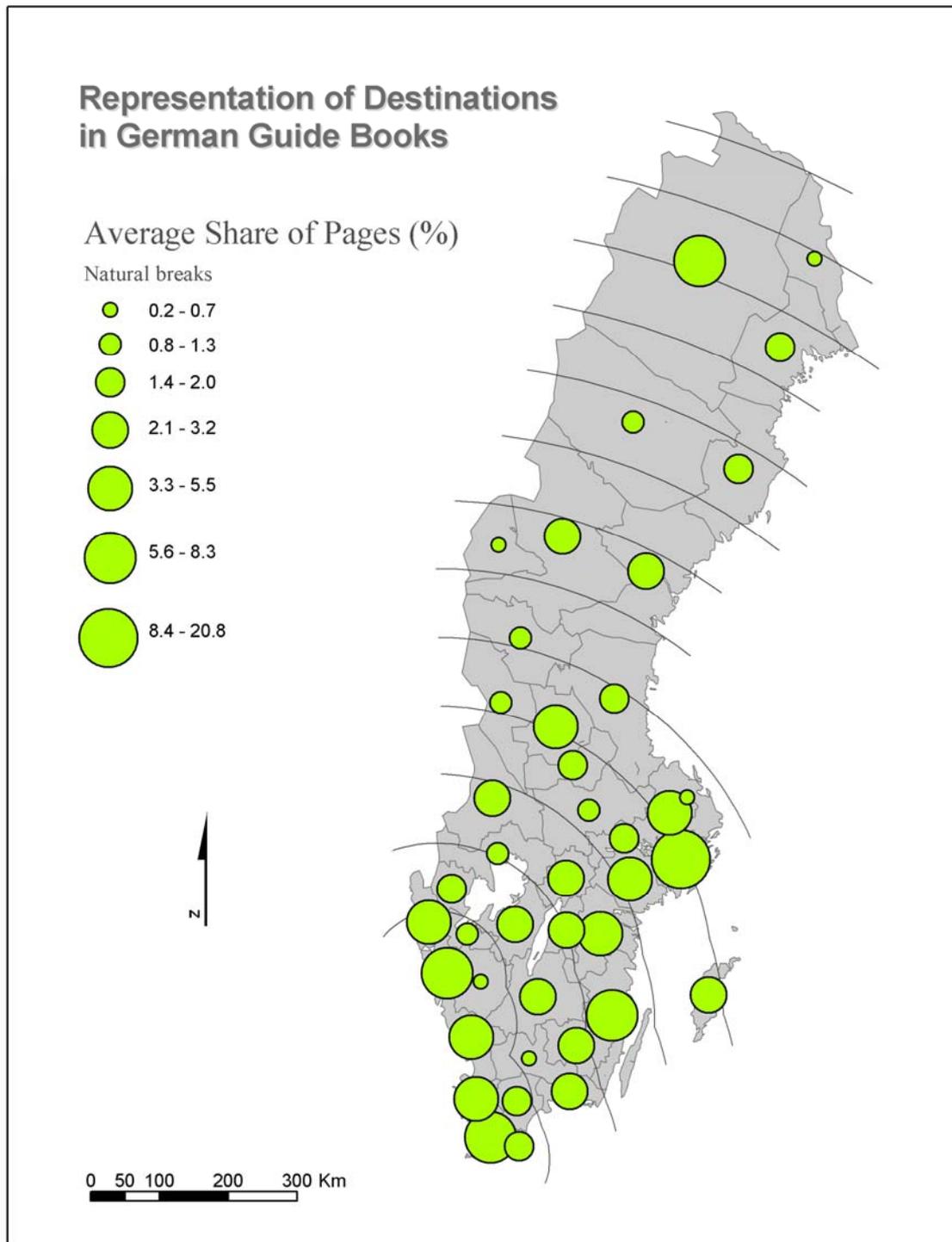


Figure 2: The representation of destinations in German guidebooks. The map includes buffer zones of 100 kilometres, located around Swedish ferry harbours and the Öresund bridge in the southwest of the country.

Regions which are comparatively less mentioned are spread all over the country. Still, two regularities can be acknowledged. Firstly, there are more disregarded regions in the north than in the south. This goes in line with the distance decay theory, as the distance to the tourists' origins in Germany increases the further the visitor travels northwards. The second trend which can be identified is that regions which are mentioned the least

are often located close to the regions mentioned the most. This is true for four of the five least mentioned regions. These are Tornedalen (located next to Northern Lapland, rank 2), Roslagen med Vallonbruken (located next to Stockholm, rank 1), Knalleland med Borås (located next to Gothenburg, rank 5) and Southern Småland (located next to Southern West Coast and Northwest Skåne, rank 9 and 8) (compare figure 1 and 2). The tourist regions which are mentioned least in the guidebooks can be said to be located in the primary attraction shadow of other, more popular areas.

The fact that regions which are the most and the least acknowledged are located so close to each other can be explained by the perceived outstanding attractiveness of certain regions. Destinations which have an either high number of secondary and tertiary attractions and/or a primary attraction constitute a tourism cluster (Jansson 1994, p. 82). According to Gunn (1965, p. 28ff.), such a cluster consists of one or more primary attractions, which are surrounded by secondary and/or tertiary ones. This combination forms a critical mass, which in its diversity and geographical closeness attracts tourists. Thus it can be argued that certain regions in Sweden do not reach this critical mass. The critical mass which is presented in the guidebooks is bigger, the closer the region is located to highlighted regions in the guidebooks. At destinations which are intensively portrayed in the guidebooks, a critical mass of attractions has been exceeded. Because of its perceived importance, it casts an attraction shadow over the surrounding places. That e.g. Stockholm is classified as a superior place means that in this case Roslagen, bordering upon the Stockholm region, is compared to Stockholm. As number and perceived importance of tourist attractions is higher in Stockholm, writers of guidebooks prefer to concentrate on this place.

But not only the attractions contribute to the shadow, also tourists' time schedules might be a factor to this. It can be supposed that tourists travel a certain distance during their holiday in order to spend a certain degree of time at the different tourist destinations. If the tourists have spent some time at a destination in order to visit those attractions which are presented in the guidebook, they will hardly stop at a destination nearby in order to visit attractions which are presented as secondary or tertiary attractions. The distance is simply too small. The correlation between guidebook, travel itinerary and time budget is an interesting question for further research.

Those destinations which already have a high status are perceived and thus portrayed as touristic places of utmost importance. This happens at the cost of those destinations which are a) located close to these places and b) have a touristic offer which is smaller and identified as less significant. The fact that a place has a low popularity and acquaintance contributes to it being even less known. This system works as a positive spiral for those regions which already have a high status and as a negative such for those areas which are rather unknown to the German population.

## **7.2 *Presented attractions in the guidebooks***

It is an interesting aspect that the modest quoting in the guidebooks does not always correspond to the number of attractions and touristic offers of the lagging regions. In many cases, both number and range of attractions in these areas is high, but in the German guidebooks, the interest in this is relatively small. Besides the theory of an attraction shadow which exists here, the kind of attraction which is offered might be an explanation in some cases. In Roslagen and Knalleland, there are numerous industrial

tourist sights, and this might only be of secondary interest to many German visitors, as this kind of attraction is proposed at a lot of places in the home country. This result can be compared to McGregor's (2000, p. 43) testimony, stating that attractions which can also be found in a tourist's home country, receive less attention.

The attractions which are pointed out and described in the guidebooks can be divided up into eleven different touristic themes. The distinguished subjects are culture, pure tourist information (facts about accommodation, restaurants and route suggestions), nature, parks (like city parks or adventure parks), entertainment, sporting activities, industry, atmosphere, transport as attraction, sun and bath, and engineering. As can be seen in table 1, culture is the theme which was mentioned the most in the guidebooks, followed by tourist information, data on nature and on parks. These four subject areas take up 80 % of all representations.

**Table 1: Share of touristic themes**

<b>Touristic theme</b>	<b>Number of citations</b>
Culture	3618
Tourist information	1547
Nature	736
Parks	569
Entertainment	415
Sport	231
Industry	223
Atmosphere	203
Transport as attraction	201
Sun and bath	189
Engineering	72

Just like Stockholm is the region to which most space is dedicated, also the most attractions are mentioned here (13 % of all namings). In general, it was found out that most attractions which are mentioned are located in and south of the Stockholm area, meaning that there is a solid concentration on one third of the Swedish state area. Tourist regions besides Stockholm, in which the most attractions are mentioned, are the Southeast Coast with the island Öland, Southwest Skåne, Northern West coast and Southwest Skåne. As expected, this coincides well with the space dedicated to these regions (cf. figure 3).

**Figure 3**

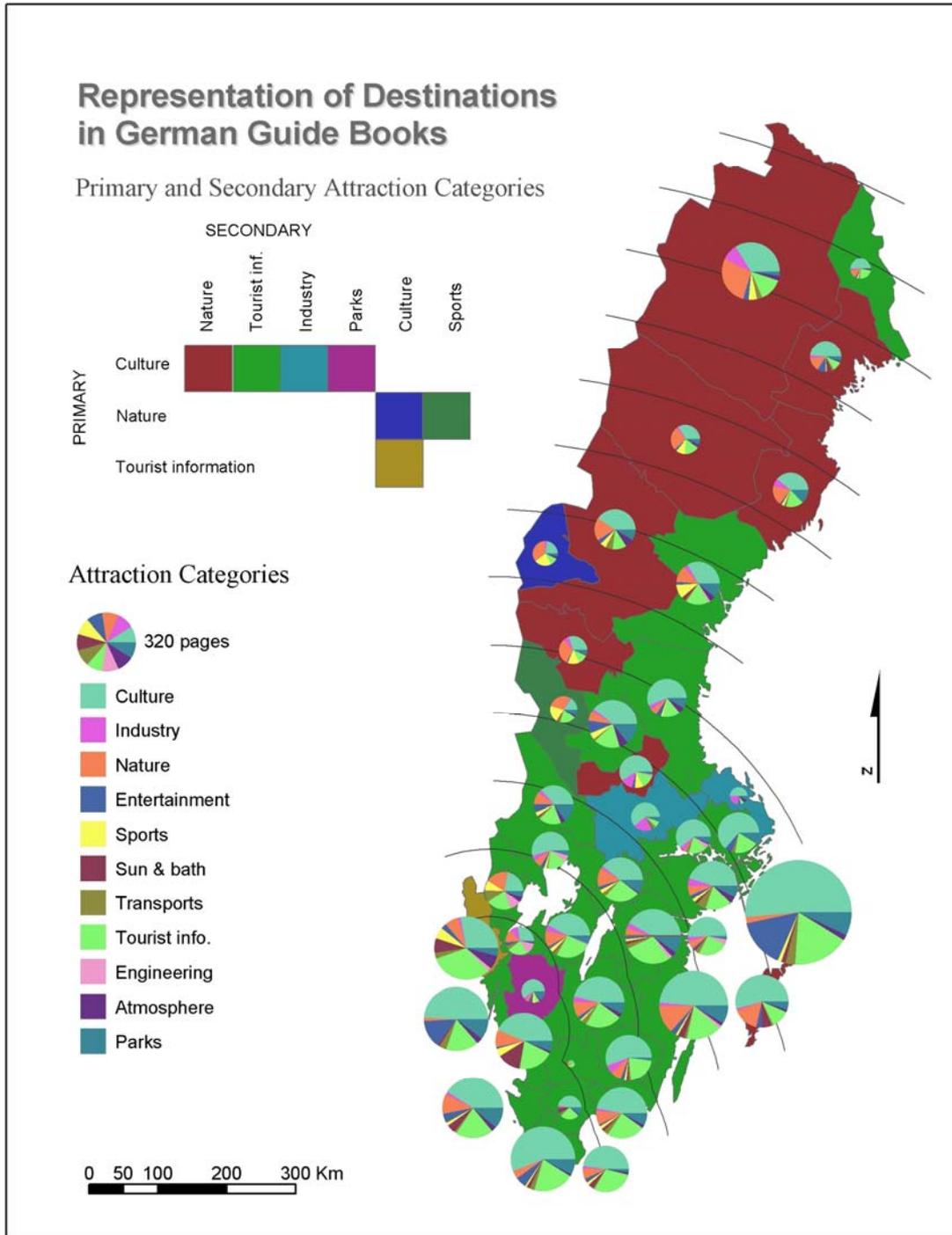


Figure 3: The representation of destinations in German guidebooks.

The cultural attractions which are presented are usually located to the biggest towns, as can be seen with the regions around Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. This is not unexpected, as many of the biggest and most important museums are placed here. Yet, in regions where history plays a great roll, cultural attractions also play an important part. One example for this is the island Gotland, whose main town Visby is a world heritage site. In Norrland, the only region where a relatively great amount of cultural attractions is mentioned is Northern Lapland. Among these attractions, the Sami culture

plays an outstanding role, contributing to manifesting the region as an exotic and extrinsic part of Sweden.

The theme which holds rank 2 is tourist information. This indicates how important the concrete travel information is for the tourist and also how important it is weighted by the authors of the guidebooks. Indeed, the dissemination of touristic facts is the heart of the guidebooks' assignment. This includes information about i.a. local traffic and accommodation. Besides Stockholm, the tourist regions Östergötland, Southeast Coast and Southwest Skåne are the leading regions in this category. This is doubtless the case because these regions have a great range of hotels, restaurants, public service, etc. to offer and it is important for the traveller to know in advance or during the stay in these regions how and where to travel.

What nature is concerned (rank 3), northern Sweden takes up an extraordinary position. This is not surprising, as this part of the country has access to great nature areas and reserves. The well known hiking trails are mentioned as often as high mountains, flora and fauna (especially focusing on elks and reindeers). Wilderness and authenticity distinguishes this from the presentation of laid out parks and adventure parks, which take up rank 4 of the themes which are taken up in the guidebooks. These grounds are man made, and are often presented as located within or near Swedish towns. Accordingly, they are taken up in the southern regions of Sweden.

Entertainment (rank 5) is, not surprisingly, connected to the big towns and their theatres, dance halls, cinemas and concerts. In Norrland, the region Siljansbygden is presented as an area with a range of entertainment, especially emphasising the Swedish native historical celebrations during the summertime, and especially at midsummer. Another theme which is widely described for the northern regions in Sweden is Sport (rank 6). Within this theme, three out of the five most quoted tourist regions are located in the northern part of the country. Partly, this can be explained with the focus on winter sports, and partly on the great possibilities on carrying out sporting activities in the nature.

Also industry, which ranks at number 7, is mentioned above average in the north of Sweden, especially in Northern Lapland. In the guidebooks, the iron ore mine in Kiruna is widely represented, and this contributes to this position. Dalarna and Bergslagen are also presented as regions where industry can be found. Here, it should be noted that these industrial places are touristically adapted, meaning that e.g. guided tours are offered at these attractions, making these places touristically ennobled.

The themes atmosphere, traffic, sun and bath and engineering play a relatively small role in the presentation of attractions in the guidebooks and are therefore not individually presented here. It is important to mention, though, that regions which are presented as having many attractions of these kinds are all located south of Stockholm. An important conclusion is that the most important features like culture, tourist information, parks and entertainment are almost exclusively located to the southern parts of Sweden. The only exception is the theme nature. Where northern Sweden plays a more prominent role in the guidebooks, it is within themes which are not of so great importance, such as sports or industry (both 3 % of the nominations).

### 7.3 *The relation between appearance in the guidebooks and statistical data*

#### 7.3.1 All tourist regions – an overview

The relation between the space dedicated to the single tourist regions on the one hand and the number of German overnights stays on the other hand was examined by linear regression analysis. This relation was found to be significant, with  $r^2 = 0,648$  (cf. table 2). However, the reason for this relatively high correlation was that the Stockholm region heavily influenced this situation. Therefore, the further examination was performed without Stockholm in order to receive a more accurate insight into consisting correlations. Thus reducing the number of tourist regions from 41 to 40, the correlation between the number of guest nights in a region and the publishing space dedicated to the region was  $r^2 = 0,386$  %, also significant.

**Table 2: Correlation between the number of German guest nights in the Swedish tourist regions and 4 different factors**

	<b>Factor</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Significance</b>
1	Space dedicated to the tourist regions, including Stockholm	,648	,000
2	Space dedicated to the tourist regions, without Stockholm	,386	,000
3	Number of mentioned attractions in the tourist regions, without Stockholm	,383	,000
4	Population size in the tourist regions, including Stockholm	,274	,001

This result was compared to the impact which the number of nominations of different attractions in the tourist regions (without Stockholm) had on the number of guest nights. Here, the influence remains almost the same:  $r^2 = 0,383$  % (see table 3). The correlation between the single attractions and the number of German guest nights ranges from  $r^2 = 0,001$  (sports) to  $r^2 = 0,484$  (parks).

**Table 3: The correlation between different types of attraction and the number of German guest nights in Swedish tourism regions (only significant figures listed here)**

Type of attraction	R Square	Significance
Parks	,484	,000
Culture	,343	,000
<i>All attractions</i>	,383	,000
Tourism information	,330	,000
Entertainment	,307	,000
Atmosphere	,183	,001
Sun and bath	,134	,000
Transport	,131	,001
Sports	,001	,000

It was also tested, if the space dedicated to the single tourist regions was dependent on the number of people living here. The consideration was that regions, where a lot of people are living, are considered to be important by the guidebook writers. As was found out, this is not the case. The correlation between population size and the space dedicated to the region is  $r^2 = 0,274$ , thus making this influence fairly irrelevant (see table 2).

### 7.3.2 Differences between the three lands of Sweden

In the interpretation of the correlation between guidebooks and German guest nights in Sweden, the influence of guidebooks was controlled for the south, the middle and the north of Sweden. Thus, individual regressions were made for the three lands of Sweden, which are Götaland, Svealand and Norrland. This administrative division mirrors long-standing natural, cultural and economic unities as well as internal similarities what population density is concerned. The hypothesis that guidebooks affect the distance decay pattern is tested by this method. It is assumed that the influence of guidebooks is intensified as distance increases. This means a growth of influence from south to north.

**Götaland**, the most southern land of Sweden, consists of 18 tourist regions. In the regression, the correlation between the number of German guest nights and the space which is dedicated to the 18 tourist regions in this land was tested. It was found out that the correlations are not significant. This result has to be compared with the significant correlation for the whole of Sweden, which is 0,648. Neither is the relationship between the number of mentioned attractions and the number of guest nights significant. Only one attraction has a significant influence on guest nights. This is parks, with  $r^2 = 0,540$  and (see table 4).

**Table 4: Correlations in Götaland**

<b>Factor/Type of attraction</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Space dedicated to the land	,334	,012
Number of mentioned attractions	,234	,042
Parks	,540	,001

This result points to the fact that German tourists are not notably influenced by guidebooks when they are travelling to this southern part of Sweden. Information which is provided in the guidebooks is hardly necessary in order to make this tourist group travel to this region. German tourists travel to Götaland anyway. Whether guidebooks are read or not hardly influences the travel behaviour. The only exception is the mentioning of parks in the guidebooks. In this category, amusement parks are included. The destination “Liseberg”, a big entertainment park in Gothenburg and one of the most visited attractions in Sweden, strongly contributes to the significance of this category. Other parks which are of importance here are located in the Knalleland region, as can be seen in figure 3.

**Svealand** consists of 13 tourist regions, including Stockholm. The correlation between the space in the guidebooks which focus on this region and the number of German guest nights is high. As can be seen in table 5,  $r^2 = 0,901$ . The relation between mentioned attractions and guest nights is exactly as high as this. The attractions which have the highest impact are entertainment, culture, tourism information, parks and transport. However, without the Stockholm region the correlations between space/number of attractions and the number of German guest nights are not significant.

**Table 5: Correlations in Svealand**

<b>Factor/Type of attraction</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Space dedicated to the land	,901	,000
Number of mentioned attractions	,901	,000
Entertainment	,933	,000
Culture	,878	,000
Tourism information	,872	,000
Parks	,846	,000
Transport as tourist attraction	,627	,004

The fact that both space and number of attractions so strongly influence German travels to this land is of course strongly influenced by the Stockholm region. This also explains the kind of attractions which so strongly affect this situation. Both in entertainment and culture there is a great range of establishments in the capital of Sweden. What tourism information is concerned, guidebook readers receive a lot of information about accommodation, transport and restaurants. Parks are of course popular places in big cities, and are thus presented as such. The relatively high rate in the group “transport as tourist attraction” can be explained by the many excursions which can be made by different means of transport. Examples for this are boats or sightseeing buses.

**Norrland** consists of 10 tourist regions. Also in this land, the correlation between guidebooks and German guest nights is found to be very high. Both space and number of mentioned attractions strongly influence this situation (see table 6). Important attractions are industry, nature, culture and tourism information.

**Table 6: Correlations in Norrland**

<b>Factor/Type of attraction</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Space dedicated to the land	,933	,000
Number of mentioned attractions	,873	,000
Industry	,818	,000
Nature	,788	,001
Culture	,769	,001
Tourism information	,680	,003

The important attractions clearly show a correlation with the making of the image of northern Sweden. The group Industry is influenced by industrial attractions which are portrayed within the Kiruna region. Nature is another attraction which is depicted as very special for Northern Sweden. Culture is often presented as indigenous traditions and customs, along with events taking place occasionally. This is a big difference to cultural attractions in the big cities: Here, there are institutions like orchestras or theatres which are of importance. In the rural regions, culture is most often linked to occasional feasts, where traditions and place identity play a big role. Tourism information often deals with information about how to travel between the scattered destinations.

Nevertheless, the results from the regression have to be handled with care. The fact that few regions (18, 13 and 10 respectively) constitute the base for the regression results in relatively high correlation rates. The more tourist regions are included in the regression, the more difficult it gets to receive high correlation rates, as can be seen when correlations are tested for all Swedish tourist regions. This explanation partly justifies the high rates which are received both in Svealand and in Norrland.

Still, the outcomes which are shown here confirm the hypothesis that guidebooks influence the distance decay curve. Comparing the results for Götaland in the south (R Square not significant), Svealand in the middle (R Square = ,901) and Norrland in the north of Sweden (R Square = ,933), one could argue that the effect of guidebooks increases, as does distance to the tourists' home regions. These findings go in line with Dilley's (1986, p. 64) results, stating that tourist information gets more important, the longer the destination is located from the traveller's home region.

#### **7.4 Distance Decay**

Last, the relation between guidebooks and the impact of distance decay on German tourists' choice of destination was examined. As was presented in chapter 3, distance decay conveys a decrease of the number of tourists the longer the distance is to their home region. This theory was transferred onto German tourists in Sweden. Starting point were not the different regions in Germany, but seaports in Sweden. For the

comparison, four seaports, which are the most important passages for German tourists on their journey to Sweden, were selected. These are Trelleborg, Helsingborg, Varberg and Gothenburg, all located on the southern west coast of Sweden. Additionally, Malmö was chosen as point where travellers arrive in Sweden via the Öresund Bridge. Most German car tourists use this way into Sweden, unless they travel via Poland to Ystad or Nynäshamn, which not many travellers do.

From these five standpoints on, buffer zones were arranged in 100 kilometre intervals. In this way, the geographically located centre point of all tourist regions could be identified within the buffer zones. Related to the distance decay theory, it should be supposed that the number of German tourists decreases from southwest to northeast, as the distance increases. This is undoubtedly not the case as can be seen in figure 4. Analysing the number of tourists in the different regions of Sweden, it is clear that distance is not the only factor which influences travel destinations. The dissemination of information about tourist regions and attractions is seen as a major factor here. Within the range of information sources, guidebooks constitute a major basis.

**Figure 4**

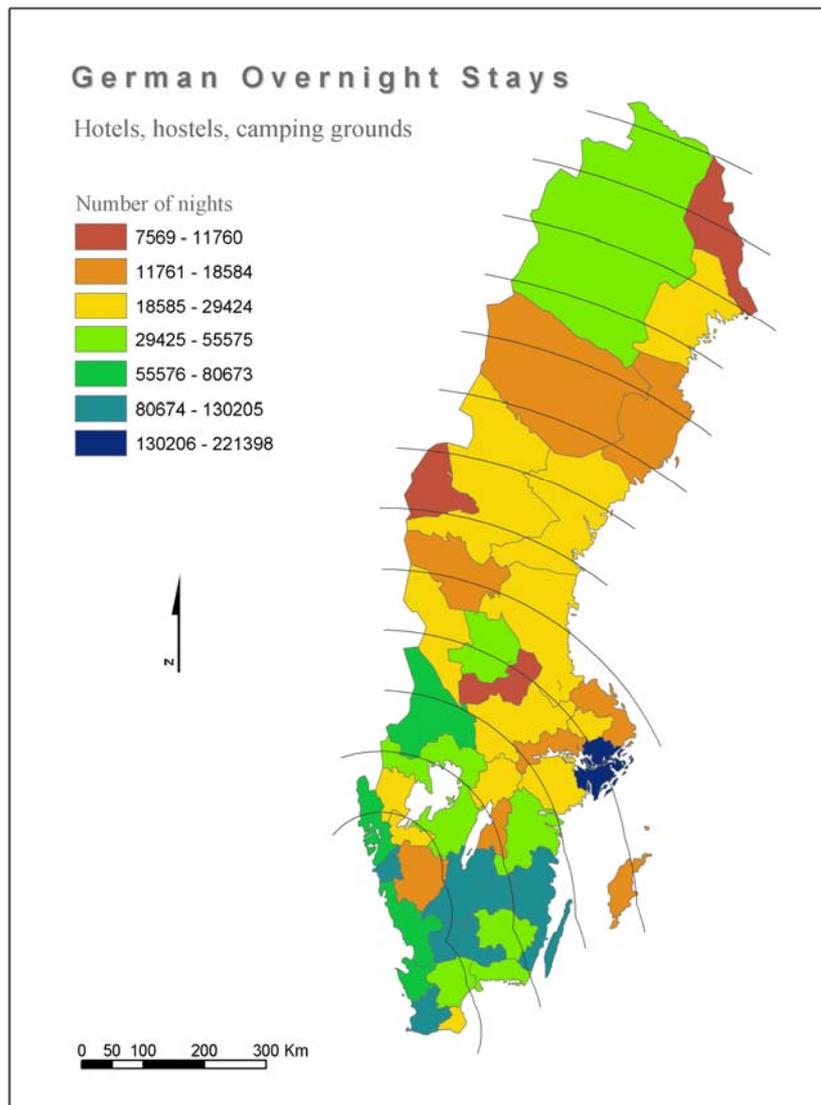


Figure 4: overnight statistics of German visitors in the Swedish tourist regions. Hotel, youth hostels and camping grounds are included.

Indeed, there is a concentration of German guest nights in southern Sweden, especially along the west coast and around the bigger towns. This coincides with the distance decay theory. But, as can also be seen in figure 2, there is a second peak in the region Northern Lapland. This peak corresponds well with both number of pages and nominations of attractions in this tourist region. It can be supposed that guidebooks, along with other sorts of information, strongly contribute to this situation. As has been shown in this article, guidebooks provide tourists with a lot of information about this most northern region. Hereby they contribute to the attitude that it is worthwhile to travel so far and thus to overcome the distance decay.

## 8 Conclusions

The achieved results in this study confirm the stated hypothesis that guidebooks influence which destinations German tourists will visit during their holiday in Sweden. Those destinations which are predominantly presented in the guidebooks are also those regions which display the highest lodging rates within the group of German tourists. Thus it can be stated that the “beaten tracks” (Jacobsen 1999, p. 69) also exist in Sweden. This is especially the case with Stockholm. Consequently, a correlation between the presentation in the guidebooks and the success of an attraction can be confirmed.

Comparing the presentation of the Swedish tourist regions from a geographical point of view, the existence of several primary attraction shadows (Flognfeldt 2003 and 2002) is affirmed. In this context, this condition can be called a primary region shadow, as the attractions, which are located in one region, are presented in the guidebooks and thus influence the tourists to spend their holiday here. Examples for regions which cast a primary region shadow are Stockholm, Northern Lapland and Gothenburg.

The presence of a primary region shadow does not mean that those regions which are located in the shadow do not have tourist attractions to offer. But as they are perceived as less important by guidebook authors, they are presented as less important. This is made by simply leaving out certain attractions. In this way, a certain image and “knowledge” (“You do not miss anything if you do not travel here!”) is disseminated by the guidebooks. This, again, has a great impact on the tourists’ choice of destination and thus on the number of lodging tourists in the region. Most tourists have a limited time budget on their holiday. If they are intending to visit the “Swedish highlights”, they have to choose those attractions which are marketed as such. Thus, if guidebooks are used before and during the tour, the dependence is strong, as all guidebooks do just this: point out highlights. This can easily be seen with the usage of e.g. stars or exclamation marks for those attractions which are considered the most important (Jacobsen 1999, p. 65f. and Boorstin 1964, p. 106).

Still, there is one question which cannot be completely answered. It has been shown that the acknowledgement of a tourist region in the guidebooks influences the popularity of a region. But in which way do status and attractiveness of a region affect its appearance in the guidebook? Certain attractions might be presented just because they already are popular. This means that popularity contributes to further popularity, while unawareness of a destination contributes to even less consciousness about the region and its attractions. One reason for presenting destinations which already are popular can be economic. A book showing pictures of attractions which the possible buyers know is easier to sell to the consumer than a guidebook solitary presenting “insider tips”, meaning those places which so far are not known to the majority of tourists.

Sure, it can be said that in many cases, an intensive presentation of already popular attractions is – at least partly - a result of a high number of previous travels to this region. However, for the tourist reading the guidebook, this is not of primary interest. Rather, reading the guidebooks indicates that these persons are in need of information about the destination and that they want to be guided to certain places which are pointed out as interesting tourist destinations. The problem of what influences what in this case

needs to be further analysed. The question how travel influences the different foci in the guidebooks, and also how destinations influence their appearance in the books, is an important issue for future research.

A distance decay pattern (McKercher 2004) is confirmed both what the presentation of tourist regions in the guidebooks and the number of German tourists in Sweden is concerned. As in most other empirical cases, the distance decay is not evenly reduced, but plateaus along important tourist routes (like the motorways E4 and E6) and around areas which have a direct flight connection with German airports. Comparing the pattern of distance decay in the German guidebooks with overnight statistics, one can see that they are similar to each other.

This can clearly be observed in the case of Northern Lapland, the most northern tourist region in Sweden. Here, a secondary peak (McKercher 2003) of the number of German tourists is noted. This peak can to a great part be derived from the intensive presentation in the guidebooks. In the case of Northern Lapland, the fact that the region is located far away from the tourists' home country, is taken up topically. Exoticness and difference is the main declaration in the guidebooks, and this can well be combined with the long travel that is necessary to get here. Indeed, the long distance is of importance. Without distance, tourists would probably not feel otherness and exoticness to this degree. The difference in nature and culture is combined with great geographical distance. Guidebooks strongly contribute to this as this region is firstly represented as a destination worth visiting, and secondly is shown as something that cannot be found closer to the tourists' homes.

Place bears meaning (Heldt Cassel 2003), thus a tourist destination is a place which bears significance. In this study, it is shown that guidebooks are highly contributing not only to providing a place with meaning, but also to making space. This is done by dividing up the country into several individual tourist regions. Regions are e.g. developed because the author is of the opinion that a certain theme predominates in an area, or because he/she estimates that one area is perfect for a day tour from one place to another. Space is made by the authors and is thus individually characterised. This personal judgement is then disseminated by the guidebook, converting a personal perception into a general reality and "truth". The authors are using an imaginary geography, which is as individual as the single guidebook. Thus, a spatial division of Sweden is presented which might differ significantly from other presentations.

Guidebooks spread information on the cultural heritage of a region – and also contribute to creating it. The mere existence of information about the region and proposals on which attractions to visit can be interpreted as a development into a conformable and submissive travel culture, where the mass production of both genuine culture and tourist attraction is dominant. Still, there is no law which tells the readers of guidebooks to strictly follow the suggestions. Within the monomorphic presentation of virtually all guidebooks, the reader unquestionably has the option not to follow the recommendations or to alter them with the individual and particular ideas about the destination. An indication for the tourists' demand for more individualistic travels is the appearance of alternative guidebooks, which pick up themes and attractions which hitherto have been only marginally mentioned. These results go in line with Koshar's findings (Koshar 2000, p. 208).

Different regions in the guidebooks are given certain attributes, which influence the reader in what these regions represent – according to the authors. The categorisation of tourist regions plays an important role in the homogenisation of Sweden as a tourist destination. The multitude of different regions is reduced to a limited number of characteristics. This goes in line with Scherle's and Agreiter's results (Scherle 2001 Agreiter 2003). Tourists are taught that genuine Swedish culture can be found in a certain region, while access to nature is offered in another. This pattern is particularly obvious in the case of northern Sweden, where nature plays the dominant role in the guidebook presentation. In Agreiter's study on Germany, for example, the southern part of the country was pointed out as a good region for outdoor activities. This was made apart from the fact that Germans are engaged in outdoor activities in all parts of Germany, and also have good possibilities to do it. The existing condition can be summarised with the declaration: "What you read is what you are going to see". The dissemination of a stereotyped image strongly contributes to this. These results go in line with Koshar (2000), who points out that national identities apparently continue to be strong, regardless of the intensive exchange of goods, labour force, tourists, ideas and images across national border in the 20th century. The history of a nation seems to position the present, even if fundamental changes have taken place.

The study of guidebooks on Sweden has shown that stereotypes are widely utilised in the travel literature. Guidebooks, by selecting and presenting destinations, contribute to establishing a certain image of Sweden as a tourist destination. As many tourist destinations are presented in the books, a selection has to be made. A lot of places are only shortly portrayed. This often leads to a biased presentation, where both positive and negative features are overstressed and focus is lying on well known aspects. By this way of presentation, pre existing attitudes are strengthened. At the same time, new clichés are formed. Furthermore, instead of updating information, obsolete information often endures in the guidebooks. This results in the resistance of once embodied images. In her study on guidebooks on Germany, Agreiter got similar results (Agreiter 2003).

It is an interesting point that all German guidebooks are written by Germans. The German authors have a certain inner picture of what the tourist destination Sweden is like. This inner picture might be individual, but it is also characterised by what is told about Sweden in Germany. In the end one can say that the researched guidebooks contribute to travelling through Sweden with the starting point of German stereotypes of Sweden. This also influences choice of destination, attraction and travel itinerary.

From this, it can be concluded that tourism creates its own images and geographies since places are perceived selectively and composed in a non-topographical way. Guidebooks are central to this process by selecting, framing and naming resorts and destinations. They also contribute to this by simply ignoring others. After all, guidebooks are written by persons who approach and observe the destination individually. Hence, they contribute to creating a true tourism landscape which is only loosely tied to the Cartesian perception of distance, place and space.

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