

# **Travel Through the Lens: Instagram's UGC in Shaping Tourism Destinations**

**A qualitative research examining how user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram is utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to inform and reflect the branding strategies and decision-making processes of tourism destinations.**

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the ways in which user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram is employed by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to influence city branding and affect tourists' decision-making processes. As travel behaviors become more image-centered and digitally influenced, UGC has surfaced as a potent medium for promoting tourism, providing genuine and relatable representations of locations. This thesis uses the official Instagram profiles of @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info - the respective DMOs of Amsterdam and Rotterdam - as case studies, and performs a qualitative visual content examination of 148 posts to uncover recurring themes, branding tactics, and interaction patterns. Utilizing the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the study analyzes how users' motivations for sharing and interacting with content correspond with the city branding objectives of DMOs. Specifically, it particularly explores the role of user-generated content in shaping a city's symbolic identity, reinforcing narratives unique to specific places, and aiding strategic initiatives to establish urban locations as culturally lively, unique, and appealing in a competitive international tourism landscape. Against this theoretical backdrop, the research asks: "How does user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs), reflect the branding and decision-making process for tourism destinations, specifically the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam?" The results indicate that while both cities make use of UGC to showcase entertainment, experiential opportunities, and natural attractions, they exhibit differences in tone, storytelling, and hashtag usage. Amsterdam prefers expressive and content-focused tags, while Rotterdam adopts a more organized and formal branding style. Overall, the analysis indicates that user-generated content (UGC) not only reflects travel habits but also actively contributes to the formation of the symbolic identity of urban locations. DMOs, by curating and resharing user content, co-author the visual narrative of a destination, shaping both perception and desire. In the end, this thesis offers important insights into the evolving relationship between digital media, city branding, and public perception, highlighting the importance of everyday imagery in boosting the attractiveness of cities in a competitive global tourism landscape.

**KEYWORDS:** User-generated content (UGC), Instagram, Destination marketing organisations (DMOs), Tourism experience

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## 1. Introduction

Internet has fundamentally altered the workings and processes of tourism, especially at the traveler level, from selecting a destination to sharing content with other people (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2014, p. 38). In particular, social media has become important for several aspects of tourism, including travelers' accessing information, making decisions, and locations' promoting destinations (De Alwis & Andrić, 2016, p. 121). In recent times, cities are actively looking for innovative methods to enhance their visibility and appeal. With the rapid advancements in technology and the transition from local to a global landscape, cities must compete against one another to become appealing tourist attractions, desirable workplaces, centers of cultural richness, and more (Kotler, 2002, as cited in Riza et al., 2012, p. 293). In this increasingly competitive environment, understanding how tourists seek and process information becomes essential for effective destination promotion. Since the rise of social media as a tool for tourism promotion in the tourism sector, its influence has significantly increased, encouraging travelers to view social media content as a reference for their journeys.

On the other side of these developments, people engage with social media to share travel information because they view it as (i) a source of enjoyment through entertaining content, (ii) a means to enhance their social status, believing it's "cool" to participate in the dialogue, and (iii) a valuable tool for exchanging insights and recommendations about travel destinations with friends, family, and fellow travelers (Chávez et al., 2020, p. 14). Alongside these motivations, it is crucial to think about how people engage with travel-related content at different phases of their journey. According to research conducted thus far, consumers utilize various online information sources depending on their stage of travel planning - before, during, and after the trip (Cox et al., 2009, p. 745) - and engage with social media at these same stages: before the trip to research destinations, accommodations, and plan activities; during the trip to gather details about nearby attractions and maintain communication with friends; and after the trip to share photos, experiences, and post reviews of the places they visited (Osei et al., 2018, p. 4). The selection of a destination is among the most crucial choices made at the start of a journey (Tešin et al., 2022, p. 68). This process is multifaceted, influenced by a range of factors. In light of this, this thesis specifically focuses on how social media is used during the pre-trip phase, where it plays a vital role in shaping travel decisions.

Unlike content created by marketers or tourism providers, social media content is generated by consumers and shared within their own networks (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p. 6). Web 2.0 technologies enable mass collaboration by allowing users to create, share, and disseminate information across the Internet, fully realizing its interactive potential (Sigala, 2007, p. 2). This user-generated content significantly influences consumer behavior and forces businesses, including

those in the tourism sector, to adapt their digital strategies (Sigala, 2007, p. 2). As more travelers increasingly rely on this “collective intelligence” found online, traditional marketing strategies used by tourism businesses and destinations are being challenged (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p. 6). Within and beyond Web 2.0, the research on destination marketing is rather dispersed, covering a few unrelated research areas and streams (Mariani, 2020, p. 12). Overall, research on tourism media has either concentrated on travelers, or emphasized Instagram's importance for a destination's image among tour operators and travel agencies (Iglesias-Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 2).

Generally speaking, the decision-making process for choosing a travel destination is influenced by two types of destination characteristics. The first includes the range of activities available such as outdoor recreation, sports, shopping, cultural experiences and nightlife. The second encompasses destination's specific characteristics like its accessibility, climate, availability and quality of accommodation, safety, the attitudes of local residents toward visitors, and the possibility of language barriers (Um & Crompton, 1992, as cited in Tešin et al., 2022, p. 67). In addition to that, travelers go through a funnel-like process while selecting a destination, reducing their options from many locations within their awareness range. In the initial phases of this process, travelers will not only rule out undesirable locations, but more significantly, they will not even take into account places they are not familiar with. A destination has very little probability of being visited if it is considered negatively or not at all (Hahm & Severt, 2018, p. 37). This highlights the importance of destination marketing in increasing awareness and shaping positive perceptions among potential travelers. By fostering a perception or mood towards a place, the social media and the networking they offer can be exploited for destination marketing (Hanan & Putit, 2014, p. 472). In the context of destination marketing, online photography platforms serve as a means for users to visually express and document their travel experiences. These user-generated images contribute to the dissemination of information through a form of indirect word-of-mouth communication, often referred to as the "silent" WOM model (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015, p. 1090). These elements shape travelers' perceptions and expectations, ultimately guiding their choices, especially as social media platforms are increasingly altering how individuals search for travel information and how they decide on their travel destinations (Morosan and Jeong, 2008, as cited in ElTayeb, 2021, p. 134).

In the digital age, these characteristics are increasingly represented and communicated through user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. In essence, the online photography platform offered by Instagram, particularly its image-sharing feature, serves as a reflection of travelers' real-life experiences. User-generated content on the platform has played a significant role in positively influencing the branding of tourism destinations (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015, p. 1090).

Nowadays, Instagram is the most widely used social media platform in tourism (Iglesias-Sánchez

et al., 2020, p. 1). Every day, more than 500 million photos are posted to social media, with 95 million of those photos being posted on Instagram alone. Since Instagram's first launch, more than 40 billion photos have been shared (Stout, 2020, as cited in Iglesias-Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 1). As the marketing of destinations has long been an essential component of the tourism sector, with the goal of enticing visitors, boosting tourism income and enhancing the destination's reputation and brand image (Platon, 2023, p. 669), Instagram offers a powerful tool for tourism promotion in the digital age. In light of this phenomenon, Instagram pushes tourism stakeholders to enhance their creativity in promoting destinations worldwide (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015, p. 1090). In this thesis, organizational stakeholders are referred to as Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) which often have a presence on Instagram - e.g., the city brand Instagram accounts of @i-amsterdam and @rotterdam\_info, which use Instagram to promote tourism. Instagram offers a platform for user-generated content, allowing destinations and travel brands to showcase posts from visitors and followers, which can act as genuine and reliable endorsements for the destination (Platon, 2023, p. 670). By emphasizing immersive activities about local culture and customs, experiential activities (like water sports), promoting online tourist storytelling, and offering a platform for reviews and recommendations, destination marketers can produce user-generated content (UGC) that evokes positive emotions (Yamagishi et al., 2024, p. 1964). This way, DMOs can establish a compelling and engaging presence, influencing their target audience's travel decisions and resulting in increased bookings and visits.

Similarly, user-generated content (UGC), also plays a pivotal role in this context, as it allows travelers to view additional travel-related multimedia (images, text and videos) shared online by other consumers (Burgess et al., 2009, p. 3). UGC, commonly referred to as eWOM, operates similarly to traditional WOM (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013, as cited in Bahtar & Muda, 2016, p. 338), with the exception that it uses internet platforms to share information (Bahtar & Muda, 2016, p. 338). Even though consumer electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been extensively researched and shown to improve an organization's image, as well as have a greater effect on acquiring new users than marketing campaigns, very little research has been done on Instagram and Instagram user-generated content (Germon et al., 2017, p. 78). In their research on tourism user-generated content, Lu and Stepchenkova (2015) as well as Bourdages (2016), emphasize the absence of theoretical frameworks underlying much of the existing literature, with the latter noting that almost 75% of the studies lacked any theoretical basis whatsoever (Santos, 2021, p. 97). Moreover, although various research papers have underscored the importance of social media in promoting tourist destinations, the current body of literature lacks studies that specifically investigate the influence of Instagram content on shaping the framing of a tourism destination experience and influencing the travel decision-making process (Platon, 2023, p. 670).

Instagram users, can encounter a diverse range of visually captivating images from around the world, which continually fuels their desire to explore new places. This observation leads to a larger question regarding whether Instagram has an impact on people's choices of travel destinations and their planning habits. While numerous articles and blog posts discuss how Instagram can be utilized as a tool for travel planning, it remains uncertain to what extent users actually engage with the platform for this purpose and whether it significantly shapes their travel decisions (Terttunen, 2017, p. 1). Furthermore, there is a significant lack of research in the current literature regarding city branding efforts in Dutch cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Given this research gap, Amsterdam and Rotterdam were selected as case studies as the Netherlands is a major tourist destination, welcoming over 20 million international visitors in 2023, with Amsterdam alone accounting for around half of these arrivals (Statista, 2024). Meanwhile, Rotterdam ranks as the second most popular urban destination in the Netherlands in terms of overnight stays, reflecting its growing attractiveness to tourists (Nieuwland et al., 2022, p. 129). Although both cities have undertaken strategic initiatives for branding, there is a limited amount of scholarly work specifically analyzing these examples. In addition, studies that examine the relationship between city branding, tourism development, and the influence of social media platforms, especially Instagram, are even rarer. There is a necessity of creating stronger connections between academic theory and research findings with actual DMO practice (Pike, 2015, p.3), and this gap is particularly evident in the context of Dutch urban branding and its interaction with digital media trends. Considering the increasing importance of user-generated content in influencing tourist decision-making (Manap, 2013, p. 54), this area represents a crucial topic for further exploration.

This thesis aims to explore the potential benefits of Instagram for promoting tourist sites in the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and seeks to explain how Instagram establishes destination branding through online media, particularly photography. Given the interactive nature of social media and the importance of sharing opinions within the tourism sector, it became essential to investigate whether user-generated content influences brand perception and travelers' intentions to visit. This investigation will highlight multiple sides of the argument: how ordinary photos can capture the essence of a tourism destination, to empower of UGC in guiding tourists' decision making (measured by engagement metrics). Therefore, the research question is:

*"How does user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs), reflect the branding and decision-making process for tourism destinations, specifically the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam?"*

The remaining sections of this thesis are organized as follows. Chapter 2 delivers a comprehensive examination of the theoretical framework, focusing particularly on essential concepts such as the functions of Instagram in tourism, user-generated content, and the role of destination marketing organizations. A key component of this discussion is the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) framework, which provides a valuable perspective on how and why travelers interact with social media content. Chapter 3 delineates the research methodology, encompassing the qualitative visual content analysis approach, the sampling strategy employed, and data collection methods. In Chapter 4, the findings are presented along with an extensive discussion that links the identified content themes and engagement metrics to practices in destination branding. A comprehensive summary of the key findings and observations, along with a discussion of their implications and suggestions for future research, is presented in Chapter 5.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Affordances of Instagram in the travel industry

The primary goal of social media is to make it easier for people to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and views to others, and consume those from others. Thus, it aims to facilitate human connections (Fotis, 2015, p. 16). People are naturally drawn to virtual communities because they offer a space to connect and interact with others in meaningful ways. At the heart of this connection is the desire to fulfill four basic needs: shared interests, social relationships, imagination or escapism, and practical exchanges. Consumers, passionate about for example sports, entertainment, travel, or professional topics, turn to virtual communities since they facilitate the process to find others who think or feel the same. These platforms are designed to help people share information, ideas, and experiences around the things they care about most (Wang et al., 2001, p. 413). This human drive to share and connect around meaningful experiences also has deep historical roots within tourism itself. This perspective is bolstered by the emergence of mass tourism in the latter half of the 19th century. From the moment photography was invented, it began to play a role in tourism, coinciding with the advent of organized tours and travel guides. In fact, the expansion of tourism paralleled the advancements in photography (Hospers, 2011, p. 28). By capturing images of locations that had fallen out of use, "sites" transformed into "sights": tourists began to visit churches not for worship, but for the purpose of photographing them (MacCannell, 1999, as cited in Hospers, 2011, p. 28).

The idea of virtual communities and social sharing has strong foundations in the early days of social media. The beginnings of social media date back to 1979, when Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott developed Usenet, a global platform for public message sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). However, modern social media took shape nearly two decades later with Open Diary, founded by Bruce and Susan Abelson, which united online diary writers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). As high-speed Internet became widespread, platforms like MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004) were introduced, signaling the rise of social media as we know it today (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Social media is defined as a group of web-based services, rooted in the principles and technologies of Web 2.0, that facilitate the creation and sharing of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

In 2010, Kevin Systrom, inspired by the idea of sharing photos, developed an initial app called Burbn, which evolved into Instagram, a collaborative project with Mike Krieger. Their goal was to create a straightforward photo-sharing app that included functionalities like filters, comments, and likes. They called it Instagram, a blend of "instant" and "telegram". The app was released on

October 6, 2010, and attracted 25,000 users within hours, quickly becoming the leading free photo-sharing app (Blystone 2019, as cited in Lalangan, 2020, p. 15).

It is noticeable that the use of social media in the travel sector has been growing (Germon et al., 2017, p. 78). With 600 million monthly active members, Instagram is a photo (and video) - sharing social network that is expanding quickly as it currently holds the position of the third most popular social network globally following Facebook and YouTube (Germon et al., 2017, p. 78; Statista, 2024). In the travel industry, however, Instagram holds the leading position, with higher engagement rates than other types of social networking (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017, as cited in Amir et al., 2022, p. 735). People mostly use Instagram to be inspired by and gather information, in addition to its primary purpose as a photo-sharing platform (Tešin et al., 2022, p. 71). It is also considered an effective platform for creating and sharing material that can contribute to the overall image of a travel destination. Its highly visual format has the potential to greatly impact users' travel choices and encourage them to discover new places and activities (Platon, 2023, p. 671). Instagram, as a photography-focused social platform, hosts a vast community of users actively creating and sharing content. This high volume of user-generated content is quite advantageous for tourism organizations, as it enables them to utilize authentic images and real-time experiences to attract potential travelers (Germon et al., 2017, p. 78). The findings also demonstrated that Instagram increases respondents' desire to travel to the location they see on posts (Tešin et al., 2022, p. 72).

Timeliness is one of the main reasons behind Instagram's leading role on consumers' travel planning and destination choice. Social media platforms and Instagram in particular, typically prioritize showing the most recent posts first, ensuring users engage with the latest information available (Kim et al., 2017, p. 693). Numerous studies have also suggested users' processing of information, adoption, and even product or service selection behavior are influenced by the recency of the online content (Kim et al., 2017, p. 693). Recent findings by Xie et al. (2021) also suggest that the freshness of online reviews significantly influences audience engagement on TripAdvisor, with newer reviews tending to attract more attention from users (Kim et al., 2017, p. 693).

Travel-related content ranks among the most popular on Instagram, with a majority of participants engaging with such posts (Tešin et al., 2022, p. 71). Potential travelers utilize Instagram to collect insights for their upcoming trips. The information they seek can encompass various elements like dining choices, accommodation, and tourist sites (Faria & Elliot, 2012, as cited in Granberg, 2019, p. 28). According to research by Granberg (2019), 71.3% of active Instagram users reported that they had, to some extent, planned a trip based on information they found on Instagram. This, along with previous studies, suggests that people not only find new destinations through the platform but also utilize it for planning their trips (Granberg, 2019, p. 28).

Consequently, it is unsurprising that many respondents believe they became alerted to new travel spots via Instagram, supporting earlier research findings (Granberg, 2019, p. 28).

### **2.1.1 Instagram as a strategic tool for destination marketing organizations (DMOs)**

Additionally, Instagram serves as a means to enhance a brand or boost visibility (Granberg, 2019, p. 15). That makes it a powerful tool for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to promote city branding and shape tourist perceptions. Also, the choices travelers make are often shaped by the types of information they encounter during the planning process (Wang, 2015, as cited in Amir et al., p. 736). Social media offers excellent opportunities for destination marketing organizations to share information and engage in communication with others (Fokkema, 2016, p. 15). Therefore, it is crucial for DMOs to effectively utilize Instagram to influence these decisions. A primary objective for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) on social media is to cultivate communities that revolve around common interests related to a specific destination. Instead of just disseminating promotional content, DMOs strive to create genuine engagement by reaching out to users who have a true fascination with the area. Additionally, a key activity involves collecting user-generated content like blog posts, images, videos, and feedback from travelers (Popescu 2014, p. 717). Destination marketing strategies are increasingly centered around creating and disseminating compelling stories, especially via social media platforms where users have previously shown interest in a location. These platforms such as Instagram, are also utilized to highlight current and future events or initiatives, as many users are on social media for immediate updates. Furthermore, there is a notable focus on fostering word-of-mouth promotion, as personal endorsements shared online can greatly impact others' travel decisions and views of a destination (Popescu 2014, p. 717). In order to reach these objectives, it is crucial for DMOs to engage with consumers (Ge, Gretzel and Clarke 2013, as cited in Fokkema, 2016, p. 16) and Instagram serves as an excellent platform for this purpose. For this reason, Instagram has increasingly become the subject of academic research, with academics attempting to comprehend how Instagram contributes to the creation of destination images (Wegerer & Volo, 2021, p. 3).

### **2.2 User-generated content (UGC) and tourism**

This widespread use of Instagram in the travel industry has coincided with a significant shift in how travel content is created and consumed. A major change has occurred in the past ten years as a result of the Internet's ability to enable ordinary people to create and post their own content directly on social media platforms like Instagram. In the online world, user-generated content (UGC)

has become commonplace (Costa, 2022 p. iii). UGC can be defined as media content that is mostly shared online and generated by ordinary individuals rather than by paid professionals (Bruns 2016, as cited in Nguyen & Tong, 2022, p. 444). Less free time, a need for value, as well as changing attitudes and lifestyles, have all contributed to the emergence of a new generation of tourists. Travelers as consumers today are more knowledgeable, self-reliant, and autonomous (Poon, 1993, as cited in Fotis, 2015 p. 18). With these shifts in consumer behavior, the way people seek travel inspiration and information has also evolved. By accessing websites with user-generated content (UGC), travelers can actively participate in online communities where people share their travel experiences (Wang et al., 2002, as cited in Amir et al., 2022, p.733). A survey conducted by Stackla (2017) found that 42% of travelers were influenced by user-generated content (UGC) when planning their trips (Amir et al., p. 733). Looking through photos taken by real travelers on holiday can provide a more genuine sense of what a destination is actually like, compared to the often-edited images found in travel magazines or on websites (Terttunen, 2017, p. 17). While professional photos might appear more polished and appealing, they do not always reflect what one could truly experience when they are there (Terttunen, 2017, p. 17). Thus, UGC is especially valuable in inspiring and informing prospective travelers.

UGC is valuable not only for its authenticity, but also for its use as a critical marketing tool. UGC websites are essentially a type of "consumer to consumer marketing" (Buhler, 2006, as cited in Cox et al., 2008, p. 2), as these user-created narratives allow destinations to be framed by lived experiences, frequently having a greater impact on audiences than conventional branding. Moreover, UGC provides psychological incentives. A study by Nguyen & Tong (2022, p. 452) found that even a passive exposure to travel-related UGC positively affects individuals' intentions to select a travel destination. Seeing other travelers enjoying a destination can engender FOMO (fear of missing out), making people more likely to visit presented locations. Some people benefit greatly from social media, but others may be discouraged by the worry of missing out on opportunities, particularly when traveling (Ukhabova, 2024, p. 2). According to the push and pull hypothesis, people are drawn to travel for two reasons: push factors (bad incentives that drive people away) and pull factors (positive motivations that draw people in) (Uysal et al., 2008, p. 414). Consequently, UGC acts as a powerful pull factor by showcasing attractive aspects of a destination, influencing potential travelers' decisions.

It is also essential to showcase relevant statistical data to better understand the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on consumer travel behavior. According to a Booking.com survey, 15% of Gen Z visitors stated that user-generated content and social media influencers had a major influence on their travel arrangements. Additionally, 51% of those surveyed stated that if they saw user-generated content on an accommodation, they would be more inclined to make a reservation

(Donovan, Visser & Beadle, 2022, as cited in Hudson, 2024, pp. 15-16). Furthermore, according to a study by Ana & Istudor (2019), only 6.25% of those surveyed said that UGC websites would not affect their current travel schedules (Ana & Istudor, 2019, p. 99). The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that UGC websites had a significant impact on their decision-making process.

Unsurprisingly, there has been an increase in the number of articles discussing UGC, since its first published appearance in 2001 (Santos, 2021, p. 98). However, while many studies highlight its influence, Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, and Buultjens (2009) conducted a study on the significance of user-generated content (UGC) in travel planning, presenting a slightly different perspective. According to their research, websites with user-generated content (UGC) are widely used for organizing trips and finding information, even though they are not as regarded as reliable and trustworthy as, for instance, government-sponsored travel websites (Cox et al. 2009, p. 743). This finding indicates that user-generated content may not be as reliable as earlier research has implied (Cox et al., 2009, p. 761). Nevertheless, those involved in this research considered user-generated content to be very helpful, especially when travel operators engaged with that content online. Additionally, there was a consensus that hospitality and tourism websites could enhance their offerings by incorporating elements that enable real travelers to submit user-generated content directly (Cox et al., 2009, p. 761).

The main perception of tourism is that it is a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking pursuit. This viewpoint, however, overlooks the variety of short-term tourists who support local economies but do not conform to the conventional holiday typology. There are many different types of tourism outside leisure travel, such as medical tourism, business travel, conferences, sports events, family visits, romantic retreats, gambling, educational tours, culinary experiences, artistic pursuits, and spiritual pilgrimages (Pike, 2015, pp. 9-10). For instance, Canada alone attracts approximately 3 million wine tourists annually, generating CAD \$1.2 billion in revenue (TravelandTourWorld.com, 2015a, as cited in Pike 2015, pp. 9-10). Instagram user-generated content (UGC) is crucial for illustrating the diverse aspects of tourism that go beyond traditional leisure travel as well, as travelers document not only typical vacation spots but also niche tourism experiences that extend well beyond the traditional beach vacation or city tour.

When incorporating UGC and consumer feedback into the travel experience, it can lead to a significant shift in how travelers perceive and make decisions. For instance, DMOs offer details about the destination, the best routes to reach it, and activities available for visitors - the initial three steps of the travel journey that potential travelers explore. The return trip and the post-trip evaluation are left to the consumer's discretion on how to move forward (Lalangan, 2020, p. 26). For example, Instagram posts that share personal reflections, tips, or visual highlights from past trips can influence future travelers' expectations and shape how they evaluate destinations.

Consequently, UGC becomes integral to travel research and an essential aspect of trip planning, as it provides information that travel companies cannot offer: the experience after the trip from the traveler's viewpoint, along with discussions of their experiences (Lalangan, 2020, p. 26).

### **2.2.1 Critical perspectives on user-generated content**

Instagram user-generated content (UGC) has the power to make a destination appear highly attractive, but it can also portray it as underwhelming or disappointing. Because UGC is based on personal perspectives and individual experiences, the content shared can vary greatly from one user to another. However, this subjectivity introduces some risks: while positive depictions can greatly enhance a destination's public image and attract potential visitors, negative impressions may damage its reputation and deter tourism (Hanan & Putit, 2014, p. 472). This influence on perception is particularly significant when considering its impact on travel choices. In the decision-making process, travelers who have a positive perception of a destination are more inclined to choose it over other options. On the other hand, travelers who hold a negative perception of a destination are likely to hesitate in traveling there, leading to a decrease in their desire to visit that location (Moreira and lao 2014, p. 98).

This variability in user experiences and the resulting diversity in shared content tie closely to how tourists process and respond to such information. Montero and Avilés (2010) argued that based on assimilation theory (Sherif and Hovland 1961), when people notice a mismatch between what they expected and what they experience, they adjust their perception to reduce psychological discomfort (Narangajavana et al., 2017, p. 258). This means that expectations do not directly affect satisfaction but rather influence it through the tourist's perception. High expectations can lead to slightly inflated satisfaction if the experience is good, while low expectations can lead to slightly lowered satisfaction, even if the experience is decent (Narangajavana et al., 2017, p. 258).

These limitations are further compounded by the fact that user-generated content (UGC) is primarily utilized during the information-seeking stage of the travel planning process. As previously stated, while about 42% of travelers rely on UGC when considering their options (Amir et al., p. 733), its use significantly declines during the actual trip and in post-trip evaluations (Cox et al., 2009, p. 755).

### **2.2.2 User-generated content and credibility**

Credibility refers to how believable and dependable information is, reflecting the degree to which both the content and its source can be trusted (Rebelo, 2017, p. 27). In the process of

planning a trip, travelers tend to place high importance on how trustworthy the content is (Berhanu & Raj, 2020, as cited in Amir et al., p. 732). The quality of generated content can vary greatly, ranging from spam, fake news and manipulation, to high-value information. This variation poses challenges in assessing the credibility of online information, which can affect how events are perceived and potentially expose users to risks (Tommasel, 2019, p. 273).

There have been debates upon the reliability of the unknown source, raising concerns about their degree of expertise. However, the study by Hansen, Jin, and Lee (2014) suggests that because users' opinions are honest, consumers favor user-generated content (UGC) over traditional promotional tactics. The study by Manap and Adzharudin (2013) supports this argument as well (Bahtar & Muda, 2016, p. 339). These authors discovered that this approach is becoming increasingly common in the travel sector and acknowledged it as a legitimate marketing strategy (Kucukusta, Law, Besbes, & Legohere, 2015, as cited in Bahtar & Muda, 2016, p. 339): people are much more inclined to trust user-generated content (UGC) than other marketing sources (Jamaludin et al., 2017, p. 216). Users tend to place the most trust in social media content shared by people they know personally. This information feels more credible and helpful, making it more influential in their decision-making. The second most trustworthy content level is user-generated content (UGC), due to its diverse perspectives, while company user-generated content is viewed with more skepticism, as it is often seen as selective and potentially biased (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017, p. 12). Consumers tend to depend on the experiences and information shared by others, as tourism is inherently intangible and cannot be experienced firsthand before making a purchase decision (Zhang et al., 2010, as cited in Amir et al., 2022, p. 733). Furthermore, users consider reading other travelers' comments on user-generated content (UGC) platforms as the most dependable, current, and entertaining source of information (Ana & Istudor, 2019, p. 91). In addition, according to a research by Fotis et al. (2012), travelers even regard user-generated content (UGC) as more reliable than travel agencies, official tourism websites, and advertisements (Fotis et al., 2012, p. 13). The credibility of user-generated content largely stems from its spontaneous and unfiltered nature, as it is typically created without the motivation of personal gain or financial compensation. These images tend to capture genuine, unfiltered experiences, making them appear more trustworthy and less influenced by bias.

One major criticism of user-generated content (UGC) in influencing travel decisions is its vulnerability to manipulation. There is a risk that travel operators may pose as independent reviewers, posting misleading or fabricated content (Cox et al., 2009, p. 747). This undermines the very essence of UGC, which is meant to provide authentic, unbiased, and credible insights from real travelers. When objectivity is compromised, the trustworthiness of UGC as a decision-making tool is significantly weakened (Bray & Schetzina, 2006, as cited in Cox et al., 2009, p. 747). A study by Cox

et al (2008), revealed that the primary concern expressed by respondents is that UGC websites give companies a chance to pose as independent travelers and post fabricated reviews or entries. Some participants noted that because other travelers may have different preferences, it can be difficult to rely solely on comments found on user-generated content (UGC) websites when making travel decisions. Several respondents also mentioned that "habitual complainers", who focus on negative experiences, can use user-generated content (UGC) sites to air their grievances without offering a fair evaluation of the whole trip (Cox et al., 2008, p. 42).

### **2.2.3 User-generated content (UGC) vs. Influencer marketing**

To illustrate the unique impact of user-generated content (UGC) in the tourism sector, it helps to compare it with another prominent Instagram-based strategy: influencer marketing. Influencer marketing involves a brand collaborating with an influencer whose audience aligns with the brand's image and message. Essentially, the main goal is reaching a community of like-minded people who follow and trust the influencer's opinions, share similar interests, and often find inspiration in their content (Terttunen, 2017, p. 21). When an influencer within a specific niche shares a post, it can instantly expose the brand or destination to thousands of highly targeted viewers. This approach not only helps grow a brand's follower base quickly but also thrives on the core principle of peer-to-peer recommendations (Terttunen, 2017, p. 21). However, when influencers provide in-depth insights into their travels on social media, it can raise concerns among potential visitors. Such detailed portrayals may detract from their own experience, such as missing out on the element of surprise, forming judgements influenced by someone else's views, or cultivating unrealistic expectations if the influencer's depiction is excessively optimistic, potentially resulting in letdown when the actual experience falls short of the excitement (Lalangan, 2020, p. 42).

Recent studies indicate that social media travel influencers (SMIs) and user-generated content (UGC) are among the primary factors influencing travel decisions among Generation Z (born 1997 - 2012) (Ghaly, 2023, p. 367). But while influencer marketing can achieve quick results, it sometimes might come across as a bit curated or even transactional. This is particularly evident when sponsored content lacks transparency or seems too commercialized, causing audiences to perceive these endorsements as insincere or motivated solely by payment (Antoniou, 2024, p. 85). That is where UGC really excels. UGC such as photos, stories, and reviews shared by everyday users, comes across as more real and relatable. Ana and Istudor (2019) found that travelers regard user comments on UGC platforms as the most trustworthy, current, and engaging source of travel information (Ghaly, 2023, p. 370). Its organic nature fosters long-term brand loyalty and genuine community. In the end, UGC platforms act as effective online word-of-mouth in the trip planning

process (Cox et al., 2009, p. 746).

### **2.3 Destination marketing**

Destinations have become some of the most prominent brands in the tourism industry, with most countries, states, and cities now investing in DMOs to attract visitors (Morgan et al., 2002; Pike & Page, 2014; as cited in Pike, 2015, p. 2). Place marketing is not a recent development. The practice of promoting specific locations dates back to the mid-19th century in the United States, where it emerged as a strategy to attract settlers to developing frontier regions (Ward, 1998; Kavaratzis, 2004, as cited in Granberg, 2019, p. 12). In the early twentieth century, promotional efforts began for French and British seaside resorts in order to draw the interest of tourists (Arnold & Kuusisto, 2000, as cited in Granberg, 2019, p. 12). Although often thought as being a contemporary phenomenon, place marketing has historical roots, and has evolved significantly over time (Granberg, 2019, p. 12). Academic research on destination marketing first emerged in the early 1970s. Over the past thirty years, interest in place marketing has grown steadily, largely driven by the expanding forces of globalization and increased international interconnectedness (Granberg, 2019, p. 8). The field has expanded rapidly, reflecting a growing understanding of the vital role that destinations play within the tourism industry (Pike, 2015, p. 19). The primary goal of analyzing a destination's image is to ascertain how prospective visitors view it and whether this influences their attitudes and actions accordingly (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993, as cited in Hahm & Severt, 2018, p. 38). Research indicates that travelers tend to select destinations that possess the most positive and appealing image (Gartner, 1989; Leisen, 2001; Dadgostar and Isotalo, 1996, as cited in Hahm & Severt, 2018, p. 38).

Destination marketing focuses on promoting a place with the goal of attracting more visitors (Terttunen, 2017, p. 4). In other words, destination marketing is the strategic process by which national tourism organizations and businesses identify and engage with their target tourists in order to understand and influence their preferences, needs, and motivations. It involves shaping the image, building the brand, and promoting everything a location has to offer to visitors (Timareva et al., 2015, p. 97). The goal of destination marketing is to advertise an area in order to entice visitors from outside the local region. Marketers in this field aim to connect with audiences not just across county lines, but also with international travelers (Lalangan, 2020, p. 24). The organizations in charge of this - known as Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) - can include government bodies (local or national), tourism boards, visitor bureaus, or travel associations. These groups are typically responsible for creating long-term strategies, managing the marketing efforts, and promoting their destinations to both domestic and international audiences

(Hudson, 2008; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2017, as cited in Terttunen, 2017, p.4). Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) play a central role in coordinating and integrating the key elements that make up a destination's appeal while also leading its marketing efforts. These organizations exist worldwide, varying widely in size and structure (Timareva et al., 2015, p. 97). In addition to receiving private funding from membership fees, they are primarily funded through government grants and hotel occupancy taxes. The typical budget for a medium-sized DMO is between \$151k and \$450k, with marketing accounting for 23% of the total and social media marketing accounting for the majority of that total (Mihalka, 2022, p.2).

According to empirical research, DMOs' social media engagement can enhance the intention to visit and have a beneficial impact on the processes by which destination images are formed (Wegerer & Volo, 2021, p. 3). According to Kotler et al. (1999) there are four specific strategies aimed at enhancing the appeal of a place and establishing a competitive edge. These include: shaping the identity or personality of the place (design), developing its physical setting (infrastructure), offering essential public services (basic services), and providing engaging experiences such as leisure and entertainment (attractions) (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 34). In the context of destination marketing, these elements can be effectively translated into a digital strategy, particularly through platforms like Instagram. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) can showcase the city's personality through visual storytelling (design), highlight accessible and sustainable infrastructure, communicate the availability of key services, and promote cultural, natural, or recreational attractions. DMOs can strengthen destination branding and affect tourists' opinions and online decision-making by coordinating these fundamental strategies with curated posts as well as user-generated content.

Social media marketing offers Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) an efficient way to provide travelers and potential tourists with the information they need during their trips. Despite its advantages, however, many DMOs remain cautious about fully embracing social media due to concerns over uncertain financial impacts (Mihalka, 2022, p. 5). That is why DMOs greatly benefit from utilizing user-generated content (UGC), as it is not only up-to-date and highly influential but also incurs little to no cost. Travelers' authentic content allows DMOs to efficiently promote destinations while avoiding high advertising expenses. Moreover, the growing demand for social media-driven marketing reflects the audience's increasing reliance on these platforms as primary sources of information. However, many Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) have yet to fully commit to social media strategies due to limited research in the field (Mihalka, 2022, p. 5). Social media-driven strategies are undeniably valuable, yet they often function best when integrated with more personalized forms of engagement. For this reason, many DMOs complement their digital efforts with interactive marketing tactics, such as local events, which tend to be more

impactful, as they foster direct engagement between tourists and the destination's brand, greatly increasing the depth of interaction and strengthening the overall experience (Mihalka, 2022, p. 5). Consequently, DMOs are placing growing emphasis on these initiatives to build stronger connections and enhance brand loyalty (Mihalka, 2022, p. 5). This strategy promotes word-of-mouth marketing and repeat visits, which are vital for a destination's growth and reputation (Mihalka, 2022, p. 7). By communicating with actual and potential visitors at local, regional, national, and international levels, they tailor tourism products to enhance visitor satisfaction and achieve organizational objectives (Wahab et al., as cited in Pike, 2007, p. 13).

One way to understand how and why travelers engage with social media content - and also driving the decision-making of DMOs, - is through the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) framework. Uses and Gratifications (U&G) emphasizes the exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of individuals' media usage, while investigating the psychological needs that influence their motivations and the particular reasons behind their media-related actions intended to satisfy those needs (Rubin, 1994, as cited in Lim & Ting, 2012, p. 49). For example, according to the push and pull framework, people choose to travel as they are pushed by internal motivations and, at the same time, pulled by the external appeal of a destination and its unique characteristics (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Cha et al., 1995, as cited in Uysal et al., 2008, p. 414). Individuals are typically guided by two key motivational factors when selecting an activity that they believe will bring them satisfaction: The "seeking" and the "escape" (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 258). More specifically, tourists are influenced by two motivational factors: (a) the wish to escape their routine surroundings, and (b) the need to gain psychological rewards from experiencing a setting that differs from their usual environment (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 258). These two driving forces - approach (seeking) and avoidance (escaping) - help explain why individuals turn to tourism to restore psychological balance and satisfy unfulfilled desires. Tourists are not merely influenced by external circumstances; rather, they proactively choose to travel in order to address personal and social needs, which encompass self-development, novel experiences, relaxation, and social connections (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 260). This viewpoint emphasizes that tourism is both a mental and emotional process, shaped by internal drives, and a person's awareness of what different destinations can offer (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 261). In practice, this implies that understanding tourist behavior requires considering how motivations engage with the perceived chances for satisfaction, a connection that is becoming more apparent through online platforms such as Instagram where content created by users is shared. This resonates with Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory, which posits that individuals consume media to fulfill specific needs, and that these needs vary from person to person (Pelletier et al., 2022, p. 272). While U&G has been applied across digital marketing channels such as websites and emails, it is particularly relevant to social media, where user interactivity and emotional engagement are high

(Pelletier et al., 2022, p. 272).

The primary assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) indicate that individuals purposefully choose their media based on their goals and actively engage with, and make sense of media content, such as advertisements, as part of their daily experiences, striving to fulfill their needs and desires in the best possible way (Rubin, 1986, as cited in Phua et al., 2017, p. 6). The U&G Theory hinges on five key assumptions. The first is that communication behaviors are intentional and motivated. The second is that individuals are proactive in selecting communication media that meet their needs. The third principle is that individuals are capable of identifying their communication goals and the corresponding gratifications. The fourth assumption is that media aims to provide various communication methods to capture attention, allow selection, and facilitate use. This creates competition among communication tools. The fifth premise posits that individuals are influenced by various social and psychological factors when choosing their communication options (Flaherty et al., 1998, as cited in Eğinli & Taş, 2018, p. 87). Travelers engage with destination content to fulfill various needs like inspiration, information, or identity expression, all factors that shape their travel decisions. In other words, users will continue to use a social media platform for sharing travel insights when the content fulfills their personal needs (Chávez et al., 2020, p. 16). DMOs, in turn, use these engagement patterns to adapt their branding, treating UGC as both promotion and feedback. Uses and Gratifications theory thus clarifies the interplay between user motivations and destination marketing on Instagram. This theory has shown to be especially relevant in analyzing media where users are actively involved, such as user-generated content (Dias & Duarte, 2022, p. 618). Moreover, some scholars believe that the rise of new media forms has revitalized and refreshed U&G theory (Dias & Duarte, 2022, p. 618). Integrating U&G viewpoints into this thesis provides a more profound understanding of how content on Instagram influences tourism branding and decision-making, ultimately contributing to the broader discussion on digital destination marketing.

## **2.4 City branding**

City branding is essential in shaping how cities are perceived globally. Like corporate branding, a city's brand communicates its identity and value, aiming to attract both visitors and residents (Alperytė & Išoraitė, 2019, p. 3). When done effectively, city branding can enhance a city's appeal; however, poor branding may damage its image and reduce its desirability (Alperytė & Išoraitė, 2019, p. 3). City branding represents a comprehensive, long-term strategy aimed at shaping the overall identity and perception of a city, while destination marketing is more narrowly focused on promoting the city as a travel destination. The basis for effective city branding lies in city marketing,

which relies heavily on how a city's image is shaped, conveyed, and maintained, since people primarily engage with a city through the impressions they form of it. Consequently, the goal of city marketing is to improve the city's image, which serves as the foundation for building the city's brand (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 58). This makes image management central to the effectiveness of city branding, which in turn lays the groundwork for all destination marketing efforts. For Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), a well-defined city brand is essential not only for guiding promotional strategies but also for ensuring consistent messaging across platforms. The branding of a city is essential in determining how locations are visually depicted and understood. Cities, can selectively promote certain images or symbols, in order to influence how visitors imagine and experience a place, aligning the actual visit with expectations formed through media (Hospers, 2011, p. 29). This viewpoint also allows less prominent destinations to gain visibility. For instance, Ystad in Sweden has capitalized on its portrayal in the Wallander TV series, and the Spanish town of Buñol has established its fame through a visually appealing event during the annual Tomatino festival, where residents engage in a spirited tomato-throwing battle (Hospers, 2011, p. 29).

According to Hankinson and Cowking (1993), a brand stands out through its positioning and personality, which combine practical features with symbolic meaning (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 65). In this context, city branding relies on three essential characteristics: image, distinctiveness, and authenticity (Riza et al., 2012, p. 294). Much like commercial brands, cities fulfill a mix of functional, emotional, and symbolic needs (Kapferer 1992, as cited in Rainisto, 2003, p. 48). This idea is closely tied to city marketing and image management. Developing a strong brand is often seen as a practical foundation for city marketing, as it offers a structured approach to shaping and managing how the city is perceived (Kotler et al., 1999, as cited in Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 66). According to Kotler et al. (1999) there are four specific strategies aimed at enhancing the appeal of a place and establishing a competitive edge. These include: shaping the identity or personality of the place (design), developing its physical setting (infrastructure), offering essential public services (basic services), and providing engaging experiences such as leisure and entertainment (attractions) (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 61). In the context of destination marketing, these elements can be effectively translated into a digital strategy, particularly through platforms like Instagram. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) can showcase the city's personality through visual storytelling (design), highlight accessible and sustainable infrastructure, communicate the availability of key services, and promote cultural, natural, or recreational attractions. DMOs can strengthen destination branding and affect tourists' opinions and online decision-making by coordinating these fundamental strategies with curated posts as well as user-generated content.

### 2.4.1 City branding: The case of Amsterdam

Amsterdam is the fastest-growing municipality in the country and is known for its diverse population, which includes a significant number of non-Western Dutch nationals. The city is managed by a mayor and a municipal council, and it uniquely functions through decentralized boroughs that handle local decisions. Internationally, Amsterdam stands out as one of Europe's leading business hubs, thanks in large part to its diverse, multilingual community and the availability of skilled professionals. The city makes concerted efforts to draw in talent and tourism by promoting its creative sectors and positioning itself as a competitively global metropolis. The Amsterdam brand has traditionally been represented by a coat of arms featuring three St Andrew's crosses at its center. These crosses appear on the city's flag and are still visible on contemporary items like bollards. After World War II, the city was given the official motto "Valiant, Determined, Compassionate" (Lee & De Boer, 2010, pp. 144-145).

Amsterdam's city brand was strategically developed to highlight its identity and future potential. The initiative was designed to attract key demographics - including global companies, creatives, and residents - by highlighting attributes such as creativity, innovation, and excellence (Lee & De Boer, 2010, p. 146). Introduced in 2004, the "I amsterdam" concept aimed to unify these traits into a cohesive message that embodies the city's strengths as a desirable location for living, working, and visiting. It also intended to incorporate the perspectives of locals while promoting Amsterdam's various roles as a business center, cultural hub, and residential community (Lee & De Boer, 2010, p. 146). To support this vision, Amsterdam's branding strategy is based on three core principles: establishing a cohesive identity among all urban stakeholders, harmonizing the city's image with practical services and promotional activities, and ensuring that branding efforts are in sync with wider municipal and national policies (Lee & De Boer, 2010, pp. 145-146). This strategic rebranding was, in part, a response to the city's long-standing image formed in the 1960s, shaped by two powerful narratives: its picturesque, historic "Vermeer townscapes and closely clustered canal-side structures" (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990, as cited in Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006, p. 4), and its identity as a liberal, youthful hub marked by sexual freedom and drug culture. While these portrayals attracted global attention, their strength has also restricted the city's broader branding by anchoring it to a narrow and dated identity (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006, p. 4).

Amsterdam, with the assistance of a consulting agency, identified 16 dimensions that characterize the city, which serve as the foundation for its marketing and branding efforts. These included elements such as its role as a residential area, international hub, and social meeting point, as well as iconic features like its canals and status as the nation's capital. Other dimensions encompassed its business environment, associations with liberal attitudes toward sex and drugs,

spaces for leisure and relaxation, local population, livability, architectural heritage, compact urban form, artistic culture, nightlife, retail appeal, and its reputation for hosting events. These dimensions were crucial for shaping the city brand and offered valuable insights into Amsterdam's priorities, opportunities, and areas needing improvement (Gehrels et al., 2003, as cited in Belabas et al., 2020, p. 1325).

#### **2.4.2 City branding: The case of Rotterdam**

Rotterdam's city branding initiatives began in the early 2000s as part of a broader plan to reshape its public image. To challenge the perception of the city as inhospitable and industrial, the local authorities developed a brand that highlighted a more modern, diverse, and culturally lively Rotterdam, primarily by focusing on its post-war architecture, vibrant population, and evolving urban identity (Belabas et al., 2020, pp. 1320-1321). Commonly known as 'The City of Architecture,' Rotterdam has a deep history of groundbreaking architectural developments (de Gast, 2016, p. 11). Prior to World War II, the city was celebrated for its innovative structures, notably with the construction of the Witte Huis (Europe's first skyscraper) and the rise of the modernist movement. The city's dedication to distinctive architecture is part of a larger effort to change its historical image as a grey and unappealing place (de Gast, 2016, p. 11). After being rebuilt post-war, the city center was primarily filled with commercial establishments, causing most residents to move to areas outside downtown, resulting in an empty and uninspiring urban core. To revitalize the city center, attract educated young professionals, and enhance living conditions, the city began incorporating iconic architectural landmarks as a key component in redefining its identity (de Gast, 2016, p. 11). Rather than restoring its historical layout, Rotterdam chose to pursue a bold, future-oriented vision aimed at establishing itself as a hub of contemporary architecture (de Gast, 2016, p. 11). Rotterdam has strategically focused on developing its reputation as the architectural hub of the Netherlands, aided by marketing firms supported by the city council. These initiatives are designed to boost the city's attractiveness on an international scale and draw in both visitors and companies. Rotterdam Partners, the organization behind the city promotion reported an increase in tourism and new business arrivals in early 2015 - compared to 2014 - indicating that these city branding efforts are effectively contributing to economic growth (de Gast, 2016, pp. 11-12).

One of the main influences behind Rotterdam's place branding strategy was its economic objective to sustain its status as a leading global port city (Belabas et al., 2020, p. 1321). Rotterdam's port has evolved significantly due to globalization and automation, shifting from unskilled labor to specialized, high-skilled roles. While it remains Europe's largest port, the city has faced economic challenges such as unemployment linked to a skills gap (Nientied, 2018, p. 160). In

response, local authorities have promoted the creative economy and implemented city branding strategies to attract investment, tourism, and cultural activity, repositioning Rotterdam as a modern, post-industrial urban hub (McCarthy, 1998, as cited in Nientied, 2018, p. 160).

At present, Rotterdam Partners manages and implements the city's promotion. This organization comprises various sub-organizations (the partners) that focus on distinct areas such as tourism, trade, investment, and hospitality (de Gast, 2016, p. 33). In recent years, the city has prioritized "inclusive city branding". Utilizing the tagline "Rotterdam. Make it Happen", the city is currently highlighting its redefined brand values: "international, worldly, groundbreaking, entrepreneurial, straightforward, and unrefined" (Belabas, 2023, p. 4). However, due to the delicate political climate surrounding cultural and ethnic diversity, the city has chosen to express its cosmopolitan perspective more through its global ambiance rather than its multicultural background, as it had in earlier years (Belabas et al., 2020, p. 1322).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This thesis employs a qualitative visual content analysis approach to examine how Instagram user-generated content (UGC) contributes to the promotion of Amsterdam and Rotterdam as tourism destinations. At the same time, it adopts a partly mixed-methods approach. Quantitative metrics will inform the qualitative thematic analysis. Similar to quantitative content analysis, sharing the results of qualitative content analysis may also include frequency counts (Schreier, 2014, p. 173). More specifically, while the core analysis is qualitative focusing on the visual and textual content of Instagram posts including captions and hashtags, quantitative engagement metrics such as likes are also taken into account. These metrics help contextualize the thematic analysis by offering additional insight into content visibility and audience interaction related to destination branding. The choice of method is justified by the fact that visual content on social media significantly influences destination perception, and qualitative content analysis allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings, symbols, and narratives (Schreier, 2014, p. 173) embedded in Instagram posts, while also considering how context shapes those meanings through a flexible, data-driven process that can be refined as the research progresses (Schreier, 2014, p. 173). Qualitative content analysis is a systematic approach to extract meaning from qualitative data. This method reduces the amount of data needed for analysis unlike other methods, allowing the researcher to focus on certain aspects of meaning that are relevant to the research question (Schreier, 2014, p. 170). Qualitative content analysis has established methods for evaluating the accuracy of the coding and analysis process that are similar to validity and reliability. Instead of objectively presenting reality, this method aims to understand how a certain issue or topic appears within its specific context (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 38). Because content analysis is centered on interpreting texts in relation to the contexts in which they are used, scholars often tailor the method to suit their specific research objectives (Krippendorff, 2003, as cited in Johnson et al., p. 4). Content analysis is an umbrella term (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 26), which has been widely applied to comprehend a variety of topics, including societal change, shifting patterns in the theoretical content of various disciplines, and shifts in the content of the mass media (Bammidi, 2008, p. 177). The research will follow a structured process, examining the official Instagram accounts of the selected cities to gain insights into the volume and type of content shared. While the study includes two cities - Amsterdam and Rotterdam - it does not seek to directly compare them. Instead, each city is examined individually, concentrating on uncovering the thematic and visual patterns unique to each context.

Thus, this approach includes Instagram photo visual analysis combined with content analysis, to

examine the user-generated content (UGC) of the official accounts of two tourism destinations. Visual analytics is a growing field that deals with large and varied amounts of information. It combines human judgement with visual tools and interactive techniques to help analyze data (Keim et al., 2006, p. 1). Interpreting its findings requires understanding how the visual elements within an image relate to the broader cultural or contextual meanings they convey (Rose, 2016; Wang et al., 2000, as cited in Jmour, 2025, p. 359). Moreover, offering contextual information alongside visual content can encourage a broader range of interpretations. Hence, captions are used to supplement the visual analysis results, offering additional textual context that can clarify, reinforce, or even contrast with the imagery's apparent message.

A qualitative visual content analysis was conducted on the full sample of 148 Instagram posts. This analysis included both visual and textual components, such as images, captions, hashtags, and engagement metrics like the number of likes. However, it is important to clarify that in this thesis, the visual analysis does not focus on formal visual characteristics (such as aesthetics, composition, or symbolism). Instead, it adopts a thematic visual content analysis, which interprets the meaning of images in terms of recurring themes, situating them within a broader communicative and cultural context. Thematic coding serves as the primary means of conducting visual analysis, as themes were derived directly from the content of the images. With the categorization and coding of the visible aspects across the sample, this thesis aims to investigate how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) use UGC and what types of content are most frequently highlighted and interacted with. It is worth noting that some Instagram posts included multiple images (carousel posts), which were sometimes represented by multiple rows in the dataset. To mitigate overrepresentation, thematic categorization was applied at the post level by consolidating rows associated with a single post URL. Captions and hashtags were likewise treated as belonging to a single content unit per post.

### **3.2 Sampling & Data collection**

Random sampling is the "simplest and most common method of selecting a sample, in which the sample is selected unit by unit, with equal probability of selection for each unit at each draw" (Singh, 2003, p. 71). For this thesis, random sampling is employed to select Instagram posts, within the specific timeframe of 2023-2024, as a population of data units has already been collected by the supervisor's project that guides this thesis. The empirical material for this thesis is drawn from a collection of posts sourced directly from Instagram, and the recent time range was selected to be currently relevant and also maintain a reasonable scope for the analysis. The vast majority of the selected posts consist of still images, with only a very small percentage being videos; this reflects

the overall content composition of the accounts, where user-generated content (UGC) is predominantly image-based. The sampling procedure involved selecting Instagram user-generated content (UGC) (148 visual based medium posts - excluding tags) from the official tourism destination organizations (DMOs) of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, specifically from their Instagram accounts such as @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info. These accounts selected and re-posted Instagram UGC content from third-party sources for branding purposes. The DMOs' own websites are:

- <https://www.iamsterdam.com/en>
- <https://en.rotterdam.info/>

More specifically, in this thesis, the user-generated content analyzed consists of images originally posted by individual users and later re-shared by the DMOs on their official platforms, with credit given to the original posters. This thesis does not investigate user motivations for posting or sharing content, such as the desire for recognition or altruistic contributions, as identified by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013, p. 55), nor does it focus only on the assumed sincerity and authenticity often attributed to user-generated content (UGC) (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013, p. 55). The emphasis is primarily on how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) leverage and enhance user-generated content (UGC) within their city branding approaches. Analyzing the types of content featured and engaged with by DMOs also indirectly reveals the themes and visual stories these organizations prioritize in shaping a destination's image. At the same time, while the primary focus is on institutional appropriation of UGC, the material under analysis still originates from actual users, thus reflecting prevailing patterns of what individuals choose to share, and, implicitly, what they anticipate others will consume. In this way, this thesis bridges user practices and institutional agenda-setting in the context of digital tourism promotion.

Data was collected using the program 4K Stogram, which is a semi-automated scraping software of public Instagram content (Feijó & Oliveira, 2022, p. 56). As for ethical considerations, obtaining consent from individual Instagram users is not feasible. However, the thesis focuses solely on publicly accessible content intended for tourism promotion, which is voluntarily shared to reach a broad audience. There will be no attempt to identify the original content creators. Finally, while the sample size may appear nominal (lower bound of the Methodological Guidelines' range for visual posts), the mixed data analysis (including the captions' contents and quantitative metrics) renders the sample size much higher, mathematically equivalent to visual analysis alone of 180 posts (the upper bound of the range).

### 3.2.1 Description of Organizations (DMOs)

This analysis focuses on the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, which exhibit distinct dynamics in tourism within the Netherlands. Amsterdam's Destination Management Organization (DMO), @iamsterdam, emphasizes enhancing the brand identity and highlighting the culture of Amsterdam, while maintaining a focus on sustainability, innovation, and transparency (Mihalka, 2022, p. 10), and managing overtourism (Sibrijns & Vanneste, 2021, p. 1). Rotterdam on the other hand, has experienced rapid growth in tourism, population, and economic activity in recent years (Nieuwland et al., 2022, p. 132). Now as the second most-visited city in the Netherlands, Rotterdam has seen a significant 68% increase in overnight stays between 2012 and 2018, indicating its rising appeal compared to cities like Amsterdam and The Hague (Nieuwland et al., 2022, p. 132). Given these dynamics, Rotterdam's DMO, @rotterdam\_info, utilizes digital content to further boost the city's visibility and draw in more tourists. Through this indirect comparison it can be further illustrated how user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms such as Instagram not only reflects but also influences the strategic marketing efforts of DMOs, aligning destination branding with evolving traveler expectations. Both Instagram accounts involved, @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info, are official digital channels managed by their respective DMOs, playing a crucial role in destination marketing and branding for Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

The I-amsterdam Instagram account (@iamsterdam) is a vital medium for showcasing the city's culture, events, neighborhoods, and visitor experiences, aligning with the DMO's mission to attract and manage tourism effectively. I-amsterdam is the official Destination Management Organization (DMO) for Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, and has built a strong online presence, with approximately 331,000 followers and over 5,200 posts shared on its Instagram account (I-amsterdam, 2022). Its primary mission is to foster connections, build partnerships, and promote events throughout the city (I-amsterdam, 2022). The organization targets a diverse audience, including residents, visitors, and businesses (Mihalka, 2022, p. 10). A crucial element of its marketing strategy is the City Card, which provides tourists with discounts on museum admission, public transportation, and various city experiences. Through this initiative, I-amsterdam skillfully presents the wide range of options for travel, work, or study in the city, emphasizing Amsterdam's dynamic culture and accessibility (Mihalka, 2022, p. 10).

The @rotterdam\_info Instagram account serves as a key platform for promoting Rotterdam's tourism identity. Rotterdam Info is operated by Rotterdam Partners, the city's official DMO and investment promotion agency. This organization works on enhancing Rotterdam's reputation and positions the city as a desirable location for tourists and investors. The account shares snapshots of local culture, major attractions, and community events, reaching both residents and international

visitors. As of May 2025, the account has more than 53,000 followers and has featured more than 3,500 posts, highlighting its significant digital presence. Describing itself as the "Official city account for a different kind of tourist," @rotterdam\_info encourages exploration beyond the typical tourist paths with the slogan: "Seek the unknown. Think local. Go green. Do Rotterdam." This message reflects the DMO's commitment to sustainable tourism and its effort to promote lesser-known parts of the city, aiming to position Rotterdam as innovative, inclusive, and eco-conscious. One of the key strategies employed by @rotterdam\_info is its strategic use of user-generated content (UGC). The hashtag #DoRotterdam encourages visitors to share their personal travel experiences, in order to create a community-driven narrative that captures authentic moments throughout the city, with the use of genuine stories and visuals directly from visitors.

### **3.3 Operationalization**

To achieve the research objectives, the operationalization of this thesis focuses on examining the visual elements and themes within user-generated content (UGC) related to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, particularly in the context of city branding. The research operationalizes key concepts like engagement and content types through a qualitative visual content analysis of Instagram posts from the official Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Based on this analysis, the data are coded to identify patterns and themes, leading eventually to inference of the DMO's branding strategies.

#### Content Categorization & Themes

Posts were categorized by content themes, such as:

- religious monuments
- historical culture heritage
- urban environments
- entertainment
- natural attractions
- local culture and customs
- experiential activities
- online tourist storytelling,

following the categorization model by Feijo and Oliveira (2022, p. 59). While some themes such as local culture, experiential activities, and online tourist storytelling are directly linked to the theoretical framework (Yamagishi et al., 2024, p. 1964), additional themes not explicitly covered in

the theoretical framework will be elaborated upon in the main thesis discussion.

While the case descriptions of Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Chapters 2.4.1 and 2.4.2) provided detailed context about each city's historical, political, and strategic branding developments, not all of these elements were directly included in the Operationalization chapter. This is because the focus of the analysis was limited to visual and thematic patterns in user-generated Instagram content, rather than institutional or historical narratives. Nevertheless, several branding aspects highlighted in the case studies, such as architecture, culture, and international standing, partially emerge in the Results section through the coded themes derived from the thematic analysis.

### **3.3.1 User engagement**

User engagement refers to the deliberate choices users make to achieve what they want, and therefore has a more limited meaning emphasizing on the quality of the experience (Lalmas et al., 2014, p. 3). In general, user engagement is assessed by analyzing interaction metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, as well as the use of specific hashtags associated with the destination's promotion. Instagram's hashtag is a crucial feature. Hashtags allow users to share their images with other users. According to our research, the hashtag on the accounts of @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info serves the purpose of enabling users to categorize themes or topics more precisely. With these features, hashtags also help users find relevant content more easily (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015, p. 1092). Another distinctive aspect of Instagram is its "like" function, which enables users to engage with content in real time. This feature allows individuals to share photos effortlessly and receive immediate feedback in the form of visible like counts, reflecting audience responsiveness and interaction levels (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015, p. 1092).

This thesis will utilize visual content analysis and thematic analysis to investigate which aspects of user-generated Instagram posts are most effective in attracting audience attention and encouraging interaction. In conjunction, there will be attention to engagement metrics, specifically the number of likes, with the aim of identifying the visual and textual features (including theme, composition, and caption content) that strongly resonate with viewers. In addition, captions and hashtags were examined to identify trending topics, keywords, and branding narratives used in destination marketing. In pursuing this goal, the analysis aims to reveal patterns in user preferences and offer insights into how specific types of content aid in the effectiveness of destination branding strategies implemented by DMOs. These metrics were linked to the Users and Gratifications (U&G) theory, in order to explore how and the extent to which users engage with content in relation to their needs and motivations.

### 3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis includes thematic analysis and its stages, as well as coding procedures. First, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in Instagram content that reflect branding strategies and influence tourism decision-making. As previously mentioned, the thematic analysis in this thesis was based exclusively on the visual content of the Instagram images, serving as the primary method of visual content analysis. Thematic analysis frequently serves as a versatile and practical research method during the collection of data, possibly yielding a rich and intricate, yet complex, explanation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Peel, 2020, p. 7). Braun & Clarke (2006) refers to thematic analysis as "a method rather than a methodology". This means that, as opposed to many qualitative techniques, it is not based on a specific epistemological or theoretical framework, thus making it a very flexible method (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). This method ensures a thorough comprehension of user-generated content (UGC), by providing a structured yet flexible way to analyze textual and visual data.

Secondly, the coding procedure involves initial coding, code refining, and final coding. More specifically, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide six stages of thematic analysis that will guide the analysis: "(1) become familiar with the data, (2) generate initial codes, (3) search for themes, (4) review themes, (5) define themes, (6) write-up" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3354). To systematically categorize and interpret the data, Instagram posts were analyzed based on key content themes, following Feijo and Oliveira's (2022) classification. The themes, such as historical sites, urban landscapes, natural attractions, and urban spaces, were identified and refined through an iterative coding process. Through these six steps, themes emerged by extracting important information and meaning from the data. These themes aim to answer the research question "*How does user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs), reflect the branding and decision-making process for tourism destinations?*"

Beyond content themes, engagement metrics (likes) and hashtags were examined to determine their relationship with branding narratives. The analysis explored:

- which content themes generate the highest engagement levels
- how hashtags are used to reinforce branding and promotional strategies
- the presence of specific keywords in captions identifying trends in user interaction

Data were systematically classified and coded using ATLAS.ti, facilitating the clustering of themes and engagement patterns. ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software, which offers a variety of useful tools in academic research, especially in the social science fields (Hwang, 2007, p. 519). This structured approach ensures that UGC's role in tourism promotion is thoroughly

explored, offering insights into how destination marketing organizations (DMOs) leverage Instagram to shape branding and influence travel decisions.

### **3.4.1 User engagement analysis methodology**

To analyze patterns of user engagement, each Instagram post in the dataset was categorized according to thematic codes (e.g., “Entertainment,” “Urban Environments,” “Experiential Activities”). Some posts were assigned multiple themes. In such cases, each theme was treated independently for engagement analysis, following a multi-thematic inclusion approach, where a single post could contribute to multiple theme categories. Engagement was assessed by counting the likes on each individual post. For every theme, the following metrics were determined:

- Post Count: The number of times a theme appeared across all posts
- Average Likes: The mean of likes for posts associated with the theme
- Maximum / Minimum Likes: The highest and lowest like totals for the theme
- Median Likes: The midpoint value of all like counts for posts tagged with that theme, offering a more stable measure compared to the average when extreme outliers are present.

To determine the median likes, all like counts for a specific theme were arranged in ascending order and the middle value was chosen (or the average of the two middle values in cases where the number of postings is even). This method minimizes the effect of exceptionally viral posts that might skew the average and result in a misunderstanding of engagement metrics. For example, within the “Religious Monuments” theme, the three posts received 296, 1,122, and 1,173 likes respectively. While the average number of likes for this theme was 864, the median value - 1,122 - provides a more accurate representation of typical engagement, as it avoids being influenced by the lower-performing post (296 likes). This example highlights the reasoning for including the median in the analysis: to present a more equitable perspective on user engagement, especially in themes that could be dominated by an outlier post receiving an inordinately high number of likes.

## 4. Results & Discussion

This study examined 148 user-generated Instagram posts collected from the official accounts of two destination marketing organizations (DMOs): @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info. Each post included an image (or a carousel of images), a caption including hashtags, and number of likes. Using a pre-defined thematic coding scheme grounded in the literature (Feijó & Oliveira, 2022, p. 59), each post was analyzed for recurring themes that contribute to city branding narratives and influence tourist decision-making. It is worth noting that some Instagram posts included multiple images (carousel posts), which were sometimes represented by multiple rows in the dataset. To mitigate overrepresentation, thematic categorization was applied at the post level by consolidating rows associated with a single post URL. Captions and hashtags were likewise treated as belonging to a single content unit per post. The bar chart below illustrates the distribution of thematic content identified in Instagram posts, highlighting the frequency of instances for each category.

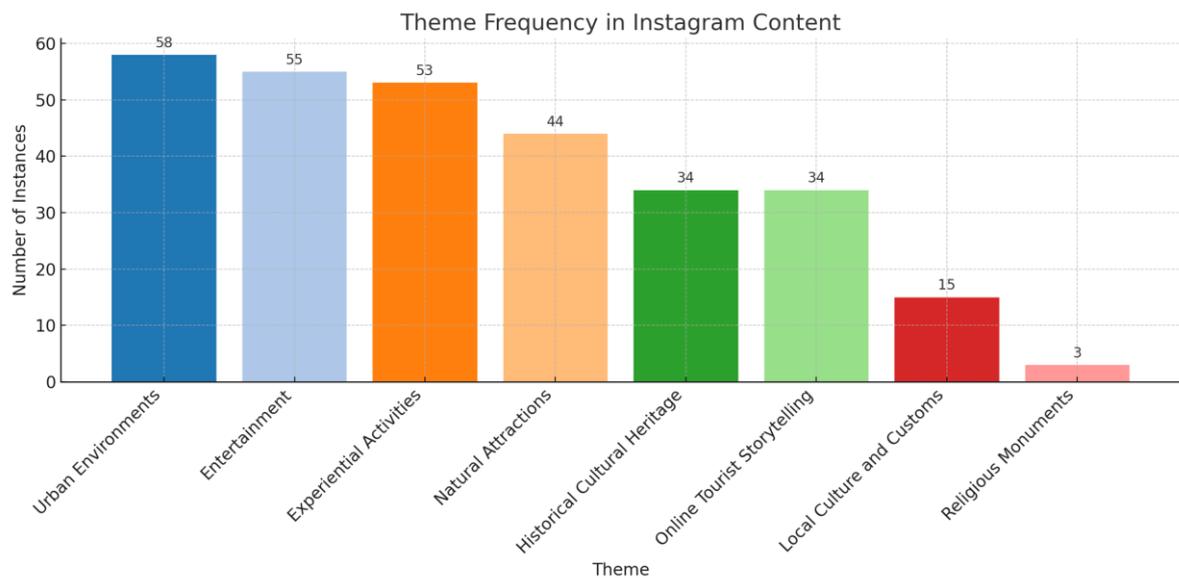


Table 1.1: Frequency of thematic categories in Instagram posts

The thematic categories used in the analysis are outlined in the table below, each accompanied by a brief description to clarify how individual posts were coded.

Code	Description
Urban Environments (39.2%)	Urban design, cityscapes, public transport, architecture, modern life
Entertainment (37.2%)	Restaurants, bars, festivals, parties, live performances, events
Experiential Activities (35.8%)	Actions that require active interaction and participation, such as swimming, exploring markets, workshops, or dancing at a festival
Natural Attractions (29.7%)	Parks, canals, rivers, beaches, animals, seasonal nature scenes
Historical Cultural Heritage (23%)	Historic buildings, landmarks, museums, or city history
Online Tourist Storytelling (23%)	People visiting, sharing, or documenting the experience
Local Culture and Customs (10.1%)	Local food, fashion, local markets, language, rituals, celebrations
Religious Monuments (2%)	Churches, temples, or religious symbols

Table 1.2: Final Coding Scheme

#### 4.1 Image analysis

Eight major thematic categories emerged from the data. The most prevalent theme identified was **Urban Environments**, appearing in 58 posts (39.2%) across both cities. Cityscapes and infrastructure made up a large share of posts, with Rotterdam leaning heavily into modernity and Amsterdam favoring tradition. Rotterdam’s use of the Erasmus Bridge or Markthal solidified its innovative, architectural brand: *“Rotterdam is known for its modern and innovative architecture. The bombing during World War II led to a wave of post-war reconstruction and a renewed focus on modern architecture. We never stopped embracing new and innovative architectural designs. As a result, Rotterdam is now home to a number of iconic buildings and landmarks. Every week we will highlight one of our architectural gems.”* (@rotterdam\_info, 2023, April 4).



Figure 1.1: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on April 4, 2023 (@rotterdam\_info, 2023).

Amsterdam, on the other hand, leaned into its classic charm:

*"Sunset glows in Amsterdam just hit different."* (@iamsterdam, 2023, May 17).

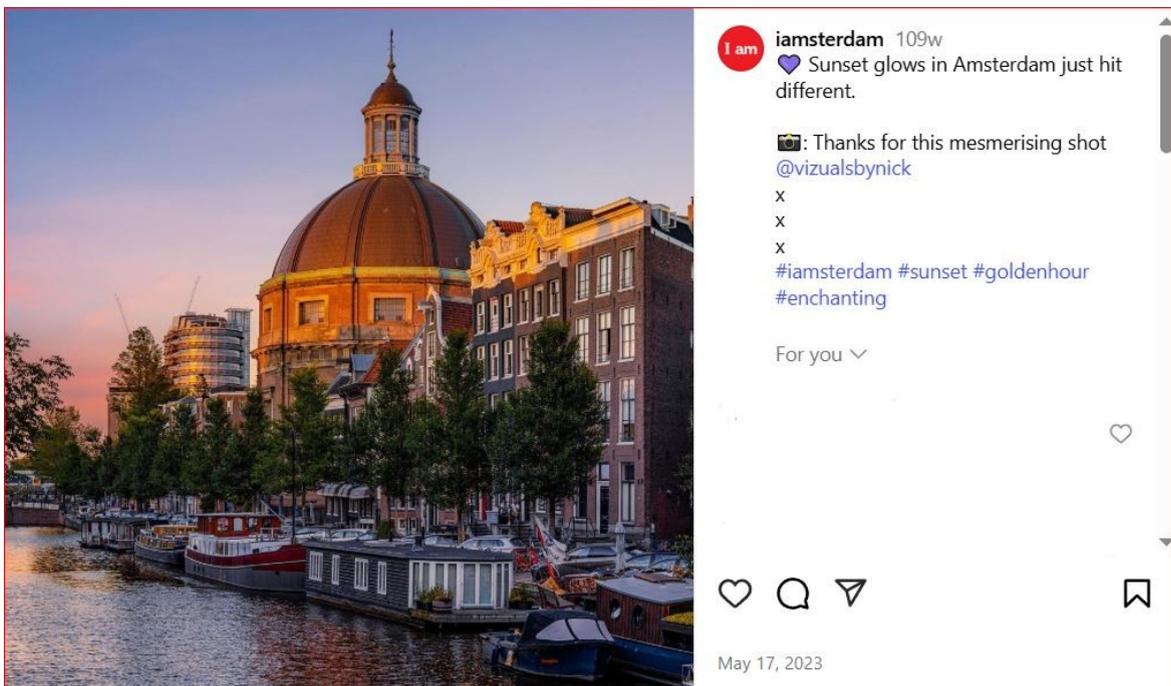


Figure 1.2: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on May 17, 2023 (@iamsterdam, 2023).

This contrast directly reflects Kotler et al.'s (1999) city branding strategies, where infrastructure and design express the city's identity and function as attractions in themselves Kotler et al.,1999 as cited in Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 61).

**Entertainment** emerged as the second most prevalent theme in the dataset, accounting for 55 instances (37.2%). This theme includes restaurants, coffee places, festivals, shows, and public events, often framed through event-based announcements and reflects cities' attempts to brand themselves as dynamic and sociable. Posts categorized under this theme frequently included hashtags such as #rotterdammakeithappen or #amsterdamcanalparade, highlighting the event-focused aspect of each city's identity. Entertainment serves as an appealing visual component that showcases the cultural vitality of the city, particularly in Rotterdam, where significant events contribute greatly to the narrative of visual branding. The example below highlights six entertainment venues in Rotterdam that are promoted as attractive summer spots:



Figure 1.3: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on July 24, 2024 (@rotterdam\_info, 2024).

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, posts about entertainment cater to the audience's desire for escapism and emotional engagement (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 258). People are attracted to destinations that provide experiences rich in social interaction, and sharing these experiences fulfills both social and self-expressive needs.

Closely following entertainment, **Experiential Activities** appeared in 53 instances (35.8%). These posts highlighted moments of active involvement, including activities like boat trips, ice skating, swimming, dancing, or taking part in workshops, experiences that necessitate engagement with the location. Captions often framed these activities as suggestions for weekend plans, illustrated by phrases such as, "Let's spice up this hot weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips!" (@rotterdam\_info, 2023, September 8) as in the example below:



Figure 1.4: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on September 8, 2023 (@rotterdam\_info, 2023).

Through thoughtfully chosen suggestions presented in an appealing way, such content not only highlights specific locations or activities but also aids in larger efforts to showcase the city as lively, approachable, and rich in culture.

The fourth most frequent theme was **Natural Attractions**, with 44 posts (29.7%) featuring natural parks, waterfronts, or flora and fauna. The content often emphasized aesthetic serenity and emotional tone, such as Amsterdam's spring blossoms versus Rotterdam's coastal scenery. Information sourced from Instagram is being utilized more and more to explore the elements that draw tourists to national attractions (Hausmann et al., 2017, as cited in Falk & Hagsten, 2021, p. 1549). A representative example of this theme can be found in a post from the official @iamsterdam account that features the Zuidpier in IJmuiden. The provided caption invites birdwatchers and nature lovers to explore the rich biodiversity of the region, featuring over 300 bird species, seals, and the occasional dolphin sighting. This framing illustrates a broader Western viewpoint on nature-based tourism, viewing nature as both a fragile domain that needs protection from human impact and as a consumable experience for travelers (Holden, 2015, as cited in Fälton, 2024, p. 235).

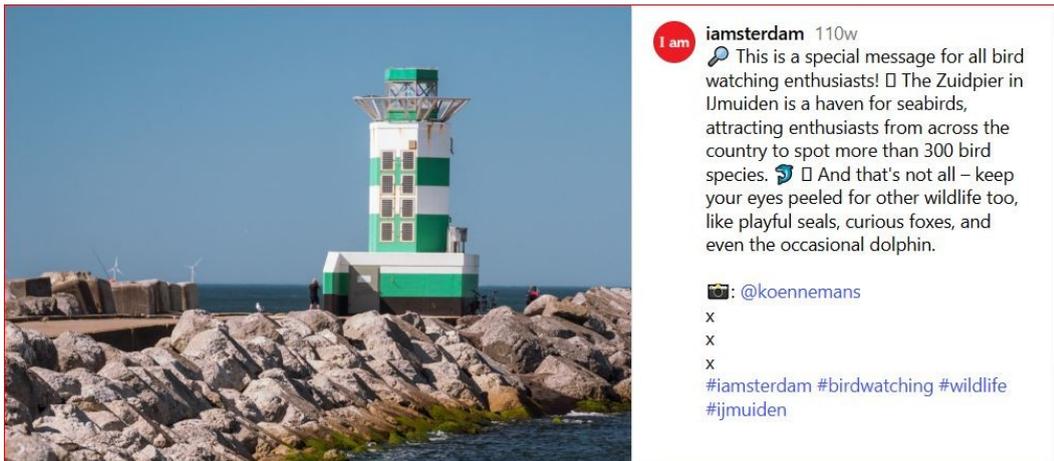


Figure 1.5: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on May 9, 2023 (@iamsterdam, 2023).

In this context, UGT's concept of "seeking" motivations is evident, as users select and share content that allows others to mentally escape or anticipate restorative experiences in real locations. It is noticed that even though Amsterdam and Rotterdam are predominantly urban environments, the frequent inclusion of nature-related content suggests a deliberate attempt to raise awareness of their green and coastal offerings, possibly to reframe the cities' images by highlighting the accessibility of natural retreats within or near the urban core. An example is provided by @rotterdam\_info, depicting Hoek van Holland's beach at sunset. The caption invites audiences to leave the crowded city center and explore the hidden facets of Rotterdam, emphasizing the idea of nature as a pleasurable experience just a short distance from the city. This imagery, characterized by its warm hues and peaceful shoreline, visually aligns with the "seeking" motivation by prompting potential visitors to envision a refreshing escape nearby urban life, reframing this way Rotterdam's identity to encompass coastal relaxation and natural tranquility.

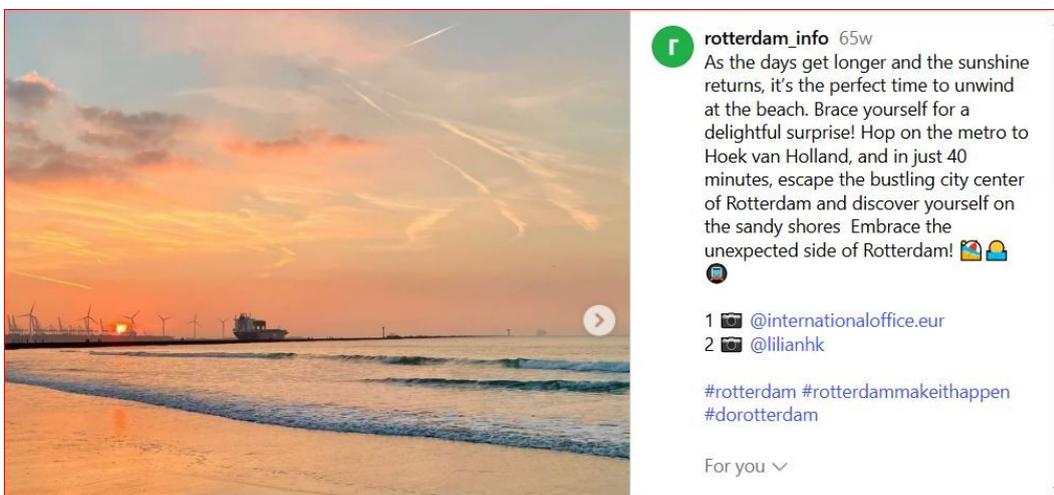


Figure 1.6: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on March 19, 2024 (@rotterdam\_info, 2024).

With 34 posts (23.0%), **Historical Cultural Heritage** was present but not dominant, despite the rich histories of both cities. Despite both cities' historical significance, posts under this theme were visually compelling but contextually shallow. Amsterdam's iconic palaces and museums appeared often, but without deep historical reflection. A post showed the Royal Palace captioned: *"Did you know that the Royal Palace on Dam Square is open to the public much of the year? When the royal family does not use the palace, the building is open to the public and well worth a visit!"* (@iamsterdam, 2024, February 21):

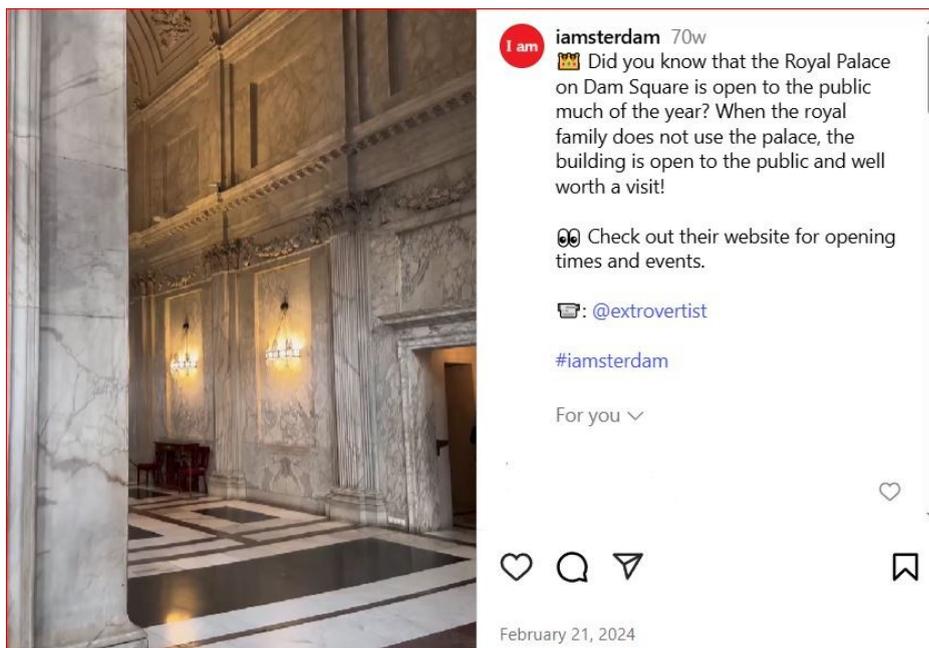


Figure 1.7: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on February 21, 2024 (@iamsterdam, 2024).

On the other hand, Rotterdam's representation of heritage primarily centered around temporally-bound events, such as Remembrance Day commemorations and museum nights, rather than permanent landmarks like the Erasmus Bridge. Nonetheless, such content still serves branding by sustaining image, distinctiveness, and authenticity, three key pillars of city branding (Riza et al., 2012, p. 294).

**Online Tourist Storytelling** also appears in 34 instances (23.0%) throughout the dataset. This theme illustrates how users engage in the curation and dissemination of personalized travel narratives, often through performative and interactive means. This activity closely aligns with the core principles of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory, where media utilization is influenced by individuals' aspirations for status, social acceptance, and self-expression. UGT explains how technology and media provide access to information and the reasons for selecting specific information sources, which is to fulfill an information requirement or desire (Sheetz et al., 2021, p.

37). From this perspective, the audience actively selects and utilizes media based on their individual needs (Eğimli & Taş, 2018, p. 87). Online Tourist Storytelling therefore illustrates how Instagram becomes a deliberate choice for users who aim to meet personal and social needs through destination-related content. UGT provides insights into "the methods and reasons behind media consumption," highlighting that people find fulfillment when their media interactions fulfill a particular goal (Stafford et al., 2004, pp. 266-267). In this context, that goal encompasses sharing travel stories, achieving acknowledgment, and engaging in a larger online community. Overall, this theme highlights real people in different locations and situations and shows how these people are interacting with the destination. The content frequently features real individuals situated in varied geographic or experiential settings, emphasizing how users not only document but also visibly engage with the destination, thereby transforming passive observation into participatory storytelling. This is better illustrated in the following post by @rotterdam\_info, where real people are shown ice skating and having fun, actively engaging with the urban space in a way that transforms the destination into a site of personal experience:



Figure 1.8: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on September 27, 2023 (@rotterdam\_info, 2023).

Although posts classified under **Local Culture and Customs** were less common in the dataset with 15 instances (10.1%), they exhibited a high level of authenticity and relatability, both crucial qualities of persuasive and influential user-generated content (UGC). These posts offered snapshots of culturally ingrained practices, public festivities, and daily habits that help to set the destination apart from just its renowned landmarks. In Amsterdam, certain content emphasized the parades for King's Day, showcasing community celebrations and traditional practices that strengthen the city's

identity. For example, images showing vibrant crowds adorned in orange by the canals illustrate how localized experiences are represented to a broader audience:



Figure 1.9: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on April 29, 2024 (@iamsterdam, 2024).

In a similar vein, Rotterdam showcased scenes from Christmas markets, illustrating how local customs are presented through modern narratives:

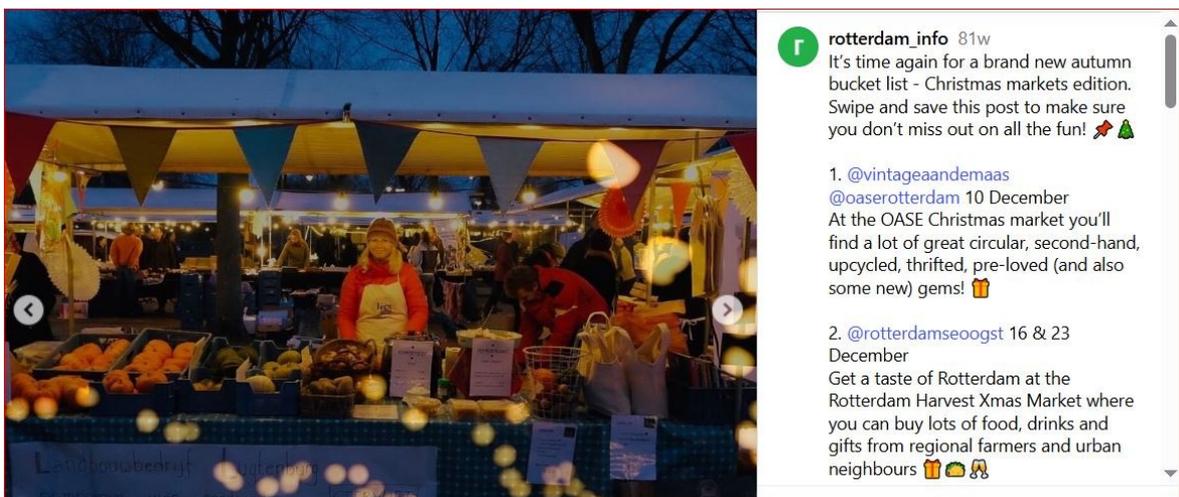


Figure 1.10: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on November 29, 2023 (@rotterdam\_info, 2023).

These authentic glimpses foster positive emotions (Yamagishi et al., 2024, p. 1964) such as emotional connection and symbolic belonging to a destination.

The rarest theme in the dataset, **Religious Monuments** with 3 instances (2.0%), was significantly underrepresented, indicating that they play a minimal role in modern destination branding, especially in secular urban environments. One of the few posts of this category featured the caption: *“The Sint Vincentiuskerk in Volendam has us feeling awed and impressed! Who else adores this architectural beauty?”* (@iamsterdam, 2023, February 25), highlighting this way the aesthetic or heritage value of the site rather than its spiritual function:



Figure 1.11: A post's example including picture and caption, posted on February 25, 2023 (@iamsterdam, 2023).

This tendency aligns with broader societal shifts. In the Dutch context, churches in the region are experiencing a notable decline in membership, with many of their affiliated social groups disbanding (Sengers, 2010, p. 439). Participation in religious services and activities has significantly decreased, and churches now hold a limited presence in public and political conversations (Sengers, 2010, p. 439). Remarkably, it often comes as a surprise that nearly half of the population has no formal affiliation with any religious organization (Sengers, 2010, p. 439). In this light, the findings suggest that religious monuments do not play a significant role in shaping users' perceived destination identity. Their visual presence appears limited, and when they are depicted, the emphasis tends to be on heritage or architectural interest rather than on spiritual or religious symbolism. Most posts featuring religious buildings, such as churches, made little to no reference to their religious function, reinforcing the secular branding strategies employed by both cities.

Overall, a concise comparative analysis of the two cities highlights several important insights about how their city branding aims correspond with the way Destination Marketing Organizations

(DMOs) utilize user-generated content (UGC) to achieve those objectives. The strategic use of visual storytelling by @iamsterdam aligns closely with the broader objectives behind Amsterdam's long-term city branding effort. The "I amsterdam" campaign promoted ideas such as innovation, cultural richness, and excellence (Lee & De Boer, 2010, pp. 145-146). This vision is supported by several themes identified in the dataset, such as historical cultural heritage, entertainment, and local culture and customs, since they highlight both the city's traditional character and its modern cultural vibrancy. The prevalence of urban environments (58) and online tourist storytelling (34) further reinforces the notion of Amsterdam as an accessible and livable city, supporting the city branding goals of promoting Amsterdam as a cultural hub, and residential community (Lee & De Boer, 2010, p. 146).

Rotterdam's branding, aligns closely with the city's slogan "Rotterdam. Make it Happen". It emphasizes values such as internationalism, entrepreneurship, and innovation (Belabas, 2023, p. 4), which are evident in the most prevalent themes, "urban environments" and "experiential activities". These themes frequently showcase the city's unique architecture as well as creative events, reinforcing its image as modern, dynamic, and forward-thinking. Although this analysis does not directly assess whether these themes were selected with brand messaging in mind, their frequency suggests a degree of alignment with the city's official branding narrative.

## **4.2 User engagement analysis**

The engagement analysis indicated significant variations in user responses to different thematic categories based on likes. Urban Environments emerged as the most commonly utilized theme (58 posts) and also demonstrated reliability in engagement, achieving a substantial median of 1,115 likes. This implies that visuals of cityscapes, architecture, and contemporary infrastructure, especially highlighted in Rotterdam, capture attention and consistently connect with audiences. In a similar vein, Historical Cultural Heritage showed stable performance, with both average (1,080) and median (857) likes reflecting steady user interest. These results reinforce the idea that content connected to place identity and familiar visual components greatly increases engagement and bolsters brand narratives. Another prominent theme was Local Culture and Customs, which achieved the highest average engagement (1,765 likes), indicating a strong user affinity for posts that feature local traditions, food, or rituals. However, the median engagement (798) implies that this interaction might be swayed by the occasional viral post, making it impactful but somewhat erratic. In contrast, themes such as Entertainment and Experiential Activities, while prevalent, showed much lower median engagement (379 and 416 likes respectively), suggesting that content

focused solely on events or activities may not connect well unless paired with compelling visuals or narrative context. Ultimately, these insights emphasize that visually cohesive and culturally anchored themes tend to perform best, while more transient or varied content requires more robust storytelling for steady engagement.

When isolating engagement metrics such as likes for each city, it becomes easier to indicate specific types of visual content that each Destination Marketing Organization (DMOs) should prioritize. For @rotterdam\_info, posts showcasing iconic architecture and unique urban landmarks tend to attract the most engagement, suggesting a strong interest from the audience in the city's contemporary design essence. On the other hand, @i\_amsterdam gains the most from posting local events like the Pride Canal Parade and the Cherry Blossom Festival, as well as beautiful, seasonally themed images of the city's historic canals and buildings. For instance, this post, depicting the annual Canal Parade, received the highest number of likes among the posts:



Figure 1.12: A post's example including picture, caption and the number of likes, posted on August 5, 2023 (@iamsterdam, 2023).

Both Amsterdam and Rotterdam showcase a significant number of posts promoting events and activities, indicating a focus on engaging experiences and things to do in the city. Details about seasonal events at the destination are frequently shared to remind travelers and entice their interest (Limbu, 2022, pp. 37-38). However, this is especially evident in Rotterdam, where the official tourism account (@rotterdam\_info) frequently shares content with localized suggestions, often presented as tips for the weekend. These posts are typically designed to provide insider knowledge and enhance the visitor experience by highlighting lesser-known attractions or timely cultural events. This aligns with the principles of creative tourism. Creative tourism refers to a type

of travel that provides travelers with the chance to cultivate their creative abilities by engaging in courses and educational experiences that are typical of the holiday destination where they take place (Richards & Raymond, 2000, p. 4). Travelers can gain from pushing their limits and acquiring new abilities, opportunities that work demands at home often restrict. In a uniform world, many individuals are feeling an urge to stand out and are becoming more interested in the creative process. A rising number of people are looking for ways to express their creativity and wish to learn during their vacation (Richards & Raymond, 2000, pp. 5-6). However, despite their informative nature, these posts seem to attract relatively low user engagement regarding likes and interactions. For example, a post from @rotterdam\_info with the caption *"Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips!"* (@rotterdam\_info, 2023, May 26), received only 136 likes, suggesting there might be a disconnect between the promotional goal and user interest or visibility in algorithms:

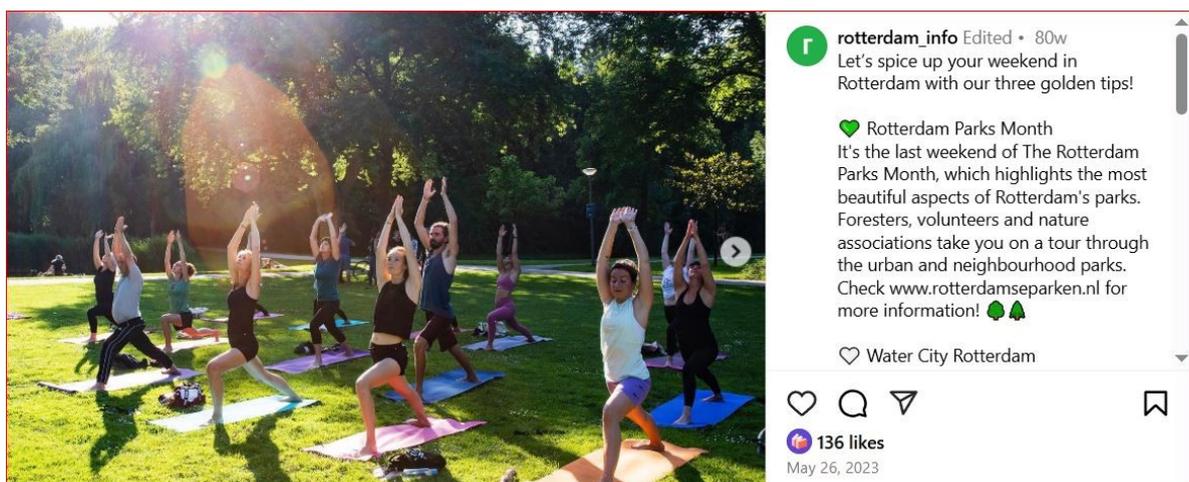


Figure 1.13: A post's example including picture, caption and the number of likes, posted on May 26, 2023 (@rotterdam\_info, 2023).

Hence, it is apparent that although the content aligns with strategic aims to promote local and participatory tourism, it may not successfully resonate with or reach a broader audience on Instagram.

#### 4.2.1 Additional caption & hashtag branding analysis

Many captions are concise and informative, often serving as announcements for events (*"Get ready to celebrate autumn with a bucket list of festivities that will make this season unforgettable! Swipe and save to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun!"*) (@rotterdam\_info, 2023, September 27), visual cues (*"The snow played a disappearing act this weekend"*) (@iamsterdam,

2023, December 5), or questions for the community ("*With whom would you want to have a drink here?*") (@iamsterdam, 2023, February 12). Captions frequently incorporate city-specific branding hashtags like #rotterdammakeithappen and #iamsterdam, indicating that users contribute to strengthening the destination's brand identity. In addition to branding, captions exhibit a relational quality, often utilizing second-person pronouns ("you," "your") that create a feeling of invitation or community. This supports the idea that DMO reposts and UGC function not only as marketing material but also as engaging, socially integrated narratives. The use of casual or expressive emojis may suggest a preference for storytelling that is informal, humorous, or emotionally resonant.

Hashtags were used extensively, but mostly followed a branded or location-based pattern. Most frequent hashtags include: #iamsterdam, #rotterdammakeithappen, #dorotterdam, #rotterdam. An analysis of hashtag use reveals notable differences in strategy between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In Rotterdam, hashtags were more focused on official city branding and local identity, with dominant examples such as #rotterdam, #dorotterdam, and #rotterdammakeithappen found in the dataset. These tags represent a cohesive approach directed at reinforcing the city's identity and improving its visibility in city branding initiatives. In contrast, while Amsterdam employed specific and location-oriented hashtags such as #iamsterdam, it also showcased a broader and more detailed array of tagging practices. Instagram users apply hashtags to identify themes, thereby enhancing the organization of their posts visually (Acuti et al., 2018, p. 16). This was apparent in Amsterdam's posts, where they frequently included hashtags related to the content or context of the image, with examples like #sunrisejog, #amsterdamcanalparade, and #swimmingamsterdam. This indicates a more personalized and expressive method of tagging, where hashtags serve not just as tools for discovery but also as small narratives that enhance the audience's understanding of the post. Amsterdam is also positioned more favorably in terms of online visibility and user engagement. Unlike Rotterdam, the collection of images associated with the hashtag #iamsterdam was already substantial prior to Amsterdam Marketing's involvement, as "I amsterdam" had evolved into a symbol representing Amsterdam (Fokkema, 2016, p. 94).

Thematic analysis of the hashtags provided additional evidence that the branding language is collaboratively created by both users and institutions. Dominant hashtags such as "#iamsterdam" and "#rotterdammakeithappen" were dominant throughout the dataset. Out of 74 posts from the I-amsterdam dataset, 73 included the hashtag **#iamsterdam**, representing approximately 98.6% of the posts. In the Rotterdam dataset, 69 out of 74 posts featured the hashtag **#rotterdammakeithappen**, accounting for about 93.2% of the total. These hashtags function as digital branding tools that enhance the public image and the distinctiveness of a destination, which are essential components of effective city branding (Riza et al., 2012, p. 294). From a Uses and Gratifications (U&G) standpoint, the use of hashtags demonstrates both practical and symbolic

requirements. Hashtags enhance the ability to find information (information-seeking) while also indicating one's belonging to a community and personal taste (self-expression and group affiliation). They provide significant assistance in distinguishing oneself from the vast amount of information present on social media, allowing for specific posts to be easily discoverable (Palazzo, Vollero, Vitale, & Siano, 2021, as cited in Bellio & Checchinato, 2022, p. 5). For example, users searching for particular hashtags related to locations in Amsterdam may come across images posted by @iamsterdam, which aids @iamsterdam in gaining more followers and likes (Fokkema, 2016, p. 84).

In general, the frequent use of branded hashtags, that is, hashtags officially associated with a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) or campaign such as #iamsterdam, highlights a merging of personal and organizational stories: users willingly contribute to promoting the destination marketing organization's brand identity, not because they have to, but because it resonates with their own strategies for building identity. However, it must be noted that users checking the hashtag #iamsterdam may perceive Amsterdam differently than what @iamsterdam presents, as this hashtag features images from various sources and users. For instance, examining the hashtag #iamsterdam reveals that many users share pictures of coffee shops and the red-light district, which are elements that Amsterdam Marketing prefers to downplay (Fokkema, 2016, p. 111). Interestingly, the analysis also showed relatively low usage of experiential or emotional hashtags, implying that the branding narrative remains largely visual and structural rather than deeply personal. Hashtags also enable users to connect with one another. For instance, research indicates that posts containing at least one hashtag generate 12.6% greater user engagement compared to those that lack any hashtags on Instagram (Zhang et al., 2019, p. 5805). Overall, hashtags act as strategic micro-messages that amplify destination branding, while reflecting the aesthetic and communal dimensions that influence tourists' decision-making processes.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis explores how user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram is utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) as a strategic tool to shape city branding and influence the travel decision-making processes of tourists. This thesis does not investigate the reasons behind users sharing content. Instead, it examines how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) apply user-generated content (UGC) in their strategies for branding cities. Although the focus is on how institutions use this content, it still comes from users, highlighting broader trends in sharing and the expectations of audiences. According to the research question, it is explicitly stated: *"How does user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram utilized by destination marketing organizations (DMOs), reflect the branding and decision-making process for tourism destinations, specifically the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam?"* A qualitative visual content analysis of UGC shared by the official Instagram accounts of @iamsterdam and @rotterdam\_info revealed that DMOs carefully select user content to collaboratively create engaging digital stories about their cities. The distinct branding of each city is conveyed through storytelling, which also actively shapes how potential tourists perceive and engage with these destinations. The strategic use of hashtags, visual aesthetics, and thematically focused content acts as branding tool that aligns the motivations of users with the marketing objectives of the DMOs.

The results revealed that posts highlighting visually rich cultural elements, like historic landmarks, local traditions, and meaningful urban environments, attracted considerably more engagement, whereas posts focused primarily on events or information, particularly those without compelling narrative context, usually received fewer likes. This suggests that although both cities attempt to boost engagement through creative tourism content, the success of such efforts depends on the emotional and visual resonance of the shared material. Ultimately, user-generated content that is visually cohesive, authentic, and symbolically rich proves most effective in supporting DMO branding goals and shaping traveler intent.

The findings indicate that UGC serves a dual purpose. On the one hand it reflects authentic travel experiences while on the other hand is strengthening the identity and appeal of a destination. The research underscores the growing dependence of DMOs on UGC as a cost-effective, genuine, and emotionally impactful approach to improve their digital branding and influence the decision-making process prior to travel. Tourism marketers must intentionally incorporate UGC strategies, recognizing that Instagram posts both mirror public sentiment and actively influence the symbolic and visual representation of cities on the global tourism stage.

## 5.1 Limitations

This process allowed the researcher to identify patterns and extract valuable insights from the data. Nevertheless, certain practical difficulties emerged during the research process, which added complexity and raised concerns about the overall reliability of the findings.

During the thematic analysis, it was noted that numerous Instagram posts were categorized under multiple themes (for instance, a single post could represent both “Entertainment” and “Experiential Activities”). The reason behind that is the complex nature of user-generated content, where one visual or caption can encapsulate various facets of the tourism experience. In the analysis of engagement, these posts were factored into the calculation of likes corresponding to each thematic category. Consequently, the same post might influence the engagement metrics for multiple themes, which could lead to an inflation of post counts and cross-theme averages. Although this strategy illustrates how tourism narratives intertwine (for example, an urban experience during a cultural festival), it also creates thematic interdependence, which may slightly cloud the distinct effects of individual themes. This methodological decision for 1-to-many mapping of post to theme was made to preserve the dataset's authenticity, but it is crucial to interpret the engagement findings with the awareness that some results may overlap because of the multi-thematic characteristics of the content. Another constraint is that, despite the inclusion of a minimal number of videos mainly incorporated in carousel posts, the evaluation did not cover independent video formats like reels, which could provide deeper user engagement understanding.

A crucial methodological aspect of this thesis was the use of median likes in addition to average likes for the engagement evaluation. Median values were determined by arranging all like counts within each theme in ascending order and pinpointing the central value (or calculating the average of the two central values when the count is even). This method was especially effective for dealing with the skewed nature of social media data, where the average might be greatly inflated by a small number of really popular posts. The incorporation of the median resulted in a more precise and representative view of typical user engagement, reducing the risk of misinterpretation that could occur if only mean averages were taken into account.

Regarding the sampling process, random sampling was utilized for the selection of Instagram posts for analysis. This approach improves the reliability and objectivity of the dataset by reducing researcher bias and ensuring a diverse range of themes, although it also brought about some limitations in representation. The benefits of this approach include the need for limited understanding of the population, high internal and external validity, and straightforward data analysis (Acharya et al., 2013, p. 331). However, they usually suffer from larger sampling errors and lower precision compared to stratified samples of equivalent size (Acharya et al., 2013, p. 331).

Specifically, the random sample did not fully capture some highly iconic and visually dominant urban elements, such as the Cube Houses or Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, which are central to the city's branded visual identity. Consequently, certain themes that occur regularly or hold significant symbolic value within the overall content stream may be inadequately represented in the final sample. This constraint indicates that, although the results offer valid perspectives on thematic diversity and engagement trends, they may not reflect the full visual intensity or frequency of key brand-defining features typically emphasized by DMOs or users. Thus, some purposive sampling could be considered in the future. Lastly, while this thesis focused on thematic categorization and engagement metrics, it did not conduct a detailed visual analysis of specific aesthetic elements such as color schemes, composition, or symbolic motifs. While visual and design aspects can demonstrate how each element interacts both collectively and individually to communicate significance (Obot, 2022, p. 26), this type of detailed semiotic analysis was not included in this thesis and remained beyond its scope. This was partly due to the lack of a consistent or noticeable pattern across the visuals, suggesting that a formal visual analysis may not have yielded significant additional insights.

## **5.2 Implications & Future research**

There is a remarkable gap in the academic literature regarding the usage of Instagram by DMOs, and user-generated content in particular. Prior studies have highlighted a broader disconnect between academic theory and practical DMO application (Pike, 2015, p. 3), as well as a lack of consistent theoretical frameworks in UGC research on tourism (Santos, 2021, p. 97). Moreover, while social media is widely acknowledged as influential in destination marketing, there remains a limited understanding of how Instagram content specifically shapes destination perception and influences travel decision-making (Platon, 2023, p. 670). This thesis adds to the existing body of research by examining a gap in the comparative branding of tourism, focusing on two prominent European cities: Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Although research primarily focuses on Amsterdam, the lesser-known city of Rotterdam is not frequently examined. Consequently, this research can contribute important insights to the broader field of communication and media studies, addressing the existing gap in the literature.

The insights presented here may serve as a foundation for larger-scale studies and offer value to destination marketing organizations, reconsidering the strategic role of Instagram user-generated content in destination branding. These findings offer practical insights for destination marketing organizations aiming to strengthen place branding via Instagram. Since some posts attract a high volume of likes, engagement metrics serve as useful indicators of content that effectively connects

with audiences. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) ought to concentrate on content that drives significant engagement. Posts highlighting the urban environment show consistently strong performance in both cities. For @rotterdam\_info, featuring contemporary architecture and city design attracts the most likes. In the case of @i\_amsterdam, content such as festivals and seasonally themed images of the city's historic canals and buildings drives substantial engagement. Emphasizing these themes can improve city branding and boost audience interaction. At the same time, while this study focused on thematic categories to evaluate Instagram content, future research could benefit from incorporating a deeper visual analysis. Analyzing elements such as the environment, color scheme, objects, lighting, and any accompanying text enables a deeper comprehension of the intended message conveyed by the image (Soleil, 2022, p. 27).

In this context, DMOs could benefit from not only analyzing the visual and textual content of user-generated posts, but from considering user interactions such as comments as well. For instance, research by Mihalka (2022) demonstrates that the I-amsterdam campaign effectively conveys the city's identity, resulting in followers feeling emotionally satisfied and engaged. This is evident in the comment sections, where users share personal experiences of having visited the featured locations, express intentions to return, and often use emojis to convey enthusiasm (Mihalka, 2022, p. 19). This two-way engagement reveals how audiences respond to branding efforts and may provide valuable qualitative feedback. Future research may expand on this by incorporating comment analysis into UGC evaluations.

The dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of Instagram as a marketing platform presents challenges for maintaining the long-term relevance of research in this area. Due to the fast-paced changes in social media trends and features, studies can quickly become outdated (Grandberg, 2019, p. 31). This master thesis was limited by time constraints, which eventually affected the scope. While this thesis tried to approach Instagram holistically, further investigation should explore how the platform's various features such as posts, stories, reels, and hashtags interact and contribute to the branding and decision-making processes in tourism. In addition, future research could adopt a comprehensive case study method to provide insights into the social media strategies employed by tourism providers, highlighting both successful and unsuccessful examples (Alizadeh et al., 2015, p. 190).

Additionally, more nuanced investigation is needed into how consumers weigh personal versus impersonal sources when using Instagram, to inform travel decisions. For example, do people's perceptions of user-generated content (UGC) change based on whether it originates from official tourism accounts, friends, or influencers? Are different kinds of knowledge sought from different kinds of sources, such as practical details versus emotional inspiration? These questions have become especially relevant on Instagram, where user-generated content (UGC) can blur the lines

between authentic personal expression and strategic brand messaging. Furthermore, in the absence of face-to-face interaction, consumers must rely on digital cues to evaluate credibility and assign trust to online sources (Litvin et al., 2008, p. 19). Gaining an understanding of how these trust mechanisms work on Instagram is essential for comprehending how branding is perceived and how decisions are made. Future research could additionally examine the effects of upcoming marketing strategies and observe how they influence tourists' perceptions of destination image over time (Hahm & Severt, 2018, p. 50). Therefore, continued research is essential to better understand how UGC shapes travelers' perceptions and influences their destination choices.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### User Engagement Analysis (Median likes included)

Theme	Post Count	Average Likes	Median Likes	Max Likes	Min Likes
Local Culture and Customs	15	1765	798	9223	136
Urban Environments	58	1661	1115	7690	152
Historical Cultural Heritage	34	1080	857	7690	85
Online Tourist Storytelling	34	1056	460	9223	88
Natural Attractions	44	933	647	3491	101
Religious Monuments	3	864	1122	1173	296
Experiential Activities	53	828	416	4416	88
Entertainment	55	749	379	9223	85

## Appendix B

Appendix B presents a condensed overview of the full dataset analyzed in this study. Each row includes the originating city, a shortened version of the Instagram post caption, its assigned thematic category (or categories), number of likes received, and the post URL. This table provides an accessible summary of the sample used for thematic and engagement-based analysis.

City	Post Caption (Shortened)	Theme(s)	Likes	Instagram URL
Amsterdam	☺ With whom would you want to have a drink here?_x000D_ _x000D_ ☺: @photography_by_katinka_x000D_ _x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamsterdam #amstergram #amsterdam #terrace #sun	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	7690	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CoksMzNr0_S/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CoksMzNr0_S/</a>
Amsterdam	☺ The Sint Vincentiuskerk in Volendam has us feeling awed and impressed! ☺ Who else adores this architectural beauty?_x000D_ _x000D_ ☺: @andrew_shenouda_x000D_ _x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamste	Religious Monuments	1122	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CpGDq7ns4QP/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CpGDq7ns4QP/</a>
Amsterdam	☀️☐ After a few days of rain, snow and thick mist, we're ready for Mother Nature to bring on the sunshine!_x000D_ _x000D_ ☺: @shotbysheena__x000D_ _x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamsterdam #snow #	Natural Attractions	1071	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CpRiY3Vu-kx/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CpRiY3Vu-kx/</a>

Amsterdam	<p>☑ Amsterdam sure knows how to tease us with the most beautiful evenings! _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>☀️ It's impossible not to feel the excitement in the air as we eagerly wait for the season of blooming flowers</p>	Urban Environments	5493	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cp9_tHcDOqB/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cp9_tHcDOqB/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ Rising from the waters of Amsterdam's IJ river, the Pontsteiger building is a marvel of modern architecture. As you take in the sunset views from a ferry ride, be sure to a good look at the unique d</p>	Natural Attractions	2529	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqPOI8cq3bF/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqPOI8cq3bF/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☀️ We love to see how folks spill out to the streets when the sun is out and turn the city into their own little personal terrace. _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>📍: @camaleon.tours _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ #</p>	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	4416	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqTdz6_Lb_j/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqTdz6_Lb_j/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ This fortress, located in Hoofddorp, has undergone an impressive renovation and now boasts an incredible transformation. @fortvanhoofddorp has been reborn as a unique and thrilling meeting place whe</p>	Experiential Activities, Historical Cultural Heritage	1254	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqgVyb6OB3V/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqgVyb6OB3V/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ Venture out to the west of the city, and discover Bos en Lommer &amp; De Baarsjes, two districts that are becoming hipper and more happening faster than you can say "BoLo". _x000D_ _x000D_</p>	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions	3259	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqIOajkD8XZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqIOajkD8XZ/</a>

	☑ Boasting co			
Amsterdam	☑ This 50-metre-high Watertoren (water tower) is one of Aalsmeer's showpieces. The elaborately decorated water tower, built in the Art Deco style, is situated on the edge of the Westeinderplassen. For	Natural Attractions, Historical Cultural Heritage	1425	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqxZjpWs7o9/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqxZjpWs7o9/</a>
Amsterdam	☑ If the sun is out, then so are we. ☑ The Dutch are like sunflowers; turning towards the sun wherever it shines!_x000D_ _x000D_ ☑ Have you already enjoyed the sun on a terrace this spring?_x000D_ _x0	Urban Environments	2832	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqzfdA-soCf/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqzfdA-soCf/</a>
Amsterdam	☑ This beautiful castle looks like something out of a dream, don't you think? @kasteelkeukenhof boasts an impressive history with 17th-century roots. The name probably already gave it away, but this b	Historical Cultural Heritage	1456	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq50IBTuPvS/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq50IBTuPvS/</a>
Amsterdam	☑ Opera, techno, tulips and dressing up in orange, Amsterdam's cultural agenda is suitably packed again for Spring 2023._x000D_ _x000D_ ☑ You'll find dance parties, food fairs, classical concerts and	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	3053	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq8V8AUsxqK/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq8V8AUsxqK/</a>
Amsterdam	☑ Explore the greenhouses of yesteryear, dotted with tools from a bygone era. ☑ The Aalsmeer Historical Gardens are home to a large selection of long-forgotten strains of	Natural Attractions	640	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CrC8ONkOX6J/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CrC8ONkOX6J/</a>

	plants and varieties of fruit			
Amsterdam	<p>📅 April 27th is the king's birthday, and everyone is invited to the party! Here are some tips on how to paint the town orange like a local: <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a></p> <p>📅 Dress in orange and show your pride - no wo</p>	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	3379	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CrRLKu3y2NU/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CrRLKu3y2NU/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📅 Get ready to be blown away by the sheer beauty and grandeur of the <a href="#">@bloemencorsobollenstreek</a>, which took place last weekend</p> <p>📅📅📅 This stunning floral parade, where elaborately decorated floats cover</p>	Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	2790	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CrdxD17tQv7/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CrdxD17tQv7/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📅📅 The Flower Region isn't just colourful petals and stems. Sure, the name might give away that you can find lots of flowers there, but it's also home to stunning historic buildings, hiking trails, an</p>	Natural Attractions	2601	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CroXcKQAIZM/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CroXcKQAIZM/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📅📅📅📅 At the mouth of the North Sea Canal you'll find Forteiland IJmuiden, an impressive fortress dating back to 1880. 📅 This former military defense offers plenty of history, adventure and relaxation</p>	Historical Cultural Heritage	944	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CrwJ-PvIOvi/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CrwJ-PvIOvi/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📅📅 Between Zandvoort and IJmuiden, you'll find the pristine dune valleys, historic estates and rugged beaches of <a href="#">@nationaalparkzuidkennemerland</a>. <a href="#">_x000D_</a></p>	Natural Attractions	1329	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cr5OpeaoB_N/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cr5OpeaoB_N/</a>

	<p>_x000D_</p> <p>📍 Stretching for more than 3800 hectares</p>			
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Happy Birthday @artis.amsterdam! The urban zoo (and botanical garden, since 2020) is celebrating a major milestone this month: 185 years of inspiring curiosity, promoting conservation, and fostering</p>	Natural Attractions	1739	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cr_Bb-Js_sV/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cr_Bb-Js_sV/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 This is a special message for all bird watching enthusiasts! 📍 The Zuidpier in IJmuiden is a haven for seabirds, attracting enthusiasts from across the country to spot more than 300 bird species. 📍</p>	Natural Attractions	698	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsCFIc3SZJM/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsCFIc3SZJM/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Aside from the pigeons on Dam Square, you're probably not expecting to encounter much wildlife in Amsterdam. 📍 You might be surprised to learn that the Dutch Capital does have a few safari surprises</p>	Natural Attractions	653	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsEjDoRswbO/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsEjDoRswbO/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Mother's Day is coming up and Amsterdam has plenty to offer to make this day extra special for your mom or maternal figure. _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>📍 Check out the round-up of inspiration via the link in our</p>	Urban Environments	2319	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsGzQSOMp2k/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsGzQSOMp2k/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Exploring Velsen-Zuid's quaint cobble-stone streets feels like stepping into a postcard from a bygone era. 📍 This little village close to Amsterdam gives off a peaceful vibe that's simply hard to</p>	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	2019	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsL5aY-M_xo/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsL5aY-M_xo/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Sunset glows in Amsterdam</p>	Urban	2366	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/">https://www.instagram.com/</a>

dam	<p>just hit different. _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: Thanks for this mesmerising shot @vizualsbynick _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ #iamsterdam #sunset #goldenhour #enchanted</p>	Environments		p/CsWhMBUNNdm/
Amsterdam	<p>📷👩🏻👦 Deep breaths in and out... 📷👦 How peaceful is this? _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷 Zandvoort _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: @stratenvanhaarlem _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ #iamsterdam #zandvoort #beach #amsterdamarea</p>	Natural Attractions, Entertainment	1678	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsdfWNYALms/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsdfWNYALms/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📷 Exploring Amsterdam from a boat offers a whole new perspective on the city's stunning views. _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: annaabgaryann _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ #iamsterdam #boat #explore #citytrip</p>	Experiential Activities	2349	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsiZFIhqUHz/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsiZFIhqUHz/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>Who wouldn't wanna go for a jog with a view like this? 📷 _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷 IJpromenade _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: @gosse_bouma _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_ x _x000D_</p>	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	1218	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cs0qqfNsGXR/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cs0qqfNsGXR/</a>

	#iamsterdam #sunrisejog #amsterdamnoord #views			
Amsterdam	📷 Boating off into the sunset... _x000D_ 📷 Have you ever explored Amsterdam by boat?_x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: @noramaria.nl_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamsterdam #views #sunset #amstergram	Experiential Activities	2591	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtPU-e4rfy8/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtPU-e4rfy8/</a>
Amsterdam	📷 As of today, it's officially #summer! 📷 Never is Amsterdam more alive than in Summer, when the city's streets, canals and parks transform into a buzzing kaleidoscope of activity._x000D_ _x000D_ 📷👩🏻👦👧	Urban Environments	3385	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtwYc43sne4/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtwYc43sne4/</a>
Amsterdam	📷📷 Are you planning on visiting Amsterdam this summer?_x000D_ _x000D_ 📷: @adriangmontalvo_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamsterdam #summerinamsterdam #visitamsterdam #amstergram	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments	1751	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtzN0AlurHX/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtzN0AlurHX/</a>
Amsterdam	📷 A time to commemorate and celebrate the abolishment of slavery in the Netherlands: join us at Keti Koti. Every year on July 1, the abolishment of slavery is commemorated in various places in the Net	Online Tourist Storytelling, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	827	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CuKRIZvoLCD/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CuKRIZvoLCD/</a>

		ment		
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Amsterdam's @streetartfrankey has been installing small humorous artworks around the city for a good few years now. Sometimes absurd, always playful, these works always light up your face with a be</p>	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	1740	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvKAw9JMIJq/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvKAw9JMIJq/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☐☐ Those who are afraid to melt in the rain might not want to venture out of the city to explore the Flower Strip, but there's many indoor locations to discover. _x000D_ _x000D_ 📍 A short trip with pub</p>	Historical Cultural Heritage	755	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvabX0VsRk9/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvabX0VsRk9/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Even with the rain, the city is glowing with rainbow colours today! Here's a glimpse into the festivities going on, including the annual Canal Parade. _x000D_ _x000D_ 📍: @instamsterdammer _x000D_ x_x0</p>	Online Tourist Storytelling, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	9223	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvkmzlhMFCO/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvkmzlhMFCO/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 This has got to be one of the prettiest streets in Amsterdam, don't you think? _x000D_ _x000D_ [!D: A street with large trees growing inward, creating a large, green archway.] _x000D_ _x000D_ 📍 Lomans</p>	Urban Environments	5076	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cv673qKszCg/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cv673qKszCg/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>📍 Embrace the weekend with open arms and a heart full of adventure! Explore new flavours or let loose at performances going on around the city. _x000D_</p>	Urban Environments	3371	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CwDu63mumTZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CwDu63mumTZ/</a>

	<p>_x000D_  👉👉 It's all in our weekend guide so hea</p>			
Amsterdam	<p>👉 Would you believe us if we told you these photos were taken in Amsterdam?_x000D_  _x000D_  👉: @eleonora.giovanforte  _x000D_  x_x000D_  x_x000D_  x_x000D_  #iamsterdam  #amsterdamarchitecture  #citytrip</p>	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	2611	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CwSG6Yiox3h/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CwSG6Yiox3h/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>👉 It's hard to miss @nemosciencemuseum - a giant green structure that rises like the hull of a cruise liner from the Oosterdok (just east of Central Station)._x000D_  _x000D_  👉 If you're looking for so</p>	Historical Cultural Heritage	1787	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CwqJHVfjqvY/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CwqJHVfjqvY/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>👉 The perfect date spot doesn't exist..._x000D_  _x000D_  [ID: people sitting on a terrace under a tree with fairy lights, right after sunset.]_x000D_  _x000D_  👉: @delannoyfanny_x000D_  x_x000D_  x_x000D_  x</p>	Entertainment	1642	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw8YZ9atBPM/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw8YZ9atBPM/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>👉 Wondering what do to with those open spots in your agenda this weekend? We've got you covered with our weekend guide👉_x000D_  _x000D_  👉 You can find the guide via our link in bio 👉_x000D_  _x000D_</p>	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	1877	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CyDTIh0s9Ln/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CyDTIh0s9Ln/</a>

	[ID			
Amsterdam	<p>Nature's carpet 🌿_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: The park ground covered with orange &amp; brown leaves, leaving no spot uncovered.]_x000D_ _x000D_ 📍: @i_on_amstelpark_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ x_x000D_ #iamsterdam</p>	Natural Attractions	910	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0PodP8MygH/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0PodP8MygH/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>❄️ 📷 The snow played a disappearing act this weekend. 📷 Thanks to @daniel.budaes, we've got this awesome photo to relive the snowy magic!_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: a photo taken from street level, showing sn</p>	Urban Environments	1831	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0epw6VOj4h/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0epw6VOj4h/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>Late night strolls through the city 🌃_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: someone walking their dog through the streets of Amsterdam, the red 'Zeedijk' Christmas lights are lit up in the background.]_x000D_ _x000D_</p>	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments	1592	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0zoJv8MxUF/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0zoJv8MxUF/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>🎄 A very merry Christmas from all of us, to all of you!_x000D_ _x000D_ 📷📷 Amsterdam is wrapped with Christmas spirit, and we're soaking it all in. May your homes be filled with love, warmth, and the j</p>	Urban Environments, Local Culture and Customs	3255	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C1RDRrpMwV5/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C1RDRrpMwV5/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>🌿 Marken is brimming with characteristic green wooden</p>	Natural Attraction	1408	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/">https://www.instagram.com/</a>

dam	houses and traditional buildings that seem to transport you back in time. 🏠 Once an island (and now a peninsula) Marken is accessible by a single	ns, Historical Cultural Heritage		p/C2KUIsNsZUe/
Amsterdam	👩🏻‍🌾 The last weekend of January rolls in and we've picked the events to make it an unforgettable one. So if you like plants, sky-high parties and Sunday roasts, you're in the right place!_x000D_ _x0	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments	1127	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2fSpjWNT2F/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2fSpjWNT2F/</a>
Amsterdam	🚲🏡❤️ Cycling through Amsterdam's neighbourhoods is like a journey through different worlds. Which area is your favourite?_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: A canal with a boat covered by a tarp floating in it. So	Urban Environments	2370	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2uUzMOMhH5/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2uUzMOMhH5/</a>
Amsterdam	❤️ Video postcards from the Zaanse Schans. A unique piece of 18th and 19th century Netherlands, full of wooden houses, mills, barns and workshops._x000D_ _x000D_ 📍 Have you ever visited this area?_x00	Historical Cultural Heritage	1010	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2z0EHZsOkJ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2z0EHZsOkJ/</a>
Amsterdam	📍 Did you know that the Royal Palace on Dam Square is open to the public much of the year? When the royal family does not use the palace, the building is open to the public and well worth a visit!_x00	Historical Cultural Heritage	1123	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3nbQe1ro1Q/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3nbQe1ro1Q/</a>
Amsterdam	🌸🌸 Spring is just around the corner, so time to start thinking about outdoor day	Natural Attraction	537	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C4JRwNDPsAp/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C4JRwNDPsAp/</a>

	trips from Amsterdam! How about kicking off the season with a day of discovery along Amsterdam's stunning coastline?_x	ns		
Amsterdam	☒ Dutchies will take any opportunity to go out and sit in the sun, no matter what the temperature is. Also known as the sunflower effect!_x000D_ ☒ What's your favourite way to catch some rays?	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments	3055	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C4fEloYNvt3/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C4fEloYNvt3/</a>
Amsterdam	☒ Get ready for a sprinkle of spring magic! Just a short train ride from Amsterdam, the Cherry Blossom Festival in Almere is the perfect way to celebrate the season._x000D_ ☒ This weekend (Mar	Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	3491	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C48UOIAug9x/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C48UOIAug9x/</a>
Amsterdam	☒ This unique building is a real head-turner. The sharp corner of @hoteljakarta.ams definitely piques our curiosity. What do you reckon the inside of the space looks like?_x000D_ [ID: A tall b	Urban Environments	791	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C5GLaTeulrA/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C5GLaTeulrA/</a>
Amsterdam	☀️☐ Sunshine in Amsterdam? We'll take what we can get! (And of course, always hoping for more sunny days like this.)_x000D_ ☒ What are your favourite things to do in Amsterdam when the weather	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments	1026	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C5Vd4nTsixZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C5Vd4nTsixZ/</a>
Amsterdam	2024 King's Day recap ☒ The city turned orange, the streets were filled with energy and	Online Tourist Storytelling	2627	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C6WweG_JoVe/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C6WweG_JoVe/</a>

	partygoers of all ages who gathered for a day of fun and festivities!_x000D_ _x000D_ 📍 Did you celebrate King's	ng, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment		
Amsterdam	📍 Amsterdam's an art lover's paradise! Museums or not, the city's alive with sculptures, murals & unexpected finds around every corner. 📍 From historical tributes to thought-provoking modern pieces, t	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	968	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C6eGelotvhj/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C6eGelotvhj/</a>
Amsterdam	📍📍 Discover a special side of Amsterdam along the picturesque Amstel River route! 📍 Named after the charming village of Amstelredamme (dam on the river Amstel), this scenic path meanders through histo	Natural Attractions, Historical Cultural Heritage, Religious Monuments	1173	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8FBkgIRLL/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8FBkgIRLL/</a>
Amsterdam	📍 Cycling through Amsterdam in the summer sun is pure bliss! Have you experienced the magic of this picturesque city on two wheels?_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: People cycling in multiple directions on a wide	Urban Environments	1103	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8m-zVelo1c/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8m-zVelo1c/</a>
Amsterdam	📍 Make the most of Amsterdam's sunny days by heading off for a picnic away from the city centre. From grassy fields to a full-on forest, we've scouted the very best places to spread your rug this sum	Natural Attractions	641	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8r0e4VoXbW/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8r0e4VoXbW/</a>
Amsterdam	Today, we celebrate Keti Koti, the day we commemorate the abolition of slavery in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. 📍 Keti	Local Culture and Customs,	1401	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C85OG0git4f/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C85OG0git4f/</a>

	Koti reminds us of the importance of treating each other equally. It is time t	Entertainment		
Amsterdam	<p>☑ If we choose to believe the weather apps, it might actually be hot in Amsterdam this weekend! Beat the heat with these cool down tips: <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a></p> <p>☑ Escape the sun and delve into art &amp; history at</p>	Experiential Activities	944	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C9iWIJGiHzA/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C9iWIJGiHzA/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑☐ @kokomo.amsterdam is a new hotspot that's all about good vibes and green spaces. Don't let the Beach Boys reference fool you - this isn't your typical beach club. <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a></p> <p>☑ At this all-day</p>	Entertainment	456	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-lvLg5u3O3/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-lvLg5u3O3/</a>
Amsterdam	☑ Come summer, this city built on water provides some exceptional opportunities for an alfresco dip. Check out our link in bio for your complete guide to Amsterdam's best outdoor swimming pools and sp	Experiential Activities	1625	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-XO1MkqWiF/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-XO1MkqWiF/</a>
Amsterdam	☐☐ Did you know the Pampuslaan is named after the historic Pampus Island? Once a vital shipping point, today it's a charming Amsterdam neighbourhood. ☑ Two local gems to check out: @dejapannerstrande	Natural Attractions	450	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_tTyamCTPZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_tTyamCTPZ/</a>
Amsterdam	Reminder that Amsterdam will look like this again soon ☑ What are you looking forward to most this autumn? <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a> ☑:	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions	1502	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C__TUxul-n5/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C__TUxul-n5/</a>

	@instamsterdammer_x000D_ _x000D_ #iamsterdam #amsterdamautumn	ns		
Amsterdam	An empty Vondelpark: a rare and serene sight 🌿_x000D_ _x000D_ 📍: @amsterdamenthusiast_x000D_ _x000D_ #iamsterdam #vondelpark #beautiful	Natural Attractions	1191	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/DA1hWtmRE_r/">https://www.instagram.com/p/DA1hWtmRE_r/</a>
Amsterdam	📍 Discover the hidden gems of New Land's culinary scene! 🍷🍴 Whether you crave a cosy café, seaside eatery, or upscale restaurant, they've got it all. 📍📍 Dive into the unique ambiance of @boutiqalmere	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities, Entertainment	416	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/DAqypisA4y2/">https://www.instagram.com/p/DAqypisA4y2/</a>
Amsterdam	📍 The curtain is almost down on travelling theatre @theaterfestivaldeparade's Amsterdam journey! 📍 Explore one last weekend of unique performances and stroll through the colourful festival grounds in	Online Tourist Storytelling, Entertainment	607	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_SOYIGu5ct/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_SOYIGu5ct/</a>
Amsterdam	Name a better sunrise... We'll wait 🌅_x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: people sitting on a dock overlooking the sun rising over the water as a boat passes by.]_x000D_ _x000D_ 📍: @when.in.amsterdam_x000D_ _x000D_	Urban Environments	1305	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-1uK2BoKnJ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-1uK2BoKnJ/</a>

	#			
Amsterdam	<p>☑ There's something about the calmness of watching and hearing the city wake up for the day. _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>☑: Footage by @gosse_bouma edit by lamsterdam</p>	Urban Environments	526	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C7kBkUetbxT/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C7kBkUetbxT/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ Westerpark slowly waking up, taking deep breaths before the city comes alive. _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>☑: Video by @gosse_bouma, edit by I amsterdam _x000D_ _x000D_ #iamsterdam #westerpark</p>	Natural Attractions	560	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C5B6MKQLDKv/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C5B6MKQLDKv/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ The shippinghouse (Scheepvaarhuis) - a beautiful example of the Amsterdam School architectural style. _x000D_ _x000D_</p> <p>☑ Prins Hendrikkade 108 _x000D_ _x000D_ [ID: An entryway with a large light brown</p>	Historical Cultural Heritage	770	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3GLusSyVVK/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3GLusSyVVK/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ ☑ ☑ Discover the (sometimes hidden) wildlife at the Amsterdamse Waterleidingduinen, just a short train ride from Amsterdam Central Station. Perfect for a romantic walk or a family outing! _x000D_ _x0</p>	Natural Attractions	377	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CztSO4-sEb6/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CztSO4-sEb6/</a>
Amsterdam	<p>☑ Every year, the capital becomes a global hub for superstar DJs, dance music lovers and industry professionals. That's right: it's time for</p>	Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	798	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CydzjZ_Oigx/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CydzjZ_Oigx/</a>

	@amsterdamdanceevent._x000D_ _x000D_ 📍 Still picking your	ment		
Rotterdam	Celebrating 65 years of @ssrotterdamofficial! On September 3, 1959, this iconic steamship set sail for the Holland-Amerika Line, marking its place as the largest passenger ship ever built in the Nethe	Entertainment, Historical Cultural Heritage	504	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_ayTkHif5a/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_ayTkHif5a/</a>
Rotterdam	Mark your calendars for Saturday, September 7, 2024! From 12:00 to 18:00, @laurenskerkrotterdam will be transformed into Vegan Fair 2024, hosted by @nlvegan. 📍_x000D_ _x000D_ Get ready for a vibrant c	Entertainment, Religious Monuments	296	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_S2KWvik-q/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_S2KWvik-q/</a>
Rotterdam	From September 1st to 8th, don't miss ALL CAPS, the Netherlands' top street art festival! This year, Beverwaard will come alive with incredible new murals. Check out the mural map and lineup at @allca	Urban Environments, Entertainment	308	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_OUYszC2BA/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_OUYszC2BA/</a>
Rotterdam	Discover @ssrotterdamofficial: even though this former Holland-Amerika Line steamship is no longer cruising, there is still so much to enjoy on board: catch breathtaking sunsets and stunning views fro	Entertainment, Historical Cultural Heritage	381	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C_lxtJqCEKq/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C_lxtJqCEKq/</a>
Rotterdam	What's New in Rotterdam! Check out the latest hotspots that are adding even more vibrancy to our dynamic city!_x000D_ _x000D_	Entertainment, Experiential Activities	180	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-5WZYTCNzq/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-5WZYTCNzq/</a>

	1. Head over to Berweg for the brand-new @silbar_rotterdam! Formerly Ciao			
Rotterdam	Rotterdam is a water-rich city, famous for its impressive Port of Rotterdam. Here are some top tips for enjoying the water with kids and making the most of this element in the city!_x000D_ _x000D_ 1.	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	825	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-rtbqgCv9F/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-rtbqgCv9F/</a>
Rotterdam	Looking for places to stay in Rotterdam? Here are three top recommendations:_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. @supernovahotel: This non-hotel immerses you in Rotterdam's culture with unique rooms that feature their	Experiential Activities	224	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-YZNRrCILD/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-YZNRrCILD/</a>
Rotterdam	Cheers to International Beer Day! 🍺 It's the perfect time to spotlight breweries with amazing summer terraces just in time for the beautiful weather ahead. _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. @pelgrimrotterdam: At Sta	Entertainment, Experiential Activities	168	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-lhhJRCTqK/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-lhhJRCTqK/</a>
Rotterdam	Although we're thrilled with the sunshine after all the rain, it might be getting a bit too hot for you ☀️👎 That's why we've rounded up the best cooling down swim spots in Rotterdam 🏊♀️👎_x000D_ _x000D	Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	777	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-DGXvrCZ43/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-DGXvrCZ43/</a>
Rotterdam	On August 11, 12, and 13, Rotterdam turns yellow for the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift 2024! 🚴♀️👎 The world's biggest women's cycling race	Experiential Activities, Local Culture	260	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C-AwX6mi4Fo/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C-AwX6mi4Fo/</a>

	kicks off in Rotterdam, with three exciting stages through	and Customs, Entertainment		
Rotterdam	An Ode to @oaserotterdam: a cultural podium, café, and lab for a just and sustainable city in Rotterdam West. <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a> There's so much to experience here—check our tips and follow @oaserotterda	Experiential Activities, Entertainment	307	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C94isPfiXgp/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C94isPfiXgp/</a>
Rotterdam	We've had a lot of rain lately, so we truly appreciate and must make the most of the sunny days. Enjoy them to the fullest at one of these 6 pop-up summer spots in Rotterdam! <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a> 1. @de_	Entertainment	455	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C9z0qEqCQNZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C9z0qEqCQNZ/</a>
Rotterdam	Finally, it's almost time again for @rotterdamunlimited Zomercarnaval on Friday, July 26 and Saturday, July 27! Here are three must-see events: <a href="#">_x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x000D_</a> 1. Zomercarnaval Street Parade - July 27_	Local Culture and Customs, Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertainment	459	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C9pHR6rCYaD/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C9pHR6rCYaD/</a>
Rotterdam	Enjoying a shopping day in the center of Rotterdam and looking for some unique experiences along the way? Check out these 3 extraordinary spots in the heart of the city <a href="#">@rotterdam.centrum: _x000D_</a> <a href="#">_x00</a>	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	1141	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C9KqZTgiRaI/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C9KqZTgiRaI/</a>
Rotterdam	Roffa Mon Amour is back for its 12th edition from August 14-25! <a href="#">_x000D_</a> Join twelve summer	Experiential Activities	165	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8924QJietV/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8924QJietV/</a>

	evenings of the latest must-see and classic films, live film concerts with local artists, engaging talks, communal	, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment		
Rotterdam	Rotterdam, the #2 most sustainable city in the world! According to Arcadis, a leading consultancy and engineering firm, Rotterdam has claimed the 2nd spot from 100 evaluated cities w	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions	1027	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8G-DI4i4NI/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8G-DI4i4NI/</a>
Rotterdam	The iconic Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam is getting a major makeover this year! At over 27 years old, it's time for a fresh coat of paint. But first, the 800-meter-long bridge needs a thorough cleaning—	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	614	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C8Cht9BCual/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C8Cht9BCual/</a>
Rotterdam	On the 5th of May each year, we remember the end of World War II and celebrate the gift of freedom. Check out our tips! 1. Explore the Plant Market @trompenburg for expert gardenin	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Natural Attractions, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	194	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C6lG7VGCHZt/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C6lG7VGCHZt/</a>
Rotterdam	National Remembrance Day Every year at 8 pm on 4 May, Rotterdam commemorates the fallen civilians and soldiers who	Historical Cultural Heritage	315	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C6jVNmicjB3/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C6jVNmicjB3/</a>

	have died since the outbreak of the Second World War, both in war			
Rotterdam	Only in Rotterdam we reach new heights at @dakendagen010 from May 24-26! 📸_x000D_ _x000D_ Explore a variety of open roofs like @dedoelenrotterdam, @nieuweinstituut, @heinekengebouw, and more, each s	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Experiential Activities , Entertainment	379	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C6b9qDTii6g/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C6b9qDTii6g/</a>
Rotterdam	Exciting news in honor of Museum @boijmans Van Beuningen's 175th anniversary! This summer, the museum will open temporarily for a special art route, children's program, and additional activities in th	Experiential Activities , Historical Cultural Heritage	185	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C5yW4FQi2uH/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C5yW4FQi2uH/</a>
Rotterdam	As the days get longer and the sunshine returns, it's the perfect time to unwind at the beach. Brace yourself for a delightful surprise! Hop on the metro to Hoek van Holland, and in just 40 minutes, e	Natural Attractions	584	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C4tBYf_omGs/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C4tBYf_omGs/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips!_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Last call to dive into the world of Yayoi Kusama at @stedelijk.museum.schiedam 📸_x000D_ 2. Celebrate Internatio	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities , Entertainment	147	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C4OA2u3IQuj/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C4OA2u3IQuj/</a>

Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our Museum Night special on March 2nd 📅📅_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Celebrate 150 years of @maritiemmuseumrotterdam! 📅 Dive into the compelling exhibition 'Verank	Online Tourist Storytelling, Historical Cultural Heritage, Experiential Activities , Entertainment	88	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C38cXu4ouvj/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C38cXu4ouvj/</a>
Rotterdam	Looking for some peace and tranquility? Explore Dakpark, Europe's largest rooftop park, situated at nine meters high, offering a beautiful view of the Port of Delfshaven. Rather doing something active	Natural Attractions	480	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3245_ZIbAv/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3245_ZIbAv/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend & explore Rotterdam with @__linda & @brucetmc's insider tips! 📅_x000D_ _x000D_ 📅 Visit @kunstinstituutmelly in the Witte de With, where a large dose of sociability and inc	Entertainment	125	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3qEwY4oO6t/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3qEwY4oO6t/</a>
Rotterdam	Spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with some amazing Chinese hand-pulled noodles! 📅 Check out Zheng's insider tips: _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Enjoy authentic Lanzhou noodles at @yellowriverrotterdam (Maurits	Experiential Activities , Entertainment	479	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3F8XJAIQAO/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3F8XJAIQAO/</a>
Rotterdam	Ditch the typical dining dates upcoming Valentine's Day and spice things up with these unique ideas! 📅_x000D_ _x000D_	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experien	295	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C3DV8NwoJk6/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C3DV8NwoJk6/</a>

	♥️ Break away from the ordinary with 'Life Actually' at @theaterwalhalla : after w	tial Activities , Entertainment		
Rotterdam	Beneath every surface lies a journey of continuous internal work. 🗺️_x000D_ _x000D_ It may be a personal goal, a neighbourhood project or a migration museum, there are plenty of internal journeys bei	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	612	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C24UFzOI6C1/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C24UFzOI6C1/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips!_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Enjoy the last days of Rotterdam Art Week: explore art, design, and architecture in 90+ events. Check out the ful	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities , Entertainment	146	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C20E-2tlrgb/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C20E-2tlrgb/</a>
Rotterdam	🗺️🗺️🗺️ Discover the Dynamic Fusion of Art and Innovation in @rotterdam_info. 🗺️ It goes without saying that Rotterdam dazzles with its architectural wonders and a melting pot of over 170 cultures. It's a	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Experiential Activities	997	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2kFkwLlpF6/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2kFkwLlpF6/</a>
Rotterdam	Only in Rotterdam we give all our landmarks distinctive nicknames 🗺️ Let's unveil a few gems: _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. De Pot (The Pot): A playful moniker for the iconic Depot Boijmans van Beuningen 🗺️_x000D_	Urban Environments	1686	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Na-xBoBDH/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Na-xBoBDH/</a>

Rotterdam	It's almost time for Rotterdam Art Week! 🎨📅 From 31 January to 4 February art enthusiasts from all over the world come to Rotterdam for inspiring fairs, exhibitions, pop up shows and open workshops	Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertainment	85	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C2LDHfNIXW9/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C2LDHfNIXW9/</a>
Rotterdam	Swipe to see the future of Santos @nlfotomuseum 📱_x000D_ _x000D_ The iconic Santos coffee warehouse (1903) on Katendrecht in Rotterdam is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Santos is set to become	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	423	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C17WCOxICaW/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C17WCOxICaW/</a>
Rotterdam	New year, new adventures in Rotterdam! Check out the city's latest gems: _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. @blendartwork: A cozy and creative coffee haven where you can not only enjoy excellent coffee but also admir	Experiential Activities, Entertainment	450	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C14jlpEI7RM/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C14jlpEI7RM/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend & explore Rotterdam with @faismusic's insider tips! 📱_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Historic Delfshaven is like a stroll through the past 📱_x000D_ 2. For a dose of that classic Blue No	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Entertainment	626	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C1rw53ElqI6/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C1rw53ElqI6/</a>
Rotterdam	What a year it was! It's already the last day of 2023, time to look back at some great highlights 📱_x000D_ _x000D_	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban	545	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C1iduYCiWZ_/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C1iduYCiWZ_/</a>

	<p>1. King's Day in Rotterdam coloured the town orange</p> <p>2. 'Moments Containe</p>	<p>Environ ments, Experien tial Activities , Entertain ment</p>		
Rotterdam	<p>Still on the hunt for a New Year's Eve event in Rotterdam? Check out our last-minute tips for a night filled memories to cherish</p> <p>1. Get ready to ring in 2024 with a bang as the Nationa</p>	<p>Experien tial Activities , Entertain ment</p>	970	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Zzt1olj5F/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Zzt1olj5F/</a>
Rotterdam	<p>Only in Rotterdam, you'll soon be able to experience the world's first coffee hotel by @manmetbrilkoffie!</p> <p>Get ready for a unique hotel featuring a roastery, coffee bar, restaurant, a</p>	<p>Online Tourist Storytelli ng, Experien tial Activities</p>	314	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C1XM_plousY/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C1XM_plousY/</a>
Rotterdam	<p>Only in Rotterdam we indulge in a unique dining experience at the floating @restaurantputaine</p> <p>Nestled in the Rijnhaven, you'll dine while being enveloped by the city's skyline. The ambiance</p>	<p>Urban Environ ments, Experien tial Activities , Entertain ment</p>	256	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0zd2N0I7gW/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0zd2N0I7gW/</a>
Rotterdam	<p>It's time again for a brand new autumn bucket list - Christmas markets edition. Swipe and save this post to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun!</p> <p>1. @vintageaandemaas</p>	<p>Online Tourist Storytelli ng, Natural Attractio ns, Local Culture and</p>	415	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/C0PG9NnoJEn/">https://www.instagram.com/p/C0PG9NnoJEn/</a>

	@oaserot	Customs, Entertainment		
Rotterdam	An alternative to spend your money in a good, conscious way this Black Friday: Changez @bluecity010   _x000D_ _x000D_ On Saturday 25 November, the day after, BlueCity and @theswapshop_nl transform the	Experiential Activities, Entertainment	367	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz89nuXizkl/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz89nuXizkl/</a>
Rotterdam	Exploring Rotterdam's Water Squares!   _x000D_ Did you know that these innovative water squares store 1.7 million gallons of rainwater, preventing overflow and transforming the square into a water oasis	Urban Environments	152	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQ1Wcal-IT/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQ1Wcal-IT/</a>
Rotterdam	Embracing the sunshine vibes this upcoming week! The perfect time for a delightful stroll, a cozy picnic, or maybe a nature workout. Have you explored the hidden gem, @eilandvanbrienenoord yet?   Thi	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions	182	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx8Szj6In5A/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx8Szj6In5A/</a>
Rotterdam	Get ready to celebrate autumn with a bucket list of festivities that will make this season unforgettable! Swipe and save to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun!   _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. From 4 -	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities, Entertainment	221	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CxtTcumobIM/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CxtTcumobIM/</a>
Rotterdam	Swipe and see the future of the Nelson Mandelapark  _x000D_ _x000D_ Exciting times ahead in	Urban Environments, Natural	724	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxlzt_po7D7/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxlzt_po7D7/</a>

	Rotterdam as the Nelson Mandelapark is on its way to the Maashaven, covering an impressive 10 football field	Attractions		
Rotterdam	Let's spice up this hot weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips! ☀️👉👉👉 1. Hop on the metro to Hoek van Holland and in just 40 minutes, escape the city center and find yourself in	Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities, Entertainment, Historical Cultural Heritage	215	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw7hhRQIW7P/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw7hhRQIW7P/</a>
Rotterdam	It's time again for a brand new summer bucket list - Kop van Zuid edition! Swipe and save this post to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun! 📌☀️ 1. At the foot of the Erasmus Bri	Online Tourist Storytelling, Urban Environments, Experiential Activities, Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertainment	1144	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw2vSUqME03/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw2vSUqME03/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam: visit World Port Days 1-3 September📌 Be amazed by the many shows on the Maas, walk along the quays, enjoy beautiful ships or book your excurs	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities	348	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CwpOLXMo11i/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CwpOLXMo11i/</a>
Rotterdam	It's time again for a brand new summer bucket list -	Online Tourist	279	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/">https://www.instagram.com/</a>

am	Katendrecht edition! Swipe and save this post to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun! 🌞☀️🌞_x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Soak up the good vibes around D	Storytelling, Urban Environments, Entertainment		p/Cwky65_IMn3/
Rotterdam	From September 3rd to 10th, get ready for ALL CAPS: the Netherlands' premier street art festival 🎨🎨🎨🎨 Make sure to check out the mural map and line up of this year's edition @allcaps_rotterdam. And b	Urban Environments, Entertainment	372	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CwfgARuI4-C/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CwfgARuI4-C/</a>
Rotterdam	As the clouds and rain disappear (finally), it's time for a brand new summer bucket list - eat and drink edition! Swipe and save this post to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun! 🌞☀️🌞_x000D_ _x	Entertainment, Experiential Activities	626	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvzY47UoC0m/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvzY47UoC0m/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips! _x000D_ _x000D_ 1. Rent an electric sloop @geenbootwelvaren and sail across the Kralingse Plas! 🚤_x000D_ 2. Escape the city and em	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities, Entertainment	222	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvuvyq-l4wx/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvuvyq-l4wx/</a>
Rotterdam	Swipe to see the future of Rijnhaven 🏗️_x000D_ _x000D_ In, on, and along the Rijnhaven a brand-new urban center is taking shape. By constructing high-rise buildings with 3,000	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions	703	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvP1ruRICSq/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvP1ruRICSq/</a>

	residences, the Rijnhaven			
Rotterdam	Discover @trompenburg: an 8-hectare paradise for plant enthusiasts and nature lovers 🌿 Also, the perfect spot to beat the summer heat, as the temperature can be more than 10 degrees cooler compared to	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions	532	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CvH-VGOoN6C/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CvH-VGOoN6C/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips! 🌞 1. Enjoy weekends until July 31 at the free-access Ridicule Festival @brutus.rotterdam unique sculpture garden. Sip	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions, Entertainment	438	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu7HvI-oWo2/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu7HvI-oWo2/</a>
Rotterdam	Get ready to celebrate summer with a bucket list of perfect cooling down spots. Swipe and save to make sure you don't miss out on all the fun! 🌞🌿 1. The Holland Amerikaplein at Kop van	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	483	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu18UONog6Q/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu18UONog6Q/</a>
Rotterdam	Let's spice up your weekend with our three golden tips! 🌞 1. From 14th July to 12th August @dakrotterdam brings you live performances, games, DJ sets by local talent, sports and breathta	Urban Environments, Experiential Activities, Entertainment	355	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CupStRYIWvd/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CupStRYIWvd/</a>
Rotterdam	Day and Night of Architecture on June 17th! Explore architecture through the eyes of architects, historians, residents, and builders during this annual event. Let's shine a	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions,	598	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtjQCTEIFfZ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtjQCTEIFfZ/</a>

	spotlight on a few activite	Experien tial Activities , Entertain ment		
Rotterd am	📷📷 Calling all architecture aficionados once more because Rotterdam Architecture Month is here! The whole month of June evolves around the richness of rooftops of @rotterdam_info where the event is	Online Tourist Storytelli ng, Urban Environ ments, Natural Attractio ns, Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertain ment	1011	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtTX2ONofF8/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtTX2ONofF8/</a>
Rotterd am	European Sleeper launched a new night train, connecting the Netherlands to Berlin. Boarding in Rotterdam at 21:21, you'll wake up at Berlin Hauptbahnhof at 6:48 the next morning 📷📷 _x000D_ _x000D_ Ar	Experien tial Activities	1094	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsqV3V6oIMi/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsqV3V6oIMi/</a>
Rotterd am	Happy National Windmill Day! It's time to celebrate a piece of Dutch culture, so let's take a look at some of our stunning windmills: _x000D_ _x000D_ 📷The Distilleerkerketel Delfshaven _x000D_ The Distil	Natural Attractio ns, Historical Cultural Heritage, Local Culture and Customs	545	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CsMKxYKITin/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CsMKxYKITin/</a>
Rotterd am	Step into a world of flavors and colors at the Markthal in Rotterdam, where culinary	Urban Environ ments,	871	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq5nGJDqbRE/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq5nGJDqbRE/</a>

	delights and stunning architecture come together in perfect harmony 📸📸_x000D_ _x000D_ Curious for more architectur	Experiential Activities		
Rotterdam	No plans for this weekend yet? Check out where the Rotterdammers hang out! Will we see you there?_x000D_ _x000D_ 📸 Reopening @weelderotterdam_x000D_ To start off the final season with a bang, Weelde o	Online Tourist Storytelling, Experiential Activities , Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertainment	123	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cqatb3Uq9qX/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cqatb3Uq9qX/</a>
Rotterdam	Rotterdam is a water-rich city – known for its great Port of Rotterdam – and therefore, we should enjoy this element a bit more. In honour of World Water Day we highlight three of our floating spots!	Urban Environments, Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	511	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqGN1_voN_N/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqGN1_voN_N/</a>
Rotterdam	All about art 📸📸_x000D_ _x000D_ The artwork L'Âge d'Or depicts a more than 3.5-metre-high open door. The spot could not be more appropriate: here, on the Wilhelmina Pier, millions of emigrants left f	Historical Cultural Heritage	459	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CpNkUZS1bTy/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CpNkUZS1bTy/</a>
Rotterdam	No plans for this weekend yet? From today on it's time for @rotterdamartweek. Check out where the Rotterdammers hang out! Will we see you there?_x000D_ _x000D_ 📸 @hi_monument_x000D_	Experiential Activities , Entertainment	107	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CoaFHKlqG5I/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CoaFHKlqG5I/</a>

	HIM is a place for			
Rotterdam	Green, Greener, Greenest Explore the city in a fun, innovative and responsible manner from the water with the prize-winning @ikapitein, the world's first pleasure craft with an integ	Online Tourist Storytelling, Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities	101	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn4ma3_oCPQ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn4ma3_oCPQ/</a>
Rotterdam	All About Art The Tiger is back! It's almost time for the 52 edition of International Film Festival Rotterdam. Film fanatics from all over the world come to Rotterdam for the annual	Experiential Activities, Historical Cultural Heritage, Entertainment	321	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CnhbCxxqsf/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CnhbCxxqsf/</a>
Rotterdam	No plans for this weekend yet? Check out where the Rotterdammers hang out! Will we see you there? Rootgallery Have you discovered @rootgallery yet? A small gallery in Rotterdam	Experiential Activities, Entertainment	135	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CnUs6YBIT22/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CnUs6YBIT22/</a>
Rotterdam	Want to leave the hustle and bustle of the city centre behind? Embrace the charm of Delfshaven's historic streets on a tranquil morning stroll #dorotterdam #differentkindoftourist #d	Urban Environments, Historical Cultural Heritage	1103	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtJzJfLoK-f/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtJzJfLoK-f/</a>
Rotterdam	Rotterdam is known for its modern and innovative architecture. The bombing during World War II led to a	Urban Environments	592	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CqnlaTFowLJ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CqnlaTFowLJ/</a>

	<p>wave of post-war reconstruction and a renewed focus on modern architecture. We never stopped emb</p>			
Rotterdam	<p>With the rising temperatures, it's the perfect time to explore Rotterdam's hidden parks</p> <p>📍 Historische Tuin Schoonoord_x000D_ Historische Tuin Schoonoord is a hidden oasis boasting a d</p>	Natural Attractions	491	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CtMYNmqlHsJ/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CtMYNmqlHsJ/</a>
Rotterdam	<p>Let's spice up your weekend in Rotterdam with our three golden tips!_x000D_ Rotterdam Parks Month_x000D_ It's the last weekend of The Rotterdam Parks Month, which highlights the most beauti</p>	Natural Attractions, Experiential Activities, Local Culture and Customs, Entertainment	136	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/Css_s-Uoecc/">https://www.instagram.com/p/Css_s-Uoecc/</a>

## Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Thesis

### Student Information

Name: Antonina Paradeisi

Student ID: 709508

Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000

Supervisor Name: Dr Ju - Sung (Jay) Lee

Date: 26/6/25

Declaration:

### Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
- ~~Writing improvements, including~~ grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books (e.g.,

I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically [Name of the AI Tool(s) or Framework(s) Used], in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: Antonina Paradeisi

Date of Signature: 26/6/25

### Extent of AI Usage

I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.

### Ethical and Academic Integrity

I understand the ethical implications and academic

integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: [Antonina Paradeisi]

Date of Signature: [26/6/25]

## **Appendix**

I have utilized AI solely for spelling corrections, enhancing the academic tone of my writing through some synonyms, and gaining a better understanding of certain concepts such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).