

# Santa Claus Is Coming to Town: A Case Study of Santa Claus Park in Mohe, China

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Master's Thesis  
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Department of Communication  
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# **AALTO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

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## **Objectives**

The objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and to provide a study for promoting Santa Claus Park to them. This study focused on three tasks: 1) identifying the image of Santa Claus and its cultural impact in China, compared to its Western origin; 2) identifying the market segmentation for Mohe Santa Claus Village in China; and 3) providing suggestions for Santa Claus Village marketing activities to best attract potential customers.

## **Methodology**

The study used a single-case approach consisting of qualitative interviews with 16 respondents in three major Chinese cities and a quantitative survey among 100 people from nine provinces in China. Santa Claus Park in Mohe has been chosen as the case company. It is a newly established theme park in China that used Santa Claus Village in Lapland as its model. Santa Claus Park was chosen because it provided the perfect comparison of a well-known cultural feature exported from its original culture to a destination culture.

## **Findings**

The present study has provided good insight of how the Chinese perceive Santa Claus as a feature associated with Western culture. It also gave information about current Chinese tourism trends, thus giving guidance for the development of Chinese tourism generally. This study also defined different ways of communication needed to promote Santa Claus Park in China compared to Finland.

**Key words:** Santa Claus, Mohe, Santa Claus Village, Chinese, culture, communication, branding, marketing, tourist, tourism

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*In Finland, we love brands. What else would you expect from a country that has successfully branded itself as the land of Santa Claus? Santa started locally in Finnish Lapland, and then went onto become a global brand.*

-- Cai-Göran Alexander Stubb, in the *European Voices* magazine, about branding Finland

# 1 Introduction

The idea for my research topic and the case, Santa Claus Park in Mohe, emerges from intriguing news: The Santa Claus, impersonated by a Finn, arrived in Beijing on 18 December 2010 to perform in the Santa Claus Village for the then-upcoming<sup>1</sup> Christmas in Mohe<sup>2</sup>, the northernmost village in China. This Santa Claus Village brand is owned by the Finnish company China Tekway, who had been actively promoting Mohe's Santa Claus Village project in Finland and China.<sup>3</sup> They had also initiated the idea of taking the “real Santa Claus from Finland to China” jointly with the Heilongjiang province government.

There are two reasons why this topic is interesting to study: Finland's “national branding” of Santa Claus was already widely discussed in the news, and a group of fellow business students studying consumer culture at the Aalto Business School were interested in promoting anthropomorphic marketing and its associated product portfolios.

Anthropomorphic marketing is reflected in products, services, destination branding, advertising mascots etc. that are “ubiquitous in marketing” (Brown, 2010). In his call for papers for the *Journal of Marketing Management Special Issue*, Professor Stephen Brown argued, “Despite the prevalence of anthropomorphism, its appeal is poorly understood” (Brown, 2010). If the term “anthropomorphic marketing” lacks meaning, imagine “Angry Birds”, “Hello Kitty” and those lovely toys, shirts and shops filled by their themes. This is an emerging area for studies and many small- and medium-size growing companies, not only as an information technology

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Marketing Management Special Issues* (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/cfp/rjmmcfp.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.china.org.cn/travel/2010-12/20/content\\_21579673.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/travel/2010-12/20/content_21579673.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.chinatekway.com/news/News-2012-6-20.pdf>



business as Brown has stated, but also in many other fields that deal with anthropomorphism or theming.

When I considered the chosen case, it initially seemed quite surprising that Mohe could be Santa's destination. Santa Claus has been traditionally believed to be a Western old man. Mohe, as China's northernmost village, has not been touched by much foreign investments or trade. In fact, as a travel enthusiast, I had never considered putting it into travel schedule.

In November 2011, while participating in the Fourth Multisemiotic Talks symposium (MUST-4)<sup>4</sup>, which had been organized around the theme of 'Santa Claus', I also visited the capital of Lapland, Rovaniemi, where Santa Claus Village is located. There I met people who had worked to brand the city as Christmas Land and who worked in the post office at Santa Claus Village to send "authentic Christmas gifts" to people around the world. Back in Helsinki, I discovered much interest in exporting Santa Claus to China. It seems the promotion of Finland as Santa's home country to the Chinese is getting popular, both in China and Finland.

More recently, I interviewed the director of China Tekway, the Finland-based company that owns the Santa Claus Park brand and worked with the Mohe government to establish Santa Claus Village in Mohe. The director shared his experiences of transferring Santa Claus to a very typical Chinese village with I and those effects on both expatriate Santa and local people's lives.

All this input has brought different perspectives to this study. While doing research, social media and other Information and Communication Technology ICT tools helped I connect with the stakeholders who are important to this thesis and facilitate communication with correspondents. I reached tourism enthusiasts by social media, interviewed subjects via Skype and collected data via on-line survey assessment tools.

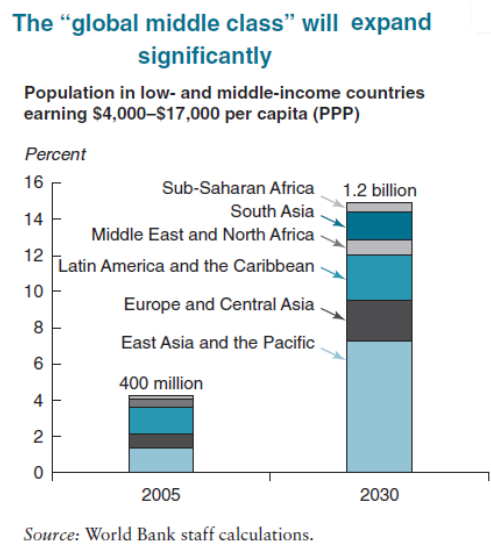
In this thesis, I will reveal my discoveries or, rather, rediscoveries from the empirical study of Santa Claus image-associated culture and traditions, tourism and theme park studies, and regional tourism resources in Mohe, comparing them with Lapland for a solid foundation for this study. First, we examine the tourism environment in China to get a broad picture of the challenges and opportunities to establish a tourism program in the Mohe region.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/multisystemiotic-talks/>

## 1.1 Background of Study

As noticed in *Global Economy Prospects* January 2013<sup>5</sup>, East Asia is a major global tourist destination among developing countries, having welcomed about 204 million visitors in the calendar year 2011—about one-fifth of all international tourists—according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2001). Among these nations, China was still the top recipient of remittances globally in 2012, receiving \$66 billion.



The global middle class in 2030, projected from the December 2006 World Bank report<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1 The Global Middle-Class Expansion**

Two major factors are fueling the domestic Chinese tourism boom. The first is the emergence of a newly prosperous middle class. Nonetheless, “multiple orientations coexist among China’s middle class today, and it has a long way to go before it forms a homogeneous middle-class

<sup>5</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1322593305595/8287139-1358278153255/GEP13AFinalFullReport.pdf> (p.102)

<sup>6</sup> [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGEP2007/Resources/GEP\\_07\\_Overview.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGEP2007/Resources/GEP_07_Overview.pdf) (p.16)

identity and culture” (Li, 2012). The total size of the Chinese middle class had reached 300 million by 2011.

Another fueling factor is the easing of restrictions on travel by the Chinese government. The boom is driven by both inbound and outbound international tourism and domestic tourism. By 2011, China had already become the world's third most-visited country. The number of overseas tourists was 13.542 million (2011).<sup>7</sup> The number of domestic tourist visits totaled 2.6 billion, which is 9.4% of total resident consumption. By the first quarter of 2012, China's domestic tourism revenue reached RMB ¥648.8 billion.<sup>8</sup>

Tourism development has surely benefited the local economy as well as many other fields. Thus, the government has increasingly taken it seriously (Wu, et al, 2000). Domestic tourism has turned out to be a new growth area in many regions of China. It makes a significant contribution in promoting regional economic growth, improving local economic structures, driving the development of related industries, enhancing employment and activating domestic demand. Various aspects of domestic tourism attracted the attention of many researchers, including Wu (1999), Zhang (1999), Zhang et al. (1999), Zhao (1999) etc.

Travel within China has become easier and more popular in recent years for many reasons, including the lifting of travel controls, the rapid rise in incomes and massive investment in transportation facilities such as roads, railways and airlines.<sup>9</sup> The five-day working week and long weekends (i.e. Labor Day, National Day, Lunar New Year etc.) “have increased leisure time for the Chinese people (and) spurred market demand in domestic tourism, thus fueling its prosperity<sup>10</sup>.”

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cnta.gov.cn/html/2012-2/2012-2-21-19-9-54985.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.askci.com/news/201204/16/163736\\_97.shtml](http://www.askci.com/news/201204/16/163736_97.shtml)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.chinability.com/tourism\\_in\\_china\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_cen.htm](http://www.chinability.com/tourism_in_china_in_the_21st_cen.htm)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/220246/china\\_tourism\\_industry.pdf](http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/220246/china_tourism_industry.pdf)



Figure 2 Chinese Tourist Attraction Map, 2012<sup>11</sup>

“China is endowed with diverse tourist resources,” wrote Zhang (1999), who proposed that “at least nine tourism zones in China ... incorporate climatic differentiations and destination characteristics” (Shen 1993, p. 89). These are:

1. Capital China: ancient and modern tourist area (including Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei);
2. Northeast: “North Land” scenery tourist area (including Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang)<sup>12</sup>;67
3. Silk Road: ethnic cultural pilgrim area (including Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Gansu and Ningxia);
4. Chinese-civilisation heritage tourist area (including Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan and Shandong);
5. Southwest, ethnic customs and traditions tourist areas in Qishanxiushui (including Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Guishou and Guangxi);
6. Jingchu Culture Koyama landscape tourist areas (including Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi);
7. Wuyue culture Jiangnan hometown scenery tourist area (including Jiangsu, Anhui, Shanghai and Zhejiang);

<sup>11</sup> Modified from <http://www.tourismchina-ca.com/mainmap.htm>

<sup>12</sup> This is where Mohe is located.

8. Lingnan culture, tropical-subtropical tourist area (including Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan); and
9. Adventure tourism zone in the Roof of the World (including Qinghai and Tibet).

Mohe is located in China's northeast, "North Land", No. 2 in the above list. The regional tourism development plan and local tourist resources help researchers identify the unique advantages of the Mohe region, thus providing a source to further differentiate tourism products and program development and to form a competitive marketing strategy. Chinese regional tourism development varies. The zoning schemes are different, as are the tourism resources, the level of tourism development, the tourism industry structure, the partition etc.

Each of these nine tourist areas has developed its own specialized tourist program based on their unique features of landscape, historical heritage, local ethnic groups etc., forming a colorful diversity of resources and reflecting regional differences in the characteristics of tourism resources. Thus, duplication of investment and unnecessary competition between tourist zones are avoided.

Mohe is located inside the Northeast North Land scenery tourist area, which includes Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang. The Chinese State Council has approved the tourism industry strategy of this area as "to develop eco-tourism<sup>13</sup>...to become the world's leading ice leisure tourism area...to become Northeast Asia's historical and cultural tourist area..." (The Chinese State Council, 2010). Since Santa Claus Village is a government-invested, local economic development project, it is important that any marketing plan or development strategy should follow the guidelines of the State Council.

Ecotourism in this context serves as an alternative to traditional high-impact, over-controlled mass tourism. "Ecotourism is expected to contribute to economic development of its destination areas especially in its role of earning foreign exchange, diversifying regional economies and providing income directly to regional and local economies" (Boo 1990).

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<sup>13</sup> Ecotourism is defined as "nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable" (Commonwealth Department of Tourism, Australia 1994, p. 17).

For Mohe, developing ecotourism is highly important to protect its natural resources and promote its unique cultural position. According to the government home page of Mohe<sup>14</sup>, it is at the latitude of 53° 29' N and is known as China's "Arctic Village" (北极村). The village is on the Amur River, which forms the border with Russia. It is named after the Mohe, the Tungusic people of ancient Manchuria<sup>15</sup>. The village is also the only place in China that has the astronomical phenomenon of aurora borealis, which attracts domestic and foreign tourists to this village.



**Figure 3 Mohe in Heilongjiang Province**

At present, China's tourism is concentrated in cities<sup>16</sup> like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Yunnan, with more than 90% of tourism income receipts being earned by cities. In comparison, China's large rural areas, rich in diversified nature resources, are not obtaining a large share of tourism in China, except for Yunnan Province.

Many remote areas in North China contain good natural resources and scenery that are an advantage for developing tourism. Despite the large expected marketing value and huge development potential, not many academic studies focus on the tourism and economic potential of this area for the Chinese domestic tourist market. I found very few such studies in Chinese, which I had already included in this thesis, and even fewer in English. This reflects the fact that,

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hlmohe.gov.cn/zjmh/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hlmohe.gov.cn/zjmh/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cnta.gov.cn/html/2012-6/2012-6-11-11-16-82026.html>

though the area has bountiful natural resources for tourism and local ambitions to develop tourist industry, the area is lacking in reputation and popularity among tourism enthusiasts. It needs to build tourism products, for example the new Santa Claus Park in Mohe; more importantly, it must find an effective marketing strategy to attract visitors. That is what this thesis is seeking, and that is what this thesis intends to contribute.

Two main factors are motivating this research. The first is the Finnish perspective. Finland has been highly interested in promoting its national brand in recent years. After Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's initial efforts, Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb set up a high-level group to develop a national brand starting in September 2008. This group included distinguished representatives of business, the arts and sciences, sport and opinion leaders in Finland, from historians to football players to painters. The committee has described the purpose of the country's branding as: "1) strengthening the operating potential of Finnish businesses; 2) increasing foreign political influence; 3) promoting interest in Finland as an investment target; and 4) increasing tourist flows to Finland. The country brand is regarded as a cornerstone for success and prosperity."<sup>17</sup>

Among many other cultural or branding icons, Santa Claus has been regarded as a successful Finnish national brand. If we examine the case from a national branding point of view and focus on the business-related motivation, we can hypothesis that Santa Claus's arrival in China should meet Finland's objectives. During interviews with Finnish people involved in promoting Santa Claus's image, it was confirmed that they do believe that branding Finland as the hometown of Santa Claus will promote the Finnish national image through Santa's cultural influence and, furthermore, improve the commercialization of other brands that originate from Finland.

The second perspective is that of Chinese regional development: The Santa Claus theme park in Mohe, which started construction in September 2009, is a big economic step for the region, covering more than one square kilometer of land. It features Santa Claus's house, an arctic-style

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<sup>17</sup> <http://nation-branding.info/2009/07/22/finland-plans-managing-country-brand/>

souvenir shop and a post office with the whole village decked out with illuminated Christmas trees.

Santa Claus Park, also called “Christmas Village”, is a key project for Mohe, and it aims to introduce a European festive atmosphere to tourists and visitors during the Christmas season. Mohe Santa Claus Park is located in Mohe Arctic Village Station.<sup>18</sup> As an integrated part of Mohe Arctic Village, it has incorporated Christmas attractions into the theme park like Christmas Square, a ski resort, Fairy Tale World, Snow White Paradise and Reindeer Park. The natural setting of the theme park includes a subarctic coniferous forest, long winters with snow and ice, and rivers that border Russia and Aurora. All these elements create a Chinese, Santa Claus, polar and Christmas tourism fusion.

Inside the park, various tourist programs utilise nature resources to promote the fun of snow and ice: a tour on ice castle, snowy vistas, a variety of snow sports, snow survival training, riding a moose sledge, ice fishing, a cold spa, snowmobiling, snow football, curling competitions and snow golf<sup>19</sup>.

I contacted the company who owns “the Santa Claus Park” brand in China, China Tekway, and invited the manager, Erlin Yang, for two open-ended interviews. According to China Tekway’s manager, building a theme park is a long process that typically involves a multi-industry effort. The project is in the current stage of the basic construction of roads, facilities and other tourism-related informational infrastructure. The total number of milestones is unknown, but by the end of June 2012, the third milestone was achieved. Santa Claus Village was open to the public, with the main areas ready to receive tourists.

As part of the brand building and promotion work, the company’s recent activities in Finland are to continue attracting investments from Finland to Mohe Santa Claus Village, preparing market promotion materials and looking for enhanced business opportunities. China Tekway is also promoting product placement for original Finnish brands in Santa Claus Village to establish the commercial platform of the theme park in addition to its tourism value. The manager mentioned that, because of the gift giving that is linked with Santa Claus and the Christmas season, Mohe’s

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.hlmohe.gov.cn/mhly/szbj/2012/04/259.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.hlmohe.gov.cn/mhly/szbj/2012/04/259.html>



Santa Claus Park also plans to have collections of commercial gifts for visitors to purchase. The value of gift merchandise will be an important part of revenue. Among those collections, original Finnish brands are regarded as ideal to promote both Santa Claus Park and the Finnish personality of Santa; the park is Finnish-original and “authentic”.

I asked the manager what activities he thought were most needed in developing Santa Village. The manager told me that, currently, the most important task for him is to convince investors to have confidence in Santa Claus Park as a commercial platform for promoting the Finnish brand in China. This requires two steps: first, to promote Santa Claus Park to visitors, and second, to promote Finnish products to park visitors. Because the second step can only be achieved after the first, in this thesis, we will focus on providing useful information to make a successful marketing and communication solution.

As is common sense in marketing and advertising, we must know about our customers to make a marketing strategy. So here comes the following question for research work: Who are the target customers, and what are their preferences when choosing Mohe Santa Claus Village as a tourist destination? What other Santa Claus-associated products would be interesting for visitors to take home? How big are the current market scale and its potential?

## **1.2 Research problem**

As mentioned before, the objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and provide possible convincing communication solutions in promoting Santa Claus Village to them. It is thus natural that we will first delve into Santa Claus’s Western origin and his cultural roots as a feature character. To get a full picture of the perception and reception of Santa Claus among the Chinese, we will also need to learn a bit about Santa Claus and his associated history in China. This leads to formulating the following three main research questions, which the thesis attempts to answer:

- 1) What is the perception of Santa Claus in the Chinese culture compared with his Western origin?

- 2) Who would be interested in visiting Mohe Santa Claus Village in China?
- 3) What are the best ways and activities to communicate and market Santa Claus Village to attract potential customers?

Since Finland and many countries have been putting huge efforts in developing their national brands, it is also worthwhile for us to take a close look at the effect of all these activities and study practical implications.

This study will also create practical value. It may serve Finnish companies when they consider whether to invest in Santa Claus Village. Competitiveness and communication are highly correlated. If product does not communicate, it does not sell: neither products nor identity (Pattuglia, 2011). Communication is present almost everywhere. In other words, branding is communication in a narrow sense and duty-loaded domain. Marketing perspectives have not been a main topic covered during my international business communication (IBC) studies, so much of this research work required self-study from other areas like the tourism industry, marketing and branding studies, etc.

### **1.3 Importance of topic in the IBC domain**

There are two prospects to address about the worthiness of this research for international business communication.

The first reason the topic is important is from a tourism destination-branding point of view, that is, to study for practical solutions to transferring foreign-origin cultural elements to new destinations. As the manager from brand owner China Tekway mentioned: “To invite the ‘Finnish Santa Claus’ to China is only a small part of the whole project. To make it convincing to customer and to achieve commercial success often needs effort beyond the scale of setting up a park. It goes from learning the perceptions of Santa Claus and his living place to delighting customers with something more than what they expected.”

The second aspect is to give insight about Chinese tourism industry development and focus on potential customers for Mohe Santa Claus Park to provide a practical plan to reach target customers and approach them with Santa Claus Park and associated tourism programs. Everything is about communication, and only when all elements are successfully delivered is the branding work done.

Santa Claus Park's challenge is communicating Santa Claus as a cultural symbol to the Chinese customer, making an "unreal" figure seem an actual person (especially a Finnish guy!), attracting tourists to a faraway village in a remote area, selling more goods and promoting the origins of the cultural symbol. Thus, it also inspires me to continue this research and contribute to these projects.

In this research, the IBC curriculum of cross-cultural communication and studies in marketing communication and customer experience made great contributions in forming this study and leading to its insights and understanding. However, since I had known Santa much earlier than heard he lives in Lapland, private company operates Lapland Santa Claus Village and the Mohe Santa Claus is just hired among Finnish job-seekers, questions like "Is Finland really the 'home' of Santa Claus?"; "Who is Santa Claus?" and "Why has he been associated with Finland and got a home in Lapland?" have echoed in my mind. I believe these will also be questions others who consider the Santa Claus Village their tour destination will ask. Therefore, I will also dedicate some parts of the thesis to background research of the Santa Claus tradition and its cultural associations that tell the "truth", thus an important contribution to the topic.

## **1.4 Structure of Thesis**

The main body of this thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I have introduced my personal motivation behind the study, the case background, the academic motivation, the research questions and the importance of the study in IBC. This section explains the organisation of the rest of the thesis.

In the second chapter, I will review the literature concerning empirical research in the domain established to provide an academic background for the analysis. The chapter elaborates on research in such areas as tourist industry development in China and worldwide, the origins of Santa Claus and current perceptions worldwide, the perception of Santa Claus's image in China, intercultural communication, consumer culture study, feature character commercial branding, national branding and an ethnographic culture study for both original cultures (Western/Finnish Santa Claus) and export destination culture (Santa Claus in Chinese perception).

The third chapter contains the process of research, starting with research methods and the argument for the rationale of choosing such methods for data collection and analysis. Here I will also bring in detailed information for research design and the rationale for research reliability.

In the fourth chapter, I will provide the analyses and the results from both the quantitative survey and the qualitative analyses that have been achieved from my study. Both first-hand information and the empirical study will be addressed in detail. The result and limitations also will be discussed in this part.

The fifth chapter summarises the aim and research questions, main results and the discussion of limitations for suggestions of further study.

## 2 Review of Literature

In this part, I will discuss earlier research in the fields that have contributed to this research. The aim of this study is comprised of three interlinked subject areas, as the image of Santa Claus and its Western origin is compared with its Chinese destination. This serves as the cultural background of the study; from commercial perspectives, the literature review will focus on market segmentation for a Chinese tourist destination and corresponding marketing methods to attract potential customers. Consequently, the study's literature has been roughly divided into three main fields: a cultural study of Santa Claus in both China and the Western world, tourist research work in the theme park industry, the Chinese tourist industry operational environment for case destination, and marketing strategy with the preferred channels.

In conjunction with Santa Claus Village operational environment studies and the effort to look for a concrete marketing plan, there will be also reviews of destination branding strategy to later facilitate the study's implications.

### 2.1 Santa Claus, Past and Present

There is much information about Santa Claus's origin and the history associated with Santa or Christmas on the Internet. A Google search for "Santa Claus" achieved about 86,000,000 results. Wikipedia has a brief introduction of Santa Claus that covered many aspects of the character. However, it is a bit hard to find information about this feature character from business and economic journals like *Emerald* or *SAGE*. Santa is also known as "Saint Nicholas", "Father Christmas" and simply "Santa". (Appendix 1 is a cited timeline of Saint Nicholas from a collection by Carol Myers and Jim Rosenthal's [www.stnicholascenter.org](http://www.stnicholascenter.org).)

Reading some of those articles that are related to Santa Claus, it is not difficult to notice that Santa is a figure with legendary, mythical, historical and folkloric origins in many Western cultures. Santa Claus is also associated with a commercial effort from Coca-Cola (Barr, 1989) and retail industry (Sheldon, 2002) to promote their products and boost sales. For most people, “what is most look up from Santa is to bring gifts to the homes of the good children during the late evening and overnight hours of Christmas Eve, December 24”<sup>20</sup>.



Detail from broadside by Alexander Anderson, December 6, 1810  
*St. Nicholas Center Collection*

**Figure 4 Saint Nicholas**

“The modern figure was derived from the Dutch figure of Sinter Klaas”<sup>21</sup>. After searching for Sinter Klaas, the Google engine hints it “has part of its basis in hagiographical tales concerning the historical figure of gift-giver Saint Nicholas (Burrows, 1999)”. According to Wikipedia’s Santa Claus page, it is said that, “in Greek and Byzantine folklore there is Basil of Caesarea. It leads to Basil's feast day which is on January 1 to be considered the time of exchanging gifts in Greece<sup>22</sup> (grammar modified)”.

The modern image of Santa Claus is not very different from one place to another. He is generally depicted as a stout man acting jolly, with a large white beard and wearing a red hat and overalls with white collar and cuffs, wide belt and large black boots. Images of him rarely have a beard with no moustache. He is often carrying a bag of gifts on his back. This image “became popular

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16329025>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nicholas/nicholas\\_of\\_myra3.html](http://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nicholas/nicholas_of_myra3.html)

<sup>22</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\\_Claus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Claus)

in the United States and Canada in the 19th century due to the significant influence of Clement Clarke Moore's 1823 poem 'A Visit From Saint Nicholas'<sup>23</sup> and of caricaturist and political cartoonist Thomas Nast<sup>24</sup>. After those works, many media have replicated this image. Associated with Christmas season and its commercial activities, this image is widely used in song, radio, television, children's books and films.

Belk et al. (1989) have noticed "the two ongoing processes in contemporary society; secularisation of religion and the sacralisation of the secular". Santa Claus's image reflects this. St. Nicholas had been part of religious legend for more than 1,500 years until 1979, when it was officially removed from the hagiography list. The legend that Santa Claus travels around the world on Christmas Eve coexists with our modern life. The celebration of Christmas has moved from "church", which refers to the religious role of Santa, to "shopping centers", which is the total commercialised Santa (Belk and Bryce 1993). Just like Mark Pendergrast (1993, p. 181); explained, "Prior to the Sundholm illustrations, the Christmas saint had been variously illustrated wearing blue, yellow, green, or red. After the soft drink ads, Santa would forevermore be a huge, fat, relentlessly happy man with a broad belt and black hip boots—and he would wear Coca-Cola red" or, as Barr quotes Marcio Moriera, creative team leader and director for Coca-Cola International Advertising of McCann-Erickson, "Christ, Coke made Santa Claus a universal figure" (Barr, 1989).

Now we will study the Santa Claus's image in Northern Europe. The information in this part combines academic research, visiting of popular websites and stories I heard during my stay in Finland. What I have learned from Finnish folks is there is a deer uncle who scares children at the end of the year. He wears horns and is not that well dressed. Since this is very different from the popular Santa Claus image (which refers to that which is mentioned in the last chapter of this thesis), I started researching the link between Santa Claus and Scandinavian folk traditions.

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<sup>23</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\\_Claus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Claus)

<sup>24</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\\_Claus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Claus)

In Danish folk tradition around the 1840s, the fairytale character called "Tomte" or "Nisse" started to deliver Christmas presents. Tomte's traditional appearance has been a bit different from Santa Claus; Tomte is described as "a short, bearded man dressed in gray clothes and a red hat"<sup>25</sup>.



**Figure 5** Folktale depiction of Father Christmas riding a goat

Perhaps an evolved version of the Swedish Tomte.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 3 shows Father Christmas riding a goat. This is very similar to the folk depiction of the Swedish Tomte. This image was taken from Wikipedia and is widely used in the citations of 35 different wikipedia pages<sup>27</sup>. The same thing happened in Finland, where the more human figure retained the Yule Goat name,<sup>28</sup> "Joulupukki", as my friends call it. Yule Goat is believed to have a link with the Scandinavian folk god Thor. Although the tradition of the Yule Goat as a bringer of presents is no longer practised, a straw goat that is still called the Yule Goat is still a common Christmas decoration in all.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\\_Claus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Claus)

<sup>26</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santaandgoat.gif>

<sup>27</sup> Accessed by 1 April 2013

<sup>28</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yule\\_Goat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yule_Goat)



There is also another source of Santa Claus in German culture, in which he is related to the Norse god Odin, god of poetry, wisdom, hosts and the dead (Lindow, 2001), who rode flying horses during the winter pagan holiday to give gifts to children.

## 2.2 Santa's Home

Since the image of Santa Claus has multiple sources, several locations are regarded as Santa's residents. What remains common in the Santa Claus tradition also reflects on his home settings. Traditionally, Santa's residence is a logwood house. Within the same house or nearby are the gifts he delivers to good children at Christmas; a post office is necessary for both receiving, requesting and sending the gift. According to some legends, Santa has helpers, elves or other supernatural beings who live in a village around Santa's residence aid Santa in making gifts, writing letters to children and delivering gifts to children.

Around the world, the address of Santa's residence is different, mostly relative to some localised features of the host culture. For example, his Danish residence is on Uummanaq Island, and his home is a restored traditional Greenlandic turf house, Santa Claus Castle. Sitting beside the fireplace in this spacious place, Santa and his helpers receive letters from children or their parents to reserve gifts.

Moving to North American tradition, the United States and Canada are two countries who gave Santa's residence a dedicated postal code.<sup>29 30 31 32 33</sup> Santa lives in Canadian jurisdiction in postal code H0H 0H0 (a reference to "ho ho ho", Santa's notable saying, though postal codes starting with "H" are usually reserved for the island of Montreal in Québec)<sup>34</sup> which is located on the Canadian side of the North Pole. On the US side of Alaska, there is a city named North Pole in Alaska, and a tourist attraction called the Santa Claus House has been established. Santa Claus uses the local zip code of 99705 in all his mail and delivery services. The post office is also

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.the-north-pole.com/history/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/resources/news-and-press/news-archive/660-santa-our-arctic-colleague>

<sup>31</sup> <http://traditionscustoms.com/christmas-traditions/christmas-north-america>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/origin-of-santa/>

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postal\\_codes\\_in\\_Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postal_codes_in_Canada)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.writetosanta.ca/santas-address.php>

named “Santa’s post office” in all promotions. It’s slightly humorous that, every Christmas, the US military agency NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) trains its radars to track Santa’s progress to America.

On 23 December 2008, Santa Claus received his Canadian citizenship from Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney. Therefore, Santa Claus “has the automatic right to re-enter Canada once his trip around the world is complete,” Kenney said in an official statement.

Santa has at least four residences in Nordic countries because of his strong favoritism among the locals. As per Wikipedia’s Santa Claus page<sup>35</sup>, “Each Nordic country claims Santa’s residence to be within their territory. Norway claims he lives in Drøbak. In Denmark, he is said to live in Greenland (near Uummannaq). In Sweden, the town of Mora has a theme park named Tomteland. The national postal terminal in Tomtebodav in Stockholm receives children's letters for Santa. In Finland, Korvatunturi has long been known as Santa’s home, and two theme parks, Santa Claus Village and Santa Park, are located near Rovaniemi.”

### 2.3 Santa Claus in China

In this part of the research, we try to collect all the elements that contribute to Santa Claus and Christmas image and practise among Chinese people. As previous research in this study indicated the strong link between Santa Claus and Christian traditions, we will review the development of Christianity in China to examine the source of Santa Claus among the Chinese.

With Santa Claus’s religious origin, we trace the footprint of Christianity in China. Christianity in China has been a minority religion compared with ancient institutional religions like Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism. Christianity has existed in China since at least the seventh century and comprises Protestants, Catholics, and a small number of Orthodox Christians. Christianity has grown fast in China within the last 200 years (Mei, 2007).

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<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa\\_claus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_claus)

Wailu Hou (1962), in his book *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, maintains that medieval Christianity was introduced to China in three waves. The first two did not influence philosophical thinking. China's official brush with so-called "Western philosophy", should count on Christian to the late Ming, when there is a sign of philosophy of Christianity has been brought together with religious. This is also acknowledged by other scholars (Gernet, 1996) that the real incoming of a religion should count on the impact of its religious ideology or philosophy of the scale, not simply by the time of showing early or late as the criteria. During this time. However, even by late Ming, there had not been any record for celebrating Christmas or special practises regarding Saint Nicholas. The main celebration in Chinese tradition is the Lunar New Year, which celebrates the coming of Spring in South China and is scheduled at the end of each Chinese traditional year, that is, the lunar calendar, corresponding to January and February in the Gregorian (or the Christian) calendar.

As the Chinese researcher Mei Ling (2007) has noticed in research for Santa Claus and Christmas' media presents in *SHEN BAO* ("申报"<sup>36</sup>) there are mainly six resources from which the Chinese learn about Christmas. These are from the Western expatriates' and Western companies' Christmas celebrations and the holiday announcements, Christmas advertisements, media-introduced Christmas knowledge, Christmas newspaper stories and from world literature.

In 1919, there was a "Jesus Birthday Extra" in *SHEN BAO* with a few articles about the relationship of Christmas and religion, "The Reason for Christmas". In the following years, *SHEN BAO Christmas Special Issues* and *SHEN BAO Freedom Talkings*, were the main media to introduce information about Santa Claus. For example, in 1919, *SHEN BAO* posted Junhao's article, "Something about Santa Claus," which introduced Santa Claus's origin.

*"...the celebration is original from a story. The impressive story of giving gold to others is still being told by one to another even now. There was a very poor person, he has three*

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<sup>36</sup> Shen Bao, formerly transliterated as Shun Pao or Shen-pao (Chinese: 申報; Pinyin: Shēn Bào), known in English as Shanghai News, was a newspaper published from April 30, 1872 to May 27, 1949 in Shanghai, China. The influence of the newspaper in early 20th century Shanghai was such that Shen Bao zhi, literally "Shen-pao paper", became a generic term for newspaper or newsprint.

*beautiful girls but extremely poor. Without other income source, he had to order them to be prostitutes. Santa Claus got to know about it. Santa passed by his home and gave gold to each of three girls. The family was saved from poverty and girls are kept decent. Later, people got to know about it. It became a tradition that people put food in children's shoes, and tell that was old man "Santa Claus" who did it. Later, the tradition had changed many time and result as December 24<sup>th</sup> night. It is very close to Christmas.<sup>37</sup>*" (Mei, 2007 p12-13)

When examining Christmas practices in modern China, Black (2006) has noticed it is new for the Chinese, who are catching on rapidly. Through Mei's research (Mei, 2007), we can see there was a link, though weak, between Santa Claus with earlier religions in China. Another study mostly shows "people don't know a great deal about the origins or significance of Christmas" (Gan, 2007). It is more regarded as a commercial event<sup>38</sup>.

While "older people and the rural population rarely note its passing at all" (Gan, 2007), young people from metropolitan areas embrace Christmas as a celebration with friends rather than family. Christmas has good timing in China. The National Day is the first of October, and after that, the next major Chinese festival, Lunar New Year, often starts in February. During the long three to four months' time, both young people and marketers are looking for something to spice up the mood and boot up sales.

It is not difficult to notice the cheerful and delightful atmosphere around major cities in China during Christmastime. P.T. Black<sup>39</sup>, a journalist in Shanghai, has noticed in his interviews of China's young generation that youth in Shanghai differentiate Chinese traditional festivals from Christmas, which is a time to "really have fun with friends and enjoy". Black continued, "Christmas is not alone. ... The optimistic open-mindedness of this country extends even to the calendar. Let the marketing begin."

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<sup>37</sup> Translated by thesis auther from SHEN BAO newspaper attachment from Mei (2007)

<sup>38</sup>[http://ls.edb.hkedcity.net/LSCms/file/web\\_v2/prof\\_dev/online\\_course/modern\\_china\\_ches/event8/event\\_08\\_speech.pdf](http://ls.edb.hkedcity.net/LSCms/file/web_v2/prof_dev/online_course/modern_china_ches/event8/event_08_speech.pdf)

<sup>39</sup><http://adage.com/article/print-edition/christmas-china/113450/>

## 2.4 Tourist Destination and Theme Park Study

According to the director from China Tekway, the Mohe Santa Claus Village project is “aiming to brand Mohe as ‘Santa’s another resident place in China’ and to build a Christmas-themed park at the north-most location in China.” In the tourism industry and branding field, this goal is classified into two separate research fields, maybe even more: destination branding and theme park development. It is important for us to review destination branding and theme park research in general to learn some useful insights. It will also gain us a broader view of marketing practices and competition in this area to give further suggestions for development.

In today’s business world, globalisation is increasing, and branding is one of the key competitive advantages a company needs to compete internationally. According to Room (1992), “the modern form of branding appeared in the 19th century and now includes legal instruments, logos, companies, identity systems, image, personality and relationships”. Using brands for marketing is probably one of the earliest forms of product differentiation (Cai, et al, 2009). “Brand,” as defined by the American Marketing Association, is a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is ‘trade name’”.<sup>40</sup>

A popular brand specialised in web once quotes that “brand can take many forms, including a name, sign, symbol, colour combination or slogan”<sup>41</sup>. A “brand” is an experience, an emotion, a perception—something that stirs something inside you that encourages you to make a buying decision or take action<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.marketingpower.com/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.proofbranding.com/santa-claus-brand/>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.proofbranding.com/santa-claus-brand/>

Many people think Santa is one of the best brands out there<sup>43</sup>. Globally, he is recognised as much more than a jolly, fat man in a red suit who visits children's houses and gives gifts to "good children" at Christmastime. Santa Claus defines an experience and feeling inside many people, typically American and Europeans, which is not limited. It is typically associated with childhood, opening presents on Christmas morning, friends and family, snowy mornings and warm cookies.

"Tourism has become and will continue to be one of the world's largest industries and growing in almost all countries" (World Travel and Tourism Council 2012). According to the organization's forecast<sup>44</sup>,

*"In 2011 Travel & Tourism generated, either directly or indirectly, \$644 billion which (is) equal to 9.2% of China's GDP. ...(It created) 61.9 million jobs. ...Travel & Tourism GDP is larger than that of the automotive manufacturing, education, and communication services sectors. In terms of its direct GDP, Travel & Tourism is nearly 60% larger than the direct GDP of the automotive manufacturing sector in China."* (The Authority of World Travel & Tourism, 2012, p 2-22)

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that by 2011, the number of tourism could reach 1.1 billion<sup>45</sup> globally. Along with other attractions and tourist programs in the Asian Pacific region, 66.9 million people visited the top ten parks in 2008<sup>46</sup>. Asia, and especially China, with its growing economies and expanding middle class, is now the biggest tourist country in the region. In China, extensive investment activity is evident in theme parks; the development of nature resorts, cultural and entertainment facilities; and other tourist-related programs.

"Intense competition is among destinations-characterizes-tourism today" (Kim, 2008). This is reflected in domestic travelers' choosing from various travel destination in China and when their comparing different destinations globally. Globalization only makes this competition fiercer.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.proofbranding.com/branding/santa-claus-brand/>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.wttc.org/>

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.wttc.org/site\\_media/uploads/downloads/traveltourism2011.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/traveltourism2011.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.org.id.tue.nl/ifip-tc14/documents/TEAreportThemeparks-2008.pdf>

Tourist destinations, including all natural, human and cultural elements of one location in both tangible and invisible form, are more complex and diverse than just very specific tourism products (Ooi, et al, 2010). Munar (2011) pointed out when doing his research for re-thinking destination branding that “The creation of a destination brand has to address multiple groups of stakeholders, socio-cultural identities and take into consideration the intangibility and multifaceted features of a destination”.

Destination branding is a term that lacks a common definition. However, it is commonly understood as “being a process used to develop a unique identity and personality, different from all competing destinations” (Munar, 2011). The theme park is a comparatively new kind of tourist attraction. It attempts to create an atmosphere of fantasy of place and time. Although a commonly agreed-upon definition does not exist, a theme park experience is primarily communicated through visual and vocal statements, as well as other senses like scent and touch. When a theme park is large enough, the park itself can be regarded as a destination (Clavé, 2007).

As reported by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)<sup>47</sup>, depending on the scale, a large theme park of today “often includes attractions, hotels, restaurants and other recreation, and tourist facilities. Theming is reflected through architecture, landscaping, costumed personnel, rides, shows and animations, food services, merchandising, music, lighting design and other services that impact the guest experience”.

The few distinguishing characteristics to modern theme parks include spectacular buildings (exotic, vast, and novel that fit a certain theme), environmental setups, technological wonders, and animation and theatres (3D, 4D or even “5D”) to entertain and amuse guests. Historical presentations, myths and storytelling are often included, “as well as party atmosphere like fireworks, shows, and fun. Food and beverage are also regarded as basic elements” (Mills 1990).

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.prweb.com/releases/themepark/attendance/prweb2329194.htm>

In contemporary theme parks, the primary theme serves as a tangible statement to unify all structures and organizations. Theme parks incorporate the visitor experience into different aspects of the park's operation. This has more recently merged with other tourist elements like hotels and resorts. For example, visitors to Atlantis on Palm in Dubai experience a water adventure and sea life through Aquaventure Park in the form of life-size strolling characters, architecture, a giant aquarium themed "the lost chamber", which is associated with a myth also designed for the theme<sup>48</sup>, hotel interior decoration, restaurant theming, costumes, shows, a shopping avenue and gift shops. For visitors to Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom in Florida, their experience is not limited to the colorful setup of the resort but also includes theme based local currency, telephone directories and mailboxes.

Scholars (Chasse 1993, Milman 1993 and Sanchez 1998) proposed several categorizations of theme parks. Clave (2007) summarized the various proposed definitions and suggested that the standard of a theme park should include "a thematic identity, feature one or more themed areas, be designed as an enclosed space with guest-controlled access, have a single admission price, and have the potential to attract families..." In addition these organizations, a theme park should offer some form of entertainment, food services and merchandise. "This necessitates high levels of investments, quality products and services, technology, as well as central management (Clave 2007)".

Milman (2007) has focused on the development from theme parks to "themed tourism" and reported "contemporary theme parks feature a dominant theme and several sub-themes that are derived and linked to the major dominant theme (Milman, 2007)". Not only parks are built with the theme, but also there are themed hotels, themed shopping malls, and themed events and festivals. All these experiences, designs and arrangements have meant themed entertainment goes far beyond the park.

"Goods and services are no longer satisfactory for twenty-first century consumers", as Ady Milman mentioned in his report. Milman added that contemporary customers want memorable

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.atlantisthepalm.com/marineandwaterpark/thelostchambers/themyth.aspx>



experiences to supplement or substitute for traditional commodities. “Theme parks of today offer story-telling. Memorable experiences are featured by design, landscaping, rides, entertainment, food services, merchandise, and other experiences for all ages (Milman, 2010)”.

Milman (2007) said, “successful development of a themed attraction is a combination of writing or storytelling, creative design, financial projections, audience analysis, and planning. The story or an idea can be expressed in one simple sentence. Sea World, for example, tells the story of marine environments around the world and the theme is expressed in two words. The story can be more unique, creative, complex, and extensive.” According to Benedikt (2001), this trend is not unique to the theme park industry, as consumers have become more demanding for experiences rather than pure “products” or “objects.”

With the sophisticated amusement-recreation themed experiences, it often combined with accommodation, recreation, entertainment, tour programs, retail and food services, which promote the development and integration of well-known and well-liked brands into the themed entertainment industry (Milman, 2007) .

In this thesis, the case under study is Santa Claus Park in Mohe, a newly established theme park with a brand originating in Santa Claus Park in Rovaniemi, Finland. Santa Claus Park in Mohe is located in a bigger themed area called “North Pole Village” in Mohe country<sup>49</sup>. The whole area is designed to portray a North Pole landscape with a river bordering on Russia.

After studying the Santa Claus Village in North America, Pretes (Pretes, 1995), who believes the Santa Claus Village combines fantasy and nostalgia for kids and family, said that “Santa Claus and his village become simultaneously a commodity, spectacle and representation: Christmas is available in a consumable form”. Compared with the more religious background that we have reviewed earlier in this chapter, secular consumption, interpersonal relationships and the experience of material world “has influenced taste, lifestyle and identity” (Hirschman & LaBarbera 1989). “Subsequently, Christmas is generally portrayed as consumption experience and is the peak of consumerism in Western cultures” (Belk et al. 1989) (Clark 1995).

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<sup>49</sup> Mohe country here means the area that are defined as Mohe (漠河县)

As many theme park and tourist experts had noticed about theme park development, “The theme park role in destination development and sustainability will continue to grow and impact with a large variety of demographic and socio-economic sections of the communities where they operate” (A. Milman, F. Okumus, D. Dickson, 2009). This might be one of the most attractive reasons for the local government (like Mohe’s government, in our case) to be an active participant in theme park and destination brand work. Furthermore, in developing a theme park’s business strategy, the theme’s impact must go beyond the local. “Certain classical universal values like respect for the environment, peace, animal affinity, and tolerance toward ethnic and racial diversity will continue to be featured by many theme parks globally” (Milman, et al, 2009).

## **2.5 Summary of Literature Review**

We spent a rather large part of the literature review on the origins of Santa Claus. We reached two conclusions. First, the image of Santa Claus has three components: the traditional Santa in religious context—Santa Nicholas who brought gold for a poor family and piercing in South Europe; the Nordic folk Santa who rode a Yule goat carrying gifts and currently serving as a Christmas decoration; and the modern Santa Claus, an old man wearing a red hat and red overalls who travels all around the world on Christmas Eve to bring gifts to children. Thus, it is questionable to state that Santa Claus is a character of Finnish origin. It is even less authentic to conclude he has an authentic home. Lapland’s Santa Claus Park is primarily a branded theme park that has deployed Santa Claus’s image and the traditions associated with it as their theme.

Later, we reviewed the Santa Claus image and related history in China. As the literature review mentioned, Christianity is not one of the original Chinese religions, and its history in China is rather short in comparison with its other, more Eastern peers. Chinese people do not associate Santa Claus with a Christian, religious background. There is limited amount of research done by Chinese scholars about Santa Claus. As we noticed in Mei’s research (Mei, 2007), religious iconography had been part of Santa Claus in earlier stages, but more recently, Santa Claus is assumed to be American. The holiday is commonly referred to as the “Western New Year.”

Effort is needed in the theme park design, storytelling and other promotions to convince the Chinese customer to make Mohe Santa Claus Park successful.

As is practical for giving any good suggestions, we reviewed the theory of development for the theme park industry and Santa-themed parks. Using mythology or famous religious figures as a theme is not rare. Other Santa Claus parks also exist outside Finland. Santa's residences are found in several countries. Still, the existence of competition does not exclude the possibility of success of Mohe Santa Park's business operation.

The theme park industry is looking for experience, entertainment, exhibitions and more. The theme park industry has included shopping malls, vast themed hotels, mega-resorts, restaurants, nightclubs and parks that aim to bring an all-encompassing experience to customers. The theme is often even outside the park itself. So, depending on the scale, the theme park has changed from one location to a "destination". Theories we learned about theme are gradually merged with tourist destination branding. Shall we call it a "themed destination"? We shall look at these phenomena from our case study. When considering choosing a theme or building the customer experience strategy, utilising natural resources, operational environments and neighborhood themes will all contribute to the success of the business.

In the following chapter, we shall review the natural environment of Mohe and tourism-related economic factors. The development of Santa Claus Park in Mohe is fact in motion. The local government is the main investor and driver for the project. In combination with the earlier research on theme parks and destinations, I set a theoretical framework for later research. A questionnaire was designed based on this theoretical study and was conducted to seek the best solution to answer the research questions.

### 3 Case: Santa Claus Park in Mohe

In this chapter, Santa Claus Park in Rovaniemi, Finland, and Santa Claus Park in Mohe, China, are both studied. Their theme design, program and surrounding natural environment are compared to get a clearer idea for a business model and promotion strategy needs. Section 3.1 is dedicated to Mohe in Heilongjiang Province, China. Section 3.2 looks at Rovaniemi for an operation background study. In the last section of this part of the thesis, Chapter 3.3, a comparison of these two locations is made.

#### 3.1 Santa Claus Village in Lapland

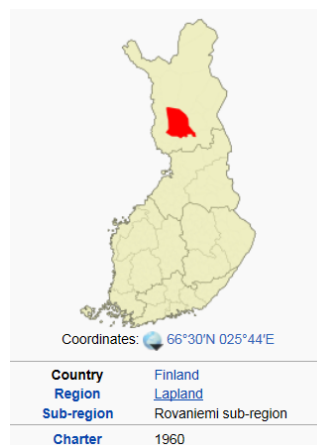


Figure 6 Rovaniemi in Finland

Rovaniemi is a municipality in Finland. It is located in Finland's northernmost province, Lapland, being the administrative capital and commercial centre in the province. According to the Lapland government's home page: "...(Rovaniemi) is situated close to the Arctic Circle and

is between the hills of Ounasvaara and Korkalovaara, at the confluence of the Kemijoki River and its tributary, the Ounasjoki. The city and the surrounding Rovaniemen maalaiskunta (rural municipality of Rovaniemi<sup>50</sup>) were consolidated into a single entity on January 1, 2006”.

According to the official page of the municipality<sup>51</sup>, the new municipality has an area of 8,016.72 square kilometres and an approximate population of 60,000. The average temperature is about 0.2 °C.

- Annual rainfall: 535 mm
- Snow stays on the ground: 183 days a year on average
- Lowest temperature ever recorded: -47.5 °C, recorded on January 28, 1999
- Highest temperature ever recorded: 30.7 °C, recorded on June 10, 2011
- Midnight sun can be seen: June 6 to July 7

(<http://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/in-english>)

The Rovaniemi municipality claims it is Santa Claus’s hometown. Santa Claus Village<sup>52</sup> is an amusement park near Rovaniemi. It is located about 8 km northeast of Rovaniemi and about 2 km from the Rovaniemi Airport. It takes about 30 minutes to get a bus tour from the local airport to the park. Rovaniemi’s city bus route travels between the Rovaniemi Railway Station and the Santa Claus Village daily. On Santa Claus Park’s official website<sup>53</sup>, more information, including what is mentioned in the following paragraph, is available for the public.

The Santa Claus Village is built with several sub-attractions. The Arctic Circle, a white line denoting the Arctic Circle, is painted across the park where it cuts right through Santa Claus Village. Visitors officially enter the Arctic area when they cross the line, thus being a very popular photographing spot.

In the post office, there is a large variety of Christmas-related items, Christmas cards and CDs. Mail sent from this post office is marked with a special Santa Claus postage stamp. Visitors can

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/in-english>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/in-english>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.santaclausvillage.info/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.santaclausvillage.info/>

choose if their mail will be sent next Christmas, regardless of when they actually visit the post office, or to be sent out immediately with Santa Claus stamps. Santa Claus's Office is located inside the main building in the park, where human-impersonated "real" Santa Claus holds office hours for visitors to take photographs and chat with the Santa Claus. However, besides "the office hour", Santa Claus may not be in the office all the time, even when the Village is open. There are also many shops and restaurants inside the park selling a variety of items related to Santa Claus and the Lapland region.

Topworld International in 2007 awarded Santa Claus Park the second-best travel adventure in Finland. In 2008, it held second position after Topworld invited world travellers to vote for their own Top 10 list of adventures.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.2 Mohe in China

Mohe is located in far northwest Heilongjiang<sup>55</sup> (黑龙江省), the northernmost province of China. According to the government website of Mohe (漠河)<sup>56</sup>, its exact location is at latitude 52° 10'–53° 33' N and 121° 07'–124° 20' E; it forms a border with Russia, where the Heilongjiang ("黑龙江") River flows for 245 km. The county is 150 km long from north to south and has a total area of 18,233 square km, occupying 21.6% of the prefecture's Da Hinggan Ling (大兴安岭) area, which has the biggest forest coverage area in China. It is also the only location in China where the astronomical phenomenon of aurora borealis can be observed.

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<sup>54</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Santa\\_Claus\\_Village&oldid=444314851](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Santa_Claus_Village&oldid=444314851)

<sup>55</sup><http://www.hlj.gov.cn/zlj/wzzk/>

<sup>56</sup><http://www.hlmohe.gov.cn/zjmh/mhgk/>



Figure 7 Mohe in North East China

Mohe is the far northern location in China. It has a subarctic climate (Köppen Dwc), with long, severe winters, and short, warm summers, which is very rare in China. The winter in this area begins in early to mid-October and lasts until late April. The summer is often very short, mostly only happening in July. It is also the coldest location in China; nearly seven months of the year, the temperature is below zero. The frost-free period is just short of 90 days. According to the official weather information website in China, “monthly averages range from  $-29.8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  in January to  $18.4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  in July, with an annual mean of  $-4.29\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ , so that the county is only a little south of the line of continuous permafrost. Extreme temperatures have ranged from  $-52.3$  to  $39.3\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ <sup>57</sup>”.

Especially after the forest fire in 1987 in this area, development and the construction of tourism facilities and infrastructure has made great progress<sup>58</sup>. Accommodations, transportation and telecommunication conditions have been significantly improved. The Heilongjiang Province’s government website states that 17 intercontinental ports have been open in the province, including 15 ports (in Chinese “哈尔滨 Harbin、佳木斯 Jamusi、黑河 Heihe、同江 Tongjiang、抚远 Fuyuan、漠河 Mohe、呼玛 Huma、奇克 Qike、嘉荫 Jiayin、名山 Mingshan、饶河 Raohe、孙吴 Sunwu、富锦 Fujin、绥滨 Tuibin、悦来 Yuelai”) are open for international (mainly Russian)

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.weather.com.cn/cityintro/101050703.shtml>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.hlj.gov.cn/zlj/jt/>

transportation. Harbin-Heihe (in Chinese “哈尔滨- 黑河”), Suifenhe (in Chinese “绥芬河”), Jiamusi (in Chinese “佳木斯”), Jixi (in Chinese “鸡西”) and other places are interlinked by tourist trains; high-grade highways have been extended to Suifenhe (in Chinese “绥芬河”), YiNing (in Chinese “伊宁”) and other ports. The highway has shortened travel from Harbin to Mohe from 36 hours (by train and various transportation tools) to 26 hours (car drive)<sup>59</sup>.

The Mohe village government has updated its website since May 2012, putting tourist information and hospitality resource shortcuts on its homepage. The webpage has served as an updated tourist and local information resource for this thesis.

The rapid development of world tourism provides a good operational environment, and the geographic location of Mohe has given it a unique benefit, which is beyond Zhang (2010), who has studied cooperation in tourism between China and Russia, which shows a stronger economic benefit to Chinese domestic tourism.

As has been noticed by Zhang’s study, “*Research on Development Strategy of Heilongjiang Province Border Tourism to Russia*”<sup>60</sup>, Harbin, as capital of the province, had the advantage of transportation (airport, railway, road etc.), hospitality and other functions, thus serving as the leader in the region.

The snow- and ice-themed program that has developed support and is popular in the region includes forest hiking, a ski resort, sports ground and ice-and-snow art theme. “The province itself is following Hainan and Jilin provinces, is the third ecological province, which has a unique eco-tourism resource, has built 96 ecological demonstration zones at the provincial level...” as Zhang (2011) has described in his work to study the local tourist advantage with the Russian border as a resource. The area is popular for its forest theme. There are five camps: Yichun (in Chinese “伊春”) and another National Forest Park, Jingpo (in Chinese “景颇”), Wudalianchi (in Chinese “五大连池”), Xingkaihu (in Chinese “兴凯湖”) and Zhalong (in

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<sup>59</sup> Various resources from tourist forums and tourists who had visited Mohe village and shared info online.

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.seiofbluemountain.com/upload/product/201004/2010lyhy02a2.pdf>



Chinese “扎龙”) “Nature Reserve”. All provide a broader eco-tourism space for not only the Russian tourist, on whom Zhang (Zhang, 2011) has focused in his report, but also for all visitors to the region.

To summarize this chapter, I had reviewed the natural location, local economics and tourist resources in both Lapland in Finland and Mohe in China. Both places are located in the northernmost province of their countries, near the arctic zone and with long winters. The subarctic weather promises heavy snow during the winter and vegetation coverage. Both places have large forest coverage with much less than average human density compared with other areas in the country. Polar borealis can be observed in both locations, though in Mohe the chance might be less. This provides a good basis for Mohe Santa Claus Park to develop its polar-themed tourism strategy, Santa’s successful new home in China.

## **4 Research Methodology and Data**

This chapter will present the methodology used in research and the reason for choosing such strategies and methods. In sub-chapters, the empirical study, survey questionnaire, open-ended questions and interviews are introduced as instruments for data collections. In the last part of Chapter 4, the reliability and validity of the study is presented. The research and discussion on those results are presented in the next chapter.

### **4.1 Research Design**

The research design is about deciding what methods to use to help the researchers to collect the correct data and achieve the purpose of research (Ghaury & Gronhaug 2005). In this thesis, there are three main tasks: 1) identifying the image of Santa Claus and its cultural impact in China in comparison with its Western origin; 2) identifying the market segmentation for Mohe Santa Claus Village in China; 3) providing suggestions for Santa Claus Village marketing activities to best attract potential customers. The research questions should serve as the basis for the research design (Johnson & Harris 2002). A research strategy often includes a series of research methods (Ghauriy & Gronhaug 2005).

To choose the best possible method for different studies, Yin (2009, p.8) stated three conditions and related each of these conditions to the five major research methods in COSMOS's table, below:

Method	1) Form of research question	2) Requires control of behavioral events	3) Focuses on contemporary events
Experiment	how, why?	yes	yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much?	no	yes
Archival Analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much?	no	yes/no
History	how, why?	no	no
Case study	how, why?	no	yes

Relevant Situations for Different Research Methods (COSMOS Corporation in Yin (2009, p. 8)

Table 1 COSMOS's Table

Using COSMOS's table, I identified the preferred research methods: case study, empirical study for background and literature, survey and an interview that will answer "what", "who" and "how" questions from the research purpose.

#### 4.1.1 Quantitative and qualitative research strategy

Quantitative and qualitative research strategy are the two main research strategies in social business studies (Bryman & Bell 2003). Qualitative research puts more emphasis on the word and observation in data collection, while quantitative research focuses on statistical result and numerical analysis (Bryman & Bell 2003) (Johnson & Harris 2002). To achieve a good understanding of Santa Claus's image among the Chinese, further identify the potential customer groups and provide suggestions for a high-quality customer experience, it decides that individual experience and common preference are both important. Both the quantitative research method and the qualitative method are used to gain primary, first-hand data. Quantitative research takes care of the general customer preferences, and qualitative research focuses on obtaining individual preferences for later analysis.

Qualitative research strategies emphasise the generation of theories by exploring the ways in which the individuals interpret the social world (Bryman & Bell 2003, p. 25). The reasons to

choose it as a research method are twofold. First, by asking open questions, it gives free space for interviewees to provide thoughts, describe their impressions from the social world and find a relationship between research and theory. Second, the research task presented earlier is about the general image of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and the proposition for Santa Claus Park in Mohe. Utilizing semi-structured interviews to get an overall understanding of context and more emotional descriptions will further test it.

In practice, to get more information to be proactive to the market, the study used largely a qualitative approach along with a small quantitative paradigm, employing a variety of methods that would enable exploration of the research question. It was believed that this approach could generate rich data on issues related to tourist attitudes toward Santa Claus Village in Mohe and give input for further marketing activities from different angles. The qualitative approach tends to focus on exploring within research territory, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances that are seen as being interesting and aims to achieve “depth” rather than “breadth”. The method to reach the quantitative research data is a survey, and qualitative data is gained via semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.1.2 Case study method**

This research will be a single case study of Mohe Santa Claus Village. According to Robert K. Yin, the case study research method is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 1984, p. 23)”. Simons (1980) and Yin (1984) have highly recommended a case study research method. Yin (1984, p. 23) “in achieving an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to existing research result. It focuses on detailed contextual analysis for the subjects’ conditions and their relationships. “Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations”.

Although the case study method is popular in a wide range of research fields, it is not without controversy. Getting results from a small number of cases can lead to biases and thus lack of reliability or generality of findings.

## 4.2 Data collection and analysis

There are three methods used in collecting data: empirical study for background, survey and semi-structured interviews. In the following sub-chapters, the reason for choosing such techniques and their advantage and disadvantage are discussed. Data achieved through these collecting methods are analyzed in quantitative and qualitative forms.

### 4.2.1 Survey

As indicated by Figure 8, the survey is most frequently used to answer who, what, where, how much and how many, and therefore, it tends to be used for exploratory and descriptive research (Saunders et al. 2009 p. 144). In business studies, descriptive surveys, such as attitude and opinion questionnaires, are often used to obtain consumer attitudes toward a certain product or to identify and describe the variability in different phenomena (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 362) (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2005, p. 59). Following this tradition, in this research, a quantitative consumer questionnaire was designed in an attempt to examine consumer preference of choosing tourist destination, tourist programs, gifts and the image of Santa Claus. Using a survey gives the researcher more control over the research process while the data collected can be used to present possible reasons for particular relationships between variables and to produce models of these relationships (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 145).

In principal, the design of a questionnaire differs based on the way it is administered and the amount of contacts the researcher has with the respondents (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 362). In light of the definition given to the types of questionnaires by Saunders et al. (2009, p.362), survey questionnaires in this research (See [Appendix 3](#)) are usually completed by the respondents and are administered physically on the tourist office desk or electronically using the Internet. As the quantitative consumer questionnaire for this study was realized completely on a volunteer basis,

it can be concluded the type of the quantitative survey here is a self-administered questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to address issues from three perspectives: 1) an evaluation of the current Chinese tourism awareness of Santa Claus, 2) an evaluation of Chinese tourists' interest toward visiting Mohe Santa Claus Village, and 3) trying to find out the influencing factors that affect making the tourist destination decision.

Like any other research methods, the survey holds its own imperfections. According to De Vaus (2002, p. 7), flaws exist in terms of philosophical, technique-based and political aspects. De Vaus (2002, pp.7-9) indicated a survey as intrinsically manipulative, which lacks solid grounds to establish causal connections between variables, ignores the context in which a particular aspect of people's beliefs and actions occur, and assumes that human action is determined by external forces without realizing the role of human consciousness. In this study, I tried to minimize the incomplete information due to the nature of a survey by using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, both intended to get contextual and objective information.

#### **4.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

While a survey was conducted to test the general attitudes and knowledge a Chinese customer has toward Santa Claus Village and Mohe as a tourist destination, to get a better understanding of consumer needs when choosing a tourist destination and their further expectations, qualitative methods were used to explore how Santa Claus as national brand is perceived by different stakeholders.

The interview is one of the most common methods of getting qualitative information from targeted respondent groups (Yin 2009, p.106). According Yin, interview as a method fits varying purposes because of its flexibility in structures, topics, location etc. Maylor and Blackmon (2005, p. 227) suggest, "In a qualitative interview, you do not go in with an interview schedule with precisely worded questions in a strict order". It is, rather, guided conversations, and there is interaction between two parties that influence each other.

In this thesis, the semi-structured interview was chosen as the appropriate qualitative information collection method, as the aim was to study the current preference of choosing the tourist destination, the image of Santa Claus and the preferred commercial product. Through collected information, I can identify possible challenges, and based on this knowledge, create further guidelines for improving the marketing and business development strategy.

To gain profound information about the market, potential tourists from different ages, genders and locations were interviewed. Such information will be achieved through the survey.

### 4.2.3 Data analysis

Since there are three data collecting methods used in this research—empirical study, survey and semi-structured interview—the data analysis methods are also different, according to the nature of the data.

The common purpose of the data analysis, regardless the collecting methods, is to summarise meanings (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005). Information from the empirical study was edited, compared and coded to serve as the background information. Quantitative data from the survey result provides the database for getting a general impression. By using statistical methods to predict the potential tourist, their opinions and graphical figures demonstrate trends and serve a later matchmaking platform to identify the potential customer segmentation for Santa Claus Park in Mohe, to further identify the programs to be developed in the park and to find Finnish products that will fit the promotion platform of Santa Claus Park in Mohe.

This research has followed the advice of Saunders et al. (2009, p. 485) that “transcribing interviews is the first step in preparing qualitative data for analysis and the transcription should be made as soon as possible after the interview has taken place”. I started the preliminary data analysis after first interview was done.

Each of the interviews has been given at least a half hour to make sure respondents have sufficient time to reflect their opinions in the conversation and explore the topics without losing

focus. In fact, interview questions might be slightly adjusted based on the preliminary analysis done during the data collection on each section.

### 4.3 Trustworthiness and reliability

Credibility, objectivity, validity and reliability (Lieblich et al. 1998; Moisander and Valtonen 2006) are often regarded as a measurement of research quality. Credibility is about if the data, data collection and the results obtained are trustworthy and believable (Lieblich et al. 1998). Validity refers to the truth of claims. In qualitative research, it also reflects the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation and often revolves around the researcher's introspection (Moisander and Valtonen 2006). Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of measures, and the repeatability of the results (Bryman & Bell 2003; Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005).

This study achieves construct validity (Ying 2009, p. 41) by using three data collection methods, multiple channels to reach the target correspondents to acquire a comprehensive view (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005). The survey reached a rather large number of potential correspondents, 100 persons; the 50% response rate gives a rather general reflection of people's motivation with the topic and provides a database to generate common opinions and trend. The gender, age and professions division seems to match the entire population. The group was reached via different channels (travel agency, online forum and personal contacts) to avoid a snowball<sup>61</sup> effect.

The research took the empirical study result to build the theory framework. Validity is achieved by the literature review and theories incorporated into research practice and analysis.

To summarize Chapter 4, in this chapter, I discussed research methodology and data collection methods, analysis methods, trustworthiness and validity of this research. The research is designed to use both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. Researchers choose to have

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<sup>61</sup> Snowball sampling may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open possibilities for an expanding web of contact and inquiry. The strategy has been utilised primarily as a response to overcome the problems associated with understanding and sampling concealed populations such as the deviant and the socially isolated (Mary Sargeant BA MA(Econ); Jean Faugier RMN MSc PhD, 1997).



a single case study, and all data are collected by empirical study, survey and semi-structured interview. All data are recorded and analyzed in detail. The statistical methods are used to analyses quantitative data, and qualitative data was analyzed by emerging methods. The study fulfills the criteria of validity and reliability.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

Following the methodology and data discussion, in this part, I am going to present my research result from the case and briefly discuss the research process and present the reason of making such arrangement. The objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and provide a study for a convincing solution in promoting Santa Claus Park to Chinese tourists. In more detail, the study focused on three tasks; to answer these questions and provide background information (“reasons” and “context”), the research questions have been further divided into quantitative research setups and qualitative research setups. In each of these, I presented the questions and findings in this part of chapter. First, let us examine the three main research questions:

- 1) What is the perception of Santa Claus in the Chinese culture, compared with his Western origin?
- 2) Who would be interested in visiting Mohe Santa Claus Village in China?
- 3) What are the best ways and activities to communicate and market Santa Claus Village to attract potential customers?

The basis for these research topics is the hypothesis that Santa Claus is acting as a promotion platform for the Finnish brand to enter the Chinese market. It is important to notice that my hypothesis includes an assumption that Santa Claus is positively perceived in Chinese market.

Since Santa Claus has been chosen as a Finnish national brand and carries the mission to promote Finnish products oversea, Santa Claus Village’s reputation and its image influenced how tourists perceive the information it is trying to deliver. We consider it another factor that will affect the result.

## 5.1 Quantitative Research and Results

In this research, there have been approximately 100 persons being conducted. When conducting the research, there was no intention to reach any number in terms of gender or age divisions, but rather to test general-interest groups for domestic tours.

There is the challenge of reaching the target survey groups. I was primarily located in Finland, while the target customers are located inside China. The contacts were mainly made by contacting travel agencies to reach their customers, targeted discussion in tourism forums, tourism enthusiasm networks and professional networks. On a small scale, the snowball survey is used to reach the targeted groups. Information was exchanged by email, Skype calls and web posts. The exception was during October 2011, when I made one visit to China to spend one week to do part of the survey and made some face-to-face contact with some of the interviewees.

Type of Contacts	Travel Blog Viewers	Travel Agency Visitors	Other Contacts
Survey Reached	40	30	30
Answered	24	8	18
Selected for Interview	4	1	3

Table 2 Research Conduct and Feedback Rate

The first step in reaching the research target group was to research the most popular way for potential travelers to know about the tourist program and how they manage their trip. It was done in March 2011 by a small survey in which I asked these questions: “Where do you reserve your trip if you travel inside China?” and “Where do you obtain the tour information?”

The result of this small survey shows that four channels are what most people use to get tourist program and tourist destination information: general information from the Internet, dedicated tour promotion websites and discussion rooms, travel agencies and friends. So when I started researching, I first registered at several travel specialist websites and asked registered users if they wanted to join the research. This includes

- [www.ctrip.com](http://www.ctrip.com),
- [www.tuniu.com](http://www.tuniu.com), and
- [www.lvmama.com](http://www.lvmama.com).

Among the respondents, there were individuals and tourism professionals. Besides an individual contribution, I asked three tourist agencies to place 10 questionnaires in their offices to reach the visitors in different locations (Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai). Considered the daily visitors amount to these locations, the task load is rather small. The open time for survey was two months. Results were collected from both individuals and tourist agency visitors who are individuals as well and serve as a basis for research. Other contacts are mostly from my personal network in China and their extended networks.

The group diversifies as follows:

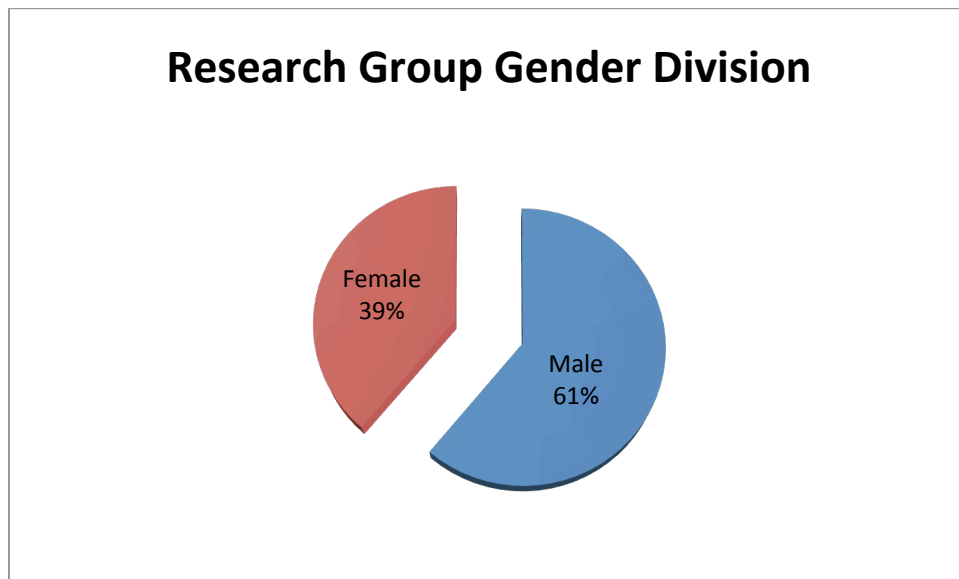


Figure 8 Reached Group Gender Division

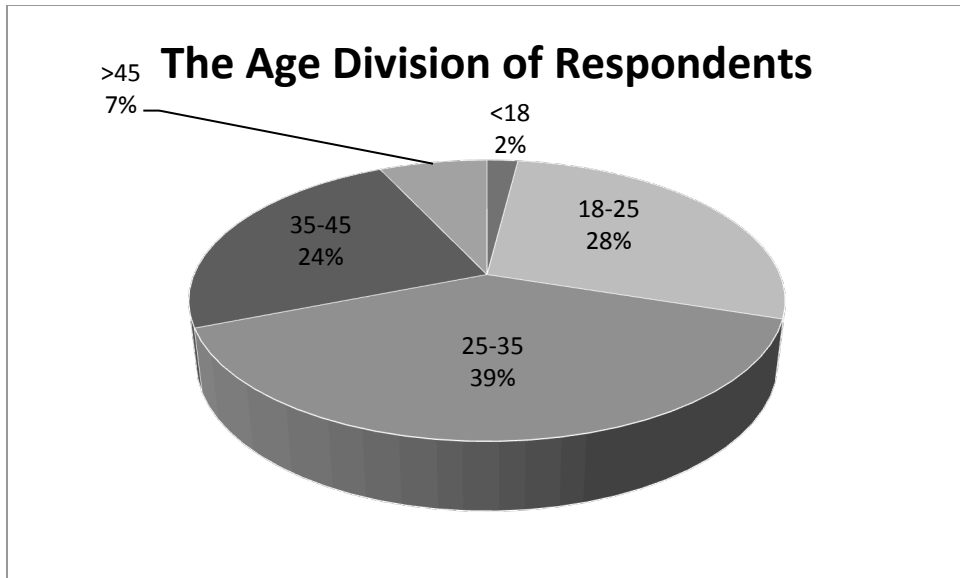


Figure 9 The Age Division of Respondents

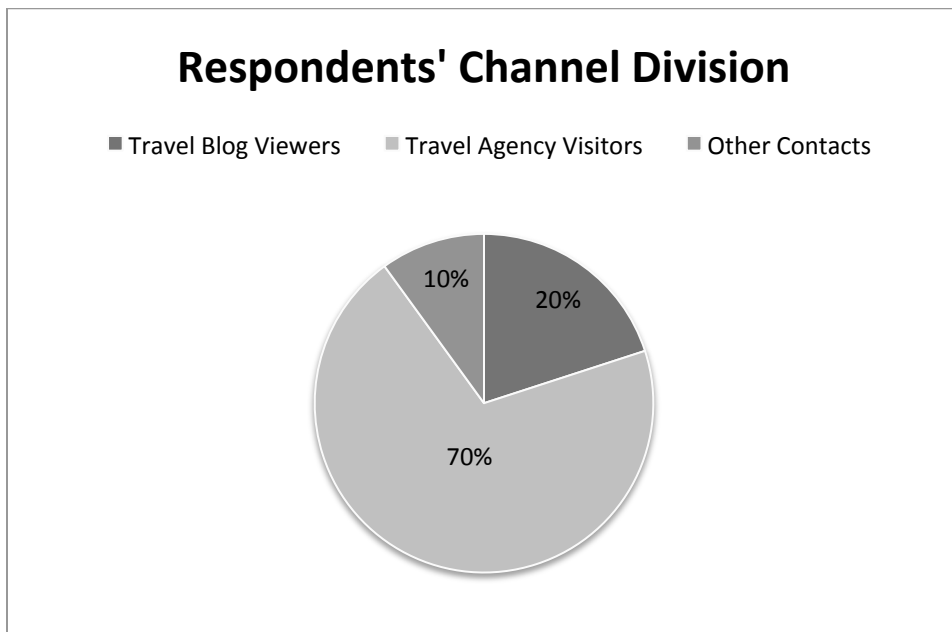


Figure 10 Respondents' Channel Division<sup>62</sup>

The population from which the study sample was drawn is as follows:

- independent travel blog viewers,

<sup>62</sup> Edited from Figure 2 p. 12 in this thesis.

- interested in winter destination and sport,
- do not visit friends and relatives as a major element of their vacation, and
- have a child under 15 or have no children.

The researcher added traveler's accompany, which means "travel with whom" to maximize diversity within the sample. The study utilizes diversified purposeful sampling. Three characteristics of the interviewee were critical for diversity in the study population: namely, province, travel group size and travel mode. The study sought diversity of traveler's origin location by interviewing some travelers from Dalian, Beijing, Shanghai and other areas. The study sought diversity of the travel group size by interviewing some individual travelers and some tour organizers from the travel agency.

Diversity of travel mode was sought by interviewing some travelers who were backpackers, some traveling by rental car and some traveling by airplane. The researchers conducted initial interviews in three major cities.

The result of the research is in Table 2 on page 53. The survey was open to potential correspondents for two months, between May to July 2011, supposedly high season for tourism in China. Because the weather is getting warm, the government-owned companies have spring breaks, and the following months are summer holiday from school.

For the survey done in travel information websites, I asked by posting if anyone from the discussion forum wanted to participate in the survey. The questionnaires were sent to them and collected via emails.

Regarding the travel agency, I asked the travel agency to record how many people were approached and how many questionnaires were collected and validated as qualified answers. People were approached when they were waiting in the agency or browsing for interesting trip destinations. A small percentage of travelers had clearly expressed that they were not interested in winter travel at all and thus were not qualified to later questions. In total, the deputy persons in the travel agency approached some 30 people; about 10 people among the approached were

willing to read through all questions. Some of the respondents were on the go and thus gave short answers; later, these non-qualified answers were discarded.

Other contacts were from personal networks and *ad hoc* people who showed interest in the research. This group showed a very high quality of feedback and was eager to continue for qualitative research.

In total, a 54% answering rate was reached for the overall research-targeted group. It lacks of the similar situation research feedback rate data to be as reference from academia publications. However, according to travel agency staff, people actually had a quite positive attitude toward this survey and gave their time and contacts for the survey and interview.

In the following part of this chapter, I will address each specific question on the survey questionnaire and present the research result.

Q1 Have you heard about Santa Claus Village in Mohe?

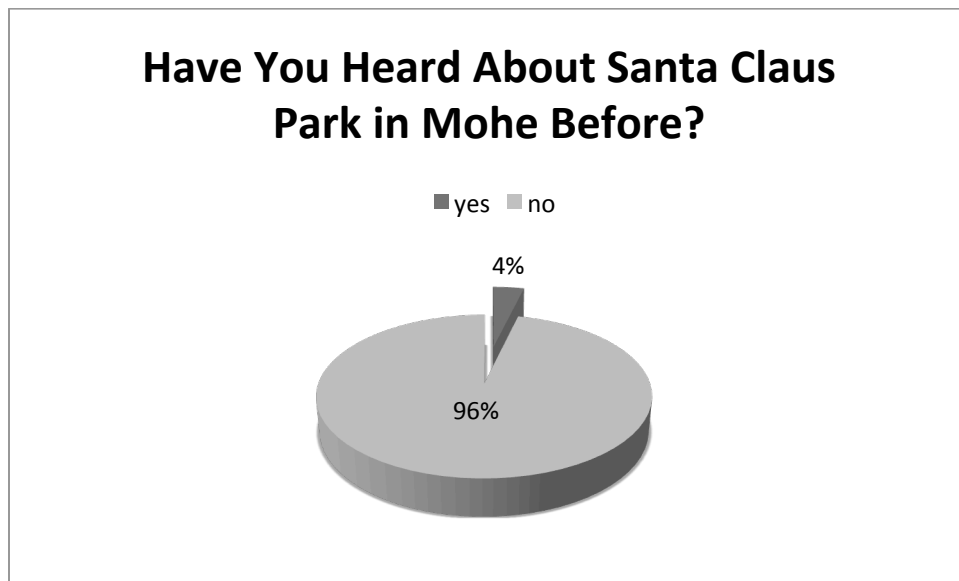


Figure 11 Have You Heard About Mohe Santa Claus Park?

Only 5% of respondents admitted they had heard about Santa Claus Park in Mohe. This result reflects maybe the fact that Santa Claus Park and Mohe have not been very popular travel

destinations and they had not done many marketing activities to reach potential customers. According to the travel agency in Beijing and Shanghai, few customers show interest in North West China travel destinations. This is also reflected in later research results in this survey.

Q2 If not, how many times on average do you travel every year?

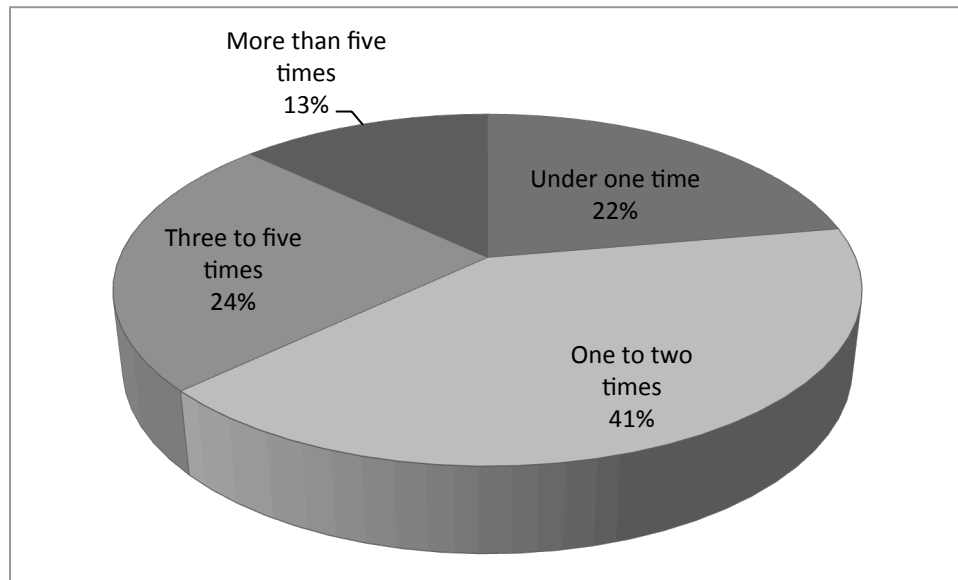


Figure 12 How Many Times a Year Do You Travel?

From this survey, we can see most people in this survey travel one to two times a year, which is 41% of total respondents. Considering these persons are reached in tourist agencies, specialized tourist discussion websites and my personal network that contains mostly active persons with a good educational background, we can conclude that ratios are higher than the Chinese average travel frequency.

Among this group, 22% of people still travel under one time per year. This shows there is still a very high potential for the tourist industry to develop to get more people to move around. Thirteen percent of people are traveling more than five times a year. Most people in China are keeping their holidays more at their residences than travelling. The three-to-five times a year travel frequency takes part of 24% percent.



In the latter part of questionnaires, I had asked respondents to describe where they had been in their previous trip in the same year. The result is showed on a tourist map in China with visit times from answers.



**Figure 13 Survey Feedback on Chinese Travel Map**

From the map, we can see the tourist destinations are still more concentrated in the Southeast's big cities, where Shanghai, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Hainan and neighboring natural resorts like Mt. Huangshan are hotspots for visitors. Similarly, in North China, it is Beijing that attracts more visitors than other sites. People who are more attracted by exotic culture and nature are making Chengdu (actually the whole Sichuan Province), Lhasa, The Himalaya, Xingjian and Inner Mongolia popular places to visit.

Only six people had visited North East China, where Mohe is located, and all mentioned they visit the capital of the province, Harbin, instead of other sites in the area.

Q3 From which of the following activities do you know more about Santa Claus?

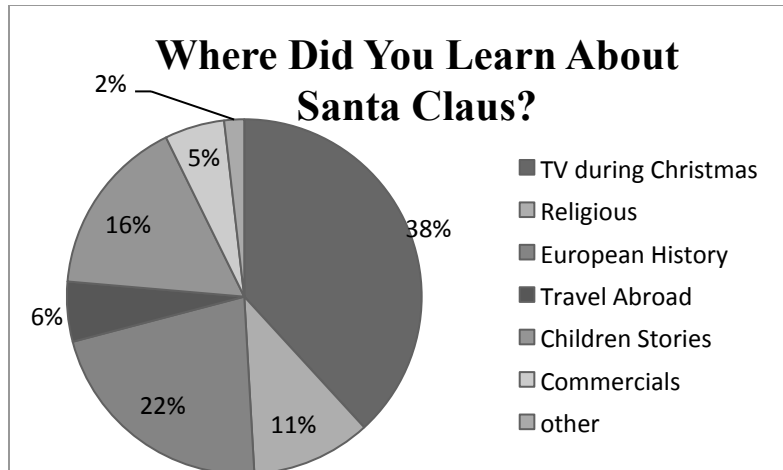


Figure 14 The Resources of Knowing Santa Claus

Through research data, we can see most Chinese learn about Santa Claus via TV during Christmastime and related commercial activities (38%+5%). The second resource is via European history, which is a bit confusing since all our research shows there was not much about Santa Claus in real European history. People who chose this answer might have gotten impressions from Santa Claus’s Western origin and mixed it with European history.

Six percent chose the “travel abroad” as a way they know about Santa Claus. Since we did not do any research for how many of all correspondents had been traveling abroad, it is a bit hard to make any general comment.

Sixteen percent of correspondents mentioned they learned about Santa Claus from children’s book, and 2% of correspondents mention other resources. We can see the tradition of children’s relating to Santa Claus, which is very popular in the Western world, does not reflect the same in China. Giving gifts to children during Christmastime is not a very popular practise in China.

Q5 What is most important thing when you choose tourist destination?

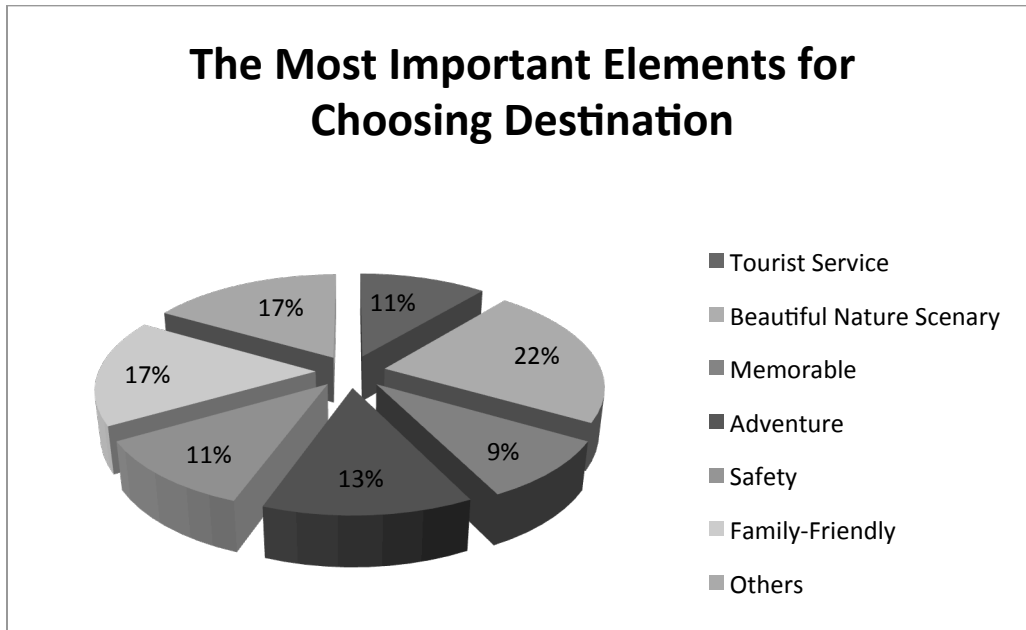


Figure 15 Most Important Element For Choosing Tourist Destinations

This part of survey is to test what is the most important elements for choosing tourist destination among potential tourists. It will also reflect the important prospects that Mohe Santa Claus Park should invest in to build a good tourist destination and program. In this section, beautiful natural scenery is showing its importance in decision making. However, family friendly and safety are equally presented as important elements. This result might be affected by the fact that correspondents are asked to choose these elements for situations in which they travel with family.

Even under the implication that a travel program should include family, “adventure” got 13% of the attention from correspondents. Other elements like “memorable” receives 9% of the attention. A choice of “others” was left to correspondents to fill in by themselves. Results from this section will be discussed in qualitative research.

Q7 Do you want to ski or skate in a real forest?

Many people had left this question as either empty or “no” with some justification like “too cold”, “afraid of lost”, or “not during short tour program” and so on. So I can conclude people

are less passionate with these sports in nature. However, it is also possible to guess that Chinese people are more keen about sightseeing and shopping holidays and not very keen about “sports holidays”.

Q8 Talking about traveling in Heilongjiang Province, Mohe area, what interests you?

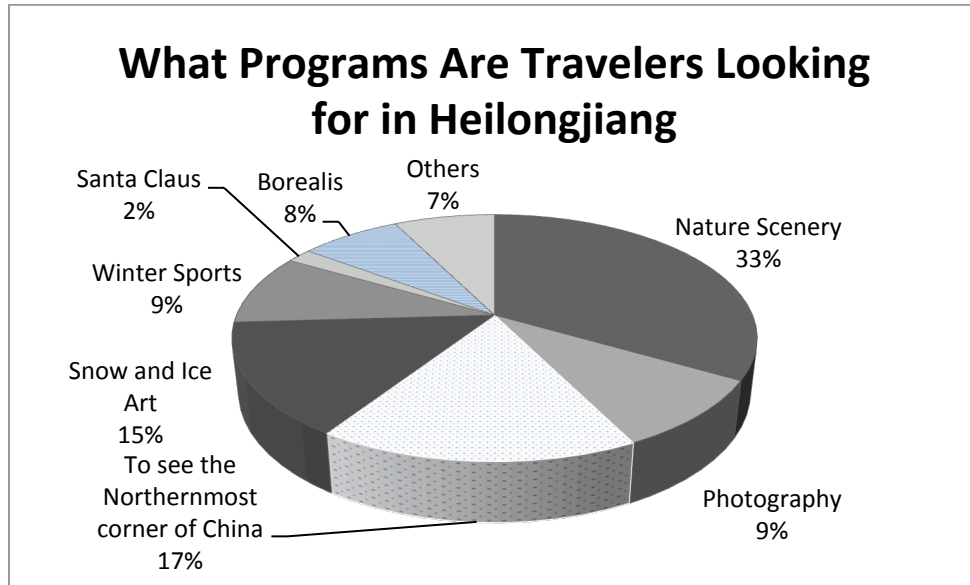
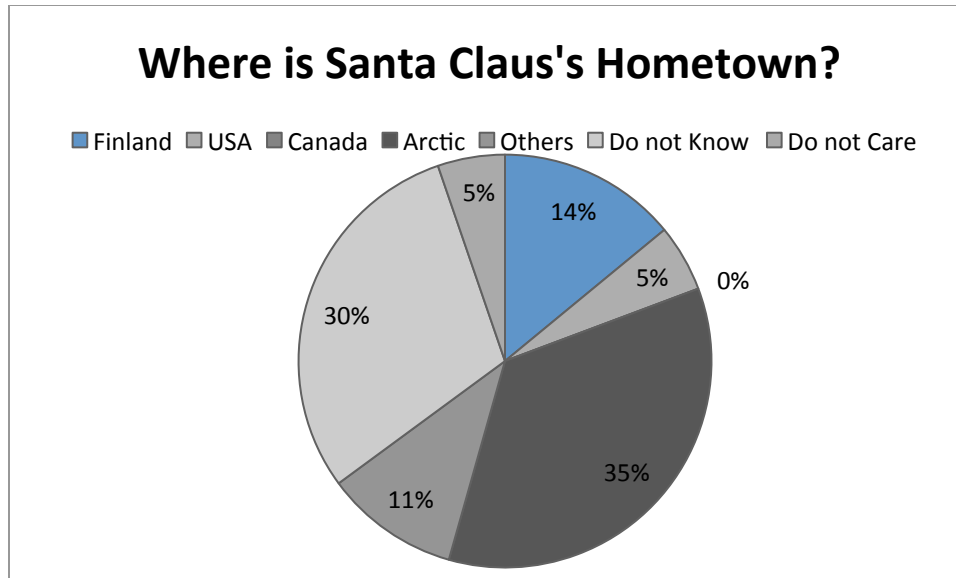


Figure 16 What Programs Are Travelers Looking For In Heilongjiang?

Q9 Where is the hometown of Santa Claus?

By this question, I am testing the itativity of the Finland being the “home of Santa Claus”. As introduced before, Mohe Santa Claus Park employed a Finnish person to impersonate Santa Claus in Santa Claus Park in Mohe. Their idea is to link Santa Claus Park in Mohe to Rovaniemi Santa Park, thus creating the credibility of the place being an “authentic” Santa Claus-themed place. This question will also help me to know what is the most direct association with “Santa Claus’s home” among Chinese tourists.



**Figure 17 Survey Feedback: Where Is Santa Claus's Hometown?**

When asking people the hometown of Santa Claus in their mind, 35% of correspondents answer the “Arctic”. This reflects the general impression that Santa Claus drives his sleigh to travel and lives in very cold places where it is all about snow.

The second big group of people answers “do not know”. It reflects the fact that Santa Claus is not a Chinese root character, and people are not very aware about his history. Among people who made a guess about Santa’s hometown, 14% of people choose Finland, 5% of people choose the USA, and 5% of people choose other places. It is actually not a bad result for Finnish brand experts who are trying to build Finland as Santa Claus’s hometown, because it is after all the most acknowledged place the after Arctic to be Santa’s hometown. If we also consider how relevant Finland is to the Santa Claus character’s history, we would say it is already a very big achievement. There are actually fewer people who consider the USA as Santa Claus’s hometown even though the commercial Santa dominates Santa Claus material in China.

The samples for further interview are selected from collected questionnaires. The selection procedure followed from the survey feedback. The researcher first reviewed all filled questionnaires, then approached people who could be potential interviewees for later research.

## 5.2 Qualitative Research and Results

Recording the interview information was done with the interviewees' permission and was mainly recorded on a mobile phone. Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 353) claim that in qualitative research, it is common that the interviews are recorded and transcribed later. This way the interviewer can concentrate on leading the discussion and not on making extensive notes. However, none of the interviews was transcript. The main reason is the research aims to fetch preference information and give directive suggestions for business development, rather than archiving.

Interview Numbers	Age	Gender	Profession	Date of the Interview
1	20	M	student	7/5/2012
2	18	M	student	7/5/2012
3	37	F	government	7/5/2012
4	30	F	IT	7/10/2011
5	45	M	Management	7/10/2011
6	60	F	Pensioner	9/5/2012
7	28	F	Artist	9/5/2012
8	55	M	Teacher	10/5/2012

**Table 3 The Qualitative Research Respondents**

The interview process was decided to be complete after eight interviews because of two reasons: the sufficiency for making the thesis and gaining the saturation point.

First, as I mentioned in the introduction, there was much more conversation done that was related to the topic. A lot of information was already gained even before the formal interview was conducted. However, the time frame in which the research findings had to be collected should not be too long in order to catch a valid analysis. So I only selected those ones that were from the questionnaire, with proper records, that followed the structured process to be included in the analysis. The topic is interesting to discuss. If the interviewer keeps it going as long as people are willing to talk about it, there will never be an end.

The second reason for the termination of the interview process was that, in the final interviews, no more significant new information that had not already been mentioned in the previous interviews came up. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, pp. 62-63), the researcher has enough data when the saturation point is reached, i.e., new interviews do not give any additional,

relevant information for the research. Eskola and Suoranta (1998, p. 63) argue that the saturation point cannot be determined beforehand but always depends on the particular study and the interviews.

Here is a list of questions that serve as qualitative research (with adaptations that will be in quantitative research as well). Because interviews are semi-structured, not all questions are mentioned in each interview.

The qualitative research topics were organized to focus three main research questions:

- 1) What is the perception of Santa Claus and his culture in China when compared with his Western origin?
- 2) Who will be interested in visiting Mohe Santa Claus Village in China?
- 3) What are the best ways and activities to communicate and market Santa Claus Village to attract potential customers?

The first groups of questions are testing the sensitivity to Santa Claus. It is often starts with:

- “When people talking about Santa Claus, what is the first thing comes to your mind?”
- “Have you ever expected to receive a gift from Santa Claus?”
- “With whom will you visit Santa Claus if you can really find Santa?”

The second group of questions regards the commercial value of Santa Claus World. It often related to:

- “What is your budget for a winter trip with family?”
- “If choose a gift to your kids in Christmas, how much you do want to spend on it?”

When asking questions like “When people talking about Santa Claus, what is the first thing come to your mind”? I often get answers like “Christmas”. This is related to the number one research

task, the image of Santa Claus. I will leave the interviewers to explore more on these topics and see that comes to a direct link with Santa Claus image.

For research question number two, the potential tourists who will visit Santa Claus Park, the research had mainly done by the quantitative research, questions on the survey list. However, this topic was explored once again during the interview by asking questions like “Whom will you visit Santa Claus together with if Santa really exists?” Or questions like “Whom do you want to visit Mohe/winter tourist destination?”

The interview questions also started to pertain more directly to the commercial value (task three in our research list), to be more focused on products that can be promoted via Santa Claus Park in Mohe.

While exploring research question one, the image of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists, I got answers from respondents like:

- “The Santa is a stout, nice, dress in red winter coat, white beard grandpa who come during Christmas time”;
- “... (he) carry a gift bag and walking on the street or supermalls”.
- “He flies, he disappear during other days. He lives very very far away, accompanied by deer”.
- “He has post cards to children and people who ask...”

It is not difficult to notice the difference between Chinese versions of Santa Claus compared with the Finnish version, where Santa Claus is more humanized. Among these answers, there has not been anything mentioned about Santa having his own life, surrounded by “tonttus” and communicating with children around the world all the time by writing mail, which was again more like the regular content in the Finnish or American context of Santa Claus. The religious image of Santa Claus almost did not appear at all in the answers I had collected.



Due to the long distance from China to Finland, its culture and knowledge regarding Santa Claus, it left us some room to develop and promote Santa Claus characters to fit into the destination culture and serve the commercial purpose.

While exploring research question two, combining with the quantitative research result, I noticed that there were a few phenomenon about Chinese customer groups:

- Aged people have less burden of their expense. They are retiring earlier than before. They are more and more looking for their “own life” than their predecessors. Two of our respondents were from this group. They were very positive toward visiting Mohe.

One respondent mentioned that “North-most China was the place I spent my youth. I was ordered to leave my home city and migrants to the countryside of Heilongjiang Province by Chairman Mao’s Culture Revolutions. I spent five years working in field. ... Now I am retired. (He had returned to his home city after the Cultural Revolution.) I am planning to drive with my friends to that place and visit all those villages where I had been. ...”

Another respondent in this age group had been in many places in China and abroad: “I definitely want to visit the ‘north most’ points of China. ... I am retired, and my children do not need me (to help them take care of children). I felt I had never been so energetic, and I will do things that I had thought for long now. ...”

- Middle-age people have the most responsibilities. They are also parents to the younger generation, namely teenagers and younger kids. Parents highly value a safe environment and family-friendly hospitality setups. These confirmed our survey results and presented strong signals for the Mohe-area tourist development plan.

One of our respondents mentioned that: “though we have long holidays, but I never have trip only by myself. Most time it was organized by my company. If my wife and child can join me, so I will join the trip. ...”

One respondents answered questions of “Will you bring gifts to your family from your trip?” with an immediate “Of course!” Then he continued with all kinds of gifts that he had brought every time from his trips, and in the end, he even complained a bit about the gift-giving tradition in China.

- Young people and new couples are the group that is the most pro-Western. They love the new imported festivals. Marketers often take them as segmented customers. They love sports and romantic experiences and are often lured by strong marketing campaigns. They are also active and adventure-oriented. Sports and outdoor activities will be good programs for them to explore Santa Claus Park and surrounding areas.

People in this age group seem to struggle between the beginning of independent life and the intriguing stage of exploring life. One respondent mentioned that “I will only travel on a very low budge, backpacker ... because I want to buy my own apartment”, then another respondent mentioned that “I go out every month, whenever there is opportunity. Both I and my girlfriends love traveling. All my friends love traveling. ...”

Respondents in this group can tell the most about Santa Claus, with their own imaginations and guesswork. They also plan programs during Christmastime.

- Children are the center of many Chinese families, thus having the most commercial value. Driven by the one-child policy and supported by the Confucian philosophy that a child’s development is the biggest responsibility of parents, Chinese people nowadays are putting a huge amount of investment in their children. If we link with our survey result that people mostly associate Santa Claus with Christmas, fairytales and gift giving, we can predict that Santa Claus Park will be a good platform for people to choose gifts for children, and the gift will mostly be associated with Santa’s fairytale style.

So there is no need to ignore any customer groups. It seems there is interest in Santa Claus Park from all ages. However, it also depends on who the decision maker is when planning the trip and who has the decision power in the purchase.

While the traditional research is suggesting that the tourist and entertainment industry is moving from service and product delivery to experience delivery, there was a new finding during the research work conducted for this thesis paper. Sixty percent of our qualitative interviewees had mentioned their life experience/dream associated to the tourist destination. Twenty-five percent of interviewees had made direct link between their life goals with the destinations. Typically, it is mentioned this way: “I want to visit the tallest mountain before I am 30 years old. When I was in..., I felt so accomplished. It brings me energy and strength to face challenges.”

“I was really lost at that time, many pressures. So I decided to see the world. I choose this routine because it is lead me to... And it is indeed a journey of enlightens. I met many like-minded travel friends. After that, I felt I am wiser now. ...”

“I just want to be the first one among my friends to see all four civilizations. So I started with. ...I feel I belong to that kind of persons who take traveling as lifestyle. I just have to start. I feel I am a freeman on my journey. I cannot look at those people who never leave their hometowns.”

“I had such strange experience during my backpack trip to Nepal to visit Buddha and my friends were really amazed. In the coming summer holiday they are all planning to go there. While I help them to make the plan, I feel so good! More and more people are now joining me. And I decided to try more daring destination. ... We also had our webpage for small groups of fans. We call ourselves as iron-back donkey-friends”.

“ Normally I take my son with me to travel. I choose those places that are famous and educational to young kids. Because I want my son to learn it and to have broader perspectives in his life.... I actually do not like travel that much myself because I have to work so hard to prepare it and even harder on the trip...”

So people are not really looking for an experience exactly, or they are not choosing the destination due to the design of any experience in the destination. If we take a look at Maslow's human satisfaction pyramid (Appendix 5), travel is already higher on the hierarchy than basic commodities. However, after this research, we find that the current trend of tourism in China has an actually even higher requirement for a destination than just entertaining or relaxing. It involves social interaction, self-esteem and self-actualization.

Tourists use a trip as a way to express or achieve some life goal. "To be there" is an experience tourists are looking for, especially among young tourists. It is hard to define if that really is about a certain culture, or nature character. But it has to be a strong, clear and unique character to which tourists can relate. The "fit in" and "fit out" character for trendy product culture is fit into here. Thus, there comes another important thing that Santa Claus Park must work on: to create the "myth".

Destination image is a function of five consumption values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional, and these in turn influence travel behavior. Such values influence the image of a destination and travel behavior (Ramkissoon, Nunkoo and Gursoy 2009).

In Chapter five, I had presented my research result from both quantitative research and qualitative research. The research process has been recorded in detail and the reason for terminations of interview is also present. The result has answered the questions like: the perceptions of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and provide a study for a convincing solution in promoting Santa Claus Park to Chinese tourists. The three tasks of this thesis have been performed by research. The additional findings have also been recorded and analyzed in this part of chapter.

## **6 Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of Santa Claus among Chinese tourists and provide a study for a convincing solution in promoting Santa Claus Park to Chinese tourists.

In the conclusion part of this thesis, I will first review the research in brief, present the result of the research, and discuss critical views of what was achieved and finally delineate the limitations of the study, thus providing suggestions for further research.

### **6.1 Research Summary**

The study focused on three tasks: The first was to identify the image of Santa Claus and his culture in China compared to his Western origin, the second was the need to identify the market segmentation for Mohe Santa Claus Village in China and the final aim was to provide suggestions for Santa Claus Village marketing activities to best attract potential customers.

I have done both quantitative and qualitative research. All the data were analyzed, and the final results calculated. The research is a single case study with transferring a famous Santa Claus from its Finnish-branded hometown Rovaniemi to its new home in China—the Santa Claus Park in Mohe. This transfer plan is not without risk, as we learned from all the background information we obtained about Santa’s image among the Chinese.

The theoretical framework had two main goals. The first was to examine Santa’s image in the Western world and China; the second was to study the theoretical development of the theme park industry. The theme park development of the past provided the possible perspectives that developers of a new theme park should be looking into. Both product and services are important, and a complete service, hospitality and commercial environment is needed to make the theme

park a commercial success. So the park is not a “spot” with borders blended by theme, but rather themed destinations with each of the elements of hospitality and a natural environment that are coherent with each other thus provide an experience to tourists.

With the theory framework and past theme park development empirical study, it is not difficult to see that Mohe’s Santa Claus Park actually benefits from the fact that the Mohe village local government is the main developer of it. There are many reasons why a local government in China would be interested in developing a theme park with many benefits to its local economic development, namely sustainability, the utilization of nature resources, employment and other prospects.

This study intended to find the solution and strategy to promote its results to potential customers to attract them to visit Mohe, visit Santa Claus Park and further promote Finnish brands to customers through gift purchasing.

## **6.2 Summary of Results**

There were three questions that were the aim of our research. Through research, the I had found the following results for the questions:

- 1) The image of Santa Claus in China is quite different than its image in Rovaniemi, Finland. In China, Santa Claus is a more pro-commercial figure mostly associated with “imported” Christmas commercial activities.
- 2) Mohe Santa Claus Park is not yet a very well-known tourist destination, not even among tourist fans. However, the popularity is growing while the local government is putting efforts to build the whole Mohe area into a “polar”-themed tourist destination.
- 3) In this research, 96% of all of respondents from Beijing, Shanghai and Harbin had never heard about Santa Claus Park in Mohe, so there is still a large marketing gap to be covered for Mohe Santa Claus Park.

- 4) Research shows the potential customers of Mohe Santa Claus Park might rise from the 25- to 35-year-old group and are mostly males, as they presented the strongest travel enthusiast group. However, the 18- to 25-year-old and female groups (39%) are also presented as an important customer segment too.
- 5) Through the qualitative research, it is noticed that early retirees are also very active in traveling and sports activities. They are sensitive with price, prefer to have more personalized tourist program, which is a potential customer group for Santa Claus Village Park.
- 6) The most important elements when people choose their tourist destination are beautiful nature scenery, which was 22%, followed by family friendly and safety. It gives input to Mohe Santa Claus Park and to its developers the direction for later development. Santa Claus Park's future development should be linked with Mohe village's eco-tourism and hospitality development to provide an integrated entertainment program to tourists.
- 7) Thirty-eight percent of people had learned about Santa Claus through TV programs, and sixteen percent, from children stories. This result confirms previous research that Santa Claus's image in China has less to do with religious and more to do with commercials. This result also provides direction for the theme park and theme design for Santa Claus Park to match the general image. Activities linked with Christmas, gift giving and fairytales might match the general image better.
- 8) Many channels are used when potential customers are searching for travel information: general information from the Internet, dedicated tour promotion websites and discussion forums, travel agencies and word-to-word.
- 9) Most people that this research reached think Santa Claus is from the Arctic, but less people think he is from Finland. Santa Claus Park in Mohe will benefit from the branding

work of Finland, which is promoting itself as Santa Claus's hometown. So their effort to recruit Finnish actors to impersonate Santa Claus in the Park will add value to its brand.

- 10) From qualitative research, I noticed that selling a tourist destination through "myth" might well be a good instrument for Mohe Santa Claus Park to associate with Santa Claus, polar borealis and being the "north-most" point of China.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

The limitation of the study is very obvious. First, Mohe Santa Claus Park is under development. It has only opened to the public for very short time, since December 2010. Compared with Santa Claus Park in Finland and other more mature theme parks, there are a lot to see and expected to be changed as time progresses. The operational environment is different compared with Mohe and Rovaniemi, so we need to give it time, then re-examine it.

During this research, I noticed that studies on theme park localization and marketing communication style are scarce. International study dedicated to tourist study among Chinese customers is also scarce. This is a bit contrary to the fact that China has become the most active tourism country in the world.

Culture and communication has been studied in academia for a rather long time. But putting culture in a theme park study is not very popular. Since this study is based on single case, this may turn out to be a biased comment or incomplete study of any of these aims. Tourist destination designers and operators need to adjust according to an actual situation when using the suggestions provided by this thesis.

The third limitation is depth. I approached about 100 respondents. However, there was not a detailed enough study done for each of these respondents' segmentation; more exploration was needed to understand their interests and preference in choosing tourist destinations and destinations other than Mohe.



I noticed there were also limitations on breadth. It is arguable whether 100 respondents with 50 results can be a very good representative for the whole Chinese tourist market. The research is within the ability of a master's degree study research can reach and explored the knowledge in relevant fields, aiming to provide a practical suggestions to a real business case.

#### **6.4 Practical implications**

China is fast developing into the world's biggest country, regarding the tourism industry. Knowing the Chinese tourist market and local people's needs would be the most important factors for tourism operators to achieve business success in China. Tourist destination promoters should consider a combination of communication style and channels to deliver the preferred content to their potential customers. Service, products or even experience might not be enough to create a successful tourist destination.

Santa Claus, a figure in Western culture that has religious and folk story roots and a commercial-blended image has mainly commercial and fairytale meanings, which again are more designed for commercial use. The culture and traditions that are linked with the commercial Santa Claus, like gift giving, have also been also adopted among Chinese consumers.

The Santa Claus theme park, considering the successful experiences of other theme park operators, should put their focus on developing their theme with nature resources and providing a novel experience to visitors.

Since China Tekway may also want to make Santa Claus Park in Mohe a commercial platform to promote Finnish brands, Santa's gifts to family and children could be a nature theme. Scholars like MacInnis and De Mello have already noticed that marketing activities and media promotion have strong influence on gift requests and desires. Marketing activities should focus on enhancing the hopes and desires of the consumer (MacInnis & de Mello 2005). The family theme, nostalgia and the symbolism of the Santa Claus tradition might be a good choice to focus on in marketing promotions to create desire.

## 6.5 Suggestions for further research

The suggestions for further research follow the limitations of the study in this thesis. My personal opinion is that there are no simple general rules for developing theme parks; nor are there any fixed patterns to transfer culture-related characters to a new destination. I would still encourage more study for case-to-case projects in this field. A comparative case study (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005) is beneficial. So after many similar studies on individual cases are done, it might be possible to learn common lessons, thus avoiding such limitations in future projects.

As mentioned in the limitation part of thesis, Mohe Santa Claus Park is under development, so more research to follow up on the feedback of tourists who visited Santa Claus Park will be extremely valuable.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 Timeline of Saint Nicholas



**AD c270**

*Nicholas' Birth*

Nicholas was born around AD 270 in **Patara, Lycia, Asia Minor**, to Christian parents. As he grew, he flourished physically, mentally and spiritually.

Stained glass: Cathedral of St. Etienne, Bourges, France  
Photo: Stuart Whatling, [Medieval Art](#)



**AD c300**

*Bishop of Myra*

Nicholas was Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, the city now known as **Demre**, Turkey. Living his whole life centered on Jesus Christ, Nicholas worked for justice and cared for those in need.

Print made by Francesco Bartolozzi, after Domenichino, from Doctors of the Church (1762)  
The British Museum, London



**AD 325**

*Council of Nicaea*

Bishop Nicholas, defender of the faith, forcefully argued for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity at the Council of **Nicaea**. The council's statement forms part of the **Nicene Creed**, still said in churches today.

Fresco, Sistine Chapel, The Vatican  
Photo: [St Nicholas Society/Rosenthal](#)



**AD 343**

*Death of Nicholas*

Bishop Nicholas died on December 6, 343 AD, and was buried in the cathedral in Myra, now Demre, Turkey. Many **pilgrims** came to his tomb.

Tomb of Saint Nicholas, Saint Nicholas Church, Myra (Demre, Turkey)  
Photo: [St Nicholas Society/JMR](#)



**AD 400**

*Wonderworker*

Since the fifth century the Eastern Church has revered Saint Nicholas for the many miracles attributed to him and for his inspiring witness as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Greek Icon  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**AD 987**

*Kiev and beyond*

Following his baptism, Grand Prince **Vladimir I** brought Christianity and Saint Nicholas to Kiev. All Kievan Rus were baptised (the area now occupied by Belarus, Ukraine, and parts of Russia). Saint Nicholas is Russia's favorite **saint**.

19th C Russian Icon  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1087**

*Saint in Bari*

Italian sailors took the bones of Saint Nicholas to Bari, Italy. This "**translation** of the **relics**" is commemorated in Bari with a fantastic festival each year on May 9th.

Vintage Italian Print  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1100s**

*Gift-Giver*

French **nuns** began giving candy and gifts to needy children on December 6th, Saint Nicholas **feast day**. Children still eagerly await his treats in French **Alsace** and **Lorraine** and in many other parts of Europe.

French Holy Card  
*Saint Nicholas Center Collection*



**c1150**

*Winchester Cathedral*

Scenes from the life of Saint Nicholas decorate this black marble baptismal font which was made in Belgium. Saint Nicholas has been a favorite subject for church ornamentation.

Winchester Cathedral Font  
*Photo: Aidan Simons*



**1200s**

*13th Century Boy Bishop Token*

All over Europe boys were selected to be the "**Nicholas Bishop**" from December 6th through the Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28th). Boy bishops and their retinues collected alms for the poor, but sometimes turned into disruptive roving gangs.

13th C English token from Bury St. Edmunds



**c1410**

*"Saint Nicholas Rescues a Ship at Sea"*

Nicholas was a popular subject for illuminated manuscripts; this one is from the *Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duke of Berry*.

Card from Metropolitan Museum of Art  
St Nicholas Center Collection



**1560**

*Saint-Nicolas-de-Port*

Stunning **basilica** dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the much beloved **patron**, "Father of the Country, Leader and Defender of Lorraine."

Belgian Lithograph  
St Nicholas Center Collection



**1661**

*Sint-Nicolaaskerk*

This silver **reliquary** is in the beautiful Saint Nicholas Church in **Sint-Niklaas, Flanders, Belgium**.

Detail Sint-Nicolaaskerk Reliquary, 1661 Sint-Nicolaaskerk



**1809**

*Washington Irving's* Saint Nicholas

*Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* describes Saint Nicholas as an elfin Dutch burgher, not a saint, thus beginning the emergence of a distinctive American figure.

Illustration by Boyd, *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, 1849  
Facsimile edition, St Nicholas Center Collection



**1823** *A Visit from Saint Nicholas* or *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*

First publication of the poem that became an American classic—and formed lasting images of an American Saint Nicholas.

1862 edition, illustrated by F. O. C. Darley  
St Nicholas Center Collection



**1845**

*The Netherlands*

A new picture book by Jan Schenkman shaped modern Dutch customs by establishing *Sint Nicolaas* arrival on a steamboat from Spain with a Moorish assistant. Crowds still enthusiastically greet their arrival each year in mid-November.

*Sint Nikolaas en Zijn Knecht*  
Reprint, *St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1864—1886**

*Thomas Nast draws Santa*

Harper's Weekly features Nast's Santas with flowing beards, rotund shapes, fur suits, and clay pipes.

"Merry Old Santa Claus" by Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly, January 1, 1881



**1873**

*Saint Nicholas Magazine*

The first issue of *Saint Nicholas: Scribner's Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys* was published. Editor Mary Mapes Dodge named the magazine for the children's saint—the epitome of loving and giving. This new magazine offered gifts to children as he did—gifts of fun as well as learning.

Saint Nicholas Magazine, August 1975  
Click for the story of [Saint Nicholas](#) from the January 1875 issue.

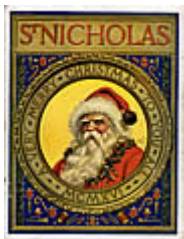


**1904**

*European Gift Giver*

Saint Nicholas leaves tasty treats for good little boys and girls.

1904 German Postcard  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1916**

*Saint Nicholas Magazine*

This enormously popular magazine named for children's patron, Saint Nicholas, was published from 1873 until 1940. It featured high quality children's illustrations and illustrations.

Illustration: Norman Price, *St Nicholas*, December 1916  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*  
Click for the [story of Saint Nicholas](#) from 1875.



**1920s**

*Dutch Moral Teacher*

Saint Nicholas visits homes and schools to reward good children who have learned their lessons well.

Dutch Postcard  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1931**

*Coca-Cola Santa*

Each year from 1931 to 1964 **Haddon Sundblom** created a new Santa for Coca-Cola's "thirst knows no season" campaign. His life-size Santas in white fur-trimmed red suits are now the American Santa Claus. Here is the first one.

Courtesy of Coca-Cola Company



**1945**

*Still Gift Giver in Europe*

Saint Nicholas' donkey helps bring treats to excited and happy children.

1945 Belgian Postcard  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1950's**

*European Advertising*

Saint Nicholas now rewards all children-whether naughty or nice. Even Coca-Cola once knew the true Saint Nicholas.

Store Promotional Piece  
*St Nicholas Center Collection*



**1994**

*Saint Nicholas Defense*

Action committees in the Netherlands and Belgium tell Santa Claus to stay away until after **Saint Nicholas Day**, December 6th.

Symbol used in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium  
Photo: [Sint-Nicolaasgenootschap Vlaanderen](#)



**2001**

*Canterbury, England*

Good Bishop Nicholas rides through the town leading happy crowds to the heart of Christmas—the manger where Jesus was born.

Photo: *Anglican World*

## Appendix 2 Myth in Atlantis themed Hotel



### The Myth

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During the construction of the resort, a complex series of passages was uncovered, thought to have been buried thousands of years ago by the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Upon further investigation, an ancient street system was discovered and the theory came into being that these were in fact remains from the Lost City of Atlantis.

Such an exciting discovery has raised many questions about Atlantean civilisation and culture, some of which will never be answered. However, it seems that this network of streets has revealed artefacts from a very civilised people who possessed an incredible level of technology.

The Lost Chambers give a valuable insight into the Atlantean history and function attached to each room, as well as information about the marine life now living there. Our map takes you through a gateway into a magnificent underwater realm where you can ask our guides for any further information about Atlantis and its inhabitants.

## 有关圣诞老人村和圣诞老人的调查表

Friday, February 17, 2012  
9:32 PM

### 个人信息

**Q1 您的年龄?**

- 18岁以下
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

**Q2 您的职业**

- 高等院校在校生
- 白领工薪族
- 管理者
- 公务员
- 离退休人员
- 其他, 请提供详细情况

**Q3 您所在的市或县**

**Q3 您是否上网查找旅游信息?**

- 是
- 否

**Q4 您的性别?**

- 男
- 女

### 访谈信息

**Q1 您以前听说过漠河县的圣诞老人村吗?**

- 听说过
- 没有

**Q2 如果没有的话, 您每年出门旅游几次?**

- 一次以下
- 两到三次
- 三到五次
- 五次以上

**Q3 您从以下哪些活动中了解圣诞老人吗?**

- 过圣诞节的时候看电视
- 宗教
- 欧洲历史
- 去过外国旅游
- 其他途径
- 请提供详细情况

**Q5 在选择旅游目的地的时候, 什么是您最看重的东**

- 旅游服务到位
- 景色优美
- 有纪念意义
- 新奇冒险
- 安全, 交通方便
- 适合家庭老少皆宜
- 其他, 请详解

**Q6 您想不想见见真正的圣诞老人?**

- 想
- 不想
- 要看花销是多少

**Q7 提到黑龙江省漠河一代去旅游, 您会对哪些感**

- 自然环境
- 摄影
- 中国最北端
- 冰雪艺术
- 冬季运动
- 圣诞老人
- 极光
- 其他
- 请提供详细情况

能不能比较详细的介绍一下您在此之前去过的两个旅游地? 说说您是因为什么选择了这些目的地的?



能不能比较详细的介绍一下您在此之前去过的两个旅游地？说说您是因为什么选择了这些目的地的？

New Section 1 Page 1

您以前听说过芬兰嘛，您对芬兰的什么比较印象深刻？

你知道圣诞老人的故乡在哪里吗？

芬兰

美国

加拿大

北极

其他\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4 Open Questions

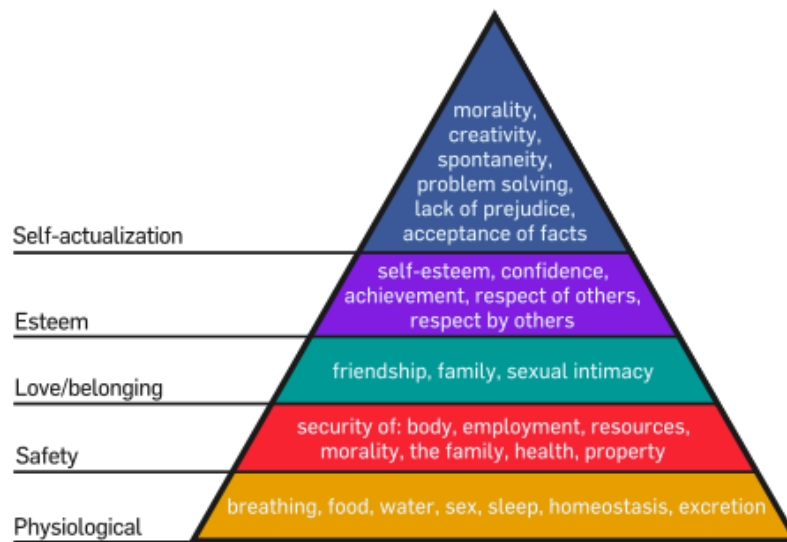
### The first groups of questions are testing the

- When people talking about Santa Claus, what is the first thing come to your mind?  
当提起圣诞老人的时候，你最先想到的是什么？
- have you ever expect to receive a gift from Santa Claus? What is the gift?  
有没有想过要见一见真正的圣诞老人？
- Do you know where Santa Claus comes from?  
你知道圣诞老人是从哪里来的吗？
- if I say Finland, how many brands you know from it?  
如果提起芬兰，你最先想到什么？那些品牌？
- if there is a chance to meet Santa Claus, who do you want to be besides you?  
如果有一个机会见一见圣诞老人，你希望能够跟谁在一起？

### The second group of questions is to commercial value of Santa Claus World:

- When choosing travel destination, what is the most important thing? / 当你选择旅游地的时候，什么事你认为最重要的事情？
- Try to remember the most pleasant trip you recently had, where it is? Why? 回忆你近期最愉快的一次旅行，是在哪里？能说说为什么吗？
- In Mohe, the Northeast corner of China, there is Santa Claus Village, polar borealis light and large forest natural view. Would you like to go there and visit the real Santa Claus who came from Finland? 在中国最北端的漠河有极光，森林和圣诞老人村。你愿意到那里去见一见真正的 圣诞老人吗？
- If you can have a gift from Santa, what you would like to receive? / 如果你能从圣诞老人那里受到一份礼物，你希望是什么？
- If you want to buy a gift to your kids in Christmas, how much you want to spend on it? / 圣诞节了，你要给小朋友准备一份礼物，你会准备什么？
- Will you go to travel in winter? To where? With whom? How much you want to spend on it? / 你会不会在冬天出去旅游？去哪里？跟谁去？你会准备大体什么样花销？
- Do you like winter sports? ski or skate? / 你会什么冬季的体育运动项目？滑雪？滑冰？
- Do you want to ski or skate in real forest? / 你愿不愿意在森林里滑雪和滑冰？

## Appendix 5 A theory of human motivation



An interpretation of Maslow's<sup>63</sup> hierarchy of needs, represented as a pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom

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<sup>63</sup> Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–96. Retrieved from <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>