"America First, the Netherlands Second" on YouTube: "spoofing" destination marketing with political satire

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Abstract

This study attempts to provide initial tentative insights into the audience reception of intertwining political satire and destination marketing imagery by analysing the "America First, the Netherlands Second" video and a student sample audience response. In 2017, a series of YouTube videos named "America First" went viral. The video that started the viral phenomenon was "America First, the Netherlands Second", responding in a satirical manner to the "America First" message of the inaugural speech of U.S. president Donald J. Trump. They achieved extreme popularity both in number of views and number of new memetic videos with similar satirical messages. These videos were a form of political expression and at first sight did not seem to have much in common with communication in tourism. However, the videos included typical destination marketing imagery, intertwined with satirical representations, thus representing a humorous "spoof" on destination marketing. The study analyses participants' memory recall, eye-tracking movements and focus group responses in order to provide initial conclusions on how audiences respond to the intertwining of satirical political expression and destination marketing imagery.

Keywords: YouTube, destination marketing imagery, destination image formation, eye-tracking, memory recall.

1. Introduction

On January 20th, 2017, Donald J. Trump, the 45th president of the United States, presented his inaugural speech. He emphasised the politics of national priorities with the words "From this day forward it's going to be only America first. America first." The inaugural speech, as

expected, attracted high media attention. What was not expected, however, was a series of viral YouTube videos responding in a satirical manner to the new president's message of the inaugural speech: "America First".

It all started with the Dutch comedy show "Zondag met Lubach", which published a satirical response to the speech, intended to mock the message "America First" with a short, humorous and very satirical, some would even say absurd, video presentation of the Netherlands. The video was published later by the show's producers on YouTube with English subtitles and with the following introductory words: "The whole world was watching the inauguration of the 45th president of the United States: Donald J. Trump. Because we realize it's better for us to get along, we decided to introduce our tiny country to him." (Vpro zondag met Lubach 2017).

In the video, the narrator used a voice similar to that of Donald J. Trump and the satirical content was critical of both the United States and to some extent the Netherlands itself. The video went viral, first in Europe and then in the rest of the world. In just a very short time, similarly as with other "meme" phenomena where mimicking is the main feature (Shifman 2012), it was taken up by other video producers, either professional or non-professional, who followed the main pattern of the original video and published satirical self-presentations of their own countries, all intended to criticise Donald J. Trump's foreign policy.

The aim of this study is to analyse the reception of the original Dutch video from the perspective of so-called autonomous sources of destination image formation (Gartner 1994). What the original Dutch video and its memetic, viral YouTube responses had in common was typical destination marketing imagery: stunning representations of the presented country's natural beauties, intertwined with humorous representations of selected travel attractions. What was different from typical destination marketing imagery were satirical "edutainment" information on the presented country's problematic past and current political situations serving as a critique of the U.S.A.'s international politics.

We focus here on the original Dutch video, since it was the main video that all other viral responses creatively copied in form. Two months after its publication, the original Dutch video had more than 24 million video views (24,465,356 views as of 26th March 2017). In comparison, the most popular video of the official "Visit Holland" YouTube channel of the Dutch national destination marketing organisation (DMO) to date managed to achieve 1.5 million views (1,528,016 views as of 26th of May 2018) after 5 years of being published.

The "America First, the Netherlands Second" video received 18906 comments by the end of March 2017 (26th March). Amongst the best rated comments, as rated by other viewers, are those that respond positively to the presented image of the destination and especially the humour used, for example:

"'And we made the Mexicans... pay for it.' Brilliant stuff here -- I'm moving to the Netherlands!! TREMENDOUS pitch!!"
"That was amazing Netherlands! Best one I've seen, I was literally laughing out loud... much love from California"
"OH I want to be at the Ponypark SLAGHAREN now: O"
(answer): "if only you could... Turns out the pony park was going to be closed a week after this video:P"
"If you want, go to Pony Park City! It's a few kilometres from Slagharen, and that stays open"

The "America First" memes create "spoofs" or parodies of the destination marketing discourse, including typical destination imagery, yet judging from the great extent of audience views and international viral responses, they seem to be an important, informal source that may influence the destination image formation processes of their audiences. The aim of this paper is to analyse the way the original "America first" YouTube video is perceived by study participants to

provide insights into the interplay between the destination imagery: typical, stunning visual representations of the destination (in this case, the Netherlands) and the satirical political expression.

2. Literature review

2.1. Destination image, destination imagery and YouTube

One of the main functions of destination marketing is to strive to influence the process of formation of a favourable destination image amongst those audiences deemed important for the destination marketers, most prominently the potential visitors. A destination image is most often defined as the "sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton 1997: 18). Research on destination image conceptualisation, formation and effects has a primary role in tourism studies and is one of the most commonly researched phenomena (for an overview, see, for example, Tasci and Gartner 2007). As argued by Gartner (1994), the potential sources of destination image formation are numerous and diversified.

The main objectives of any marketing department of destination management organizations (DMOs) will usually be to create a new image, to correct negative perceptions or to reinforce positive images already established in the minds of the target audience. The purpose is to achieve brand salience within the small competitive set of destinations considered by the consumer during decision making, which represents a source of competitive advantage (Pike 2016). Nowadays, multimedia plays a more important role than traditional print media in shaping consumers' perceptions towards a brand or image of a destination (Payne & Rahman 2014). Social media in general (Rosa, Janecek & Tluchor 2016; Hernández-Méndez & Munoz-Leiva 2015) and YouTube specifically have become recognised as important channels for both official destination marketing activities (Jakopovic 2015; Huertas et al. 2017; Uşaklı et al. 2017) and word-of-mouth marketing by users (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier 2009).

Online videos offer unique attributes which differentiate them from past media forms, such as the ability for a user to self-select what imagery they consume, making videos a distinct form of communication (Beeton 2004). Investigations into how online videos influence and shape the perceptions of viewers is an emerging field of research (Shani et al. 2010; Figueiredo et al. 2014; Jakopovic 2015). Viewers can develop "true" or "false" memories according to what they see and how they interpret the content. Wade et al. (2002) found that image manipulation can change or distort viewers' memories – e.g., the destination depicted in a photograph may not necessarily reflect what actually is real, however, it will be what participants recall as happening.

One major advantage of using video communication in marketing is its effects on emotions, especially joy and surprise. These two emotions are supposedly the most commonly targeted emotions in advertising (Teixeira, Wedel & Pieters 2012). Rubaltelli, Agnoli and Franchin (2016) analysed emotions and their manifestation in eye movements. Wildenmann and Schaeffel (2013) showed the connections between emotions and eye pupils and their dilation. Shani et al. (2010) investigated the effects of a promotional video on the destination image in the minds of the audience. They showed that the employed video had significant positive impacts on participants' perceptions of the destination image in almost all the investigated analysed attributes.

With the plethora of voices publishing on YouTube, official DMOs face an important challenge: users' alternative ways of presenting their own or other nations' destination. In a more familiar form, this can be a continuation of old genres such as travel writing in the form of travel videos (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier 2009). However, it can also be in the form of more atypical, more confronting and politically critical forms, involving humour and political satire

– forms that are not generally well known to the current research on tourism and communication. The "America First, The Netherlands Second" video is published by a traditional mass media source – a TV comedy show. Yet its viral, memetic response in the form of hundreds of similar videos is mostly published by individual users taking on the format and publishing their own creative expressions in line with YouTube as a landmark of participatory culture (Shifman 2012; Jenkins et al. 2013).

Past research into YouTube and destination image formation focused either on destination marketing performed by official voices (destination marketing organisations) (Huertas et al. 2017), or on travel videos posted by tourists (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier 2009). Based on work by Uşaklı et al. (2017), we provide a definition of destination marketing imagery as typical, most commonly used visual representations of a destination's attractions used in destination marketing material. Uşaklı et al. (2017) analysed the social media use of 50 European national DMOs and concluded that the most frequent major theme projected by DMOs in their social media postings was natural attractions (48%) across all platforms. Other frequent major themes included cultural attractions (12.5%), historical attractions (8.5%), local cuisine (6.4%), and recreation facilities (5.2%). These major themes accounted for over 80% of all posts in their analysed sample. Such themes with the main aim of forming a favourable image of a destination compose what we term here "destination imagery" – "typical" presentations of the iconic travel attractions of a destination.

Utilising Uşaklı et al.'s (2017) typology to analyse the "America First" YouTube memes, we could see that similar themes of destination imagery appeared in these videos. Specifically, in the case of the original video "America First, the Netherlands second", the video consists almost exclusively of major destination image themes, including some of the most iconic Dutch travel attractions: cultural (Kinderdijk windmills, Afsluitdijk, Madurodam, Black Pete tradition), historical (William of Orange statue at Noordeinde Palace) and recreational (Ponypark Slagharen) attractions (see Figure 1). Hence this clip and the other "America First" meme videos resemble typical destination marketing videos in terms of their visual content. However, the videos' typical destination imagery is not accompanied by the stereotypical narratives of inviting the tourists to come and explore the destination. The destination imagery is meshed with humour in the form of sarcasm and political critique.

Figure 1. Dutch attractions appearing in the original America First YouTube video: Kinderdijk windmills, Afsluitdijk, Madurodam, Black Pete tradition, William of Orange statue at Noordeinde Palace, Ponypark Slagharen. Source: own processing according to Vpro zondag met lubach, 2018

2.2. Spoofing destination marketing for political sarcasm

Where the "America First" memetic videos differ from typical destination marketing is the inclusion of political satire. As such, the "America First" memetic videos were an expression of international and unofficial dissent with the U.S.A.'s foreign politics. Political humour has long been recognised as having important functions in society (e.g., Nilsen 1990). It is often a means of political activism, expressing dissent by those in less powerful positions (Kutz-Flamenbaum 2014; Sørensen 2017). Satirical humour is found to have a particular ability to break the power of dominant political discourses, because their ambiguity makes them ideal as "guerrilla attacks" in the ongoing discursive guerrilla war the activists are waging (Sørensen 2017). Deen (2018) argues that President Donald Trump's humour has spurred a robust conversation concerning the relation between Trump and comedy. According to Deen, a sense of humour is politically virtuous when it encourages good will toward fellow citizens, an awareness of the limits of power and a tendency not to take oneself too seriously, or when it condemns moral or intellectual vice. He provides an analysis of President Donald Trump's sense of humour as an example of the opposite and thus labels his sense of humour as "deeply flawed". The "America First" viral videos are one of the prime examples of global dissent against Donald Trump's politics and it seems also his sense of humour.

Humour is a complex construct studied in many scientific fields. In general, humour is a multidimensional trait referring to a group of specific stimuli that can lead to fun. After perceiving stimulation from humour, individuals will generate cognitive or emotional experiences and responses that can be explicitly observed (Huang & Lee 2019). Empirical research (Abel 2002; Kuiper, McKenzie & Belanger 1995) has shown that greater use of humour is associated with appraising events in a more positive, less threatening manner. Along these lines, the use of benign humour has been identified as an effective means in the context of volitional cognitive reappraisal. Cognitive reappraisal is conceptualized as the process of reinterpreting the subjective meaning of an emotionally evocative event, thereby changing its emotional impact, and is considered a particularly powerful coping strategy (Perchtold et al. 2019).

Dozens of authors have contributed to the discourse on humour taxonomies. Nevertheless, theories of humour fall broadly into three general categories of cognitive-perceptual (including incongruity theories), relief (including psychodynamic theories), and superiority (including disparagement and affective-evaluative theories) (Swani, Weinberger & Gulas 2013; Eisend 2009; Beard 2007). The incongruity theory states that humour is a reaction of surprise because two unrelated ideas are brought together in a surprising or unexpected way (McGhee 1979). The relief theory states that humour is a reaction of relief (Solomon 1996). Finally, the superiority theory states that we laugh at others' weaknesses or misfortunes because we feel superior to them in some way (Morreall 1983).

If we simplify, we can state that the "America First, the Netherlands Second" video primarily builds on the superiority theory of humour – it is satirically criticising Donald Trump's foreign politics. The importance of destination marketing imagery comes into play here with the fact that the video creators used the destination's attractions as comedic and sarcastic proof of the mocker's superiority, for example: "This is the Afsluitdijk. It's a great, great wall that we built to protect us from all the water from Mexico. We built an entire ocean, okay? An entire ocean between us and Mexico. Nobody builds oceans better than we do. This ocean, it is so big, you can even see it from the moon, and we made the Mexicans pay for it."

In tourism studies, humour has only recently started to attract attention (Pearce 2009; Pearce & Pabel 2014; 2015), with the focus either on the humorous characteristics of tourism products (Pabel & Pearce 2018) or on tourists' responses to humour (Pabel & Pearce 2016). A third type of research, on the boundaries of which we also position this paper, focuses on the role of humour in destination image formation. Carden (2005) showed that humour seemed to

be a response to crises in destination marketing. Frew (2006) analysed tourists' visits to comedy festivals or comedic TV and film locations. Iwashita (2006) discovered that popular humorous culture products such as Peter Rabbit and Mr Bean had an important role for Japanese tourists in creating a positive image of the UK and the British as gentlemanly and humorous. These cases have, however, focused on traditional entertainment content. No research attention from the destination marketing perspective has been payed yet to YouTube memetic phenomena where political expression and popular culture mashups are the identifying characteristics of the online participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2013).

Although this was not directly intended by the video authors, "America First, the Netherlands Second" is an exceptional case study from the point of view of tourism studies because it is spoofing typical destination marketing for purposes of political expression. In advertising research, humour is claimed to positively influence attitudes toward an advertisement and the brand, particularly if non-traditional stereotyping rather than traditional stereotyping is utilized (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel 2014). Mukherjee and Dubé (2012) suggest that the audience of a message is more likely to believe (and less likely to counter-argue) humorous than non-humorous claims. Humour intended by advertisers generally mirrors the actual audience perceptions of humour effectiveness (Barry & Graca 2018). Humour appreciation is said to affect decision making by altering (a) memory, (b) information processing, and (c) creativity. In all of these cases, the effect of humour appreciation is integral to, or related to, the stimulus that the consumer wants to remember (Warren, Barsky & McGraw 2018).

On the other hand, humorous advertisements attract attention, but precisely because of that they often fail to achieve other objectives, such as improving brand attitudes or increasing sales (Scott, Klein & Bryant 1990; Warren & McGraw 2016). In order to maintain a positive effect, humour is said to reduce cognitive efforts, in particular those related to brand-related cognitions, thus supporting a "vampire effect"; that is, humour distracts from processing the central benefits of the brand (Eisend 2011). The case of the "America First, the Netherlands Second" video is specific in the sense that we can talk here about an inversion of the vampire effect. In typical advertisements, the brand or product benefits are the primary message intended to be conveyed, and humour is of secondary importance – used only to invite attention and nestle the main message within positive feelings of humour enjoyment. In the "America First, the Netherlands Second" video, however, humour is the main message and the destination imagery is only supplementary. If the video has any effects on the destination image formation of the Netherlands amongst its audiences, these were not intended by the video producers and are thus so to say "vampirising" the humour used. The video thus makes an important case study precisely because the destination imagery is of secondary importance to the political sarcasm, and how much attention these supplementary images receive needs to be analysed.

By intertwining the destination imagery and the satirical political expression, the "America First" memes become not only a form of political expression, but inadvertently also "spoofs" on destination marketing. Advertisement spoofs or "subvertisements" are defined as "a satirical version or the defacing of an existing advert, an inversion designed to make us forget consumerism and consider instead social or political issues" (Barley 2001: 45). Sabri and Michel (2014) analysed the effects of so-called "spoof" advertisements – focusing on humorous critiques of McDonalds in the form of an advertisement parody. They discovered that such critical information has negative effects on the parodied brand's perception – but only if claims are both humorous and credible (critique of McDonalds as "creator of obesity" and not as "creator of bad moods"). In line with their results, we would thus expect that both the U.S.A. and the Netherlands would be perceived negatively, since both were criticised and mocked in the "America First Video".

Yet, as Becker (2012) shows, we need to distinguish between other-directed and self-directed humour. Becker analysed the relationship between political candidates' appearances on popular comedy shows and political candidate evaluations. She provides three claims about the relationship between political campaigning and late-night comedy shows, which we argue are valid also in the relationship between destination marketing and the "America First" viral videos. First, Becker claims that political campaigns need to take into account such new forms of infotainment, since they act as a popular gateway, encouraging normally inattentive individuals to pay attention. Second, political candidate appearances on entertainment talk shows may have a positive influence on political attitudes, with less attentive voters actually warming to candidates they would normally oppose. And third, the study of the effects of these alternative ways of infotainment need to take into account the difference between other-directed humour and self-directed humour. She discovered that other-directed, hostile humour had more of an effect on political attitudes than self-directed humour. The candidate that was mocked in this study was evaluated more negatively. In regard to self-directed humour, however, Becker's (2012) results were mixed, although Becker, in line with Baumgartner's (2007) first tentative results, expected that self-directed humour will be associated with more positive attitudes towards the candidate, but found there was no significant correlation. It thus remains to be explored how the self-depreciating humour in "America First", in combination with other-directed humour, operates in relation to destination image formation. Specifically, how much attention does the audience give to the visual destination imagery that accompanies the verbal humour? How exactly do audiences perceive such interplay between political sarcasm and destination marketing imagery? What do they remember from the video? And what kind of destination image do they have of the two represented destinations: the U.S.A. and the Netherlands? These were the research questions that directed the explorative research presented in the further sections of this article.

3. Methods

The aim of this paper is to provide initial tentative insights into audiences' perceptions of the YouTube video "America First, the Netherlands Second". The research objectives include:

(a) describing the main visual elements of the video that captured the study participants' attention via the eye-tracking method – answering the question of how much attention the audience gives to the visual destination imagery that accompanies the verbal humour;
(b) outlining the effects the video has on participants' memory recall via memory recall tests;
(c) identifying the emotional and cognitive components of the destination image of both the U.S.A. and the Netherlands via focus group interviews.

To understand what role this specific online video plays in viewers' attention, memory and partly also destination image formation, a mix methods approach was used. This approach was considered most suitable for gaining a better understanding of the multiple perspectives that research participants had about the destination image of the Netherlands and the U.S.A. Firstly, an exploratory eye tracking study was conducted, complemented with a content analysis of the video and qualitative analysis of the eye-tracking participants' comments. Eye-tracking analysis was used because it can show what respondents pay attention to while watching the video – we wanted to check if the participants pay attention to the visual destination imagery of the video.

In order to study visual attention characteristics, the eye-tracking system is typically used for experiments to collect human eye movement information according to the visual stimuli. General fixation, saccades, smooth pursuits, optokinetic reflex, vestibuloocular reflex and vergence are six types of raw data from eye-tracking studies (Mangold International 1998-2018). There are several advantages of using eye tracking to examine visual appeal. It removes the subjectivity of self-reporting data and it allows the viewer's reactions to be tracked without affecting other stimuli and can show which parts of the video captured participants' attention most (Wang et al. 2014). Participants' eye movement is tracked while watching the video, providing evidence of what attracts their attention. Eye-tracking research methodology has been used in previous studies (e.g., Djamasbi et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2014). Formánková and Eger (2016) also state a limitation of the eye-tracking method, in that it does not provide sufficient information on its own and should thus be combined with interviews of research participants to assess the ability to capture attention and allow participants to state their feelings about the video.

Optimizing user experience plays an important role in today's marketing research and practice, with the prime focus on visual attention of the viewers and its effects, such as memorability (Chen & Chen 2017; Krucien, Ryan & Hermens 2017). Majooni, Masood and Akhavan (2014) found that memorability was enhanced by the use of graphical content elements followed by textual content elements. Smith, Boerman and Meurs (2015) confirmed the positive influence of some classic visual characteristics of a message, such as the advertisement's size, position and colours in printed advertisement. Much attention is paid to the impacts of video on particular elements. Researchers have focused on saliency or object detection (Fang et al. 2012; Imamoglu, Lin & Fang 2013; Li, Meng & Ngan 2013), image and video quality assessment (Zhao et al. 2011), video summarization (Evangelopoulos et al. 2013), image search (Huang et al. 2011), image retargeting (Fang, Chen, Lin & Lin 2012), visual appeal (Rosa, Janecek & Tluchor 2016), etc.

The most accurate approach to analysing visual attention is to use a gaze-tracking/eye-tracking device. Eye tracking is a neuro-physiological method that can record eye-movement metrics to objectively reflect participants' attention. In a typical gaze-tracking session, the gaze locations of a human observer are recorded when watching a given video clip using a remote screen- or head-mounted eye-tracking system (Hadizadeh, Enriquez & Bajic 2012). When watching video material, the viewing behaviour is different from that deployed when viewing images. When looking at still images, humans rapidly fixate on a specific area in the image, scan it, and then move on to other area. In videos, fixations on moving objects are enabled through smooth pursuit eye movements (Alers, Redi & Heynderickx 2015).

This study used the Mangold Vision eye-tracking software and hardware. The respondent sample consisted of a convenient sample of 7 participants (3 male gender and 4 female gender, aged from 24 to 35 years old). We used a control group of 3 respondents. They watched the video without sound or subtitles since the control was aimed at testing the attention on the video visuals representing destination imagery. We combined eye tracking with individual structured interviews and three qualitative focus groups of a convenient sample of international respondents to get a broader view of the perception of the video. At the beginning of each eye-tracking session the participants viewed the video, then answered questions and were tested for their ability to remember visual elements of the presented destination. Questions included asking participants about what they thought the main goal of the video was, and what their first emotional responses to the videos were. Then the participants were tested for their memory recall. Memory recall was tested by showing selected pictures from the video and asking participants if they thought the picture was used in the video. Pictures used in the test are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Pictures used for memory recall test. Source: own processing according to Vpro zondag met lubach, 2018

Finally, we included three focus groups, first showing the participants the video and then discussing their reactions to the video in-depth. Participants for the eye-tracking research method were different than the respondents in the focus groups to prevent re-viewing. The total number of focus group participants was 38 and they were mainly young people – university students at the level of bachelor studies of tourism programmes. Their age spanned 20 to 24 years old. The first group consisted of 13 Czech students, the second group of 12 Slovenian students and the third group was a mixed international group of Slovenian, Swedish, Czech and Italian students (n = 13). In the focus groups we included 10 male and 28 female students. The locations of the focus groups were the Czech Republic and Slovenia. An important limitation of this study is the convenient sample: university students. The reason for the convenience sampling technique, besides the researchers' obvious access to a student population, is the fact that the most typical YouTube users who would watch these memetic videos would be young and fluent in English, thus making the convenience sample of university students very much applicable to the issue at hand. Another limitation is the choice of the eye-tracking method because it shows only visual attention, thus we do not know much about other cognitive processes that are involved. We included the focus groups in order to reduce this limitation.

4. Results

4.1. Eye tracking

To address the first research objective of this study, which was aimed at describing the main elements of the video that captured the study participants' attention, the eye-tracking method was utilised. Data were analysed using the gaze plot map method. The results of the experiment are shown in Figure 3. Each respondent's eye movement is given its own colour. The size of the points indicates the period of fixation on one point on the screen.
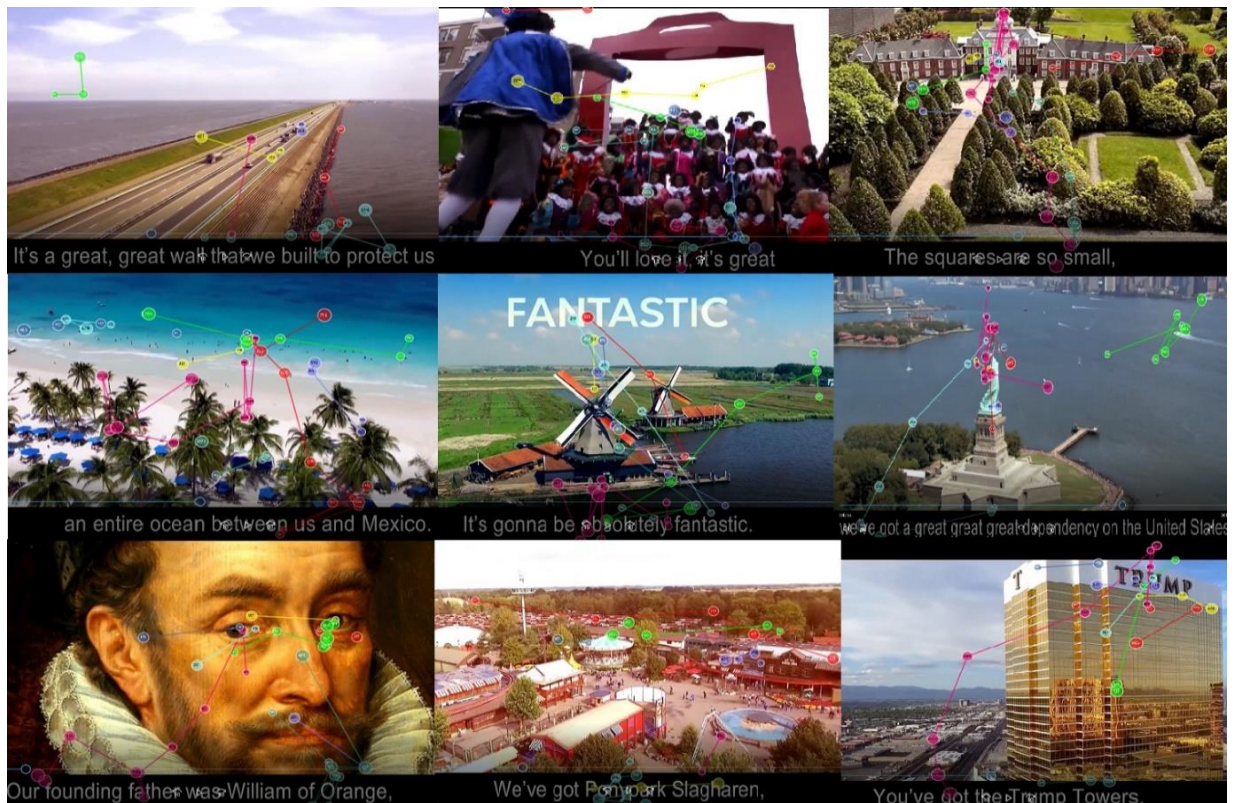
Figure 3. Eye tracking results. Source: own processing, 2018
Note: each colour is one participant's eye movement path. Points are points of fixation. That means that the respondent remained gazing at the point. Lines show the path.
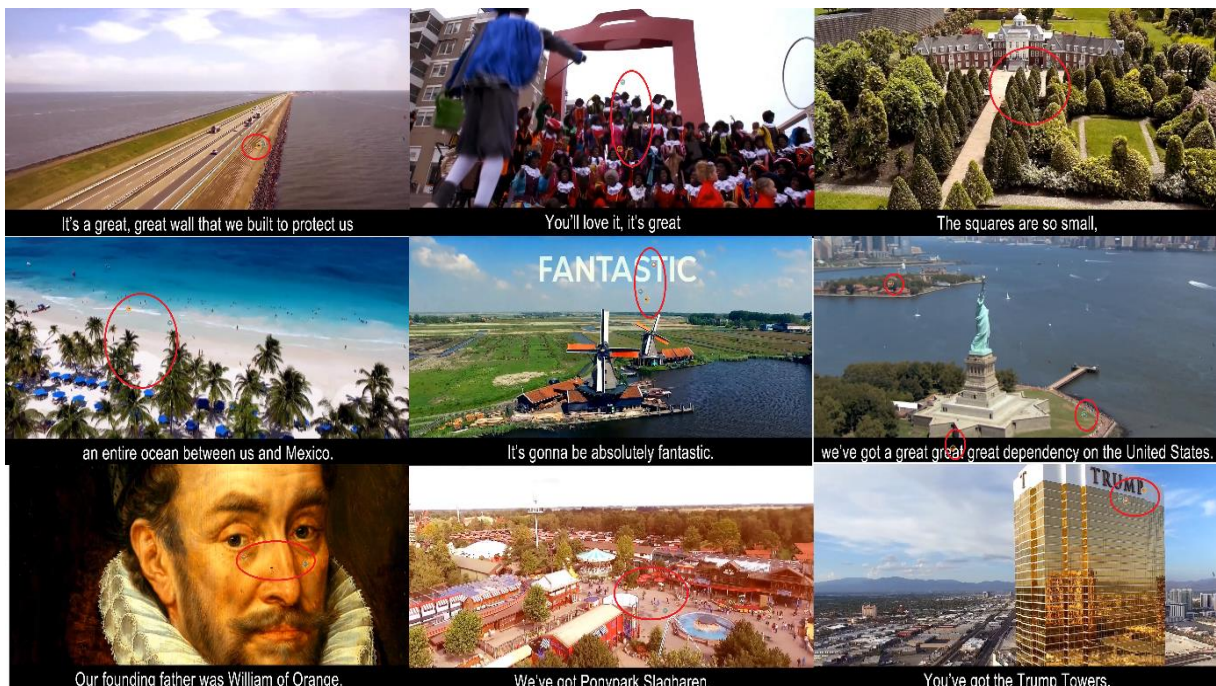

Figure 4: Eye tracking result – control group. Source: own processing, 2018

The eye-tracking movement analysis showed that the destination imagery of the video attracted high levels of participants' attention, although the attention was spread according to the expected visual elements. In the cases of the presented destination attractions, the main

focus was dedicated to the main elements of the visuals: windmills, statue, tower, street, building, and route. In case of the facial picture of the historic figure William of Orange, respondents focused on his eyes, nose, and mouth. A more complicated situation arose in the case of two attractions of the destination: Madurodam and the "Black Pete" tradition. Within these two visuals, there were no main focal visual elements so in these two cases the participants' eye movement was spread throughout the entire picture indicating that some participants may to some extent have been confused. However, in general we can conclude that the destination imagery, especially the typical stunning photos of the Netherlands presented in the video, attracted high levels of the participants' visual attention. We can thus on the basis of this small sample tentatively conclude that the typical destination marketing imagery (visuals of the Dutch attractions and the Trump Tower in the U.S.A.) served the role of attracting the visual attention of the participants. Figure 4 shows the results of the eye-tracker analysis of the control group without sound and subtitles (i.e. sound was turned off and subtitles were covered). In comparison with Figure 3, we can see small differences, although we cannot postulate about any statistical differences. The attention of the control group is more concentrated on small areas around the previously mentioned points of visuals. Only the visual with the Statue of Liberty was more broadly seen. In general, however, the control group showed a narrower focus of view, thus paying less attention than the group listening to the humorous content of the video.

4.2. Memory recall test

The second research objective was addressed by conducting a simple test for evaluation of the video's impact on the viewers' memory recall. Viewers were shown images and then had to state whether the presented picture was included in the presented video or not. Nine pictures were shown and all of them were included in the video. Pictures included attractions in the Netherlands and also pictures of attractions found in North America: the Statue of Liberty, the Trump Tower and a beach in Mexico that were also included in the video. Results from the test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Scores of participants' memory recall tests. Source: own processing 2017

Group	Yes/No	"Wall"	Festival	Madurodam	Beach	Windmills	Statue of Liberty	William of Orange	Ponypark	Trump Tower	Σ
SLO	Yes	11	8	12	11	12	10	9	10	11	94
	No	2	5	1	2	1	3	4	3	2	23
MIX	Yes	12	11	12	12	11	12	11	11	12	104
	No	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	4
CZE	Yes	13	7	11	12	13	9	12	4	12	93
	No	0	6	2	1	0	4	1	9	1	24
Total	Yes	36	28	35	35	36	31	32	25	35	293
	No	2	12	3	3	2	7	6	13	3	51

There were three groups of respondents (one group of 12 and two groups of 13) from different countries and different cultural backgrounds. The mixed international group gave only 4 wrong answers, while the group of participants from the Czech Republic gave the most wrong answers. The results may be due to the difference in English language skills whereby the international exchange students had a higher level of English proficiency and thus followed the video content with greater ease, which allowed them to remember more of its content.

The focus here is, however, on the visual elements that the three groups recalled or not. The two most recalled visual elements were of the Kinderdijk windmills and the Afsluitdijk or "the wall" as it was named in the video – the Dutch dike and waterway. This shows that the elements that were most recalled are the elements that established stereotypical visuals about the Netherlands and were thus most easily connected with general knowledge about the Netherlands – in other words, the most "typical" destination imagery already typical per definition.

The same principle applies to the least recognised images: these were the ones that were the least typical. The least recognized picture was the picture from Slagharen pony park – a small and not generally known attraction. Furthermore, the second least recognised picture was from the annual St. Nicholas festival of the controversial Dutch "Black Pete" tradition (controversial for its links to colonialism and for its exclusive nature, see for example Rodenberg & Wagenaar 2016). This corresponds with the eye-tracking test where the visual of the "Black Pete" tradition received less concentrated attention (views are more spread over less interesting points of the picture – sky, empty space, etc.).

The three American visuals were also well recalled by the research participants. While the beach and the Trump Tower were generally recalled in the participants' memory, the Statue of Liberty was less recognised as presented in the video, probably due to the relative shortness of the visual shot in the video, and in contrast to the other two visuals, this one was not accompanied by a specific sarcastic commentary.

The memory recall tests give results supporting the eye-tracking method, because the visuals that were paid attention were also the ones that were most commonly memorised. Furthermore, there is an indication from the case of the Statue of Liberty visual that this visual was the least memorised because it was not accompanied by a specific humorous commentary.

4.3. Focus group interviews

The third research objective focused on identifying the emotional and cognitive responses of the participants to the video via focus group interviews, with the focus on the destination image the participants hold of the two destinations. We cannot argue here about the extent of effects the videos had on the participants' destination image formation since the participants undoubtedly already had preconceived images of both the Netherlands and U.S.A. Nevertheless, the focus was on analysing the discussion amongst the participants and their own opinions of the video and the destinations it presents in order to provide initial tentative answers to how they perceive the intertwining of destination imagery with political satire.

The three focus groups were semi-structured since the aim was to primarily gauge the participants' emotional responses and their destination images of the two destinations. The discussion thus included a variety of topics discussed mostly on the participants' own initiative. Questions were focused on the participants' first impressions of the video, what they thought was the purpose for making this video and how useful they thought the video was for tourism promotion of the Netherlands. The discussion was recorded, and the transcripts analysed.

The analysis identified the three most common groups of associations with this video: (1) "Fun and Trump", (2) "First", (3) "Countries". "Fun" and "Trump" were the two most used thematic associations that the participants' ascribed to the video. The second most common

group of associations were adjectives like "first, second, best, great, huge, …". The third most common group of associations were the two involved countries – the Netherlands and the U.S.A.

The respondents' emotional response to the video was consensual in their understanding the video as funny and good entertainment. The participants seemed to appreciate the interplay between political sarcasm and destination imagery. Generally, they did not mind the negative commentary and sarcasm but appreciated the video as a source of entertainment. They recognised the video as originally intended for political expression and only five out of 38 respondents stated that the video could be used for the promotion of the country and that they would appreciate such content in destination marketing. Judging from this, the participants very much recognised the video as a spoof on destination marketing and, as intended by the video producers, perceived its aim in political expression.

The discussed responses to the video are divided into five thematic areas (see Figure 5). In accordance with the main message of the video, the most discussed theme was Donald J. Trump (Donald Trump, Melania Trump, Trump Tower, his behaviour, role of president) and the use of humour. Humour identified by the participants was aligned with the content of the video: humour in accordance with the superiority theory – making fun of others. The participants, just like the video, mocked the behaviour of the U.S. president. In some cases, the participants themselves used jokes that mocked not only the president but also Americans.
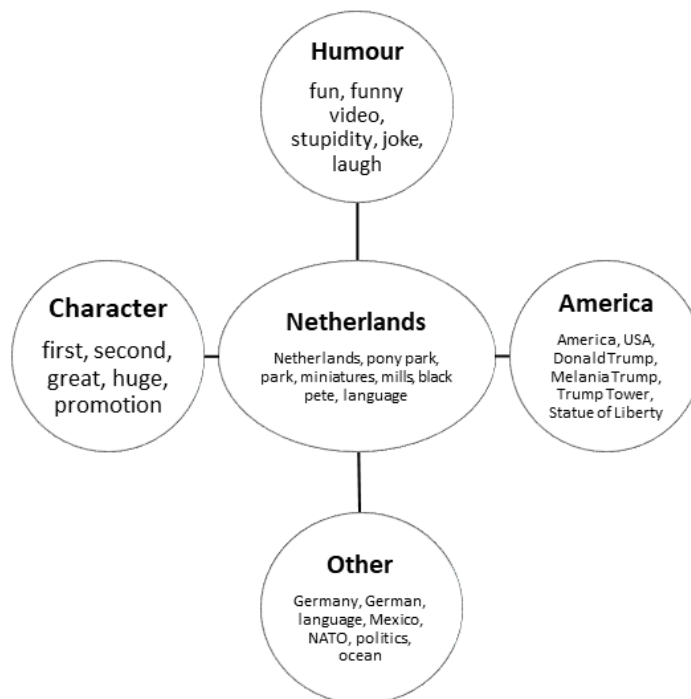
Figure 5. Focus group themes.

The most salient result of the analysis of the interviewees' responses, however, is the very positive evaluation of the Netherlands that the participants' reported. This result shows that even though the video itself was presented in a self-critical and satirical manner, presenting amongst others highly controversial and self-deprecating sarcasm towards the Netherlands, the

humorous content and the typical destination imagery of the Netherlands seem to result in the participants' positive evaluation of the country.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The extremely popular case of the "America First, the Netherlands Second" video and its viral memes are typical representations of the creative mesh of the online participatory culture (Jenkins et al, 2013) – one where TV comedy spoofs destination marketing imagery in order to provide a sarcastic political commentary that eventually results in a global viral campaign of political dissent. With an increase in "mediatised tourism" and YouTube as one of its backbones, official destination image creators are under increasing competitive pressures from alternate sources (Månsson 2011). YouTube "memes" are becoming part of the new trend of mediatised tourism. Not only does YouTube bring travellers' videos, it also brings a plethora of creative new ways through which one can form one's image of a destination. In advertising research, humour has so far been recognised as only a side element to the main intended message of a product's benefits. On the other hand, traditional media such as literature and movies have long been recognised as ways through which a destination might very successfully, advertently or inadvertently, aid in forming one's image of a destination.

The aim of this paper was to provide initial insights into how this video, which was viewed by almost 25 million of viewers and spurred a whole wave of similar YouTube "memes" from all over the globe, is paid attention to, memorised and responded to by a group of research participants – students, one of the most typical segments of YouTube users. While further research is needed, the research presented here is the first guiding point towards future research on the intertwining of political sarcasm, memetic creativity and destination imagery.

The eye-tracking results of the analysis showed the points of attention that participants focused on while viewing the videos. The results showed that the typical destination imagery indeed attracted the attention of the participants, thus "vampirising" political humour for effect. Additionally, respondents from the control group had a narrower focus and thus paid less attention to the overall destination imagery than the respondents who had listened to the humorous narrative accompanying the visuals. The memory recall results supported the eye-tracking results. They confirmed that the most memorised elements of the video were the most typical of the already typical destination marketing imagery: the waterway and the windmills. However, since the satirical element of the video was presented via the audio narrative accompanying the destination marketing imagery, more research is needed in the future to analyse the interplay of perception between the mostly non-humorous destination imagery and the humorous political satire.

Finally, and most importantly, the focus group interviews show that political satire and the negative, self-critical descriptions of the Netherlands are perceived in a very positive light by the study's participants and that the destination image of the Netherlands related to such depiction is rather positive from the point of view of Europeans, who perceive themselves as "Us Europeans" against the "American political Other" in accordance with the superiority and disposition theories of humour. The mocked image the U.S. president, in line with the superiority function of humour, funnelled by the participants' own pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices, resulted in a very negative perception of U.S. politics and sadly also the people and the destination of the U.S.A. These results add complexity to the research results of Sabri and Michel (2014). According to their findings, critical parody results in negative perceptions when the message is humorous and credible. "America First, the Netherlands Second" was a complex "spoof" on destination marketing imagery that resulted not in a negative but a positive

destination image of the Netherlands in the minds of the participants. It seems that by criticising the U.S.A.'s international politics, the humorous self-parody of the Netherlands resulted in the superiority identification of the participants with the Dutch video producers. This also effectively resulted in the extension of the negative perception of the U.S.A. by participants considering the Netherlands as "Us Europeans" and superior to the "Others" (U.S.A.). The results are thus in line with the disposition theory of humour (Zillmann & Cantor 1976) that proposes that humour appreciation is facilitated when the respondents feel antipathy toward disparaged protagonists, and that this depends on the intensity upon the respondents' affective disposition toward the ones being ridiculed. The results thus support Baumgartner's (2007) findings that self-directed humour results in positive evaluation of the ridiculed. On the other hand, Becker (2012) could not support these claims since in her results self-disparaging humour did not lead to positive evaluations of the ridiculed while other-directed humour did have effects in the opposite direction. What the case of "America First, the Netherlands Second" shows is that it may be the combination of both types of humour that provides the strongest results. Criticising Donald Trump's foreign policy while at the same time providing self-ridicule, the video producers might have created the most effective combination. More research is needed in order to further test this hypothesis.

Furthermore, more research is needed into how this and similar videos are constructed, taken up and transformed online; what their effects are in image destination formation and what kind of online discussion they spur in order to understand more about the interplay between political satire and destination imagery "spoofs" of the YouTube meme phenomena. This research was a pilot study that focused on three research methods with a small convenient sample of research participants. Future research should overcome these barriers by including a randomised sample, analysing the interplay between the perception of visual and audio content, and a proper experiment setting. Additionally, the phenomenon of "America First" viral videos deserves attention in itself; it would be of interest to analyse all other videos that were a memetic response to "America First, the Netherlands Second" and their role in the international public expression of dissent (Turnšek & Janecek 2016).

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Appendix: "America First, the Netherlands Second" video text transcript (Vpro zondag met lubach 2017).

00:36 This is a message from the government of the Netherlands
00:40 Dear Mr. President
00:41 Welcome to this introduction video about the Netherlands
00:45 It's gonna be a great video
00:48 It's gonna be absolutely fantastic
00:50 Our founding father was William of Orange
00:53 Who fought against the Spanish
00:55 The Spanish, total scumbags
00:56 They fought against us for 80 years
00:59 But they couldn't beat us, couldn't do it
01:02 Total losers
01:03 They're all dead now by the way
01:06 We speak Dutch, it's the best language in Europe
01:10 We've got all the best words
01:12 All the other languages failed
01:15 Danish... Total disaster
01:18 German, it's not even a real language, it's fake
01:20 It's a fake language
01:22 We've got 'Ponypark Slagharen'
01:26 Which has got to be the best pony park in the world
01:29 It's true. They're the best ponies. They are.
01:32 You can ride them, you can date them,
01:34 you can even grab 'em by the pony, it's fantastic
01:38 This is the Afsluitdijk
01:40 It's a great, great wall that we build to protect us
01:45 from all the water from Mexico.
01:49 We built an entire ocean, okay?
01:51 An entire ocean between us and Mexico.
01:55 Nobody builds oceans better than we do
01:59 This ocean, it is so big, you can even see it from the moon
02:04 and we made the Mexicans pay for it

02:07 It's true
02:08 You've got the Trump Towers
02:10 We've got Lee Towers
02:12 He would've loved to sing at your inauguration
02:14 Amazing voice, you gotta love him
02:17 We've got Madurodam
02:19 Which is the biggest miniature town in the world
02:22 It's great, well it's tiny, but it's great
02:26 The squares are so small
02:28 you don't even need many people to fill them, it's great
02:32 This is Gerrie Eickhof
02:35 In December we've got this scandalous tradition of Black Pete
02:39 It's the most offensive, the most racist thing you've ever seen
02:45 You'll love it
02:47 We also have a disabled politician for you to make fun of
02:51 Her name is Jetta Klijnsma
02:53 She's from the Ministry of Silly Walks
02:56 You can do a great impersonation of her
02:58 Can't wait to see
03:00 People tell us, very important people, they tell us:
03:03 We've got the best tax evasion system God ever created
03:08 It's just unbelievable
03:09 You should tell your sons to put all your...
03:11 Sorry, THEIR businesses here
03:14 You'll pay no taxes at all
03:17 Zero! It's ridiculous
03:19 And last but not least
03:21 We've got a great, great, GREAT dependency on the United States
03:26 It's huge
03:27 If you screw NATO, you're gonna make our problems great again
03:32 They're gonna be huge, they're gonna be enormous
03:35 It's true. Please don't
03:37 We totally understand it's gonna be America first
03:42 But can we just say, the Netherlands second?
03:46 Is that okay?
03:48 Thank you for watching and best wishes
03:50 We've got the best wishes in the Netherlands