DECISION CRITERIA
FOR CRUISE PORT SELECTION IN THE
NORTH SEA REGION

Cruise Gateway North Sea – Work Package 3 Study

City of Antwerp/Tourism
Aberdeenshire Council
Port of Kiel
City of Gothenburg
CRUISE
Port of Esbjerg
Cruise Port Rotterdam
Copenhagen Malmö Port
NORTH SEA
Columbus Cruise Center Bremerhaven
Haven Gateway Partnership
GATEWAY
Hardangerfjord
Port of Oostende
Bremen Senate Department for Economy and Ports
Port of Hamburg Marketing/ Hamburg Cruise Center
Cruise Destination

Cruise Gateway North Sea
European Union
The European Regional Development Fund
The Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme
Investing in the future by working together for a sustainable and competitive region

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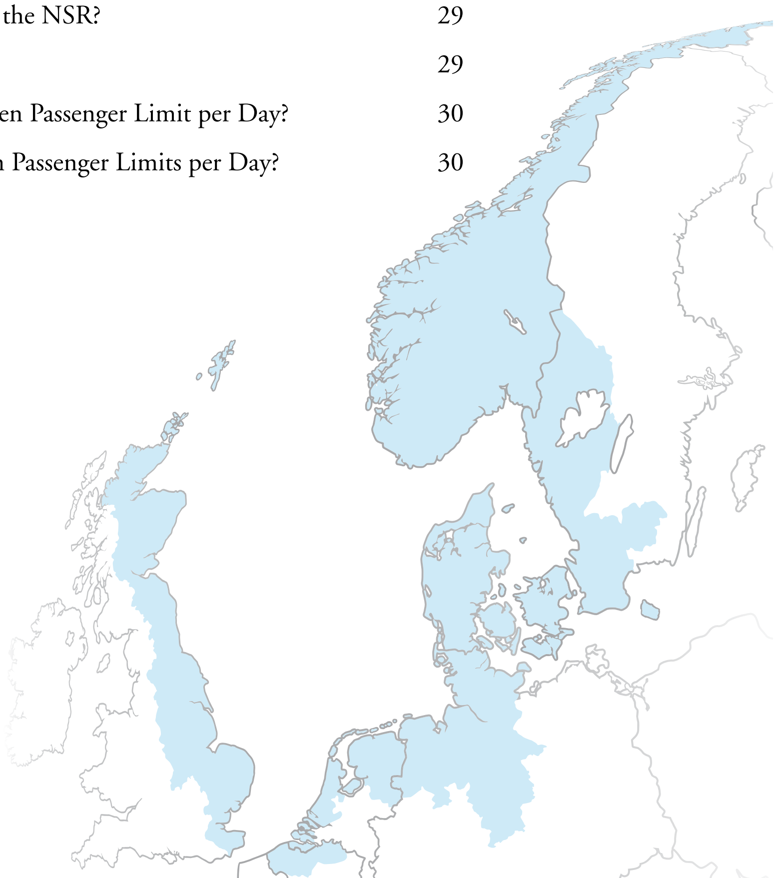


Content

Please note:
If the reader is merely interested in the main outcomes and highlights of the study, he may directly start with chapter *7. Executive Summary*. More detailed findings of the study are expressed in chapter *4. Analysis of Findings*.

Foreword

The team of SeaConsult had great pleasure in conducting this study and is grateful for the support and willingness proved by all respondents to answer our questions in personal interviews as well as filling out the online questionnaires in round two of the "Delphi" survey.

Whether we talked to senior top level managers from the industry or experienced itinerary planners, we perceived the interest in the North Sea Region (NSR). But we also learned that the North Sea Region has no clear image yet. Although supposed to have great undiscovered cruise potential, the NSR is seen as the "uncharted link" between the Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea. Looking at *Figure 4* is recommended to gain a first brief impression about how USPs[1] are perceived by the different groups of respondents. There obviously is much room for improvement in fighting preconceptions and making the cruise community even more familiar with the potential of the NSR – not as source markets only.

Another interesting experience was the fact that cruise lines' executives used the opportunity of being asked for their personal views to express a few basic wishes. The desire to be treated as ports' "customers" was evident as well as a "don't call us, we call you" mentality in some cases. And when it came to the appreciation of printed brochures we were a bit surprised ourselves. Marketing and sales managers of ports should have a special look at *Figure 11* – and think twice.

We wish all users an informative reading and hope that the findings of this study may be useful to support future success.

Finally I would like to express my personal thanks to all contributors, the Cruise Gateway North Sea project management and especially our project and production team for their confidence, continued support and valued contributions.

Helge Grammerstorf
MD SeaConsult

September 2012

[1] USP: Unique Selling Proposition

1. Introduction

This study on **Decision Criteria for Cruise Port Selection in the North Sea Region (NSR)** is initiated by the Cruise Gateway North Sea Project and was carried out for the first time from December 2011 – September 2012. First initial findings were presented at the Cruise Gateway Conference in Bremerhaven on June 21, 2012.

"So far, high growth rates in European cruise tourism have been recorded in particular for the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas – but the North Sea Region has not been recognized as a major cruise destination in its own right. […] The aim of CRUISE GATEWAY is to create a raised awareness of the North Sea Region (NSR) as a cruise destination and to improve cruise accessibility on a sustainable basis, enabling comprehensive economic and social benefits." [2] Cruise Gateway partners are working together to encourage sustainable growth of cruise shipping in the NSR, emphasize the unique attractions offered by the NSR as a cruise destination, create a 'Cruise Destination North Sea' identity, promoting reliable, high-quality services across all NSR cruise ports, exchange knowledge and experience between partners.[3] "Cruise Gateway North Sea is working to develop and promote the cruise industry in the North Sea Region. It is a three-year project with 14 cruise-related partners from six countries, co-financed by the EU-Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme." [4]
The EU-Interreg IVB Programme has a broader focus across various industries of the North Sea Region compared to a specific focus on the cruise industry by the Cruise Gateway North Sea Project. "A principal aim of the [EU-Interreg IVB] Programme is to expand the scope of territorial cooperation and focus on high quality projects in innovation, the environment, accessibility, and sustainable and competitive communities. […] The [EU-Interreg IVB] 2007 – 2013 Programme connects regions from seven countries around the North Sea, incorporating policy level planning and the long lasting and tangible effects of projects." [5]
Bearing these goals and directions of both Cruise Gateway Project & EU-Interreg IVB in mind helps to better understand and make sense of the research questions as well as of the outcomes of this study as it helps to clarify the background of this study.

In order to detect **Decision Criteria for Cruise Port Selection in the North Sea Region** a focus was put at study participant selection. To ensure the highest quality and to receive relevant answers, a representative cross selection of top itinerary decision makers of cruise lines were included into this study. Anonymity of responses had to be guaranteed to the expert group in order to win them for the study. Consequently, details of participants' answers will not be available, not even for the Cruise Gateway members.

This study is sectioned into seven main parts. After this introduction the research questions are explained in detail, followed by a comprehensive description of the approach towards the study. Subsequently, the findings are being analyzed and conclusions as well as recommendations for the Cruise Gateway Project are formulated and further research suggestions given.
Furthermore, there will be an executive summary, which highlights the most striking findings of this study. For readers' convenience a glossary is attached to this report.

[2] excerpt of Cruise Gateway's mission statement,
available at: http://www.cruisegateway.eu/content/cruise-gateway-mission-statement
[3] based on Cruise Gateway's Mission Statement,
available at: http://www.cruisegateway.eu/content/cruise-gateway-mission-statement
[4] excerpt of Cruise Gateway's mission statement,
available at: http://www.cruisegateway.eu/content/cruise-gateway-mission-statement
[5] excerpt of the EU-Interreg IVB North Sea Region 2007 – 2013 Programme content,
available at: http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/content/show/&tid=75

2. Objective

As specified in the tender invitation by the Cruise Gateway Project "the study aims to identify the USPs [Unique Selling Propositions] of the North Sea Region and to show and demonstrate the important criteria for the cruise port selection, giving concrete recommendations for specific actions for the Cruise Gateway partnership to consider and progress. Furthermore the research should focus on the whole North Sea Region and not on any specific country."

Consequently, this study on **Decision Criteria for Cruise Port Selection in the North Sea Region** will focus on the following two dominating research questions:

1. What are the Unique Selling Propositions (USPs) of the North Sea Region?
2. What are cruise lines' important criteria for cruise port selection?

These two research questions form the foundation of this study. Hence, the study design, the methodological approach as well as the selection of study participants are aligned with the goal of answering these research questions.

3. Approach

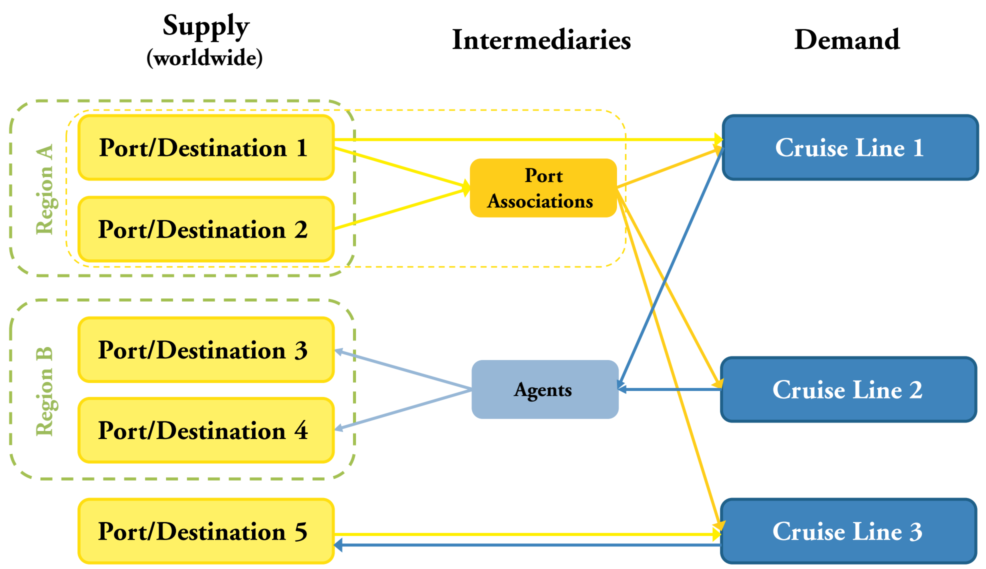
In order to answer the defined research questions of identifying unique selling propositions of the North Sea Region (regional level) as well as identifying decision criteria for cruise port selection (local level), the study works out viewpoints of respective involved parties, namely cruise lines and destinations/ports, in order to detect gaps or differing needs.

Both research questions should be analyzed independently, as the image and corresponding unique selling propositions of a region has no direct link to the selection for a specific port. Detection of unique selling proposition(s) of the NSR is part of marketing and has a focus on a regional level, whereas precise cruise port selection includes analysis of technical and operational factors next to touristic factors. Hence, cruise port selection focusses on a more detailed/local level with very specific components and requirements.

To understand the chosen methodology, study design and study participants it is important to understand the procedures how cruising with respect to deployment of cruise vessels functions. Due to economic and distance reasons, cruise itineraries are usually planned within one cruise region such as the Baltic Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea.[6] Within one cruise region cruise lines have to decide for specific destinations/ports to call at. The business relation of cruise lines and ports depends on the interplay of supply (various ports offer their services and facilities and the respective destinations offer their touristic attractions) and demand (cruise lines demand to berth their cruise vessels in different ports and offer touristic attractions to their cruise passengers to enrich their cruise product). Many ports worldwide attract or try to attract cruise business. Therefore, competition does not only exist amongst cruise ports with respective offerings to cruise lines within one cruise region, but also amongst cruise regions.

[6] Positioning cruises and world cruises are not predominant cruise routes within the cruise industry, therefore not mentioned above.

Figure 1 – Communication Possibilities for Deployment Decisions

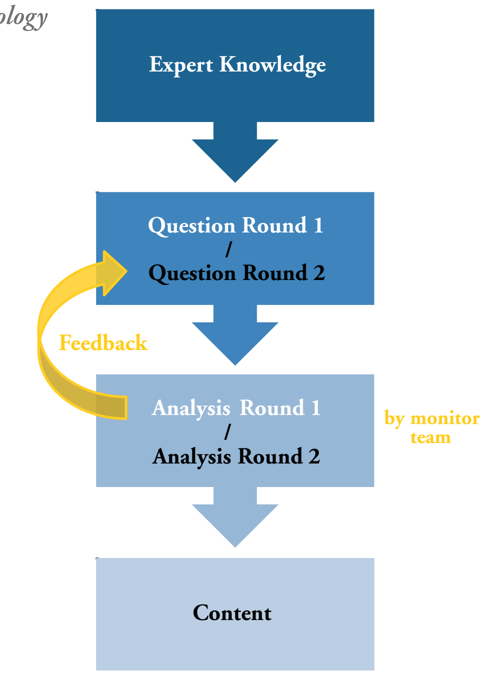


Communication between ports and cruise lines is either direct or via intermediaries like agents or destination/port associations. If intermediaries are incorporated into the communication process both sides, cruise lines as well as ports/destinations, need to assure that updated and correct information is provided. Due to its scope, this study will not focus in detail on intermediaries.

3.1 Methodology

To answer the research questions, it was decided to make use of the Delphi method as this technique seems to offer the best fitting outcome.
A Delphi method is a qualitative research approach, which may be characterized as a "method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (Linstone (2002), p. 3).
"The Delphi method is a highly structured communication process performed by groups of experts. The method focuses on facts about which we have only uncertain or incomplete knowledge. These facts are evaluated by the involved experts in the course of the Delphi process." (Häder & Häder (1995), p. 8) The method makes use of intuitive available information of participating experts.
It is a multi-step approach where "a small team designs a questionnaire which is sent to a larger respondent group" (Linstone (2002), p. 2). Questionnaires within Delphi studies guarantee "anonymous response" (Dalkey (1969), p. V) of experts and broad knowledge sharing to other participants. Hence, influences due to group dynamics or dominant personalities are minimized. The monitor team summarizes the returned results and develops a new/updated questionnaire for the respondent group, based on the received results. The multi-step approach includes "at least one opportunity [for the respondent group] to reevaluate its original answers" (Linstone (2002), p. 5). The second round incorporates feedback and ideas of other experts for review to the entire expert respondent group.

Figure 2 – Delphi Methodology



Source: SeaConsult HAM GmbH based on Linstone (2002)

After all rounds are finished, the monitor team summarizes and interprets the findings based on previously gathered information. The final result of a methodological approach via Delphi is a produced group opinion.

3.2 Design of the Study

To generate high quality output and to capture all relevant decision criteria for cruise port selection in the North Sea Region, the approach of this study is predominantly qualitative. As mentioned above, this study makes use of the Delphi methodology. As both, cruise lines and destinations/ports, are relevant groups of interest for this study - as explained in *3. Approach* - in order to detect gaps or common views, both groups will be of high relevance for the study and hence analyzed separately. By including both groups, this study is generating a self-image of the destinations'/ports' facilities and services as well as destinations'/ports' image as perceived by cruise lines.

The Delphi approach bares various benefits for the intended outcomes, as it includes multi-step interviews with experts in a specific field with feedback incorporation possibilities to be able to weigh outcomes and highlight the most important decision criteria as defined within the research questions.
For the purpose of this study the Delphi methodology will be applied by using a two-step approach. Two rounds for each group (cruise lines and ports/destinations) appear to be the perfect amount of rounds as a higher frequency of contact might bother participants and consequently reduce the response rate. Within the first Delphi round cruise experts - in this case top level managers of cruise lines - were personally interviewed in depth either via face-to-face interviews or via phone interviews. This interview phase is characterized by a topical construction with open ended questions to generate most complete outcomes and ideas. The second Delphi stage includes the verification of previously conducted information and weighting of the outcome from the first Delphi stage via an online questionnaire, which is based on the topics of the first round but enriched by the feedback of the first round of answers.

For Cruise Gateway members, the first round (same topics and questions as for cruise line experts) was either carried out via face to face interviews or via open ended written questionnaire. The second round is in alignment to that of the cruise line experts.

3.2.1 Study Participants

According to the above mentioned parties involved in deployment decision processes, cruise lines as well as ports/destinations are selected as target populations (please refer to *8. Glossary* for explanation) for this study. The survey samples for each target population are non-probability samples, which are selected by judgment sampling. Due to non-probability sampling findings will not be statistically representative, but will produce market covering trends and tendencies.

Cruise Lines
The target population 'cruise lines' was selected to give input about
a) the image and knowledge they have about the North Sea Region and
b) their decision criteria for cruise port selection.
Furthermore, it is intended to identify structures of selection procedures for regional deployment as well as must-have facilities and required information for cruise port selection.

Cruise lines are considered for the judgment sample if their cruise vessels are already deployed in the European region (itineraries in northern Europe). To enrich the sample, specific management companies, which are themselves in charge of itinerary planning for their vessels, are added to this group. It was intended to win a sample with an eminent cross-section of the cruise industry with:
· Large as well as small vessels
· Diverse source markets
· Diverse cruise concepts.

Contact was established to cruise lines' and cruise vessel managers' respective deployment decision makers, such as presidents, vice presidents, itinerary planners, operation managers, nautical officers and marketing executives. Participating companies include:
· AIDA Cruises
· All Leisure group plc. (Swan Hellenic, Voyages of Discovery)
· Azamara Club Cruises
· Carnival UK
· Costa Cruise S.p.A.
· Crystal Cruises
· Hapag-Lloyd Kreuzfahrten GmbH
· Holland America Line N.V.
· MSC Crociere S.A.
· NCL Corporation Ltd.
· Phoenix Reisen GmbH
· Princess Cruise Lines, Ltd.
· Royal Caribbean International
· Saga Holidays
· Seabourn Cruise Line Limited
· Thomson
· TUI Cruises GmbH
· V.Ships Shipmanagement

This mix of cruise lines and management companies fulfills the intended cross-section of the cruise industry. Top market players were won for this study. Cruise calls of participating cruise companies represent the majority of cruise calls in the North Sea Region.
For readers' convenience, this group of cruise lines' representatives and managers' representatives will be called "cruise lines" in all following sections.

Ports/Destinations
Destinations and ports define the second target population for the study as it is necessary to check their own image on the North Sea Region (NSR) as well as on offered services, facilities and actions against the image perceived by cruise lines on the same.

The study consortium of the Cruise Gateway Project restricted the sample to its members:
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Bremen Senate Department for Economy and Ports
- City of Antwerp/Tourism
- City of Gothenburg
- Columbus Cruise Center Bremerhaven
- Copenhagen Malmö Port
- Cruise Destination Hardangerfjord
- Cruise Port Rotterdam
- Hafen Hamburg Marketing e.V. – (lead partner)
- Hamburg Cruise Center
- Haven Gateway Partnership – (project leader)
- Port of Esbjerg
- Port of Oostende
- Seehafen Kiel GmbH & Co. KG

Cruise Gateway members include state representatives, city councils, destinations and ports. For readers' convenience, this sample will be called "ports/destinations" in all following sections. Due to the constitution of Cruise Gateway members, the sample of ports/destinations includes experienced cruise ports/destinations as well as cruise ports/destinations at the beginning of their cruise career, large ports/destinations and small ports/destinations. Hence, this sample reflects a satisfying cross-section of ports/destinations that are located in the North Sea Region (NSR).

3.2.2 Design of Questionnaires

Expert views and opinions have to be collected and structured to create first content. Hence, the first Delphi round is designed as a qualitative questionnaire/interview. Open ended questions are generating most diverse content and enhance creativity as well as deep thoughts of participants. The questionnaire/interview for the first round includes 21 topics/questions.
The second round is rather designed as a weighing round, where all created content from round one was spread amongst the experts again with the goal of generating weighted criteria via pre-defined answer possibilities in form of scales, ticks or rankings. Scales were designed as either four point- or six point-scales to avoid answers 'in the middle'. Six point scales were preferred as these create a more precise picture. Round two was supported by an online questionnaire tool and designed with 17 questions for each participant group.
Discussed topics of the study remained the same throughout both Delphi rounds as shown in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3 – General Topics of the Questionnaires

General Topics	Details
USPs of the NSR	- What is the image of the NSR? - What are the USPs?
Year round deployment in the NSR	- Is it possible/feasible?
Drivers for cruise port selection	- Which are the main drivers? - How are marketing activities of ports/destinations perceived? - Which factors create demand for cruise destinations/ports? - Is deployment planning a long term commitment? - Influence of issues like crowding effects or environmental regulations
Deployment/berthing decision process	- What are decisions based on? - Which information is required?
Infrastructure, facilities & services	- Which infrastructure & facilities are required?

The topic 'USPs of the NSR' is self-explaining. Cruise lines as well as ports/destinations are asked about their opinion concerning the North Sea Region's image and USPs.
'Year-round deployment in the NSR' is a one question topic to generate opinions on this matter. Visions and forecasts of cruise experts shall be detected so that a future trend could be read off.

Questions under the topic of 'drivers for cruise port selection' are asked to participants in order to identify which aspects and factors interplay in the decision process. This topic furthermore shall generate knowledge on the volatility of cruise port decision and which factors influence a change in deployment. Additionally, this topic shall bring insight into marketing activities and perception of these by cruise lines.
The topic of 'deployment/berthing decision processes' directs towards identification of underlying processes and competences. Moreover, this topic generates insight into required information and processes regarding the decision on a cruise region, destination and port.
'Infrastructure, facilities and services' detects requirements of cruise industry in this field. This is an important area of knowledge to ports, cities and states as port renovation or new built ports require large investments.

All topics are either addressed directly or are paraphrased with different questions.

4. Analysis of Findings

Although the sizes of samples for both cruise lines and ports/destinations are very small, the given cruise lines' market coverage allows to give trends if weighed numerical findings are interpreted cautiously. Trends of answers apply entirely to the sample, but can also be cautiously transferred to the cruise industry. Findings are not generally applicable to all cruise lines, but trends can be extrapolated.

A total of 20 cruise line representatives contributed to the various steps of this study as well as 12 cruise gateway members. To answer the online questionnaire, study participants needed an average of 25 minutes for all questions.

Cruise lines as well as port/destination representatives were asked about the same topics within this study. The analysis of findings therefore does not only show participating cruise lines' requirements and preferences, but also Cruise Gateway members' appraisal on the same topics. Hence, a self-image of cruise ports/destinations contrary to cruise lines' perception of a cruise call (port, destination and operation) is presented.
As already described in the section of *3.2.1 Study Participants*, this analysis will distinguish between the two defined participant groups 'cruise lines' and 'ports/destinations' for readers' convenience.

4.1 What are the Unique Selling Propositions (USPs) of the North Sea Region?

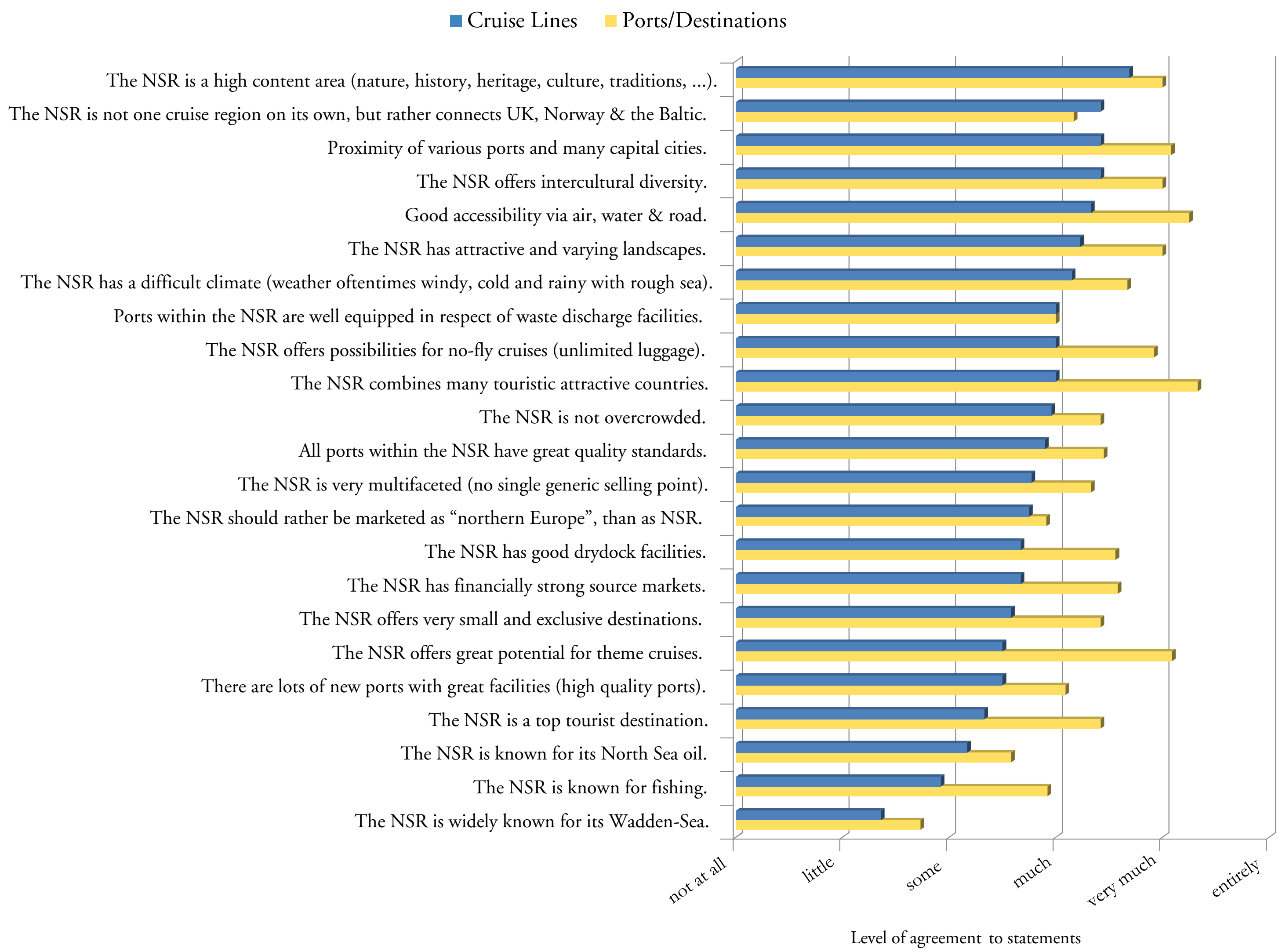
Both participant groups were asked about their opinion and ideas concerning the USP(s) of the NSR.
For some participants this seemed to be a tough question as some answered "none". The selection of answer possibilities is quite limited and answers are not very specific. With all qualitatively collected answers the quantitative analysis shows that cruise lines don't agree 'very much' or 'entirely' on any of the statements (*Figure 4*). But, cruise lines agree 'much' to 'very much' on following presented statements, that the NSR

- is a high content area and offers content with respect to nature, history, heritage, culture, and tradition.
- is not one cruise region on its own, but rather connects other regions or cruising areas such as UK, Norway and the Baltic.
- comprises many capital cities and a fitting proximity of various ports.
- offers intercultural diversity.
- is well accessible via air, water & road.
- offers attractive and varying landscapes.
- has a difficult climate as it is oftentimes windy, cold and rainy. Furthermore the sea can be rough.

Especially internationally operating cruise company representatives say that their markets would not know what the NSR is or what it stands for. Even some cruise lines themselves referred to Baltic highlights when asked about the NSR.

These findings show a lack of clear identity for the NSR at potential customers' (cruise lines') side. After all, 61% of cruise lines agree 'much', 'very much' or 'entirely' that cruise passengers don't know the difference between the Baltic and the NSR. This statement needs to be seen in relation to the international structure of the participant group 'cruise lines' with some cruise lines that operate only few vessels in Europe and thus are not as familiar with this region. This factor also plays a role when looking at the answer possibility of 'no-fly cruises'. The standard deviation for this statement is the highest, where some cruise lines did not agree at all but others agreed entirely.

Figure 4 – Unique Selling Propositions of the NSR

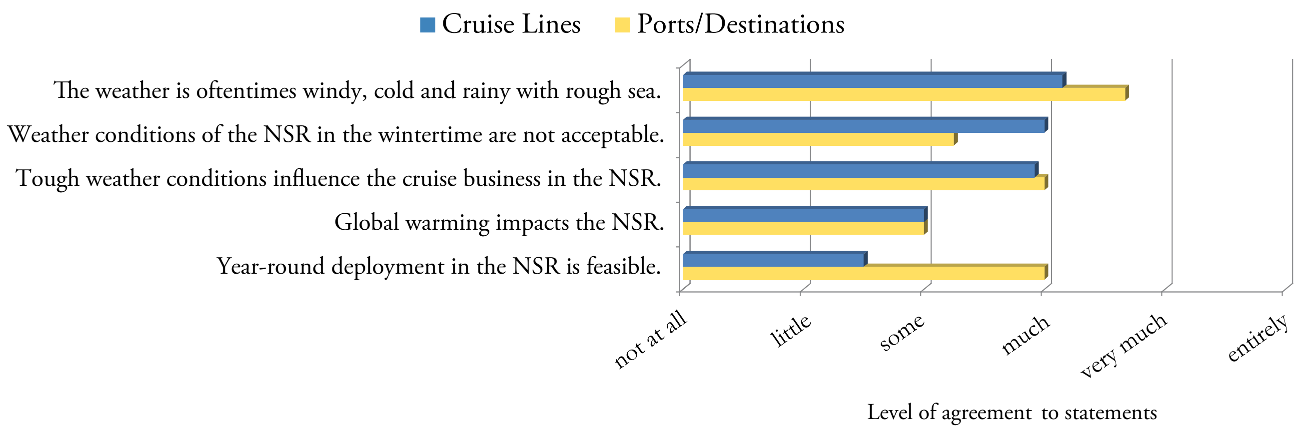


After all, study participants of both participant groups seemed to agree on the fact that the NSR offers a variety of points of interest like landscape and culture. This is underpinned by statements of the qualitative question round.
The largest deviation in answers between both participant groups is visible at the statement on 'theme cruises'. Ports/destinations agree very much that the NSR offers great potential for theme cruises, whereas cruise lines only agree between 'some' and 'much'.
Summarized, this analysis shows that cruise lines and ports/destinations believe that the NSR has much to offer, but these offers are not tangible or concretely nameable yet.

Weather Conditions

As cruise lines agreed 'much' on the statement that the NSR has a difficult climate, a more detailed analysis of statements concerning weather conditions of the NSR shows hints towards a potential weakness of the NSR.

Figure 5 – Perceptions on Weather



Ports/destinations on average agree 'much' with the statement that weather conditions of the NSR in the wintertime are not acceptable and perceive year-round deployment in the NSR only 'little' to 'some' feasible. Cruise lines' average low rating on feasibility of year-round deployment in the NSR has to be looked at differentiated, as some cruise line representatives do agree 'much' or 'entirely', that year-round deployment is feasible.

4.2 What are Cruise Lines' Important Criteria for Cruise Port Selection?

In order to detect the important criteria for cruise port selection of cruise lines, numerous aspects of cruising were incorporated into the study. First, a focus on cruise lines and their decision influencing parameters is given, then criteria that attract cruise lines and cruise passengers are analyzed. Furthermore, requirements for ports, berthing options, the role and actions of port associations, and the influence of crowding are examined as all of these topics influence cruise lines in their decision process.

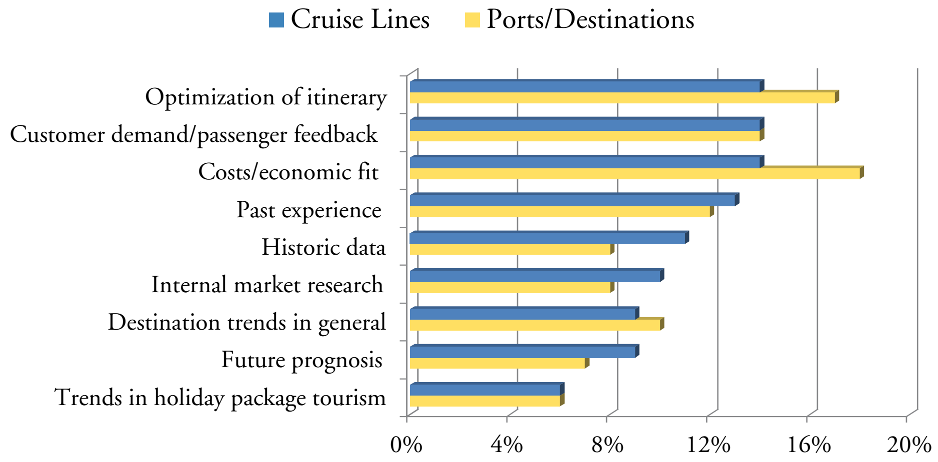
4.2.1 Focus on Cruise Lines

Basis for Deployment Decisions

At first, cruise lines were asked to rank parameters they base their deployment decisions upon. Although cruise lines seem to have different approaches, nine parameters were detected. By ranking the generated parameters a general group opinion was drawn, whereof deployment decisions are mostly based on parameters like optimization of itinerary (including touristic, nautical and operational factors), cost & economic fit as well as customer/passenger demand. Past experience with a port/destination influences cruise lines in their decision as well.

Detailed analysis of rankings shows that the approach of analyzing trends in holiday package tourism is not widely used amongst cruise lines.

Figure 6 – Parameters that Influence Deployment Decisions



With the insight that cruise lines also base their decisions on customer demand/passenger feedback, it is important to further analyze the factors that are important to satisfy both parties, cruise lines and cruise customers.

Ports/destinations seem to have a generally good understanding of underlying deployment decision parameters of cruise lines as their answers don't vary significantly. Ports/destinations even assumed cruise lines to be more cost driven than they rated themselves.

A cruise lines' comment shows, that the size of the deployed vessel(s) and the corresponding cruise concept influences deployment decisions as well: "One important choice is as well to find destinations where big vessels will not call….". This statement further directs to the topic of crowding, which is analyzed in detail in *4.2.5 Crowding*.

Criteria that Attract Cruise Lines

Different cruise concepts verify the divergent cruise lines' rating of importance of 'open shops and casinos for cruise lines while staying in port' when asked about their perceived importance of various criteria as shown in *Figure 7*. Although this criterion received the lowest rating, the single ratings within this aspect differed greatly. Two cruise companies rated open shops and casinos during port stay as 'negligible', whereas others rated this criterion as 'very important' or even 'essential'. It can be assumed that a small, traditional or luxury cruise product does not need to be allowed to open shops while staying in port, but some companies with a modern cruise concept depend on the onboard revenue passengers make even during port stay.

Figure 7 – Criteria that Attract Cruise Lines

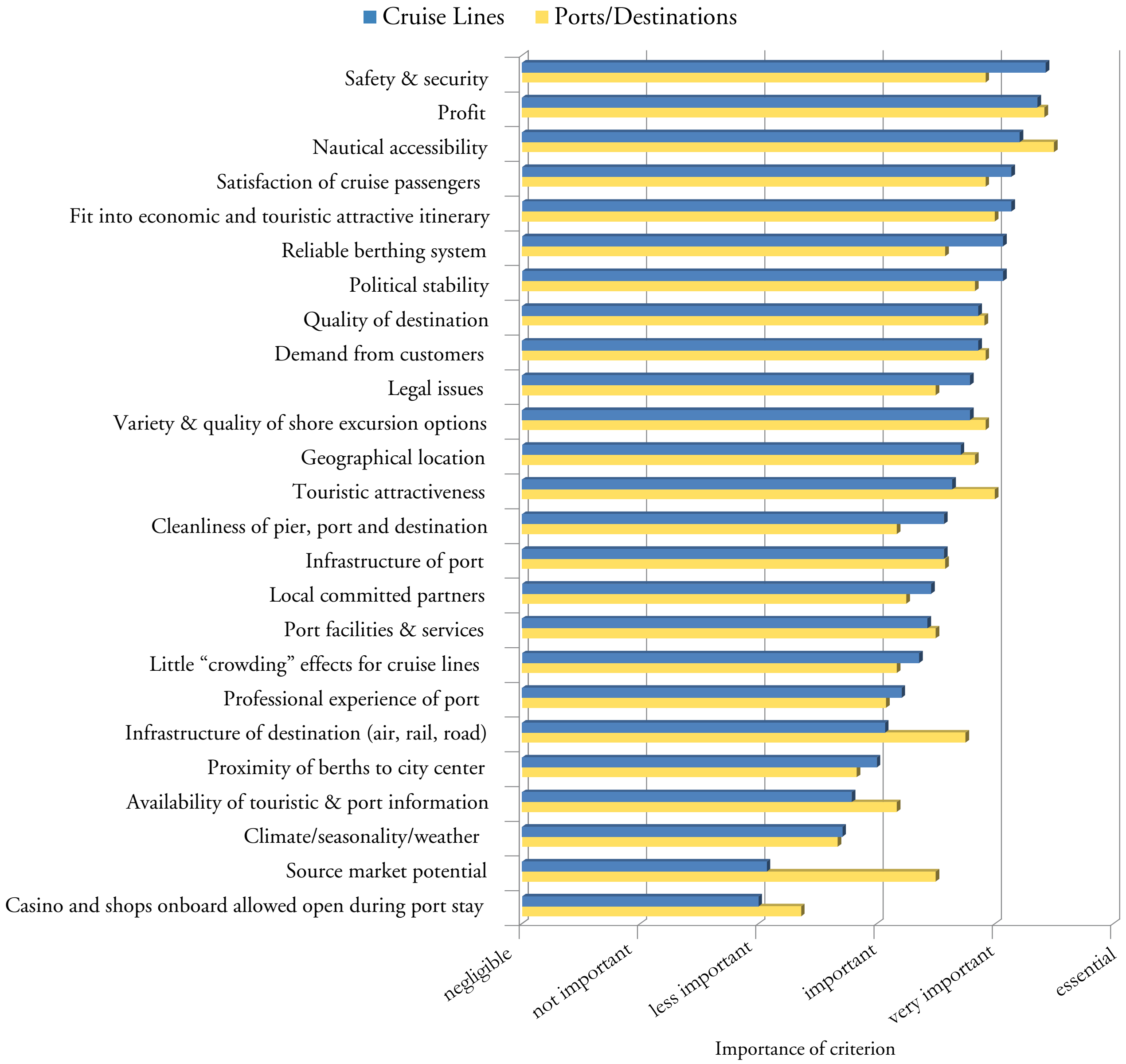


Figure 7 – Criteria that Attract Cruise Lines moreover suggests seven very important criteria. Safety and security is rated highest followed by profit and nautical accessibility. Furthermore, satisfied cruise passengers, a good fit into an economic and touristic attractive itinerary, a reliable berth allocation system and political stability are very important criteria and thus make a port/destination attractive to cruise lines.

Safety and security plays an increasing role in todays' travel industry. Therefore, it is also an essential factor in the cruise business. The past showed that cruise lines can switch destinations, itineraries or even cruise region quickly if security of passengers is not given or if political stability is missing. Cruise vessels need to fit into the port or at least need to be able to safely reach an anchorage. As for any type of business, profit is a main issue for cruise companies. Ports should be aware of the fact, that cruise lines focus on the balance per port, taking into consideration excursion revenues, port fees, tugboat tariffs, fuel cost (to get to that port), taxes, agency fees, etc. plus passenger satisfaction.

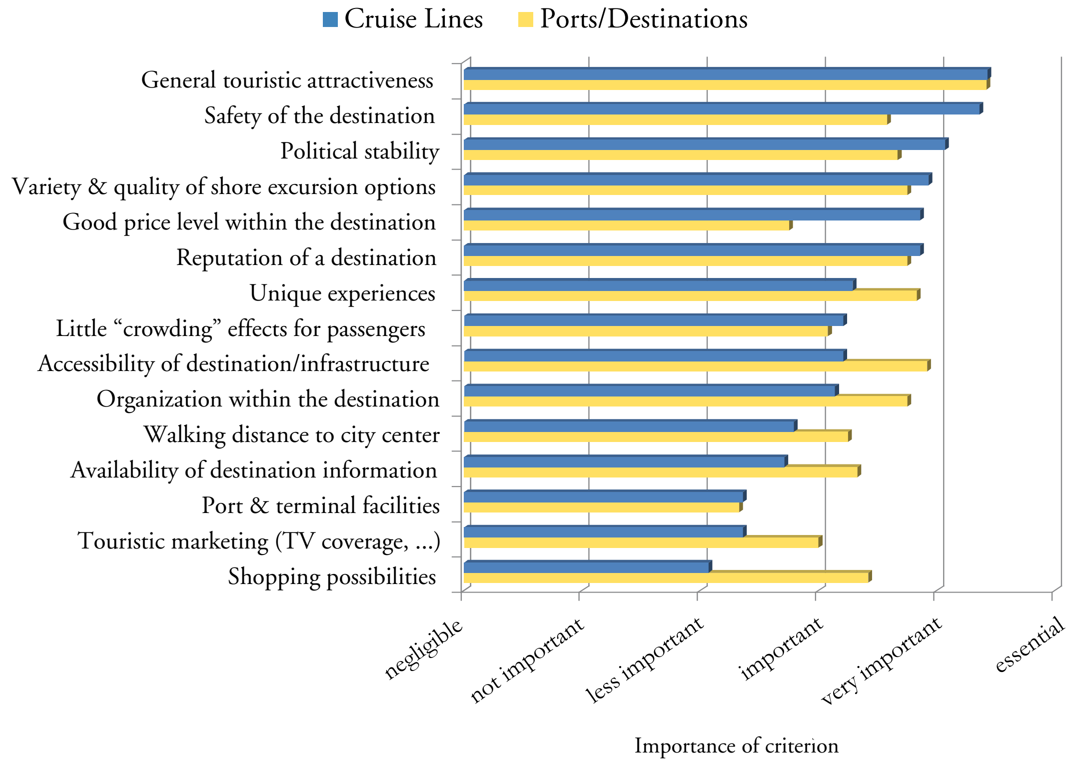
Another criterion, which was rated as 'very important', is 'reliable berth allocation systems'. As this is an ongoing topic in the industry, a detailed analysis is given in section *4.2.3. The Cruise Call/Berthing*.

Ports/destinations seem to have a good understanding about factors that attract cruise lines. The only category that varied much in rating is 'source market potential'. Here ports perceive source market potential to have a greater impact on deployment decision than cruise lines do.

Criteria that Attract Cruise Passengers

Cruise lines put large emphasis on satisfied cruise passengers. Therefore, the next category to analyze is the perceived criteria that make a destination attractive to cruise passengers. From cruise lines' point of view, cruise passengers are essentially attracted by touristic attractiveness like 'to do's' and 'to see's'. This legitimates the respectively rating of high importance in shore excursion options (rank 4). Corresponding to cruise lines' desire, cruise passengers look for safety and political stability within the visited destinations. Cruise passengers seem to ask for good price levels within destinations, which has impact on their value for money perception. Furthermore, it seems quite important to cruise passengers that visited destinations have a good reputation. This reflects a "seen that" mentality of cruise passengers and travelers in general.

Figure 8 – Criteria that Attract Cruise Passengers

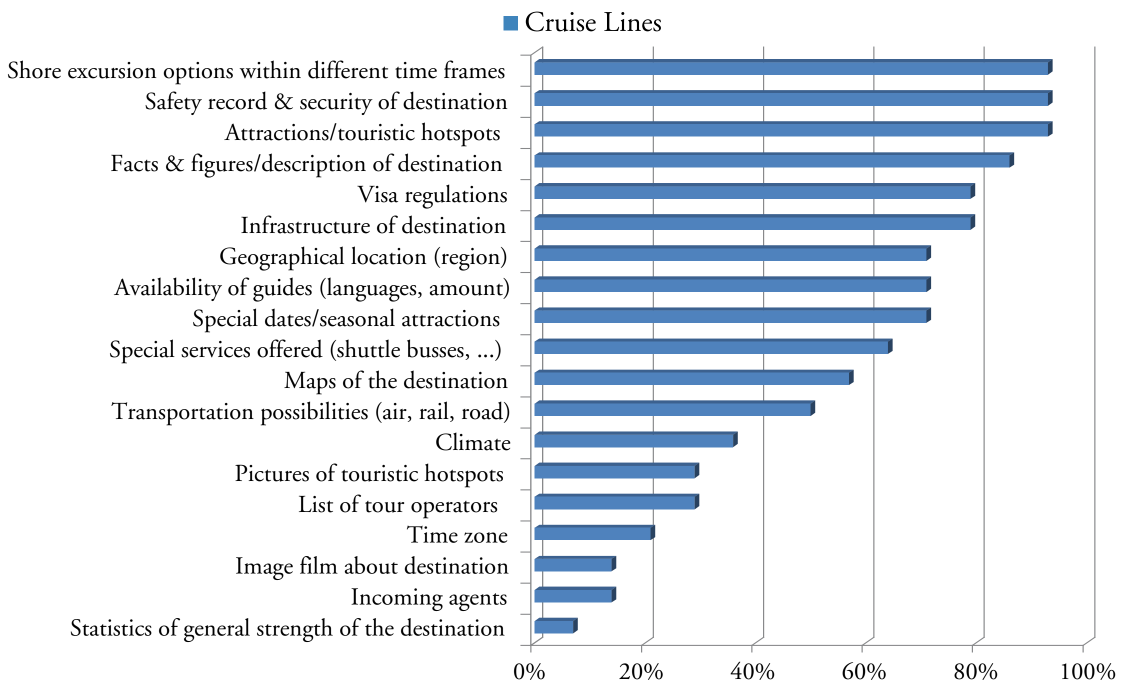


Cruise lines do not agree on the importance of 'walking distance to city center' for cruise passengers. Different cruise products may again play a role in this divergence.
Interesting to see is a varying perception of cruise lines and ports/destinations with respect to attracting cruise passengers with the factors of 'price level within the destination' and 'shopping possibilities'. Ports/destinations value the passengers' need for shopping possibilities higher than cruise lines do and additionally value a good price level not as 'very important'.

After focusing on general requirements and attractive factors for cruise lines and their passengers, the next two figures will emphasize required information by cruise lines concerning touristic information and port information.

Required Destination Information
Shore excursion options, safety record and information on touristic hotspots are the most required destination information of cruise lines. Moreover, cruise lines are interested in facts and figures about the destinations, they want to learn about latest visa regulations and require information about the infrastructure of the destination. Also nice to know are details on the region and special dates within the destination. Cruise lines are as well interested in the availability and amount of tour guides with their respective language skills.

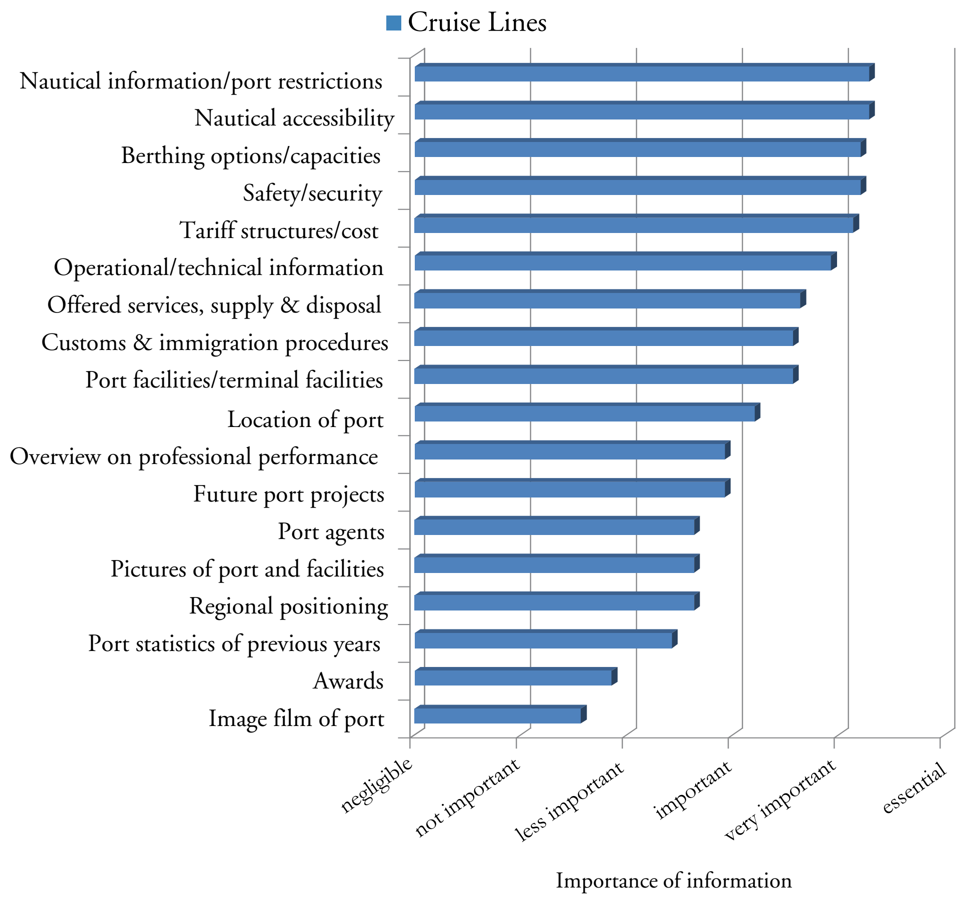
Figure 9 – Destination Information Required by Cruise Lines



Information on the time zone, cooperating incoming agents or statistics of general strength of the destination are not required as much. The same applies for image films about the destination as most cruise companies already have a large portfolio of destinations and know the region they deploy their vessel(s) frequently in.

Required Port Information
Next to destination information cruise lines additionally require port information for their deployment decision processes. 'Very important' in this respect were rated information on 'nautical accessibility', such as confined waters, or 'nautical information' like length of pier, bridges, or other port restrictions. 'Berthing options and capacities' are 'very important' for cruise lines as well. Within this category information on 'safety and security' is again rated as 'very important'. Cruise lines are further more interested in tariff structures and cost of a call. Cruise lines rated information on awards or the availability of image films less important.

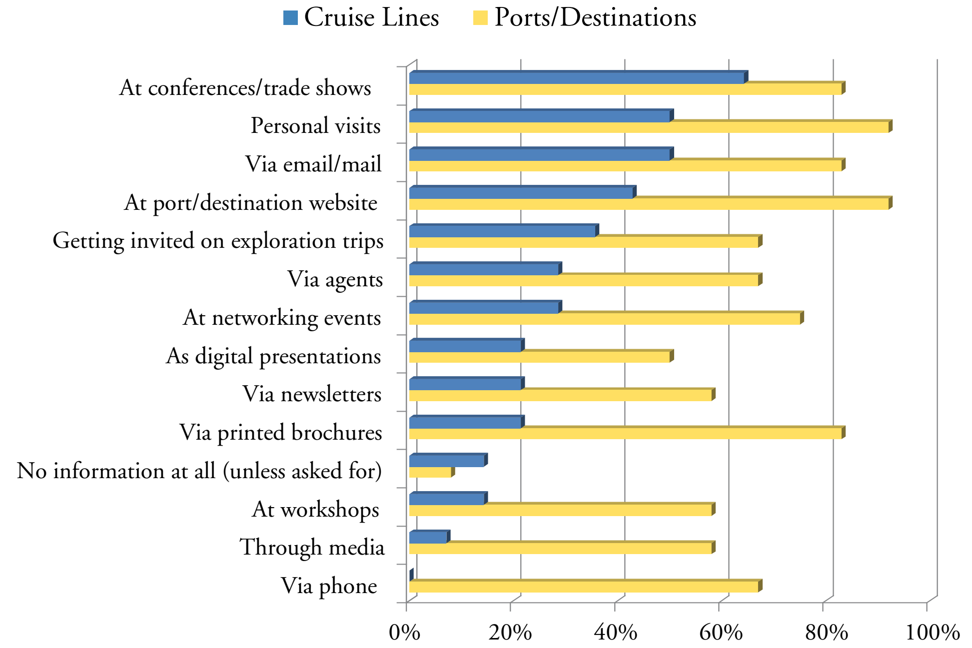
Figure 10 – Port Information Required by Cruise Lines



Vital to note in this respect is that many cruise lines have set port evaluation procedures with individual port evaluation forms, information request sheets and pro-forma disbursement requests. In combination with various existing cruise vessel sizes and cruise concepts, this is one reason that no common standards on port information have been established.

Communication of Information
This is leading to the question on how cruise lines prefer to receive information. Most cruise lines prefer contact to ports/destinations at conferences or trade shows followed by personal visits and email contact.

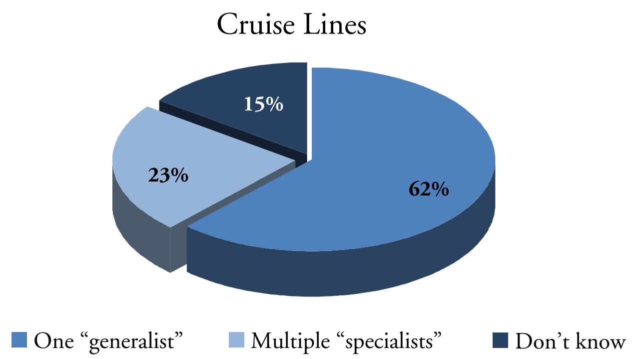
Figure 11 – Point of Contact/Information Preferences of Cruise Lines



The largest discrepancy between cruise lines' preferences and ports'/destinations' estimation occurs with information 'via printed brochures' and information 'via phone'. Cruise lines do not prefer to receive information via phone and do not perceive printed brochures as the best source of port/destination information.

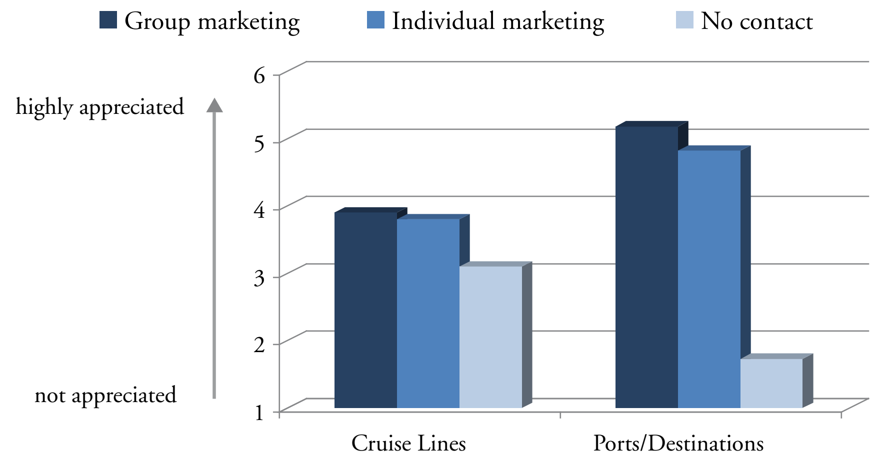
When asked about the kind of contact person cruise lines would prefer to interact with, 62% stated to prefer one competent contact person as single point of contact. Only 23% prefer to talk to multiple specialists for multiple topics such as port facilities, ship handling, ground handling, excursions, etc.

Figure 12 – Preferred Kind of Contact Person



Means of Marketing Contact
When asking for preferred marketing contact cruise lines express striking different preferences, which is shown in a moderate average rating. For example, some cruise lines highly appreciate group marketing whereas others do not appreciate it at all. Consequently, ports/destinations should learn which cruise line to approach via which way.

Figure 13 – Means of Marketing Contact



4.2.2 Requirements for Ports/Destinations

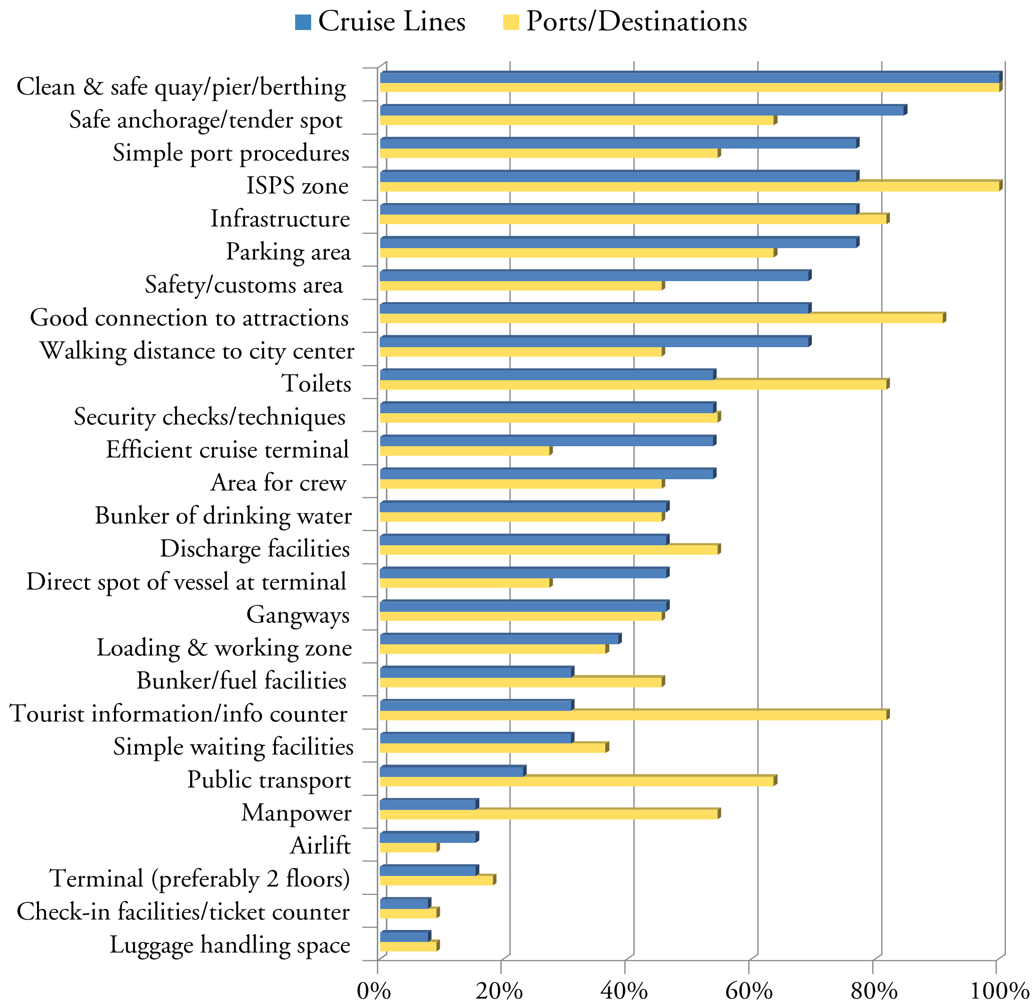
Emerging cruise destinations oftentimes face a state where they need to invest and hence need to position themselves either as a transit port or as a turnaround port. For explanation please refer to *8. Glossary*. To ease this decision, the following distinct requirements for transit ports and turnaround ports can act as a guideline for emerging ports/destinations.
In addition, all cruise ports/destinations can use these requirements as checklists for themselves in order to examine own strengths and weaknesses.

Requirements for Transit Ports
For this study minimum common requirements of cruise lines are defined as criteria that 80% or more of cruise lines rated as 'minimum requirements'.

Minimum requirements for transit ports are the following:
· clean & safe quay/pier/berthing
· safe anchorage/tender spot

Various other criteria (please refer to *Figure 14 – Requirements for Transit Ports*) such as parking area, infrastructure, ISPS zone and simple port procedures are additionally required from transit ports/destinations by more than 75% of cruise lines. More than 65% of cruise lines demand a safety/customs area, a good connection to attractions as well as walking distance to the city center. As *Figure 14* shows, ports/destinations differ in perception of requirements for transit ports. The availability of a tourist information counter, public transport and manpower is perceived as a minimum requirement much more often by ports/destinations than by cruise lines.

Figure 14 – Requirements for Transit Ports



Requirements for Turnaround Ports

Contrary to transit ports, cruise lines have more common minimum requirements for turnaround ports.

Minimum requirements for turnaround ports (required by > 80% of cruise lines) are the following:

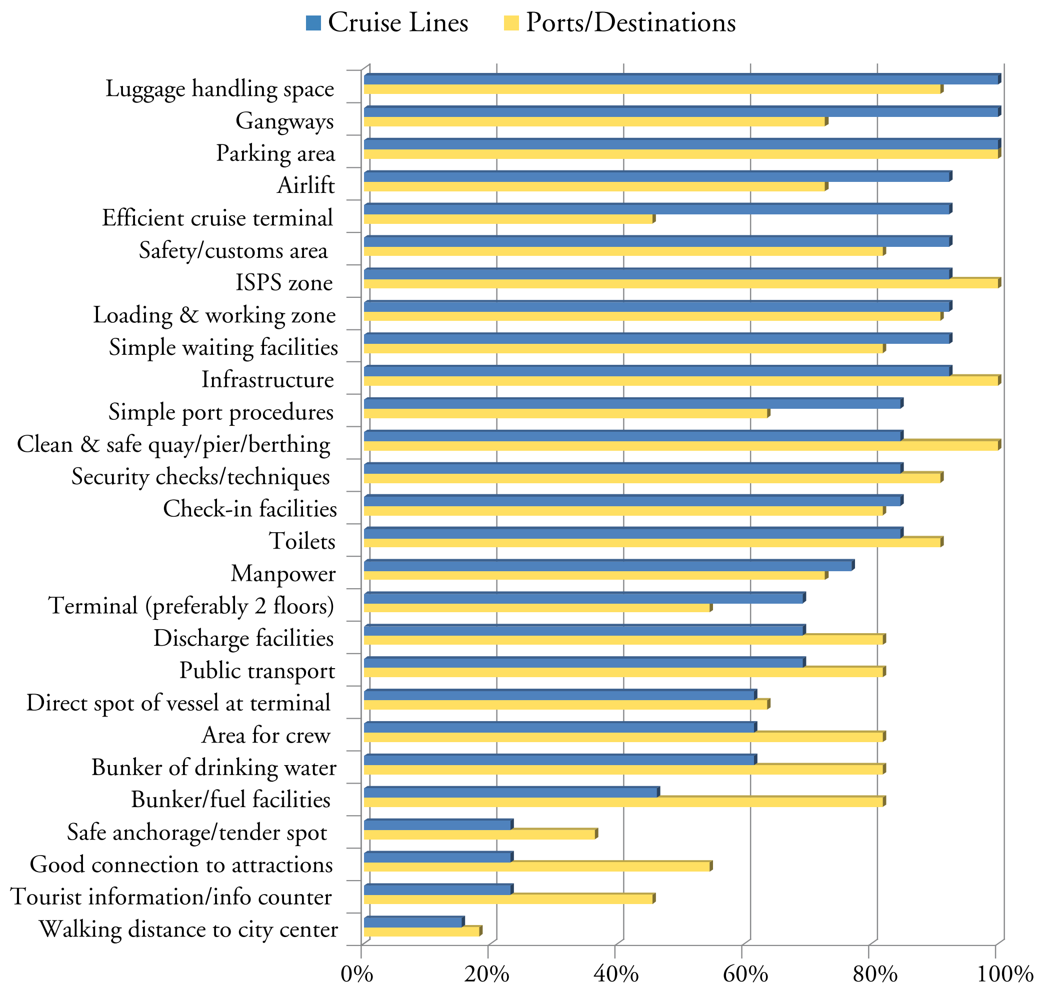
- luggage handling space
- gangways
- parking area
- airlift
- efficient cruise terminal
- safety/customs area
- ISPS zone
- loading & working zone
- simple waiting facilities
- infrastructure
- simple port procedures
- clean & safe quay/pier/berthing
- security checks/techniques
- check-in facilities
- public toilets

Besides those minimum requirements, more than 75% of cruise lines require manpower, such as additional hosts in a destination or people to coordinate passengers and luggage etc., for turnaround. A terminal with preferably two floors, discharge facilities and public transport connections are required by more than 65% of cruise lines.

No matter what exact type of waiting facility (cruise terminal, terminal with two floors or simple waiting facilities) is requested by cruise lines, some kind of "waiting facility" is required at turnaround. This is required, because arriving cruise passengers often have to wait for a longer period of time before they can board the ship as passenger' flights might arrive very early in the morning.

When it comes to turnarounds, ports/destinations seem to have a general understanding on cruise lines' minimum requirements. But, the need for waiting facilities in all forms was noticeably underestimated. Likewise, more cruise lines require simple port procedures and airlift for their turnaround call than expected. Gangways are additionally an underestimated requirement by ports/destinations, whereas bunker/fuel facilities are somewhat overestimated.

Figure 15 – Requirements for Turnaround Ports

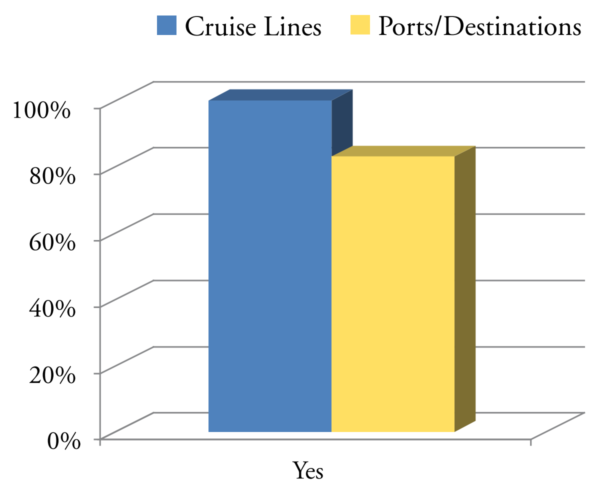


Important to mention is the limited required amount of turnaround ports in one region. Not each port should decide to invest into expensive facilities and hope for turnaround cruise business. Such a decision should be based on profound regional and competition analysis. Furthermore, potential home porting cruise lines may be incorporated to align facilities with their respective detailed needs and requirements. Established flight connections and airport proximity should be given facts.

4.2.3 The Cruise Call/Berthing

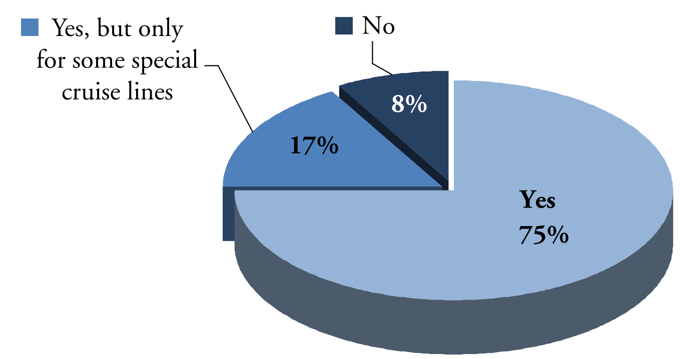
During the conducted face-to-face interviews with cruise lines the topic of berthing procedures emerged. Some cruise lines complained about the fact that ports sometimes allocate vessels to a commercial pier or require them to tender although a spot at the cruise terminal/cruise pier was promised in advance. This sometimes seems to happen to cruise lines with smaller vessels, which fit into more spots or to cruise lines which are not rated important to the port/destination.

Figure 16 – Do Cruise Lines Prefer to Book a Fix Berth in Advance?



Although admittedly somewhat of a suggestive question, all participating cruise lines prefer to be able to book a fix berth in advance, even if this means that they might not get their preferred spot in some ports. This may result from the fact that detailed planning and information transfer to cruise passengers relies on knowledge about the berthing spot.

Figure 17 – Do Ports/Destinations Offer Fix Berth Reservations in Advance?

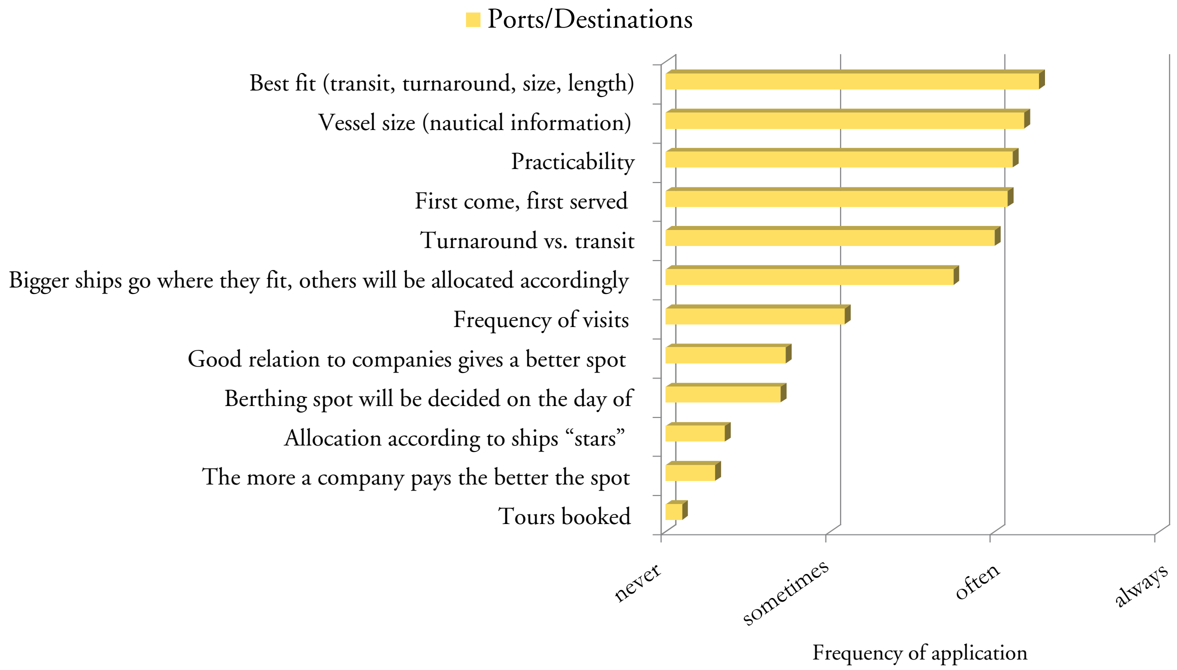


Out of the participating ports/destinations 75% claim to offer fix berth reservation in advance. 17% admit that only some specific cruise lines are accepted to make fix berth reservations, which means that there are at least two classes of cruise lines out of which one class is treated with privileges. Only 8% of participating ports/destinations state that no fix berth reservation is offered in advance.

Berth Allocation Procedures

Cruise ports/destinations admit that they slightly more often make use of a 'best fit' strategy when it comes to cruise vessel allocation in port than applying the 'first come, first served' principle. Many categories, which are rated as used quite 'often', direct to an underlying principle of 'best fit', such as allocation according to vessel size, practicability, turnaround vs. transit calls, bigger ships go where they fit, others will be allocated accordingly. Treated as one umbrella category, 'best fit' is concluded to be the most often applied procedure. The principle of allocating cruise vessels according to their frequency of visits is only used 'sometimes' by ports/destinations.

Figure 18 – Berth Allocation Procedures

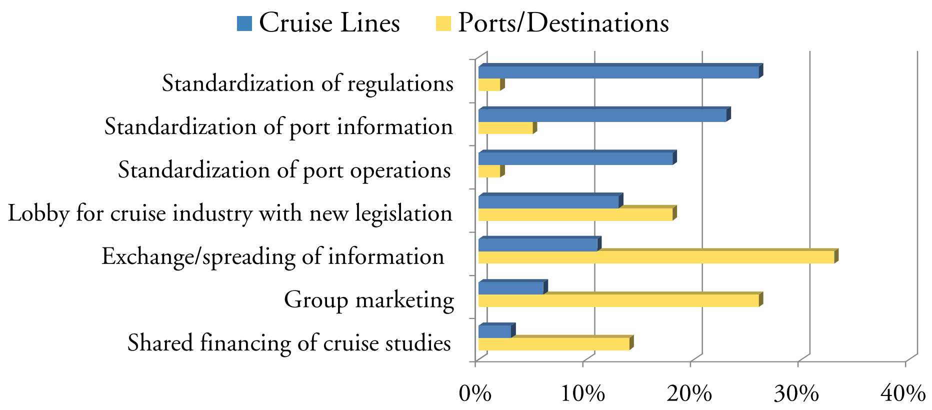


The detailed analysis of findings shows that used allocation procedures are quite diverging. One port admits that it oftentimes gives better spots to those cruise companies that pay more. Others state that they never use this procedure. Ports/destinations only agree on the little influence of booked tours in correspondence to vessel allocation procedures.

4.2.4 Port Associations & Sustainability

Port associations try to standardize various aspects of cruising in one defined region and may in the future put higher emphasis on the issue of berth allocation handling and procedures.

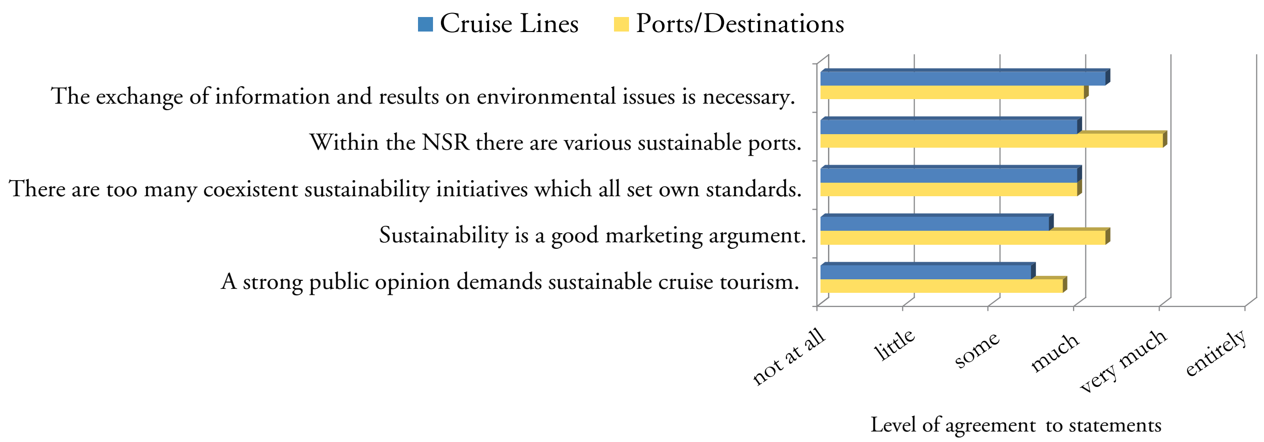
Figure 19 – Expectations Towards Port Associations



The analysis of expectations towards port associations suggests that port associations are important to both participant groups, but with a different focus. Cruise lines predominantly expect port associations to standardize regulations, port information and operations, whereas ports/destinations expect them to exchange information, perform group marketing and lobbying. Cruise lines don't expect port associations to produce exemplary itineraries. Within the content generation phase some cruise lines stated they do not want to receive exemplary itineraries. Out of the sample there was only one exception cruise line that highly appreciates these, others were indifferent/neutral about this topic.
All in all, the existence of port associations is justified and reasonable if expectations are fulfilled.

Sustainability
One dominant topic in today's discussions within the cruise industry and hence as well within cruise associations is "sustainability". A definition by the *United Nations document "Our Common Future"* states that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
Study participants were asked to state how much they agree on certain comments, which were derived in the content generation phase, on sustainability.

Figure 20 – Comments on Sustainability

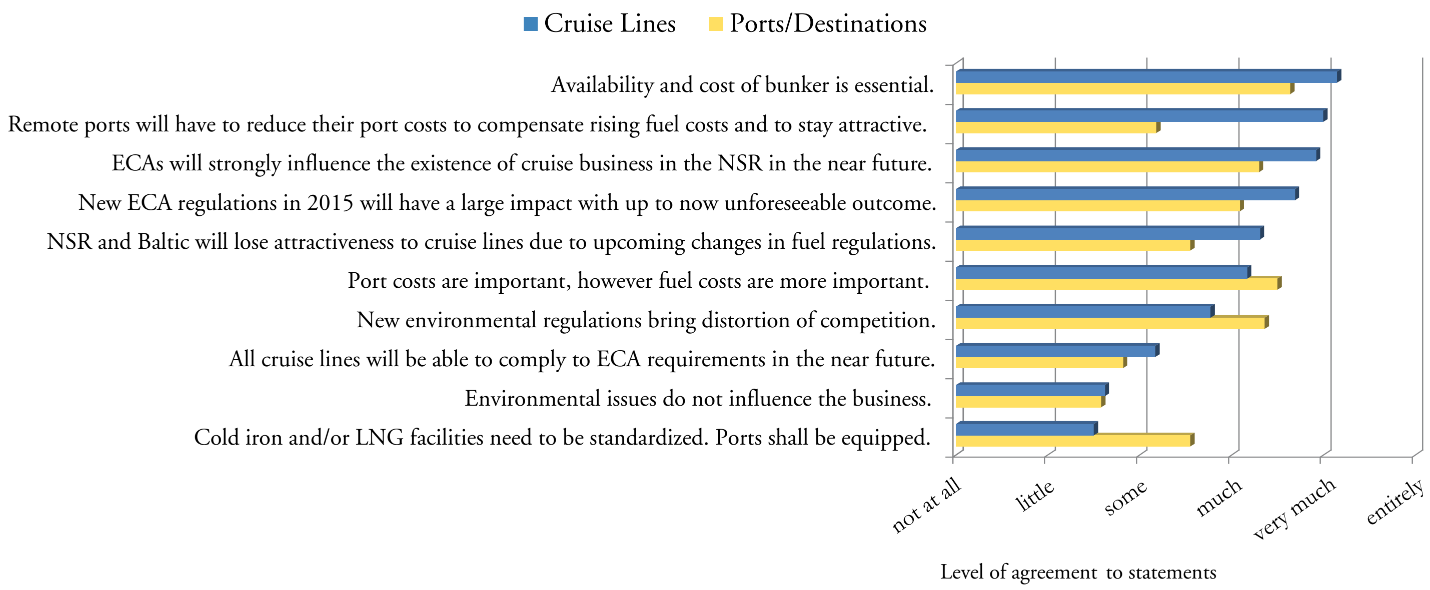


Cruise lines agreed much on the need of information exchange with respect to sustainability topics. Contrary, they also agree on the statement that there are too many coexistent sustainability initiatives, which all set own standards. These factors call for involvement of cruise associations on an international/regional/global level.

Above all, cruise lines agreed 'much' on the statement that there are various sustainable ports within the NSR. Although in everyday life mainly associated with environmental topics, the *United Nations 2005 World Summit* further defined, that sustainable development requires the reconciliation of environmental, social equity and economic demands – the three pillars of sustainability. When aiming at becoming a sustainable port, ports/destinations should focus and work on all three aspects of sustainability as these aspects interplay and influence each other.

Emission Control Areas (ECAs)
Within environmental sustainability discussions of the cruise industry, the topic of Emission Control Areas (ECAs) is predominantly discussed at the moment. Stricter and wide-ranging international regulations for sulfur limits in fuel will apply 2015 within these ECAs directing towards an increased environmental friendly shipping industry. As the North Sea Region is an Emission Control Area, *Figure 21* shall be of high interest to all ports/destinations within the NSR.

Figure 21 – Comments on Emission Control Areas (ECAs)



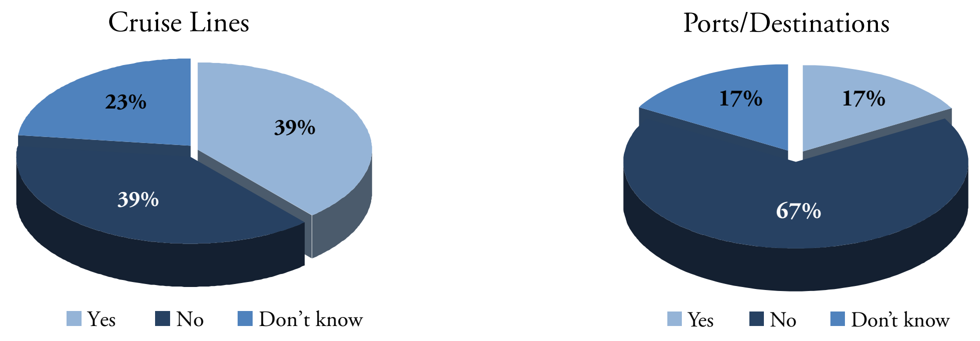
Cruise lines agree 'much' to 'very much' to the statements that ECAs will strongly influence the existence of cruise business in the NSR in the near future and that ECA regulations will have a large impact with up to now unforeseeable outcome. Consequently this topic is a vital component of cruise lines' deployment decisions. Under new regulations, cruise vessels will be required to burn more expensive (but cleaner) fuel. In this respect, it is comprehensible that cruise lines agree very much on the essentiality of availability and cost of bunker for cruise business. Moreover, cruise lines 'very much' agree that remote ports – those requiring a relatively long sea voyage to approach them - will have to reduce their port costs to compensate rising fuel costs in order to stay attractive to cruise lines, whereas ports/destinations only agree 'some' to this statement.

Interesting to note is the fact that cruise lines only agree 'little' to 'some' that all cruise lines will be able to comply with new requirements in the future. This means, some cruise lines believe the contrary and fear that certain cruise lines will not be able to comply. Due to increasing fuel cost or technical inability of their (older) vessels to fulfill upcoming regulations, a few cruise lines stated that they may not consider the NSR for future deployment.

4.2.5 Crowding

To generate sustainable cruise business, cruise lines and cruise passengers should be satisfied in order to potentially return to the region. Hence, the topic of crowding (predominantly referred to as too many people in one place) was discussed amongst study participants. As witnessed in some ports of the Caribbean or Mediterranean, crowding can become a problem and even reduce attractiveness of a port/destination. Crowding (in this respect meaning too many ships and passengers calling at one port simultaneously) in the NSR is perceived differently by cruise lines and ports/destinations.

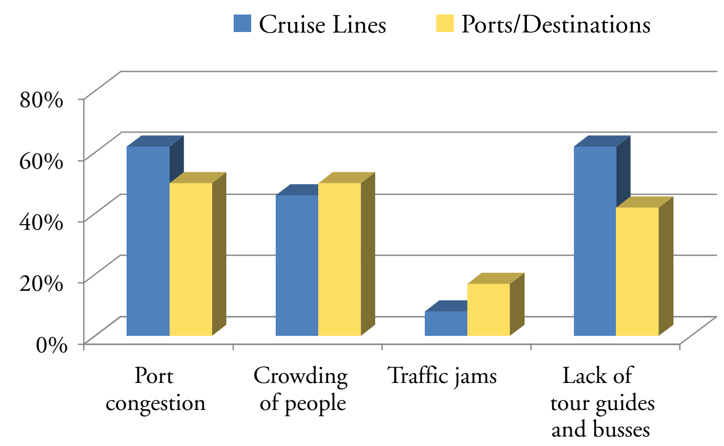
Figure 22 – Is Crowding a (Emerging) Problem in the NSR?



Cruise lines rather than ports/destinations see crowding as an emerging problem. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze this topic in depth.

What Types of Crowding are the Largest Dangers in the NSR?
Crowding may occur in diverse situations and may have varying characteristics.

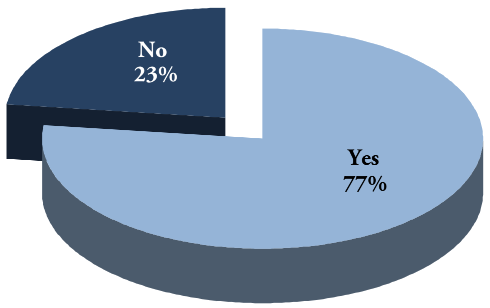
Figure 23 – Danger of Crowding in the NSR



If crowding is a problem, cruise lines suppose the largest dangers of crowding effects in the NSR to come from congested ports and lack of availability and quality of tour guides as well as busses. Insufficient personnel or tour guides that do not speak the requested language may cause disturbance of cruise call processes and satisfaction of cruise passengers.

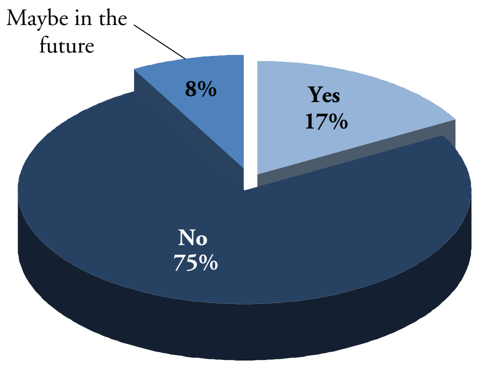
Limitation of Cruise Passenger Numbers
To avoid any type of crowding and assure a great quality call, some ports/destinations set a limit on the accepted number of cruise passengers per day.
This method seems reasonable if the passenger limit is set at an appropriate level. 77% of cruise lines appreciate a self-given passenger limit per day of ports/destinations, even if this may bring rejection of a booking request about.

Figure 24 – Do Cruise Lines Appreciate a Self-given Passenger Limit per Day?



In relation to this, only 17% of ports/destinations do have self-given passenger limits per day.

Figure 25 – Do Ports/Destinations have Self-given Passenger Limits per Day?



In this respect, the sample of ports/destinations has great influence on the outcome of this question. Some of the sample ports/destinations are very small, still developing their cruise business, or very experienced ports with appropriate facilities and services. The size of a port/destination does not necessarily influence the occurrence of crowding as seen at the example of the archipelago Santorin (Greece), where the amount of cruise visitors per day at peak time easily reaches or exceeds the amount of total inhabitants on very limited available space. Even

great offered facilities and services by ports/destinations may not have impact on the cruise lines' perception of crowding effects. Consequently, ports/destinations have to be aware of the possible perceptions of cruise lines and hence should know how their customers perceive this issue.
Cruise lines agreed much that they would like to avoid crowded destinations, but oftentimes sufficient information is not provided by ports/destinations. Therefore, set passenger limits and/or active communication of peak days is reasonable and may help to establish environmentally and economically sustainable cruise business.

4.2.6 Theme Cruises

Identified Unique Selling Propositions of the NSR show that the potential for theme cruises in the NSR is only rated moderately by cruise lines. This may be caused by the composition of the sample and the great variety of existing cruise concepts. Detailed analysis of this topic confirms a great interest in theme cruises by some cruise lines and very little interest in theme cruises by others.
Some cruise lines are happy with a standard variety of shore excursions and have no special requirements, whereas others are interested in theme cruises to differentiate themselves from other cruise offerings.

If cruise lines are interested in theme cruises, following topics were asked for:

- History, heritage, music, culture, flora and fauna
- Any shore excursion that is unusual, unique, innovative, creative and upscale with limited participation and a once-in-a-lifetime very special experience.
- Tours that capture the imagination and provide a memorable experience.
- Upscale, exclusive, luxury, small group, high revenue

These requirements are very unspecific as each region has different or unique things to offer. Furthermore, this may hint towards a lacking image of the NSR in the head of cruise lines' representatives.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

By comprising the study itself and asking cruise line representatives to participate, one Cruise Gateway goal of 'raising awareness for the North Sea Region (NSR)' is already accomplished. Especially the continuous contact due to the study design of a two-step interview/questionnaire enhanced the awareness of cruise lines about the North Sea Region.

The first defined goal of this study was to identify the **Unique Selling Proposition of the North Sea Region**, which emerged to be a complicated issue. It was not easy to generate a list of USPs in the content generation phase of the study as neither cruise lines nor Cruise Gateway (CG) members offered much content. Furthermore, study participants agreed that there is no single Unique Selling Proposition (USP) for the North Sea Region. However, research showed that the NSR offers a variety of attractive contents and is perceived as a high content cruise region. It offers diverse landscapes and history, but suffers difficult weather conditions at the same time. Furthermore, cruise lines tend not to perceive the NSR as a cruise region on its own, but rather as a connection between multiple attractive (smaller) cruise regions such as UK, Norway and the Baltic. One suggested USP by cruise lines was that the NSR is very different to the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. This might seem like a useless comment, but is a true fact and again underpins the lack of clear identity for the NSR. These findings direct towards an existing lack of identity of the NSR and hence lead to a need for a defined image and communication of such an image to all stakeholders. High development potential concerning the awareness of the NSR is predicted at cruise lines and ports/destinations. Hence, the NSR needs to define a recognizable, sustainable, tangible and representative image for itself and create a brand. A thorough marketing strategy and profound marketing communication is necessary to educate all involved stakeholders. These stakeholders include but are not limited to destinations, cruise ports, cruise passengers, cruise lines, tour operators and intermediaries, such as port associations, incoming agents and port agents. Creating a dedicated image and marketing strategy is highly recommended to the stakeholders of the North Sea Region Programme and the Cruise Gateway Project. Authors propose to additionally include the hinterland of the NSR into such a process and to design a touristic region development plan.

On one hand ports/destinations of the NSR compete with ports/destinations on a global level for cruise business. On the other hand much potential for cruising is expected in the NSR as European recession seems to recover best in northern Europe and consequently in northern European source markets. Various newbuilds with compliance guarantees to all environmental or technological requirements will enter the market with an expected international but also European source market concept. Furthermore, northern European ports are technically equipped to handle ships even in the wintertime. Taking these facts into consideration, it is expected that consequent year-round cruise business may be initiated in northern Europe and respectively the NSR in the near future. Although the NSR may still face contrary weather conditions, a fitting cruise concept might override perceived negative impacts. Even though year-round deployment in the NSR may not be economically attractive to all cruise lines and cruise concepts, cruise lines will have to calculate for themselves where deployment is reasonable with which type of vessel, passenger structure and cruise concept.

The second defined goal of this study was to identify **Cruise Lines' Important Criteria for Cruise Port Selection**. Minimum requirements for each transit and turnaround ports were compiled. There are only two consequently shared minimum requirements amongst all participating cruise lines for transit ports, which are a clean & safe quay/pier/berthing and/or a safe anchorage/tender spot. For turnaround ports, cruise lines at least commonly require luggage handling space, gangways, parking area, airlift, an efficient cruise terminal, safety/customs area, ISPS zone, loading & working zone, simple waiting facilities, infrastructure, simple port procedures, clean & safe quay/pier/berthing, security checks/techniques, check-in facilities and public toilet facilities.

If regions wish to become an attractive cruise region, they are required to provide touristic attractions, ports and facilities to cruise lines. Research showed that ports/destinations have a general understanding of cruise lines' congruent generic touristic, infrastructure, facility and information requirements. In contrast, one of the most striking findings was the divergence of cruise lines' individual requirements. This is caused by the existence of varying cruise concepts including variations in vessel sizes, clientele, price levels, etc. As information requirements and standards vary, many cruise lines have their own pre-defined port/destination investigation processes according to their own set standards and procedures. Own port evaluation forms and detailed pro-forma requests are used as each cruise line has its own standards and requirements on necessary port information. As data collection on ports is a continuous process and large databases have been established, cruise lines are likely to stick to their own used standards in the future. Very detailed information is usually not required by cruise Line at first contact as this is the second step in their port investigation process after they face general interest in a destination. Accordingly, ports and destinations mainly need to communicate most important factors at first contact, but also need to be prepared for detailed questions in a second step.

Although criteria, requirements and underlying deployment decision parameters as well as deployment processes may vary from cruise line to cruise line, this study identified various on average common factors in respect to deployment decision making.

Factors like touristic, nautical and technical optimization of itinerary, customer demand and cost/economic fit as well as past experience with a destination influence destination deployment decisions of cruise lines. As customer demand and passenger feedback are impacting factors, the perceived overall attractiveness of a port/destination consist of two fragments: customers' desires and cruise lines' desires. To cruise lines important factors are: safety & security, profit, nautical accessibility, satisfaction of cruise passenger, fit into economic and touristic attractive itinerary, reliable berthing system and political stability. Important factors for cruise passengers are: general touristic attractiveness, safety of the destination, political stability, quality and variety of shore excursions, good price level within the destination and reputation of the destination.

According to the study findings, ports/destinations are advised to provide most important information to cruise lines at first contact and/or via promotional material. This includes nautical/technical information, touristic information, operational information as well as costs. For further details please refer to *Figures 9* and *10* in section *4.2.1 Focus on Cruise Lines*.
Furthermore, cruise lines' preferred ways of communication were detected within this study. The top four ways to contact cruise lines are: at conferences, personal visits, via email/mail or they wish to receive information on the ports'/destinations' website. Cruise lines seem to prefer having one contact person that is familiar with all required aspects of cruising as opposed to multiple contact persons for multiple belongings. No common preference was detectable with regard to individual or group marketing (for example via port associations). Consequently both forms may be pursued.

With regard to these findings, it is recommended to ports/destinations to rather focus on information communication via websites than to focus on brochures, because websites were rated quite important as a communication tool. Especially technical information, but also touristic information should be easily accessible for cruise lines. Many websites do not fulfill cruise lines' generic information requirements as an internal quick-check indicated. Hence, ports/destinations should check their websites and other materials according to the various presented criteria and keep it updated.

Ports and destinations should bear all of the above influences of deployment decisions in mind when approaching cruise lines. Especially important in this respect is that a cruise is usually characterized by visiting various ports/destinations within a defined cruise itinerary. Hence, it is necessary for ports to view themselves as part of a region and not exclusively individually. Other ports within one region are needed to offer cruise lines the ability to create itineraries and visit various ports within one cruise. One port does not make a cruise region.

Past experience is an important factor to bear in mind as well, as cruise lines can switch ports/destination from one to the other cruise season. If attracted once, this does not mean that a cruise line will automatically call again in the next season. Cruise regions compete on a worldwide level, hence also a ports' performance must be seen in cohesion to the overall performance of a region.

Further Recommendations to Ports:
If ports/destinations consider approaching a cruise line, then they should already check if the vessel(s) of the target cruise line fits into its port and is able to access the area. Otherwise cruise lines seem to rate the port/destination as incompetent. Moreover, cruise lines expect individualized marketing and knowledge of the port/destination about their cruise products, such as passenger structure and special requirements. Cruise lines furthermore stated, that they wish to be treated as customers.

It is also recommended to ports to form an association to create joint offerings and to fully utilize infrastructure and services. In order to attract passengers and cruise lines to the NSR, ports/destinations should see themselves as part of this region and act and communicate accordingly with for example group marketing efforts.

Cruise lines are very interested in new destinations to enrich their cruise product. Therefore, authors recommend ports/destinations to identify themselves within their respective cruise region and literarily put themselves on a map with established cruise destinations and other interesting ports within the own cruise region, whereas this does not have to be done via example itineraries.

Cruise lines agreed much that they would like to avoid crowded destinations, but oftentimes they perceive that sufficient information is not provided by ports/destinations. It is recommended to include a berth schedule on ports' homepage (or at cruise associations' homepage if applicable) where it is visible how many ships are in port on a specific day and which berths are occupied. Details on ships could be made anonymous in order to preserve details on competitors' itineraries. Such a berthing schedule may furthermore decrease the perceived berthing allocation problems, which cruise lines stated during content generation phase of this study as they do not want to be pushed out of berth and required to anchor although berth booking was done years in advance.

Further Recommendations to the Cruise Gateway Project:
In accordance to berth allocation recommendations to ports, it is suggested to the Cruise Gateway Project to establish clear berthing allocation policies or even a berthing allocation system within the NSR. This could be used as a unique operational selling proposition to attract future cruise business in the NSR.

As described above in the conclusion about the USPs, it is highly recommended to the Cruise Gateway Project to establish a working group to create a suitable and sustainable image for the North Sea Region as a cruise destination.

6. Further Research

To further verify findings on perceived criteria that attract cruise passengers, a survey amongst cruise passengers is suggested. It would be very interesting to compare the findings of this study on detected perceived criteria to those gained from cruise passengers.

As cruise lines seem to be quite price driven, an analysis of port pricing structures within the NSR and within other cruise regions could derive interesting findings that may help the NSR to better position itself. Cruise lines stated in the content generation phase, that "discrepancy between ports in a region can price ports out of the market".

A detailed content analysis study on information material of ports and cruise regions and their respective average information content with regard to findings of this study may enrich detected criteria and findings even further. Additionally, worldwide ports and port associations could be analyzed according to provided information and user friendliness.

7. Executive Summary

The Cruise Gateway North Sea Project initiated this study on **Decision Criteria for Cruise Port Selection in the North Sea Region**. There are two main goals associated with this study. One goal was to identify the unique selling propositions of the North Sea Region, the other goal was to detect important criteria for cruise port selection.

In depth interviews with top-level managers of market leading cruise companies brought forward interesting facts about cruise lines' perception about the North Sea Region.

- The North Sea Region lacks a clear identity. Many cruise lines were not able to think of any specific unique selling propositions for the NSR.
- The North Sea Region is considered a high content area with attractive landscape, culture and heritage.
- Cruise lines tend not to perceive the NSR as a cruise region on its own, but rather as a connection between multiple attractive (smaller) cruise regions such as UK, Norway and the Baltic.

Research findings demonstrate that cruise lines have quite varying detailed requirements when it comes to cruise port selection, but also have mutual minimum requirements.

- Minimum requirement(s) for transit ports are a clean & safe quay or pier and/or a safe anchorage and tender spot.
- All participating cruise companies require a minimum of luggage handling space, gangways and parking area for turnaround ports. Furthermore, requirements for turnaround ports include airlift, efficient cruise terminal or simple waiting facilities, safety/customs area, ISPS zone, loading & working zone, infrastructure, simple port procedures, clean & safe quay/pier/berthing, security checks/techniques, check-in facilities and public toilet facilities.

Cruise lines base their deployment decisions on various factors including optimization of itinerary, customer demand, economic fit/cost as well as on past experiences. Further very important decision factors for cruise lines are safety and security, profit, reliable berthing systems and political stability. According to cruise lines' perceptions, cruise passengers additionally require attractive destinations and a variety of qualitatively high shore excursions. Moreover, topics like crowding or environmental issues play into cruise lines' deployment decisions.

Destinations are required to offer safety as well as touristic attractiveness, whereas ports are required to offer facilities, services and infrastructure to be considered as port of call. The offered cruise call has to be economically attractive to cruise lines and fit into its tailor-made itinerary, optimized under touristic, economical and ecological aspects.

In the past, itinerary planning was characterized by calling as many destinations within a cruise as possible. In contrast, itinerary planning today incorporates a vast amount of issues to be considered and is rather characterized by economic aspects.

8. Glossary

CGP	Cruise Gateway Project
Crowding	Perceived feeling of density; too many people in one place
Destination	Specific area of cruise tourism interest. A destination includes a port, touristic point of interests/hinterland
ECA	Emission Control Area
ISPS	International Ship and Port Facility Security Code
Itinerary	Route of cruise vessel including various destinations (ports)
Judgment sampling	Choosing a sample of a (target) population according to self-given standards or requirements
NSR	North Sea Region
Port	The actual port within a destination
Region	Array of destinations within defined boundaries
Target population	Companies of interest for this study (e.g. cruise lines, which operate cruise vessels in Europe)
Touristic	Services and aspects with an impact on tourism
Transit port	Port of call without passenger embarkations/disembarkations.
Turnaround port	Port of call where cruise lines schedule embarkation/disembarkation of cruise passengers
USP	Unique Selling Proposition

9. References

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Appendix

Example Checklist of Required Information by Cruise Lines:

General Information
- Geographical location
- Climate, seasonality
- Professional experience/cruise track record of port
- Performance of port (capacities, transportation links, etc.)

Nautical Information
- Nautical accessibility, duration of pilotage, fairways, anchorage areas, etc.
- Nautical information/port restrictions

Operational Information
- Berthing options/capacities/superstructure
- Dedicated cruise piers/commercial vs. non-commercial pier
- Infrastructure details of ports
- Port facilities/terminal facilities (incl. images)
- Special services offered (shuttle busses, …)
- Port services (supply, disposal)
- Safety issues/ISPS areas
- Customs & immigration procedures
- Port agents

Administration
- Legal standards/requirements
- Regulations on open shops/casinos during port stay
- Tariff structures
- Visa regulations

Touristic Information:
- Fact & figures (description of destination)
- Touristic attractions of the destination (images of touristic hotspots)
- Special dates/seasonal attractions
- Proximity of berth to city center
- Shore excursion options
- Availability of guides (language skills)
- Infrastructure details of destination (rail, road, air) – distance from port, means of transportation
- Shopping possibilities
- Generic price level within destination/currency
- Availability of maps of the destination

It is important to communicate the present port/destination situation to cruise lines. If future projects, such as a new pier, changing safety procedures, etc., are planned and completed in a foreseeable timeframe they should be communicated as well so that cruise lines can prepare accordingly. Keep in mind that average itinerary planning of cruise lines starts 2 ½ years before the cruise call. Macro level planning may even start 4 – 5 years in advance.

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