

**The Role of Google Maps Reviews in Co-Creating Brand Identity:  
A Case Study of NDSM, Amsterdam**

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# THE ROLE OF GOOGLE MAPS REVIEWS IN CO-CREATING BRAND IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF NDSM, AMSTERDAM

## Abstract

This thesis explores how user-generated content on Google Maps contributes to the co-creation of place identity within the context of urban regeneration, using the NDSM-wharf in Amsterdam as a case study. Formerly a shipbuilding site, NDSM has been repurposed into a creative and cultural hub through adaptive reuse, positioning itself as a flagship example of post-industrial transformation. While urban regeneration and place branding are often analyzed through top-down strategies and institutional narratives, this study addresses a critical gap by focusing on bottom-up digital narratives shaped by everyday visitors. Specifically, it investigates how Google Maps reviews, an accessible but often overlooked form of user-generated content, narrate visitor perceptions of NDSM's evolving identity as a cultural hotspot.

The central research question is: How do Google Maps reviews narrate visitor perceptions of NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot? To answer this, the study employs thematic content analysis combined with a qualitative interpretive approach, drawing on theoretical frameworks of digital placemaking and place identity branding. A total of 602 English- and Dutch-language Google Maps reviews posted between January 2023 and January 2025 were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding using ATLAS.ti. This process identified recurring themes and emotional tones across different levels of evaluative sentiment.

The findings reveal five overarching thematic categories: (1) Cultural Identity & Artistic Expression, (2) Accessibility & Infrastructure, (3) Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation, (4) Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement, and (5) Narrating Place Through Reviews. These themes demonstrate how visitors attribute symbolic, emotional, and aesthetic value to NDSM, and how these digital narratives both reinforce and challenge the area's urban branding as a creative hub. Star ratings and affective language further reveal that positive reviews tend to emphasize inspiration, artistic programming, and inclusivity, while negative reviews express frustrations related to infrastructure, navigation, or perceived commercialization.

By integrating qualitative with descriptive quantitative data, this study argues that Google Maps reviews serve as a form of informal cultural expression and bottom-up place-making. They reflect the participatory co-creation of meaning and identity in regenerated urban spaces, offering an alternative lens through which cultural transformation can be assessed beyond institutional discourse. This study contributes to urban and media studies by demonstrating the analytical potential of user-generated digital narratives in shaping the lived and perceived identities of post-industrial cultural sites such as NDSM.

**KEYWORDS:** *user-generated content, Google Maps reviews, NDSM, cultural regeneration, place branding*

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. Case study of NDSM, Amsterdam.....	7
1.2. Contextual Background.....	8
<b>2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1. Urban Regeneration & Cultural Transformation .....	12
2.2. Place Identity of Urban Regenerated Spaces .....	15
2.3. Negotiating Place Branding Through Public Perception .....	18
2.4. Public Perception in the Digital Age.....	20
<b>3. Methods .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1. Design.....	24
3.2. Sampling .....	24
3.3. Analytical Framework.....	26
3.4. Data Analysis .....	27
3.4.1. Thematic Content Analysis.....	27
3.4.2. Quantitative Analysis.....	29
<b>4. Results.....</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1. Thematic Content Analysis .....	30
4.1.1. Accessibility & Infrastructure.....	30
4.1.2. Cultural Destination Perception.....	32
4.1.3. Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation .....	36
4.1.4. Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement.....	38
4.1.5. Narrating Place Through Reviews .....	41
4.2. Descriptive Analysis .....	43
<b>5. Conclusion &amp; Discussion.....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1. Practical Implications .....	48
5.2. Limitations .....	49
<b>References.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>69</b>

<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Appendix D .....</b>	<b>96</b>

## **List of Figures & Tables**

**Figure 1.1 Map created by the author using data from Google Earth ..... 7**

**Table 4.1 Open Code Frequencies by Sentiment Category..... 44**

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, cities across Europe and beyond have been dealing with the spatial and socio-economic impacts of deindustrialization. Large industrial areas that once symbolized modern production have declined globally following the industrial expansion after World War II (Vanessa Bruno et al., 2024, p. 611). As these sites became inactive, they often contributed to urban deterioration by lowering the quality, safety, and attractiveness of nearby neighborhoods. However, more recently, cities have begun to recognize their unseen potential as valuable elements of urban heritage and as opportunities for economic development (Vanessa Bruno et al., 2024, p. 611). By blending heritage with redevelopment, these districts contribute to tourism, economic growth, and the formation of local identity (Vanessa Bruno et al., 2024, pp. 617–618). This shift can be seen as part of a broader trend in urban development, where cities are increasingly turning to cultural identity, symbolic meaning, and creative practices to address the spatial and social challenges left by postindustrial decline.

Consequently, cities worldwide have increasingly adopted urban regeneration strategies centered on culture-led regeneration, transforming former industrial sites such as factories and warehouses into cultural districts that host creative hubs, artistic institutions, public events, and cultural businesses (Dinardi, 2019, pp. 299–301). Within this framework, culture-led regeneration has emerged as a widely used tool for revitalizing derelict areas and fostering a renewed sense of place. Urban planners now see such sites not as obsolete remnants of the past, but as strategic spaces for fostering urban innovation, creativity, and identity. Former factories are now frequently repurposed as creative and cultural quarters, integrated into broader urban development plans (Evans, 2009, pp. 1003–1004).

One of the key strategies of urban regeneration is adaptive reuse, which involves repurposing industrial and heritage buildings to preserve their character, while fostering economic revitalization and community identity (Bullen & Love, 2011, pp. 411–414). Examples from around the world demonstrate how abandoned factories, shipyards, and power plants have been converted into vibrant cultural hubs that blend history with innovation and retain the historical character of the place. These include projects such as Sanatistanbul in Turkey, cultural redevelopments in cities like Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, as well as initiatives in European cities such as Glasgow, Essen, and the Palo Alto creative complex in Barcelona (Dinardi, 2019, p. 300; Hussein, 2021, p. 1; de Oliveira, 2015, p. 9; Trifa, 2018, p. 189). Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings strengthens community connection to place, encourages sustainable lifestyles and environmental stewardship,

preserves the unique character and cultural value of historic areas, and supports social well-being by maintaining culturally significant structures (Bullen & Love, 2011, pp. 419–420). These outcomes are particularly visible in the transformation of the NDSM shipyard in Amsterdam, which serves as the case study for this paper on how post-industrial sites can be reshaped into vibrant and culturally meaningful urban districts.

### 1.1. Case study of NDSM, Amsterdam

NDSM shipyard in Amsterdam stands out as a compelling example of adaptive reuse in a post-industrial context. Once a major industrial site, NDSM has grown into one of the city's most alternative and creative cultural districts. Located along the banks of the IJ River in Amsterdam-Noord, across from the city center and central train station (see Figure 1.1), the NDSM-wharf has been transformed into a vibrant, multifunctional cultural hub that hosts artists, festivals, creative businesses, and public events (I Amsterdam, n.d.)

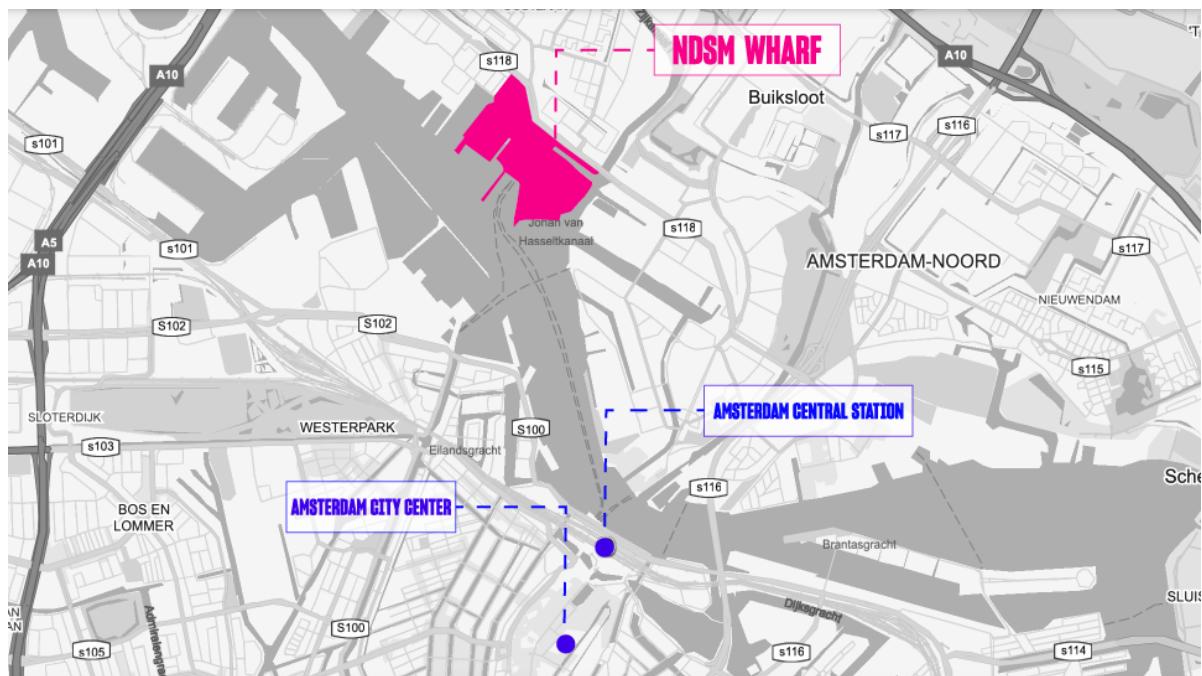


Figure 1.1 Map created by the author using data from Google Earth

The industrial legacy of the NDSM site began in 1894, when the Nederlandsche Scheepsbouw Maatschappij (NSM) was founded to construct modern ships for global transport and military use. As demand for maritime transport expanded, the company quickly grew and, by 1937, had become one of the world's leading shipbuilders. In 1946, the Nederlandsche Scheepsbouw Maatschappij (NSM) merged with its neighboring company, the Nederlandsche Dok Maatschappij (NDM), and together they formed the Nederlandse Dok en Scheepsbouw Maatschappij (NDSM). The newly established company became a

major industrial force in Amsterdam, and the site gradually came to be known as the NDSM-wharf. That name has stayed even after the company ceased operations in 1984, following the oil crisis, reduced demand, and changing geopolitical circumstances (I Amsterdam, 2025; NDSM, n.d.).

After its closure, the abandoned NDSM shipyard was gradually occupied by squatters such as immigrants, former workers, and artists who were drawn by the availability of space and low living costs. As rising rents pushed creative communities away from the city center, the northern IJ waterfront became a hub for alternative culture. Although initially viewed as an undesirable area, these informal spaces contributed to Amsterdam's creative vitality. Recognizing their potential, the municipality introduced the “*broedplaatsen*” (breeding place) policy to support and formalize grassroots cultural initiatives (Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, pp. 291 – 292). In 1999, the municipality of Amsterdam organized a redevelopment competition for the NDSM site. The winning proposal came from the Kinetisch Noord Foundation, a group of artists and cultural practitioners associated with the local alternative scene, whose vision aligned with the area's creative and experimental character. Their proposal, which was developed in collaboration with architects and artists, reimagined the vast shipbuilding hall as a “*city within a shell*,” featuring artist studios, public zones, and performance spaces. Together with municipal support, the plan was implemented from 2001 onward, establishing NDSM as a recognized cultural hotspot (I Amsterdam, 2025; Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, pp. 291 – 292).

Today, NDSM is one of Amsterdam's most vibrant cultural districts, known for its active artistic community, creative enterprises, and diverse cultural programming. Spanning a vast post-industrial site, it regularly hosts festivals, art exhibitions, performances, and one of Europe's largest monthly flea markets at the IJ-Hallen (I Amsterdam, n.d.). Many of the former shipyard structures have been repurposed to house artist studios, sustainability initiatives, and cultural venues such as Treehouse NDSM and NDSM Fuse. Popular cafés and restaurants such as Pllek and Noorderlicht contribute to the area's alternative and relaxed atmosphere. By embracing its industrial heritage, NDSM offers a distinct contrast to Amsterdam's historic center and continues to attract both residents and visitors seeking a different urban experience (I Amsterdam, 2025).

## 1.2. Contextual Background

The transformation of NDSM also illustrates how cultural regeneration is shaped by differing governance models. While some projects follow top-down strategies led by

governments aiming for economic revitalization and coordinated planning, such approaches often overlook community needs and limit public participation (Lidegaard et al., 2018, pp. 3-4; Wang, J. et al., 2022, p. 10). In contrast, bottom-up models prioritize local engagement, cultural expression, and neighborhood identity, often driven by artists and grassroots networks that resist commercial redevelopment (Dinardi, 2019, pp. 300-303; Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, pp. 289-294; Pradel-Miquel, 2017, pp. 13-16). These models reimagine industrial spaces as civic arenas where memory, creativity, and belonging are actively shaped (Deguara et al., 2018, p. 15; Falanga & Nunes, 2021, p. 4; Sepe, 2018, p. 155). Ultimately, urban regeneration strategies shape not only the physical transformation of such spaces but also influence how place identity is constructed and experienced by both visitors and local communities in places such as NDSM.

In addition to physical redevelopment and urban regeneration models, the long-term success of regenerated spaces like NDSM also depends on their ability to cultivate a strong and recognizable identity. Various strategies, whether top-down or bottom-up, play a crucial role in shaping how this identity is formed, maintained, and perceived by different groups. According to Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, pp. 71, 75-76, 78) place identity is shaped by ongoing interactions between internal cultural values and external perceptions among diverse stakeholders. In case of NDSM, the district's evolving identity results from the dynamic interaction between institutional branding and grassroots cultural practices, shaping how it is experienced and maintained over time. While many top-down regeneration strategies use branding to promote economic growth and global visibility, they risk replacing authentic local culture with commercialized images that primarily appeal to outsiders (Sepe, 2018, pp. 160-163). In contrast, community-led artistic interventions, which are often temporary, foster inclusive and locally rooted identities by reclaiming spaces, strengthening social ties, and promoting diverse narratives (Costa & Lopes, 2017, pp. 3, 6, 20-22; Shanbhag, 2024, pp. 3-5). Understanding how these contrasting approaches contribute to NDSM's place identity is essential for interpreting its ongoing transformation and place branding.

While physical redevelopment and cultural practices shape NDSM's identity on site, today's digitally mediated world adds another influential layer. Place identity is no longer defined solely by spatial design or cultural activity but is increasingly constructed through online representations that shape how places are seen and understood. Contemporary branding has shifted from top-down campaigns to more participatory processes that promote authenticity, emotional connection, and shared meaning (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, pp. 72-

74; Konecnik Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013, pp. 46-51). These evolving strategies rely on continuous interaction between institutions, creative industries, visitors, and local communities. With the rise of platforms such as Google Maps, TripAdvisor, and Instagram, digital place identity is also co-created through user-generated content (UGC). This type of content offers insight into how institutional branding is received, how cultural narratives are reinforced or contested, and how place identity evolves through everyday public interpretation (Chen & Chang, 2024, pp. 2-4; Nicola & Schmitz, 2024, pp. 398-399; Polson, 2025, pp. 22-25; Taecharungroj, 2019, pp. 39-42). Understanding these digital narratives is essential to examining how places such as NDSM are continually reshaped through public engagement.

As digital platforms increasingly shape how people interact with urban environments, Google Maps has evolved beyond its role as a navigation tool into a space where users actively share experiences and impressions. Through features such as reviews, photos, and star ratings, the platform generates user-created content that offers unfiltered visitor perspectives, which can reinforce or challenge official branding narratives (Taecharungroj, 2019, pp. 40-41, 45-47). This makes Google Maps a valuable, yet still underexplored, resource for examining how visitors engage with regenerated urban districts. While previous studies have employed Google Maps reviews to analyze perceptions of higher education, public libraries, nightlife areas, historic neighborhoods, and tourist destinations, few have investigated their potential to capture public interpretations of post-industrial regeneration (Borrego & Comalat Navarra, 2020, p. 84; Chen & Chang, 2024, p. 1; Khan & Loan, 2022, p. 601; Leiras & Eusébio, 2024, p. 2584-2602; Munawir et al., 2021, p. 1; Shah et al., 2020, p. 610; Taecharungroj, 2019, p. 39). Thus, this study addresses that gap by analyzing Google Maps reviews of NDSM in Amsterdam to explore how UGC contributes to place branding and the evolving identity of regenerated cultural hubs.

Additionally, existing research on NDSM has explored urban regeneration from various angles, including adaptive reuse, architectural transformation, stakeholder collaboration, cultural policy, and grassroots initiatives. Many of these studies focus on offline dynamics, offering in-depth insights into spatial redevelopment and the negotiation of public space and community identity. To investigate these themes, researchers have employed a wide range of methods, such as ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, architectural case studies, spatial mapping tools, and even lab-based eye-tracking experiments (Andrade et al., 2024, pp. 168-173; Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, pp. 290-291; Jing et al., 2020, p. 1; Spanjar et al., 2025, pp. 512-

517; Squizzato, 2021, p. 38; Van De Kamp, 2019, p. 201). However, despite their contributions, limited research has been done to indicate how public perceptions of regenerated spaces like NDSM are shaped and expressed through digital platforms. This creates a methodological and thematic gap in understanding how online, user-generated narratives contribute to place branding and identity formation in post-industrial cultural districts.

Thus, this study addresses this gap by analyzing user-generated reviews on Google Maps to investigate how everyday visitors narrate and interpret NDSM's cultural identity. The analysis employs thematic content analysis (TCA), supported by descriptive statistics, and is conducted using the qualitative software ATLAS.ti. This approach enables a nuanced analysis of themes, tone, and language in user-generated reviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.78, 81, 84, 86; Shah et al., 2020, pp. 614-618), shedding light on how institutional branding is received, how cultural narratives are reinforced or contested, and how visitors interpret NDSM's transition from an industrial site to a creative hub. Therefore, the main research question guiding this study is: *"How do Google Maps reviews narrate visitor perceptions of NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot?"*. The analysis is further guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What themes emerge in Google Maps regarding NDSM's cultural identity?
2. How do different star ratings reflect variations in visitor perceptions of NDSM's identity?
3. How do user-generated narratives on Google Maps reinforce or challenge NDSM's branding as a cultural hub?
4. How do user reviews reflect tensions in NDSM's transformation from a former industrial site to a creative hub?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to discussions on urban planning, media, and creative industries by examining how visitor narratives reflect and negotiate the evolving identity of repurposed cultural spaces such as NDSM. Following the main research question and sub-questions, the next chapters provide a literature review, theoretical framework, and research methodology. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of findings, and the study concludes with a reflection on implications and future research.

## 2. Literature Review

The transformation of industrial sites into cultural hubs involves complex processes of urban regeneration, place branding, and public perception. Cultural districts such as NDSM must balance historical preservation with the demands of the creative economy, making public discourse central to their evolving identity. This literature review chapter explores how these processes are understood in academic literature and introduces the theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis of user-generated reviews on Google Maps as reflections of NDSM's transformation. It draws on four interconnected concepts: culture-led regeneration, place identity, participatory place branding, and digital storytelling, which together provide a foundation for examining how visitors experience and narrate urban change in the digital age.

### 2.1. Urban Regeneration & Cultural Transformation

Urban regeneration throughout the years has evolved from a focus on physical renewal, such as reconstruction and redevelopment, into a strategic, multidimensional process. Contemporary regeneration efforts aim not only to improve the built environment but also to revitalize local economies, promote social inclusion, enhance environmental quality, and preserve cultural heritage. This approach is place-specific, addresses both short-term needs and long-term goals, and relies on collaboration among public, private, and community stakeholders to support sustainable urban development (Galdini, 2005, pp. 4–6). While earlier initiatives prioritized infrastructure and basic community development, more recent strategies increasingly incorporate cultural production and the creative economy as key drivers of revitalization (Evans, 2009, p. 1003). This shift aligns with broader economic changes, where former industrial sites are repurposed into cultural districts, reflecting the transition from manufacturing-based economies to creative-centered economies (Evans, 2009, pp. 1005-1007, 1031).

A key mechanism in this process is adaptive reuse, which plays a crucial role in culture-led urban regeneration, preserving industrial heritage while transforming spaces for contemporary cultural use. Bullen and Love (2011, pp. 412-414, 417-418) argue that, unlike traditional redevelopment, adaptive reuse retains the historical character of industrial buildings, reinforcing sustainability by minimizing demolition waste and reducing construction costs. Dinardi (2019, pp. 299, 305, 308, 311) expands on this by introducing the concept of creative reuse of space, illustrating how former industrial sites are reimaged to support cultural activity and identity while contributing to the broader goals of urban

regeneration. For instance, Fábrica Bhering in Rio de Janeiro, is a case where an abandoned factory was converted into a creative hub for artists and designers. Similarly, in Barcelona, Palo Alto transformed a historic industrial site into a space for cultural and entrepreneurial activity. In Istanbul, Santral Istanbul, a former power plant, was reimagined as a cultural and educational complex focused on interdisciplinary learning (Dinardi, 2019, pp. 305-306; de Oliveira, 2015, pp. 7, 12, 15; Hussein, 2021, pp. 29–32). These examples illustrate how industrial structures can be creatively reimagined as cultural spaces while preserving their architectural and historical significance. However, these studies primarily focus on cultural regeneration through architectural analysis, policy review, or ethnographic mixed methods, emphasizing expert and institutional perspectives. They provide limited insight into how such spaces are perceived and experienced by everyday users, which is the gap this study seeks to address by analyzing user-generated content.

Although adaptive reuse is often associated with physical redevelopment, it also creates opportunities for culture to revitalize areas, adding symbolic and social dimensions that help shape urban identity through regeneration. In post-industrial cities, culture has become central to urban regeneration strategies, as it serves both economic and symbolic purposes. Through a case study approach supported by document and policy analysis, Trifa (2018, pp. 187–192) demonstrates how cultural regeneration revitalizes former industrial sites in Europe into multifunctional hubs that foster innovation, reinforce local identity, and support urban and economic renewal. According to her study, culture functions not only as a vehicle for physical and economic renewal but also as a symbolic bridge between past and present, reconnecting communities with their heritage through the adaptive reuse of industrial space (Trifa, 2018, p. 187). This is evident in the examples such as Liverpool's Albert Dock, which was transformed into a major cultural destination with museums, event spaces, and tourism infrastructure, and Essen's Zollverein Coal Mine, which became a UNESCO-listed cultural complex and contributed to the city's rebranding through arts and creative industries (Trifa, 2018, pp. 190–191, 192). While these cases highlight the potential of culture to support city branding and heritage preservation, they primarily reflect top-down institutional narratives that may overlook grassroots responses and offer limited insight into how regenerated spaces are perceived by everyday visitors.

In addition, apart from spatial transformation and institutional narratives, temporary cultural events also play a strategic role in cultural regeneration. Events and attractions such as festivals, public performances, and arts programming serve as experiential catalysts that enhance city image, attract visitors, and reinforce community identity (García, 2004, pp.

103, 105–106, 114, 116). García (2004, pp. 103–108), through a comparative case study analysis, shows how Glasgow’s designation as the 1990 European City of Culture demonstrates how temporary cultural initiatives can be strategically employed to rebrand cities, enhance civic pride, and support urban renewal. While primarily driven by economic goals, the program also promoted inclusivity and community engagement, leaving both symbolic and physical legacies. The author argues that such interventions can generate lasting impacts by fostering cultural visibility, public participation, and a renewed sense of place (García, 2004, pp. 114–116). Additionally, Evans (2005, p. 986) reinforces this view, noting that cultural initiatives like festivals, public art, and adaptive reuse act as catalysts for regeneration by creating a sense of place that traditional planning approaches often lack. Yet, despite their immediate impact, the long-term cultural sustainability of such interventions, especially in marginalized areas, remains underexplored.

While these examples emphasize institutional, top-down regeneration, many cultural hubs also emerge through artist-led, grassroots efforts. These transformations often arise independently of formal planning, as grassroots cultural initiatives create alternative regeneration models that promote creativity, community engagement, and inclusive development (Dinardi, 2019, pp. 303, 313–314). As Deguara et al. (2018, pp. 11–15) emphasize, inclusive urban culture depends on designing experiences that are welcoming, participatory, and responsive to the everyday needs of diverse communities, particularly marginalized groups. A prominent example relevant to this study is the regeneration of the NDSM-wharf in Amsterdam, which emerged from the city’s squatting and countercultural scene. Led by the foundation Kinetisch Noord, the initiative proposed a collective reuse of the former industrial site as a cultural hub for artists, performers, and makers. Rather than following a top-down redevelopment model, the project emphasized grassroots involvement, creative autonomy, and community-driven spatial organization (Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, p. 291). Similar dynamics can be seen in Berlin’s Soldiner Kiez, where the Kiezkulturnetz fostered participatory cultural planning involving creators and artists (Pradel-Miquel, 2017, pp. 18–19). Thus, cultural production is positioned not as a means of gentrification or urban branding but as a grassroots tool for strengthening social ties and shaping collective spatial identities. These projects illustrate a bottom-up model of regeneration that centers social cohesion and collective identity rather than economic growth.

Aforementioned studies reveal how urban regeneration has evolved into a multidimensional process where cultural production, adaptive reuse, and both institutional and grassroots initiatives reshape former industrial spaces into vibrant cultural districts.

While top-down strategies often prioritize economic growth and urban branding, bottom-up efforts underscore the value of community engagement, artistic expression, and inclusive development. This distinction is particularly relevant for analyzing the transformation of NDSM, where competing narratives of creative reuse, cultural identity, and gentrification intersect. As such, understanding urban regeneration requires attention not only to architectural and economic changes but also to the cultural and participatory dynamics that define how regenerated spaces are used, valued, and narrated by different actors. Therefore, this study situates NDSM within this broader framework, examining how these dynamics are reflected and negotiated in the user-generated reviews that circulate on platforms like Google Maps.

## **2.2. Place Identity of Urban Regenerated Spaces**

In the context of urban regeneration, place identity offers a crucial lens for understanding how people relate to transformed spaces beyond their physical appearance. Place identity is shaped not only by physical redevelopment but also through the emotional, symbolic, and social connections that people form with a space. These associations contribute to how individuals perceive, experience, and assign meaning to regenerated urban environments (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, pp. 710–712). For instance, scholars Eronen (2024, pp. 258–260, 270, 272) and Guo et al. (2021, pp. 768–769) emphasized in their analysis that sensory and emotional experiences are essential in shaping people's connection to place. Elements such as sounds, textures, and visual cues can evoke affective responses, including nostalgia, joy, or frustration, which in turn contribute to the construction of meaning in regenerated spaces. Ujang (2017, pp. 118–119, 129–130) further argues that these emotional and symbolic connections are rooted in place attachment, where both emotional bonds (such as feelings of belonging and satisfaction) and functional ties (arising from how a space meets users' needs) help shape the meaning of a place and ensure continuity of identity over time. However, while Ujang's (2017, pp. 118-119, 121, 123, 125) analysis provides valuable insight into subjective attachment, it focuses primarily on residential contexts and everyday users, offering a limited perspective on how place identity is formed in evolving cultural districts, such as NDSM.

To better understand how place identity develops in cultural and post-industrial contexts, it is essential to examine the role of artistic and symbolic interventions in shaping emotional and experiential engagement. The cultural and symbolic layers of place identity are shaped by artistic interventions that engage communities, narrate collective memory, and influence

how regenerated spaces are experienced. Based on their mixed-methods analysis of the spatial distribution of urban art and its relationship to urban regeneration, Balarezo and Karimi (2018, p. 588) argue that art plays a crucial role in shaping urban experience. Whether through informal street interventions or formal public installations, artistic practices influence how spaces are visually and experientially perceived. It fosters shared narratives, strengthens emotional connections between individuals and their surroundings, and encourages engagement and a sense of belonging (Balarezo & Karimi, 2018, p. 588). This includes symbolic aesthetics, where industrial design elements are preserved and reinterpreted to shape a site's visual and emotional narrative. Cenci (2018, pp. 166–167, 171) similarly suggests that these symbolic expressions contribute to a recognizable sense of place by connecting spatial transformation with historical memory. Although Balarezo and Karimi (2018, pp. 587-590) and Cenci (2018, pp. 161-167) emphasize the role of cultural expression in shaping symbolic meaning and community identity, their focus remains on the artistic intent behind interventions, with limited attention to how the public interprets and engages with these elements. Thus, this study addresses that gap by focusing on public perception, examining how place identity is negotiated through user-generated content on Google Maps.

Furthermore, previous research has shown, artistic practice reinforces the role of enhancing place identity. In Bairro Alto, Costa and Lopes (2017, pp. 3–5, 9, 20) found that informal, temporary art reintroduced underused spaces into public life and enriched their symbolic centrality and everyday vitality. These interventions blur the line between public and private realms, enabling participatory and dynamic experiences that reflect local identity and resist gentrification. A similar dynamic is evident in Shanbhag's (2024, pp. 2-4) case study of Yelahanka, Bengaluru, where street art revitalized neglected spaces and transformed them into vibrant public realms. Based on photographic and observational fieldwork, the study highlights how such interventions promote collaborative ownership and participatory placemaking, positioning street art as a powerful tool for constructing and reinforcing place identity in rapidly changing urban environments. Although these studies highlight the participatory and placemaking role of art, their emphasis is predominantly on localized or neighborhood-level contexts. As a result, they offer limited insight into how visitors who are not part of the local community, including cultural tourists and first-time visitors, construct impressions of place identity. This study seeks to address that limitation by analyzing digital reviews that capture these visitors' first-hand experiences.

This participatory nature of art supports regeneration processes and enhances cultural

and economic vitality, while also challenging traditional uses of space (Balarezo & Karimi, 2018, pp. 587, 592). According to Hall and Robertson (2001, pp. 6-8) analysis, formal public art initiatives often seek to anchor place identity by referencing local history and altering everyday landscapes through site-specific works. However, they may also impose a singular narrative that obscures the fragmented or contested nature of urban space. This emphasizes the need for a broader understanding of place identity. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, pp. 75, 77), in their study, conceptualize place identity as a dynamic and evolving process, shaped through continuous interaction between internal cultural meanings and external perceptions. Rather than viewing identity as a fixed attribute, they emphasize its fluid nature, highlighting how it emerges from ongoing dialogue among stakeholders and is constantly redefined through social and spatial contexts. Their model highlights the role of multiple stakeholders, including residents, visitors, and institutions, who negotiate how a place is understood over time. As a result, this framework is particularly relevant for regenerated districts where different actors attribute divergent meanings to the same space.

This tension is evident in Sepe's (2018, pp. 155-157) comparative case analysis of the 798 Art Zone in Beijing and M50 in Shanghai, which demonstrated how creative regeneration can simultaneously reinforce place identity by preserving industrial heritage, fostering artistic expression, and encouraging community engagement. However, her study highlights how the fluidity of place identity in regenerated districts is increasingly shaped by commercial pressures. As these districts grow in popularity, they risk losing their original character and becoming spaces shaped more by market forces than cultural values, potentially leading to gentrification and weakened community ties (Sepe, 2018, pp. 161, 163, 165). Yet Sepe's (2018, pp. 152, 155-156, 160, 162-163) study primarily examines the institutional and economic dynamics of place transformation, giving less attention to how individuals interpret and experience these changes. By contrast, this study brings attention to the micro-level perceptions captured in user-generated content, emphasizing how individuals emotionally and symbolically engage with such spaces in real time.

Collectively, these studies highlight that place identity is not a static but an evolving, co-created process shaped by symbolic meanings, cultural engagement, and emotional connections. This perspective is essential for understanding NDSM's ongoing transformation, where industrial heritage, artistic interventions, and creative branding interact to reshape public perception. As NDSM shifts from a former shipyard to a cultural destination, UGC reviews on platforms like Google Maps reveal how visitors interpret its changing character, ranging from admiration for its industrial and artistic features to

critiques about commercialization or loss of authenticity. By treating place identity as continuously shaped through public discourse, this paper examines how digital narratives contribute to constructing the cultural significance of regenerated urban environments.

### **2.3. Negotiating Place Branding Through Public Perception**

As post-industrial spaces undergo cultural regeneration, branding plays an important role in shaping how these areas are understood, experienced, and presented to the public. Place branding was largely led by institutions through efforts to attract investment, visitors, or new residents by promoting a distinct identity using visual and promotional tools (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, pp. 62–64). However, over time, it has developed into a more complex and inclusive process that reflects economic, political, and cultural dimensions. This shift places greater emphasis on collaboration between public bodies, local communities, businesses, and cultural groups. It underlines the value of shared participation, emotional resonance, and strategic identity in influencing how places are perceived (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 64). This top-down approach is evident in the case of the ongoing regeneration of Tehran's historic district, where branding initiatives have been predominantly shaped by concentrated, bureaucratic urban management structures led by government and municipal bodies. These initiatives often emphasize physical redevelopment and externally crafted identities, employing strategies such as image-making, cultural positioning, and promotional narratives geared toward touristic or commercial appeal. However, these top-down approaches have often suppressed local participation, underscoring the need to reform regulatory systems to support more inclusive and collaborative branding processes that reflect the identity and needs of the community (Yazdan Panah Shahabadi et al., 2020, pp. 388–391).

The limitations of top-down branding initiatives underscore the need for more inclusive, co-created approaches to shaping place identity. Contemporary branding practices increasingly recognize that public perception plays a central role in negotiating how repurposed spaces are understood and valued (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, pp. 70-75). The study by Falanga and Nunes (2021, pp. 3-4) demonstrated that inclusive and co-created regeneration efforts, as seen in Lisbon's ROCK project, can serve as effective alternatives to top-down models by actively involving local residents, NGOs, and public agencies in shaping place identity through cultural heritage. Initiatives such as a pop-up store, a community garden, and a local interpretive center were co-designed with residents to activate social capital and preserve local identity. These efforts, rooted in Lisbon's broader participatory governance tradition, highlight the value of shared authorship in shaping more

sustainable and equitable urban transformations. Yet, despite participatory intentions, branding efforts are frequently shaped by institutional goals, and the real, lived experiences of the public remain unexplored.

Moreover, branding repurposed sites often creates tensions between authenticity and commercialization. Grassroots place branding, while aiming for authenticity, can still produce homogenized narratives (Ambord, 2021, p. 354). Ambord (2021, pp. 354-356) shows that resident-led campaigns in South Bend, despite starting with diverse voices, ended up reflecting Instagram's dominant aesthetics. This narrowed the portrayal of local identity and risked reinforcing negative stereotypes, revealing how even participatory efforts may exclude marginalized perspectives in favor of stylized, marketable content. Similarly, Beijing's 798 Art District began as a grassroots artistic revival but was gradually overtaken by commercial and governmental interests. Initially driven by local creatives, the area eventually shifted toward luxury consumption and external control, illustrating how bottom-up cultural initiatives can be co-opted, diluting their original authenticity (Yin et al., 2015, pp. 154–155).

In contrast, the transformation of the NDSM shipyard in Amsterdam illustrates how participatory architectural practice can resist commercial pressures. In the urban regeneration process of NDSM, Architects acted as mediators in a collaborative process, integrating their expertise with the needs and aspirations of users. This inclusive approach enabled a shared sense of ownership and allowed the space to evolve through continuous community engagement (Havik & Pllumbi, 2020, pp. 301–303). Unlike top-down redevelopment strategies, this model prioritized long-term social value over market-driven outcomes, challenging dominant narratives of urban transformation. However, while Havik and Pllumbi (2020, pp. 289-304) emphasize a participatory design process, their study gives limited attention to how these spatial interventions are later interpreted by visitors, particularly in digital environments where place meaning continues to be negotiated.

To understand how places are experienced beyond curated branding strategies, it is crucial to consider how place identity emerges through both stakeholder intentions and the lived qualities emphasized in the branding process, such as physical form, everyday use, and emotional significance. Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 2-4, 43-46) three-pillar model of place brand identity brings these elements together, demonstrating through user-generated content from Flickr, TripAdvisor and Google Maps' Local Guide how individuals contribute to shaping and negotiating place identity via textual and visual storytelling. The model distinguishes between three interrelated components. The first pillar, place physics, refers to

the tangible elements of a location, such as industrial architecture, public art, and urban design, that contribute to its visual distinctiveness. The second pillar, place practices, includes the activities and interactions within the space, such as festivals, creative workshops, and community-led events, which shape visitor engagement. Lastly, place personality encompasses the emotional and symbolic associations tied to a location, reflecting its reputation, cultural meaning, and personal significance (Taecharungroj, 2019, pp. 43-44). By using Flickr, TripAdvisor and Google Maps' Local Guide, thus analyzing both visual and textual content, Taecharungroj (2019, pp. 39-42, 45-47) showcases that such platforms remain a valid and valuable source when capturing everyday perceptions, emotional associations, and localized narratives that contribute to place brand identity from public perception.

Thus, this study uses the three-pillar model as a conceptual tool for analyzing how visitors describe and negotiate NDSM's transformation through Google Maps. It shifts attention away from promotional design and toward the public negotiation of place meaning, where users, through digital media platforms, contribute to the symbolic construction of cultural districts. In doing so, it addresses the gap left by studies that emphasize the mechanics of branding without fully considering how place identity is received, contested, or reimagined by those who inhabit or visit the space.

## **2.4. Public Perception in the Digital Age**

As outlined earlier, place branding involves two interconnected strategies in which institutional actors lead top-down initiatives, while bottom-up engagement enables everyday users to shape the meaning of place through their lived experiences. Traditionally, audiences were seen as passive receivers of these curated narratives (Polson, 2025, pp. 23–25). Early place marketing strategies reinforced this view by relying on brochures, advertising campaigns, and other institution-led communications to promote carefully constructed images of place (Ketter & Avraham, 2012, p. 286; Govers & Go, 2010, pp. 122–124). Today, however, the audience is increasingly recognized as active participants who shape meaning through digital media (Polson, 2025, pp. 23–25). This shift is also reflected in how cities communicate via digital infrastructures. People interact with these platforms not merely as users, but as participants whose engagement is influenced by their technological abilities and local social imaginaries (Halegoua, 2020, p. 106). These interactions shape how places are perceived, as communities choose whether and how to engage with digital infrastructures based on their values, experiences, and emotional connections to place

(Halegoua, 2020, pp. 106–107).

This growing dynamic is especially evident in the rise of user-generated content, which now plays a central role in shaping how cultural districts are perceived and narrated. UGC, created by everyday users outside professional frameworks, offers spontaneous and authentic insights into cultural experiences by capturing personal emotions, preferences, and interactions often missed by traditional tools (Hua et al., 2024, pp. 2–3). Collected in real-life settings, this content reflects shifting social dynamics and public sentiment, making it a valuable resource for understanding how people engage with urban landscapes beyond institutionally curated narratives (Wang, X. et al., 2024, pp. 1–2). These narratives emerge across platforms such as Google Maps, Instagram, and TripAdvisor, where individuals post reviews, photos, and reflections that can reinforce, challenge, or complicate curated branding (Nicola & Schmitz, 2024, pp. 396-400; Polson, 2025, pp. 24-26, 30). Based on content analysis of user reviews on Google Maps, Nicola and Schmitz's (2024, p. 413) study shows that while institutions seek to rebrand industrial areas into tourist destinations, platforms expose divergences between these curated narratives and actual visitor experiences. This demonstrates how user-generated content can challenge institutional representations and offer alternative perspectives on place.

Furthermore, the evolving landscape of digital storytelling is shaped by a variety of platforms, each offering unique modes of public expression. One platform that captures this dynamic especially well is Google Maps, where users contribute both star ratings and written reviews, offering a combination of quantitative and qualitative insights into their spatial experiences. According to Chen and Chang's (2024, pp. 8-9, 13) study on libraries in Taiwan's six major cities, users consistently expressed appreciation for clean, quiet, and culturally enriching environments, as well as for effective service management. These reviews reflect how individuals connect their experiences to tangible elements such as spatial comfort, staff interaction, and educational value. By integrating numerical ratings with descriptive reflections, Google Maps enables a layered understanding of how places are perceived and evaluated (Chen & Chang, 2024, pp. 2, 6, 9, 12-13). Such user-driven feedback mechanisms are increasingly recognized as valuable tools for urban analysis, offering grounded, spatially anchored insights that can inform public policy, service design, and cultural planning (Chen & Chang, 2024, pp. 14–15). While their research indicated how Google Maps can be applied to studies of spatial perception and public service quality, it focuses on functional spaces like libraries and reflects local perspectives rather than experiences of users in culturally expressive or symbolic districts. This study uses a similar

digital approach to examine NDSM in cultural significance and identity, shaped by artistic legacy, historical context, and branding influences, with a focus on how it is experienced and interpreted by visitors.

In addition, these dynamics are further nuanced by how users engage with platforms. As shown in research on Barcelona's public libraries, lower-rated Google Maps reviews were significantly longer, indicating that dissatisfied users tend to elaborate more. In contrast, Local Guides, users in a Google program that rewards contributions, typically left short, generic, and more positive reviews, likely motivated by platform incentives. This suggests that longer reviews often reflect genuine dissatisfaction, while shorter ones may stem from surface-level or incentivized engagement (Borrego & Comalat Navarra, 2020, pp. 94-95). This distinction highlights the importance of considering not only what is said in reviews but who is saying it and why, offering important context for interpreting digital narratives and understanding the layered motivations behind public expressions of place perception.

Therefore, to better understand and decode these public perspectives of how these user-generated narratives shape the perception of place, this study draws on Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework for analyzing participatory digital culture. The model identifies four key dimensions that explain how users embed meaning in digital texts: values, frames, emotions, and communicative stances. Values embedded in user-generated narratives reveal visitors' beliefs about authenticity, creativity, and commercialization, shaping how cultural districts are perceived. Frames provide alternative interpretations, depicting cultural districts as artistic hubs, industrial heritage sites, or gentrified spaces depending on user perspectives. Emotions play a crucial role in visitor engagement, as narratives express nostalgia, excitement, or frustration, offering insight into public sentiment on cultural transformation. Lastly, communicative stances influence the larger digital conversation on cultural identity by reflecting how users position themselves in their evaluations, whether as supporters, critics, or observers (Shifman, 2016, pp. 5646-5650). These dimensions provide a valuable lens for analyzing how visitors articulate their experiences of cultural districts through platforms like Google Maps.

Together, these insights establish a conceptual foundation for understanding how digital platforms mediate public perception of urban transformation. Google Maps, in particular, emerges as a site where place identity is negotiated through both measurable ratings and personal, emotionally rich narratives, offering valuable context for interpreting the authenticity and depth of user reviews. By applying Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650)

framework to Google Maps, the study uncovers the multiple layers of meaning that emerge in everyday reviews and recognizes user-generated content as an active form of participatory placemaking. This theoretical approach supports the aim of this research, which is to examine how visitors perceive, describe, and make sense of NDSM's evolution into a cultural district, and how such digital narratives contribute to the continuous shaping of its identity.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Design**

In order to answer the research questions, this study employed Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) to examine Google Maps reviews written by visitors and investigate how these narratives express perceptions of NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot. Qualitative methods were chosen for their capacity to serve as a flexible tool for interpreting patterns of meaning and narrative, making them well-suited to analyzing naturally occurring text (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 78–81). Rather than relying on researcher-driven methods such as interviews or surveys, the study draws on user-generated Google Maps reviews, which provide spontaneous, context-rich reflections of visitor experience. These reviews are publicly accessible, location-specific, and particularly relevant for placemaking research, as they capture how individuals describe and emotionally engage with space in real time (Główczyński, 2022, pp. 5–7, 18).

Based on the previous research approaches, this study adapts the methodological frameworks of Shah et al. (2020, p. 614) and Chen and Chang (2024, pp. 5-6), who employed thematic and content-based methods to analyze Google Maps reviews in the contexts of higher education and public libraries. Their frameworks were used to inform the coding structure and the integration of both narrative and evaluative review data. The analysis followed a structured, multi-phase coding process: open coding was used to identify initial themes, axial coding was applied to explore relationships between themes, and selective coding was used to refine these into overarching categories reflecting broader narratives about NDSM's transformation. All coding was conducted manually using ATLAS.ti to ensure analytical rigor and transparency. Therefore, the developed research design addressed the main research question and sub-questions by examining recurring themes, visitor evaluations, sentiment-based differences, and narrative reflections on NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot.

#### **3.2. Sampling**

To gather the dataset, a purposive sampling strategy was employed, selecting Google Maps reviews as the primary source of data. This method was selected for its appropriateness in qualitative research, where cases are intentionally chosen based on their relevance to the research objective rather than for statistical generalizability (Babbie, 2016, pp. 187–188). To implement this sampling strategy in practice, reviews were extracted on 16 April 2025 using Apify's Google Maps Reviews Scraper, a tool capable of systematically

collecting large datasets along with associated metadata, including user ID, review content, date of publication, star rating, and English translations provided by Google Translate (Apify, n.d.; Tenorio de Farias et al., 2021, pp. 1, 4, 6–7). The initial scrape yielded 2,640 reviews dated between 1 January 2023 and the extraction date. To focus the analysis, only reviews posted between 1 January 2023 and 1 January 2025 were retained, narrowing the dataset to 2,436 entries. This two-year timeframe was selected to capture visitor perceptions during a key phase of post-pandemic recovery. By 2023, international tourism had recovered to 89 percent of its pre-pandemic level, indicating a near-complete return to global travel activity (Nicula, 2024, p. 53). At the same time, cultural programming in the Netherlands not only resumed but exceeded 2019 benchmarks, with over 56,000 performances and more than 20 million attendees recorded in 2023 (CBS, Statistics Netherlands, 2025). For NDSM, a cultural site reliant on public engagement and events, this period marked a return to full activity and renewed visitor interaction. The reviews collected during this time offer timely insights into how people re-engaged with the space and contributed to its evolving identity.

Following this, the first round of filtering excluded records without written content, such as those containing only star ratings, emojis, or blank text, resulting in 996 records. From this subset, only reviews written in English or in Dutch were retained. Dutch reviews were included based on the researcher's working proficiency in the language, with additional support tools used as needed to ensure accurate interpretation of sentiment and meaning. Reviews in other languages or with poor translation quality were excluded.

Next, incomplete, repetitive, or semantically thin reviews were removed. These included vague or context-poor entries such as “*Ja leuk*”, “*Knap*”, “*Top*”, “*Amsterdam*”, “*Mega*”, “*Super*”, “*Such a nice*”, “*Great*”, and “*Nice*”. During the subsequent data analysis stage, six additional reviews that had not been flagged earlier were excluded due to irrelevance, vagueness, or poor translation. Examples included: “*Get delicious chocolates*”, “*I was with Circusbende*”, “*coole location*”, “*Good gans good*”, “*Truly amazing experience*”, “*If you want to 'feel' Van Gogh's presence, visit this museum*”, and “*North is bad*”. This multi-step filtering process resulted in a final dataset of 602 context-rich reviews, consisting of 321 in English and 281 in Dutch, all containing both written narratives and star evaluations (see Appendix A for an overview of the review metadata). The sample size aligns with prior studies analyzing user-generated reviews for thematic content, which suggest that datasets ranging from 370 to 850 reviews are sufficient to achieve thematic saturation while maintaining analytical feasibility (Borrego & Comalat Navarra 2020, p. 90; Garner & Kim, 2022, pp. 418-420).

Lastly, the final sample was stratified according to the framework proposed by Chen and Chang (2024, p. 5): 1–2 stars indicated negative sentiment, 3 stars were considered neutral, and 4–5 stars were interpreted as positive. Within each category, language distribution was relatively balanced in the negative and neutral groups, while positive reviews included a higher proportion of English entries. This stratification enabled nuanced comparison across sentiments and supported the study’s aim of exploring how user evaluation influences the co-creation of NDSM’s identity.

### **3.3. Analytical Framework**

This study employs two complementary analytical models to translate theoretical concepts into observable dimensions, enabling a structured interpretation of how Google Maps reviews contribute to NDSM’s place identity: Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) three-pillar model of place branding and Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) digital narrative framework.

Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) model was used to identify recurring references to NDSM’s physical environment, the activities and interactions it facilitates, and the symbolic or emotional meanings attached to it. These three dimensions, identified as Place Physics, Place Practices, and Place Personality, were applied to capture how visitors described the site’s industrial features, engaged in creative events, and expressed emotional or symbolic responses to its evolving identity. This approach enabled a structured interpretation of how Google Maps reviews reflect both material and symbolic aspects of place branding.

In addition, Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) narrative framework was applied to explore the expressive dimensions of the reviews. The analysis focused on identifying user values, framing, emotional tone, and communicative stance. These narrative elements revealed how reviewers positioned themselves in relation to the space, and how they articulated themes such as creativity, authenticity, gentrification, and community. Although originally developed for analyzing social media content, the model was adapted to suit the textual structure and tone of Google Maps reviews, providing insight into how users construct place meaning through everyday language.

Together, these two frameworks informed the open, axial, and selective coding process. While Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) model helped categorize thematic content linked to physical and experiential aspects, Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework enriched the analysis by uncovering the affective, rhetorical, and interpretive dimensions of user-generated narratives. Their integration supported the broader aim of the study: to examine

how branding narratives are reinforced, challenged, or negotiated through the public discourse surrounding NDSM's transformation.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1. Thematic Content Analysis

The data analysis followed the aforementioned multi-staged thematic content analysis approach, supported by ATLAS.ti software to ensure analytical rigor, traceability, and transparency (Soratto et al., 2020, pp. 1, 4). The first phase of the analysis included familiarization with the dataset and identifying initial impressions. These early readings served to build contextual awareness, indicate recurring expressions, tone, and narrative structure, and inform the development of inductive codes in the subsequent open coding phase.

Based on the sampling strategy and data cleaning process, all reviews were imported into ATLAS.ti and segmented by language, allowing English and Dutch entries to be analyzed separately in order to preserve linguistic nuances. This separation was supported by previous research, which shows that while English and Dutch reviews often focus on similar topics, they differ in how value and identity are expressed (Cenni & Goethals, 2020, pp. 19–21, 28–30, 35).

During the open coding phase, each review was read carefully and tagged, resulting in a total of 301 distinct codes reflecting keywords or short labels that captured semantic or symbolic content. These codes contained a wide range of elements, including emotional tone, spatial experience, cultural references, visual impressions, and evaluative judgments (see Appendix C).

Following the initial tagging, all open codes and corresponding review quotes were exported to Excel and manually revised to verify consistency, check for redundancy, and consolidate the phrasing of translated Dutch quotes.

Furthermore, during the axial coding phase, semantically related open codes were manually clustered into ten broader conceptual categories, reflecting key dimensions of how visitors perceived and experienced NDSM. These axial codes included: *Social Accessibility & Inclusion*, *Mobility Accessibility*, *Creative Reuse of Space*, *Events & Attractions*, *Symbolic Aesthetics*, *Symbolic Place Attachment*, *Sensory & Experiential Atmosphere*, *Affective Connection*, *Experiential Evaluation*, and *Meta-Review Behavior* (see Appendix B). These categories were developed through comparative analysis of emergent code patterns, allowing for the identification of shared conceptual meanings across reviews. Evidence for each axial

code consisted of repeated references to visitor mobility, architectural symbolism, emotional impressions, and experiential value. Where reviews diverged from dominant trends, exceptional or contradictory entries were flagged to test the robustness of the categories and to uncover tensions, silences, or alternative narratives in user perceptions.

In the final stage, selective coding was applied to consolidate the axial categories into five overarching themes that captured the core interpretive narratives present across the dataset. While open and axial coding were conducted inductively to allow categories to emerge from the data, the selective coding phase was guided by the analytical models outlined in the Measures section. Specifically, the dimensions from Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 43-44) place branding model and Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) digital narrative framework were used to interpret and organize the axial codes into five theoretically grounded themes. One of these, *Accessibility & Infrastructure*, encompassed axial codes related to social inclusion and mobility, highlighting how visitors experienced the site as accessible both socially and physically. This emphasized the significance of openness, publicness, and transportation in shaping perceptions of ease and inclusivity. *Cultural Destination Perception* combined codes related to the site's creative programming and symbolic transformation, such as *Creative Reuse of Space, Events & Attractions*, and *Symbolic Aesthetics*. These codes illustrated how NDSM was interpreted as a cultural hub rooted in post-industrial creativity, aesthetic distinction, and event-based engagement. In addition, *Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation* integrated axial codes concerned with symbolic place attachment and atmospheric perception. Through *Symbolic Place Attachment* and *Sensory & Experiential Atmosphere*, this theme addressed how people emotionally, symbolically, and sensorially connected with NDSM's evolving identity. Furthermore, *Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement* combined insights from *Affective Connection* and *Experiential Evaluation*, highlighting how people emotionally responded to the space and how they assessed the value of their visit based on time, cost, and expectations. Lastly, *Review Behavior & Meta-Narratives* captured reflexive content in which reviewers commented on their role as contributors, evaluated their experience narratively, or referenced their reviewing behavior itself. Together, these themes offered a multi-dimensional understanding of how NDSM's identity is negotiated through everyday digital storytelling, shaped by both experiential content and expressive form.

### **3.4.2. Quantitative Analysis**

In parallel to the thematic coding, the study incorporated a quantitative evaluation of Google star ratings, which served as an indicator of evaluative sentiment. This study applied the classification framework proposed by Chen and Chang (2024, p. 5), grouping reviews into three sentiment categories: negative (1–2 stars), neutral (3 stars), and positive (4–5 stars). The final data included 26 negative (4.3%), 30 neutral (5.0%), 546 positive reviews (90.7%).

After stratification, the coded data were analyzed within each sentiment group to explore how visitors' evaluations influenced their narrative and thematic expressions. This comparison was guided by Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 43-44) and Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) frameworks, which allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of how sentiment shaped perceptions of NDSM as a cultural hotspot. Previous research using thematic content analysis has shown that stratifying reviews by sentiment can reveal how thematic emphasis varies across evaluative categories, providing deeper insight into user perspectives and experience dimensions (Oyebode et al., 2020, pp. 111141–111145).

## 4. Results

A total of 602 Google Maps reviews of NDSM were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Reviews were categorized by sentiment (negative, neutral, positive) and coded according to five overarching themes derived from open, axial, and selective coding. The themes reflect how visitors describe, evaluate, and emotionally engage with NDSM as a cultural hotspot.

### 4.1. Thematic Content Analysis

#### 4.1.1. Accessibility & Infrastructure

The theme of Accessibility & Infrastructure reflects how visitors experience NDSM as accessible in both physical and symbolic ways, presenting it as a space that encourages movement, exploration, and participation. As Deguara et al. (2018, pp. 11-21) and Gargiulo and Sgambati (2022, pp. 552, 554-555, 558) argue, such infrastructure not only enables mobility but also fosters inclusivity and engagement in urban cultural life. In case of NDSM, infrastructure is not merely a logistical asset but a defining component of the site's identity and cultural appeal.

*Accessibility & Infrastructure* theme is grounded in axial codes such as *Community Access & Openness* and *Transport & Access*, which were developed from 58 open codes identified in the dataset. For instance, “*Free Access*” appeared in 12 reviews, “*Open Public Space*” in 13 reviews, “*Walkability*” in 21 reviews, and “*Transportation Experience*” in 6 reviews. Collectively, they highlight perceptions of NDSM as an unrestricted and inviting space that co-constructs its identity as an open, creative environment.

The coded data supports these interpretations. A substantial portion of reviewers across 3-, 4-, and 5-star ratings used keywords such as “*open*”, “*walk*”, or “*discover*” to describe their visit. These terms collectively convey an atmosphere of informality and approachability, positioning NDSM as a public cultural site without rigid restrictions or curated entry points. As several visitors noted:

- “*...free place with lots of small details to explore. Good for pictures.*”(EN, 5 star rating);
- “*...Lots of places for photography, interesting things to discover...*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*Nice area to stroll through.*” (NL, 5 star rating);

These narratives emphasize that cultural engagement at NDSM is informal and freely accessible. Visitors are not required to follow a schedule, purchase tickets, or have prior knowledge. The site encourages curiosity and allows people to wander, take photos, or simply experience the environment at their own pace.

One of the most frequently mentioned infrastructural elements was the ferry connection to Amsterdam Central Station, which appeared in 78 reviews. It was often framed not just as a convenient transportation option, but as an integral part of the overall experience. As reviewers shared:

- “*Fun to go there with ferry...*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*...a free ferry to Amsterdam Centraal*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*Even though it was quiet, beautiful ferry across and the art was really impactful...*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*...Easy to reach when you take the ferry. You get the chance to travel along the river for free and breathe in fresh air.*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*We took the ferry to Centraal Station and it was great...*” (EN, 5 star rating)

These sentiments highlight the ferry as a scenic and symbolic transition, a threshold between the structured, commercial center of Amsterdam and the creative, alternative atmosphere of NDSM.

Furthermore, visitors frequently emphasized the absence of formal entry barriers. In reviews ( $n = 70$ ), they praised the ability to access exhibitions and spaces without cost, reinforcing the impression of NDSM as a welcoming and inclusive environment. Unlike traditional cultural venues with fixed ticketing and operational boundaries, NDSM was consistently described as a space where visitors could arrive spontaneously and freely explore. For instance, several users noted:

- “*Free-to-access art gallery...*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*Beautiful part of old Amsterdam, a sanctuary for accessible art.*” (NL, 5 star rating);
- “*Really cool art/graffiti open expedition area... Costs nothing to go to and can be found in Noord...*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*Really nice spot with free stuff to look and visit.*” (EN, 5 star rating);
- “*...free and you can walk by and admire certain pieces of street art.*” (EN, 5 rating).

These expressions contribute to an overall image of NDSM as an easily accessible cultural destination, where freedom, curiosity, and public belonging are core to the experience. This sense of openness supports participation across diverse visitor groups, making the site feel socially inclusive as well as physically accessible.

Although positive sentiments dominated, a smaller subset of negative reviews ( $n = 2$ ), primarily 1- or 2-star, raised concerns about logistical and spatial limitations. The most common concerns included difficult parking, limited signage, and disorganized

infrastructure during events. For example:

*“Parking is quite nerve-racking here. Few spots, and people seem to have a hard time treating other people’s cars with care.”* (NL, 2 star rating);

*“There’s always a lot of glass lying around and the road is very bumpy. Annoying traffic situations due to lack of signs, road markings, and crosswalks.”* (NL, 1 star rating).

While these comments were relatively rare, they complicate the overwhelmingly positive framing of accessibility by showing that openness alone is insufficient. Infrastructure must also support safety, clarity, and basic usability to be truly inclusive.

In summary, this theme illustrates that NDSM’s perceived accessibility stems from both its physical infrastructure, including the ferry connection, walkable layout, and open public access, and its symbolic identity as a creative space with minimal formal restrictions. These results support Gargiulo and Sgambati’s (2022, pp. 554-555, 558) view that infrastructure enhances cultural participation by removing social and economic barriers. They also reinforce Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) concept of place physics and personality, and align with Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework on digital narratives, as visitors’ descriptions contribute to shaping NDSM’s image as a dynamic and inclusive cultural destination.

#### **4.1.2. Cultural Destination Perception**

A second key theme that emerged from the Google Maps reviews was *Cultural Destination Perception*. This theme draws on axial codes such as *Creative Reuse of Space*, *Events & Attractions*, and *Symbolic Aesthetics*, informed by 100 instances of open code applications. Notably, references to Street Art ( $n = 57$ ), Festival experiences ( $n = 30$ ), and Industrial Aesthetics ( $n = 78$ ) were particularly prominent. Together, these elements illustrate how the transformation of industrial infrastructure into creative spaces shapes NDSM’s identity as a site where artistic expression and public events coexist. As such, the theme of *Cultural Destination Perception* captures how visitor experiences are influenced by this symbolic reuse, which combines a distinct visual character with a wide range of cultural offerings that attract diverse audiences (Cenci, 2018, pp. 166-171; Dinardi, 2019, pp. 299-314; García, 2004, pp. 105-108, 114). NDSM, thus, exemplifies these elements contributed to its perception as a dynamic cultural hotspot that offers a contrast to more traditional, curated institutions in Amsterdam’s city center.

As the analysis demonstrated, many 4- and 5-star reviews highlighted NDSM’s

distinctive visual identity, often describing it as creative, raw, artistic, and vibrant. Specifically, “*graffiti*” was mentioned in 43 reviews and “*street art*” in 50, with both elements frequently positioned as integral to NDSM’s creative signature. These visual cues held aesthetic value and simultaneously reinforced the area’s identity as a center of artistic expression and alternative culture. As some reviewers expressed:

“*amazing district, full of street art*” (EN, 5 star rating);  
“*Great location, there is a Street art museum nearby, with many graffiti and paintings on the walls around.*” (EN, 5 star rating);  
“*...The industrial vibe, vibrant street art, and creative energy make it a unique and exciting place to explore...*” (EN, 5 star rating).

Another defining aspect of how visitors perceived NDSM was its dynamic and varied cultural programming. Events such as festivals, flea markets, exhibitions, and music events, especially ADE and IJhallen, were regularly mentioned in the reviews. The keywords “*festival*” ( $n = 26$ ), “*IJhallen*” ( $n = 24$ ), and “*ADE*” ( $n = 7$ ) appeared across multiple entries, indicating that many visitors associated NDSM with a lively and ever-changing cultural agenda. Rather than viewing these events as isolated activities, reviewers often framed them as integral to NDSM’s evolving identity. A few examples include:

“*Great venue during ADE*” (EN, 5 star rating);  
“*What a cool dance event that DGTL was on the old NDSM TERRAIN with all its history.*” (NL, 5 star rating);  
“*We have been in the NDSM for the IJ Hallen Vintage market . The space is very beautiful and it is nice how they decided to use this industrial location...*” (EN, 5 star rating);  
“*Went to Into the Woods ADE. Good location, easy to reach...*” (NL, 4 star rating);  
“*The IJhallen... always a party at this market...*” (NL, 5 star rating).

Such reviews show how cultural programming strengthens the site’s identity as an active and participatory cultural destination. This experiential quality, in which the audience actively engages with the space, was central to how the site’s cultural value was described.

However, cultural programming did not elicit uniformly positive responses. A smaller group of reviewers ( $n = 10$ ) conveyed disappointment, particularly regarding the flea market and food-related events. Some visitors cited unmet expectations, limited diversity, or overly commercial experiences. For example:

“*This can no longer be called a flea market. Far too many clothes, far too little flea market... Certainly not worth repeating*” (NL, 2 star rating);

*“Very bad flea market, never seen anything like it. We left within an hour...” (NL, 2 star rating);*

*“I came for the flea market. Apparently my expectations were different from reality. An excellent market if you want to score second-hand clothing or are looking for expensive, collectible items. I won't go there anymore.” (NL, 1 star rating);*

*“Food festival Lepeltje Lepeltje. Nice atmosphere, mediocre design and way too expensive!...” (NL, 2 star rating).*

These comments illustrate that while the site's event-based appeal was a strength for many, it could also become a point of frustration for others when expectations were not met. This reinforces the idea that NDSM's image as a cultural destination is fluid and subjective, shaped by factors such as the quality of programming, the timing of the visit, and individual interests.

In addition to its visual identity and event programming, many visitors perceived NDSM as a creative area. Specifically, 10 users mentioned artists and studios, depicting NDSM as a site where artistic production occurs alongside exhibition. This sense of artistic presence was especially linked to adaptive reuse, which involves transforming former industrial infrastructure into cultural facilities such as museums, pop-ups, and collaborative spaces. As some visitors explained:

*“NDSM is a institution. One of the last free zones in the center of Amsterdam. Enjoy live music in Noorderlicht, visit the biggest flea market in Europe, rent the room in top of a old industrial krane, admire the graffiti, skate on the quarterpipe, wonder about the beached submarine in the harbour.” (EN, 5 star rating);*

*“This former shipyard has been transformed into an open-air playground, complete with stunning graffiti art, buzzing cafes, and a lively atmosphere...” (EN, 5 star rating).*

Beyond its symbolic atmosphere, reviewers frequently referenced landmarks such as the STRAAT Museum, along with galleries, culinary venues, and studios. These sites were valued for their individual offerings as well as their collective contribution to creating a diverse and multifunctional cultural environment. Reviewers stated:

*“...you can find from good restaurants, cafeterias to interesting exhibitions, artistic workshops, festivals...” (EN, 5 star rating);*

Others noted:

*“One of my absolutely favorite areas of Amsterdam. The Straat Museum of street art is fabulous as is the NDSM space next door. We also had a drink and a light meal at*

*PLLEK... ” (EN, 5 star rating);*

*“A vibrant place in Amsterdam, with street art museum and Fuse gallery. There are also more cozy cafés and bars. ” (EN, 5 star rating);*

A third reflected:

*“This is such a cool area to check out if you’re visiting Amsterdam. The wharf is pretty much its own city with cafes, a grocery store, and residential buildings. I loved how spacious and unique this area is with art everywhere, even outside of the STRAAT. ” (EN, 5-star rating)*

This diversity supports the idea that NDSM is more than a cultural environment. It functions as a creative ecosystem where artistic production, social connection, and leisure activities take place side by side. The openness and scale of the site enable informal and spontaneous use, contributing to a sense of accessibility and cultural vibrancy that extends beyond formal programming.

Nevertheless, a small number of reviews reflected a more critical view of NDSM’s cultural experience, particularly in relation to atmosphere and expectations. While many visitors praised the creative energy and event offerings, some described the site as underwhelming or lacking in activity. Terms expressing dissatisfaction with the cultural environment appeared with varying frequency across the reviews, including “*boring*” (mentioned in 4 reviews), and “*nothing to do*” (2 reviews). These expressions predominantly reflected visitors’ disappointment during days without events or periods of lower activity.

For instance, one reviewer wrote:

*“Very boring, but that may also be my expectations. I expected it to be a bit more pleasant, but the site itself is extremely boring and there is nothing to do. The inside is interesting and nicely decorated. ” (NL, 1 star rating);*

*“Eh, just walk through it quickly. ” (NL, 2 star rating);*

*“Busy and messy” (NL, 1 star rating)*

*“Way too busy these days and not even really anything to do. ” (NL, 1 star rating).*

These comments underscore that while NDSM is celebrated for its artistic and cultural vibrancy, such perceptions are not universal. They suggest that its appeal may depend on timing, personal interest, or the availability of active programming, highlighting the subjective and fluctuating nature of cultural destination perception.

As a result, Google Maps reviews portray NDSM as a dynamic cultural destination shaped by symbolic reuse, spatial diversity, and continuous programming. Visitors emphasize the importance of its graffiti and street art, creative energy, public events, and

multifunctional character in shaping their perceptions. The findings align with Taecharungroj's (2019, 43-44) model of place physics and practice, as well as Shifman's (2016, 5646-5650) emphasis on emotional and value-based framing in digital narratives. They reflect broader academic insights into how cultural production and adaptive reuse transform post-industrial spaces into participatory urban hubs (Cenci, 2018, pp. 166-171; Dinardi, 2019, pp. 299-314; García, 2004, pp. 105-108, 114).

#### **4.1.3. Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation**

A third central theme that emerged from the Google Maps reviews is *Spatial Identity and Urban Transformation*, which captures how visitors emotionally and symbolically relate to NDSM through its evolving physical features and cultural character. As Ali (2010, pp. 9, 14) and Guo et al. (2021, pp. 765, 768-769, 776) describe, people emotionally, symbolically, and sensorially connect with a place through its evolving physical features, aesthetic character, meanings, and reputations that develop over time.

This emotional and symbolic connection is reflected in visitors' frequent references to NDSM's industrial heritage and distinctive physical features, which play a central role in shaping its unique spatial identity. Consequently, the *Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation* theme is grounded in axial codes such as *Symbolic Place Attachment* and *Sensory & Experiential Atmosphere*, which were informed by a total of 72 open codes. Among these, the open code "*Industrial Atmosphere*" was applied to segments in 78 reviews, "*Shipyard*" in 33 reviews, and "*Heritage*" in 8 reviews. Additionally, 28 reviews explicitly emphasized the site's industrial heritage and raw aesthetics, often using the term "*industrial*" to describe its distinctive environment. These descriptions carried symbolic meaning, suggesting a strong connection to NDSM's historical continuity.

Visual features of NDSM, including cranes, warehouses, and docks, were perceived as symbols of authenticity and character, offering a striking contrast to the refined and commercial character of Amsterdam's city center. One reviewer commented:

*"One of the most amazing places of its kind that I've seen. A great use of a once-great post-industrial shipyard."*

Other reviewers shared a similar view, portraying NDSM as a place where elements of its industrial history have been creatively repurposed to support artistic and cultural activities. Some visitors observed:

*"The former shipyard has become an arts venue. There is a unique hotel, a former gantry crane has been turned into a hotel and there is a graving dock with very wide*

*sluice gates.”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“Oh I love this heritage. It is so strange to be here at this area. You can feel the hard work, the process and production of ships. Now it is a very creative area for events and party...”* (EN, 4 star rating);

*“Warehouse district with huge old factory buildings converted into spaces for art, culture, music and markets...”* (EN, 4 star rating)

Such reflections suggest that NDSM’s sense of place is shaped by the preservation and reinterpretation of its industrial past. Instead of being erased, the site’s history enriches the atmosphere, creating a deeper and more authentic experience for visitors.

In contrast, while many visitors embraced NDSM’s transformation, a smaller subset of reviewers ( $n = 8$ ) expressed concern about the pace and direction of recent developments. Their comments pointed to increased commercialization and the rise of residential developments as possible threats to NDSM’s distinctive identity:

*“...Unfortunately, more and more residential towers are appearing.”* (NL, 5 star rating);

*“...it is a shame that a lot of character has been removed in recent years for residential towers.”* (NL, 4 star rating);

*“Very commercialized now...”* (EN, 4 star rating);

*“Great area, although I miss it when it wasn’t over developed like now”* (EN, 4 star rating);

These comments highlight a tension between ongoing development and efforts to preserve historical and cultural authenticity, a dynamic often observed in the transformation of former industrial sites into cultural districts.

Additionally, reviewers ( $n = 25$ ) explicitly described NDSM using terms such as “*offbeat*”, “*creative*”, or “*alternative*”, positioning it as a distinct cultural counter-space. These descriptions highlighted its contrast with the mainstream tourist experience in the city center, reinforcing the site’s reputation as a space of creative freedom and cultural experimentation. Visitors expressed strong emotional attachment to this atmosphere:

*“NDSM Amsterdam is a vibrant and exciting destination that offers visitors a unique and unforgettable experience.”* (EN, 5-star rating);

*“One big melting pot of culture, you can really find everything here.”* (NL, 5-star rating)

*“...Very different vibe from central Amsterdam, both fabulous.”* (EN, 5-star rating);

*“For those who love industrial style and post-apocalypse”* (EN, 5-star rating);

*“Off the beaten path, and totally worth it.”* (EN, 4-star rating);

*“Probably the most beautiful and underrated place in Amsterdam.”* (EN, 5-star rating)

Moreover, NDSM’s large physical scale and open waterfront layout significantly shaped how visitors experienced and interpreted the space. This was reflected in several recurring open codes, such as “*Huge/Big (spatial scale)*” ( $n = 17$ ), “*Lots of space*” ( $n = 7$  reviews), and “*Beautiful view*” ( $n = 11$  reviews). These codes indicate that visitors recognized the physical characteristics of the area and emotionally responded to them, frequently associating spaciousness and scenic views with feelings of freedom and calm. As one reviewer noted:

*“Lots of cool places to get some good photos and a large area to walk around”* (EN, 5-star rating);

*“It has a magnificent view...”* (NL, 4-star rating);

*“Enormous area with a treasure trove of cultural events. Very diverse, so something for everyone.”* (NL, 5-star rating)

Overall, these reflections suggest that urban transformation is expressed both in the physical changes of a place and in how individuals engage with it through movement, observation, and emotional connection.

Together, these narratives show that visitors perceive NDSM as more than just a physical place. They see it as a dynamic and emotionally rich symbol of creative urban life. Its industrial charm, adaptive reuse, and continuous transformation play a crucial role in how NDSM’s spatial identity is shaped and discussed. The results support the view that spatial identity is shaped not just by physical form, but through emotional resonance, sensory memory, and shared narrative (Ali, 2010, pp. 9, 14; Guo et al., 2021, pp. 765, 768-769, 776). The findings also align with Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) concepts of place physics and place personality, as visitors respond to both the site’s material environment and its distinct cultural character. Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework further highlights how emotional framing and shared values allow reviewers to actively shape NDSM’s cultural image. Rather than merely describing the space, these digital narratives contribute to the co-construction of its evolving identity and symbolic meaning.

#### **4.1.4. Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement**

The fourth theme, *Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement*, explores how visitors emotionally and sensorially engage with NDSM, underlining how place is shaped by

atmosphere, aesthetics, and personal resonance. As Eronen (2024, pp. 258, 260, 270-271) and Ujang (2017, pp. 118-119, 125, 127) suggest, it refers to how people emotionally respond to and evaluate places based on their impressions, feelings, and perceived value of the experience. This theme is grounded in axial codes such as *Affective Connection* and *Experiential Evaluation*, which were developed from 67 open codes identified across the dataset. For example, *Emotional Attachment* was identified in 33 reviews, *Expectations vs. Reality* in 23 reviews, and *Cost/Value Judgment* in 48 reviews. As a result, the codes demonstrate that visitors evaluate NDSM through both perceived value and emotional reflections, revealing the site's enduring personal significance and its role in shaping individual place attachment.

A large number of reviews expressed strong positive sentiment toward NDSM, often using enthusiastic adjectives such as “*amazing*,” “*cool*,” or “*awesome*.” Specifically, 98 reviews contained such language, highlighting how the site exceeded visitors’ expectations and left a lasting impression. Some reviewers noted:

“*Great place, definitely worth a visit – in one word: awesome.*” (NL, 5 star rating);  
“*Amazing post industrial location in Amsterdam Noord.*” (NL, 5 star rating);  
“*What a cool place! Here you can experience culture... and a nice piece of history too.*” (NL, 5 star rating).

These comments suggest that NDSM is appreciated for both its atmosphere and aesthetics, as well as its ability to spark strong, immediate affective responses. The expressive and emotional language utilized by visitors underscores the site’s energetic and engaging character, reinforcing its image as a lively and culturally resonant environment.

In addition, visitors expressed a deeper emotional connection to NDSM, indicating that the place carries personal meaning and leaves a strong impression. Rather than simply describing what they observed, many reviewers reflected on how NDSM made them feel, often characterizing it as memorable, distinctive, or personally meaningful. Reviewers ( $n = 45$ ) portrayed NDSM as their favorite location in Amsterdam or recommended it to others. Reviewers stated:

“*My favorite part of Amsterdam*” (EN, 5 star rating);  
“*If you are visiting the Amsterdam's Northern area, stop here! [\*] Nice spot where freedom & creativity go together*” (EN, 3 star rating);  
“*Amazing location for parties, absolutely loved the view and the vibes from the top of the crane for the concert. Would 100% recommend!*” (EN, 5 star rating);

Additionally, Google Map users ( $n = 11$ ) emphasized NDSM’s inspirational quality,

highlighting its capacity to foster creativity, personal reflection, and a sense of connection:

*“My senses were fully satisfied - the quality and quantity of art I got exposed to was so inspiring! Love it here.”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“What a beautiful inspiring environment, you think you can just feel the energy. A very inviting place where a lot is organized.”* (NL, 5 star rating);

*“No matter how I feel, if I wander around here for a while I will be very happy again because of all the nice creative objects, graffiti, the warehouses, the cafes, the nice cheerful people & all the events.”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“Super inspiring environment!”* (NL, 5 star rating)

A smaller group ( $n = 10$ ) commentators further described NDSM as emotionally impactful and memorable:

*“Very nice place for beautiful memories!”* (NL, 5 star rating);

*“THE BEST GRAFFITI MUSEUM EVER! The colors are beautiful, the message is clear, the space is huge and there’s so much to see. There’s even a little swing inside!”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“NDSM Amsterdam is a vibrant and exciting destination that offers visitors a unique and unforgettable experience...”* (EN, 5 star rating);

These reviews illustrate that UGC functions as more than a descriptive tool. It actively contributes to shaping NDSM’s cultural identity. Visitors use emotionally expressive language to construct a representation of the site as creative, stimulating, and memorable, sustaining its identity through personal attachment and repeated engagement. Together, these reflections suggest that NDSM is not merely a venue for cultural events but rather functions as a meaningful cultural landscape where memory, identity, and reflection are continuously shaped through visitor experience.

Furthermore, 26 individuals emphasized how the act of exploring NDSM enabled an imaginative and emotionally engaging experience. Rather than focusing solely on specific attractions, visitors described the site as one that invited curiosity, reflection, and a sense of discovery as they moved through it. This experiential openness allowed for unscripted encounters with the surroundings, encouraging individuals to slow down, observe, and develop a more personal connection to the space. For example:

*“Nice graffiti everywhere, you will be amazed by roaming around in this area. In evening it’s beautiful to sit and relax in some of the restaurants.”* (EN, 4 star rating);

*“Whole area is very cool to explore!”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“Super cool industrial area to explore.”* (NL, 5 star rating).

These reflections underscore how NDSM supports both spatial exploration and emotional engagement, positioning movement through the site as a meaningful contribution to its evolving cultural identity.

Lastly, a small number of visitors ( $n = 5$ ) expressed a desire to return, or described having visited NDSM multiple times, framing it as a place of ongoing experience and lasting personal attachment. The site's evolving atmosphere and continued appeal were often highlighted, reflecting more than momentary satisfaction. Instead, these reflections suggest a sustained emotional and psychological connection. As some visitors noted:

*“Had a great time here, can't wait to come back next year”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“Special location, I will definitely come back to see it further.”* (NL, 4 star rating);

*“Always a nice place to go...”* (EN, 5 star rating);

*“I love this area I visited here several times over my 4 day trip to Amsterdam...”*

(EN, 5 star rating).

Thus, NDSM fosters a lasting emotional and psychological attachment among some visitors, demonstrated through their expressed desire to return and repeated visits. This suggests that emotional engagement with the site extends beyond a single experience, becoming embedded in how individuals connect with and remember the space over time.

Hence, the reviews demonstrate that NDSM is not merely a site for cultural consumption but a place that invites emotional and sensory engagement. Visitors described the space as inspiring, meaningful, and worth revisiting, often using affective language that signals personal connection and resonance. These reflections support Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 43-44) model of place experience, which emphasizes how creativity, repeated interaction, and individual relevance shape the perceived meaning of a space. Rather than offering neutral descriptions, reviewers conveyed how the site made them feel, highlighting the experiential and symbolic dimensions of NDSM. Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework further reinforces this interpretation by showing how emotional expression and shared cultural values embedded in user-generated content contribute to identity formation. In this way, digital narratives surrounding NDSM do not simply reflect visitor impressions; they actively co-construct its image as a culturally rich, emotionally engaging, and participatory urban environment.

#### **4.1.5. Narrating Place Through Reviews**

The fifth and last theme that emerged from the data analysis is the way visitors

narrate place through their reviews. Drawing on Shifman's (2016, pp. 45, 47, 50, 55) analytical framework, this theme explores how user-generated content functions not merely as feedback, serving as a cultural practice through which place is interpreted, experienced, and symbolically framed. These digital narratives blend personal reflection with cultural expression, often employing informal tone, emotional language, and evaluative judgments that reveal what visitors value and how they position themselves concerning the space.

This theme is grounded in Meta-Review Behavior axial code, which was developed from 3 open codes identified across the dataset: *Informal language/tone*, *Overall comment*, *Thin data*. These were applied across the dataset as follows: *Informal language/tone* was identified in 3 reviews, *Overall comment* in 170 reviews, and *Thin data* in 144 reviews.

Out of the total number of reviews, around 100 users employed an informal and emotionally expressive tone, utilizing casual language and cultural slang that conveyed personal enthusiasm and affective engagement. These expressions go beyond neutral commentary, instead reflecting a sense of identification with the site's atmosphere and character. In such cases, even the style of writing becomes a vehicle for place-making. A few visitors, for example, wrote:

“stunning, crazy sh\*t” (EN, 5-star rating);  
“Dopest raw place in town visit the Art spaces” (EN, 5-star rating);  
“Perfect spot to smoke a joint...” (EN, 5-star rating);  
“Tooo000ppp festival!! Definitely do it if you are on breath” (NL, 5 star rating)

In addition to this expressive language, the reviewers relied on broad and general evaluations, using brief phrases such as “cool” ( $n = 66$ ), “top” ( $n = 18$ ), or “nice” ( $n = 118$ ). While these may appear vague, they function as micro-narratives that reinforce NDSM's identity as an artistic, vibrant, and photogenic space. Through repetition and tone, such reviews contribute to the site's symbolic aura, even without detailed explanation:

“Atmospheric, top location” (NL, 4-star rating);  
“Nice art” (EN, 5-star rating);  
“Cool location” (NL, 5-star rating);

Together, these responses illustrate how informal tone, emotional intensity, and condensed expression serve as tools through which visitors narrate their connection to place. Rather than offering factual detail, they engage in a participatory act of meaning-making that reinforces NDSM's cultural identity.

Nevertheless, a smaller group of reviews ( $n = 8$ ) consisted of minimal or negative commentary, often offering little elaboration. These brief or negative reviews may indicate

limited engagement or emotional detachment. Yet they remain part of the participatory review environment, expressing dissociation or unmet expectations.

- “*Busy and messy*” (NL, 1-star rating);
- “*Its awful*” (EN, 1-star rating);
- “*Doesn’t open until 12*” (EN, 2-star rating)

Despite differing critical tone or elaboration, these reviews function as user-generated content. They position the reviewer as detached from NDSM’s cultural narrative and reflect the range of visitor responses, showing that digital participation can express resistance and ambivalence as well as approval.

This theme shows how user-generated reviews serve as participatory storytelling devices that shape the evolving cultural identity of NDSM. Through informal tone, expressive judgment, and repeated impressions, reviewers engage in the co-production of place meaning. This aligns with Taecharungroj’s (2019, pp. 43-44) model, where physical features, individual practices, and symbolic identity interact, and with Shifman’s (2016, pp. 5646-5650) view of UGC as a culturally embedded, emotionally driven form of digital authorship.

## 4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Lastly, a descriptive analysis was conducted to assess overall satisfaction and sentiment distribution among the 602 visitor reviews of NDSM, based on user-assigned star ratings. This assessment provides a quantitative foundation for understanding how evaluative patterns reflect broader perceptions of the site.

The findings indicate a clear dominance of positive sentiment, with 90.7% of reviews (546 out of 602) rated 4 or 5 stars, while only 5.0% were neutral and 4.3% negative. The overall mean rating of 4.5 and a median of 5.0 suggest consistently high levels of satisfaction, reinforcing NDSM’s reputation as a vibrant and well-regarded cultural destination. Review length was relatively consistent across sentiment categories, averaging around 17 words, though negative reviews were slightly longer on average. This suggests that dissatisfied visitors may be more inclined to elaborate on their critiques, offering more detailed justifications for their ratings.

To further explore how evaluative sentiment shaped visitors’ experiences of NDSM, open code frequencies were analyzed across positive, neutral, and negative reviews (see Table 4.1). The code *Positive* appeared 480 times in positive reviews, compared to 4 occurrences in neutral reviews and none in negative reviews. Emotionally expressive codes

such as *Emotional/Enthusiastic* ( $n = 139$ ) and *Positive experience* ( $n = 111$ ) were similarly concentrated in higher-rated reviews, suggesting that positive sentiment was frequently accompanied by affective engagement. References to NDSM's cultural and artistic character were prevalent in the positive subset, as evidenced by the frequency of *Artistic space* ( $n = 96$ ), *Event-based* ( $n = 88$ ), and *Creative reuse* ( $n = 85$ ). Codes such as *Place identity* ( $n = 279$ ) and *Atmosphere* ( $n = 79$ ) further emphasized visitors' symbolic and sensory appreciation of the site. Although *Event-based* was primarily associated with positive reviews, it was additionally identified in 6 negative reviews, indicating occasional dissatisfaction with event-related experiences. In contrast, codes such as *Thin data* ( $n = 7$ ) and *Overall comment* ( $n = 6$ ) appeared more often in negative reviews, which may reflect less substantive or more critical feedback. These findings suggest that thematic emphasis varies by sentiment category, with positive reviews more tending to contain emotionally and artistically oriented expressions, while negative reviews more frequently exhibit concise feedback or critical sentiment.

Overall, these patterns suggest that star ratings reflect both evaluative and emotional dimensions of visitor experience. These impressions shape how NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot is perceived and narrated.

Table 4.1 Open Code Frequencies by Sentiment Category

Open Code	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Positive	0	4	480
Place identity	2	10	279
Overall comment	6	7	157
Emotional/Enthusiastic	1	2	139
Thin data	7	5	132
Positive experience	2	1	111
Artistic space	1	6	96
Event-based	6	3	88
Accessibility (ferry)	0	1	81
Industrial aesthetics	0	2	76

## 5. Conclusion & Discussion

This study aimed to answer the main research question: How do Google Maps reviews narrate visitor perceptions of NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot? The findings of the analysis suggest that user-generated content on Google Maps plays a significant role in co-creating NDSM's place identity, offering a multilayered narrative shaped by emotional expression, thematic emphasis, and symbolic associations. The analysis of the reviews indicated five emerging themes, including *Accessibility & Infrastructure*, *Cultural Destination Perception*, *Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation*, *Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement*, and *Narrating Place Through Reviews*. These themes demonstrate that visitor narratives serve as informative accounts of experiences while simultaneously contributing to placemaking and the development of place identity in urban regenerated spaces such as NDSM.

The findings further demonstrate that visitor engagement with NDSM reflects all three dimensions of Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 43-44) place branding model. Reviewers respond to the site's physical characteristics, describe their activities and interactions within it, and articulate emotional or symbolic associations that contribute to the construction of place identity. In parallel, the results additionally correspond with Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework by demonstrating that reviewers construct place meaning through emotionally resonant and narratively structured accounts. Within this narrative construction, NDSM is frequently represented as a site of discovery, inspiration, and creative transformation. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive answer to the central research question.

In addition, the themes that emerged throughout this study reveals that reviewers engage with the site across multiple dimensions, including its accessibility, cultural programming, spatial transformation, emotional resonance, and narrative construction. These patterns suggest that visitor perceptions of NDSM extend beyond functional appraisal and encompass symbolic, affective, and experiential interpretations. This supports Ujang's (2017, p. 129) argument that emotional and functional attachments to place, formed through the fulfillment of psychological needs and personal significance, collectively reinforce a stronger sense of place and the continuity of place identity. Moreover, the interpretive and expressive qualities found in the reviews correspond with Shifman's (2016, pp. 5646-5650) framework on digital narratives, which identifies how online users embed meaning through values, emotional tone, interpretive frames, and communicative postures. Rather than simply describing their experiences, reviewers often portray NDSM as a space that is inspiring and

authentic, while in some cases expressing disappointment. In these reviews, visitors present themselves as supporters, critics, or reflective participants. Through such contributions, they play an active role in shaping the identity of NDSM by co-constructing its meaning in the context of digital public discourse.

Furthermore, visitor evaluations of NDSM as a cultural hotspot reveal that star ratings are closely tied to differing perceptions of the site's identity. The majority of reviews, accounting for 90.7 percent, awarded four or five stars and frequently included emotionally expressive language such as “*amazing*,” “*cool*,” and “*inspiring*,” suggesting that positive ratings are often driven by affective responses. These reviews highlight aesthetic appeal, atmospheric qualities, and a sense of creative energy that shapes how the site is experienced. This emphasis on visual and emotional elements reinforces the argument by Balarezo and Karimi (2018, p. 588) and Cenci (2018, pp. 166–167, 171) that artistic interventions, such as street art and symbolic aesthetics, play a vital role in shaping urban experience by fostering emotional connections, constructing shared narratives, and linking spatial transformation to historical memory. Visitors assigning high ratings often described NDSM as their favorite place or expressed a desire to return, indicating a deeper level of emotional attachment. This aligns with Ujang's (2017, pp. 118–119, 129–130) claim that emotional and symbolic meaning strengthens individual and collective attachments, reinforcing place identity and its continuity over time.

In contrast, reviews with lower star ratings, although less frequent, tended to be longer and more critical. Reviewers in this category expressed dissatisfaction with elements such as overcrowding or a perceived decline in authenticity. These concerns reflect broader tensions between visitor expectations of spontaneity and creative openness and the perceived realities of curated cultural programming. These patterns reflect a more reflective and evaluative approach among dissatisfied visitors and support Borrego and Comalat Navarra (2020, p. 94), finding that lower ratings on Google Maps are more likely to include nuanced feedback. Although positive reviews tend to reinforce NDSM's cultural identity, lower ratings contribute critical perspectives that complicate this image. Overall, the variation in star ratings illustrates a spectrum of visitor responses that help clarify how NDSM's identity is evaluated across affective and critical dimensions.

While visitors expressed varied perceptions, user-generated narratives on Google Maps further reveal how they actively engage with and shape NDSM's branding as a cultural hub. Many visitors explicitly highlight the site's artistic atmosphere, creative events, and alternative atmosphere, often describing NDSM as “*unique*,” “*inspiring*,” or “*must-see*”.

These expressions align with the branding goals of NDSM, which highlight its identity as a post-industrial space transformed into a center for creativity and cultural innovation.

Expressions found in the reviews illustrate Taecharungroj's (2019, pp. 43-44) notion of participatory place branding, where individual contributions play a role in forming a place's brand identity. On the other hand, several reviews raise concerns about the commercialization of NDSM, the growing prominence of curated experiences, and a perceived loss of authenticity, thereby challenging NDSM's branding as an organic and experimental cultural hub. These critiques support Costa & Lopes's (2017, pp. 3-5, 9, 20) argument that temporary artistic interventions can revitalize underused spaces by enhancing symbolic meaning and supporting local identity, yet risk being undermined when grassroots creativity is overtaken by institutional branding. As such, the reviews reveal a disconnect between NDSM's projected image and visitor expectations of spontaneity, diversity, and cultural autonomy. This illustrates how user-generated content can both reinforce official branding and introduce counter-narratives that complicate and contest the site's evolving identity.

Moreover, user reviews reflect the ongoing tension in NDSM's transition from a former industrial site to a cultural destination. Many visitors respond positively to the site's layered identity, appreciating the raw industrial features, graffiti-covered surfaces, and creative adaptations that preserve its heritage while supporting new artistic uses. These reflections illustrate a symbolic continuity between NDSM's past and present, aligning with Trifa's (2018, pp. 186-187, 194) argument that cultural regeneration carries both physical preservation and emotional reconnection to the space. Simultaneously, reviewers reveal ambivalence about the direction of change. Concerns about over-curation, increased tourist presence, and new residential construction suggest that some visitors view the transformation as drifting away from its original grassroots character. This mirrors Sepe's (2018, pp. 161, 163, 165) findings that, as regenerated urban areas gain popularity, their evolving identity becomes increasingly shaped by market-driven forces, often displacing original cultural values and weakening community ties. Collectively, these observations imply that visitors continually reinterpret NDSM's evolving identity as they navigate the tension between cultural transformation and historical preservation, rather than simply embracing or rejecting it.

Overall, this study demonstrates that user-generated reviews on Google Maps contribute meaningfully to the construction, negotiation, and contestation of NDSM's identity as a cultural hotspot. Through a combination of emotional expression, thematic

content, and interpretive narratives, visitors co-create a dynamic and multilayered representation of place. These insights support the analytical value of UGC as both a reflective and participatory tool in understanding urban cultural transformations.

### **5.1. Practical Implications**

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for media professionals, cultural practitioners, and urban planners involved in the transformation and representation of post-industrial spaces into creative hubs. First, Google Maps reviews should be recognized as a valuable tool for monitoring public perception and the evolving construction of place identity. As Taecharungroj (2019, pp. 40, 61) argues, UGC reflects visitors' subjective experiences and actively co-creates place brand identity through participatory narratives on social media. This study reinforces that claim by demonstrating how reviews on Google Maps express individual responses while simultaneously contributing to the collective negotiation of a site's image and meaning. Accordingly, these reviews may be conceptualized as a form of digital storytelling through which visitors construct and communicate place meaning by employing narrative structures, affective expression, and symbolic language. Planners, cultural stakeholders, and media practitioners can therefore benefit from systematically analyzing such content to identify emerging concerns, shifts in public sentiment, and perceived strengths in a site's cultural appeal.

Second, maintaining core experiential qualities, including accessibility, spontaneity, and diverse cultural programming, is vital for sustaining a space's perceived authenticity and emotional resonance. Numerous reviews on Google Maps characterize NDSM as a site of inspiration, personal connection, and discovery, with these experiences frequently attributed to its spatial openness and atmosphere of creative freedom. These expressions, communicated through digital platforms, play a mediating role in how authenticity and place attachment are constructed and circulated within the public imagination. Such emotionally and functionally meaningful interactions play a key role in shaping place identity, as they fulfill psychological needs and foster symbolic connections between people and place (Ujang, 2017, pp. 119–122, 129). Thus, future cultural communication and development strategies at NDSM should aim to preserve these experiential elements, particularly those that support open exploration, artistic expression, and participatory cultural engagement. By maintaining these qualities, NDSM may continue to be both represented and experienced as an inclusive and evolving cultural landscape, symbolically grounded in its industrial heritage while remaining relevant and resonant to contemporary audiences.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of avoiding over-curation and excessive commercialization in the branding and media representation of regenerated cultural spaces. Costa and Lopes (2017, pp. 3, 5–6, 21–22) argue, artistic interventions can reinforce symbolic meaning and local identity, but their impact depends on preserving spontaneity and authenticity rather than allowing institutional branding to dominate. Hence, for media professionals and cultural strategists, this underscores the need to support flexible, community-driven narratives that reflect the diversity and lived experiences of place. Encouraging artist-led initiatives and inclusive storytelling across media platforms can help sustain the site's credibility and cultural resonance, ensuring that public perception remains aligned with the values of openness, creativity, and grassroots participation.

Collectively, these implications underscore the critical role of digital platforms as mediating spaces through which the identity of urban regenerated areas is represented and circulated. These platforms also function as arenas where such identities are continuously negotiated, contested, and rearticulated by diverse publics engaged in cultural and spatial discourse.

## 5.2. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into how Google Maps reviews narrate visitor perceptions of NDSM's transformation into a cultural hotspot, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the dataset was restricted to reviews posted between 1 January 2023 and 1 January 2025. This limited temporal scope constrains the ability to trace how perceptions of NDSM have evolved over a longer period. Therefore, future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach to examine shifts in visitor narratives and symbolic associations over time.

Second, the data did not distinguish between frequent visitors, such as locals who engage with the site regularly, and one-time or occasional visitors, such as tourists or event attendees. Although this study included reviews in both Dutch and English, language alone could not reliably differentiate between local and non-local users. While Dutch-language reviews might suggest greater familiarity with the site, Amsterdam's multilingual context means that English is widely used by both residents and international visitors. As such, the dataset does not allow for a precise classification of visitor type or level of engagement. Future research could address this limitation by incorporating survey-based segmentation or interviews to explore how differing visitor profiles influence perceptions of place.

Third, as Google Maps is a self-selective platform, the dataset likely reflects the views of users already motivated to share feedback. This introduces platform bias and may not fully represent broader public sentiment. Online reviews tend to overrepresent highly positive or highly negative experiences, which can skew the overall perception of a place. To mitigate this, future studies could triangulate data from other digital platforms, community consultations, or ethnographic fieldwork to capture a more representative and balanced range of perspectives.

Fourth, this study included both English and Dutch-language reviews. While Google Maps provided automatic translations for many Dutch entries, several required additional manual translations by the researcher. As a result, there is a possibility that certain linguistic nuances, affective expressions, or culturally embedded meanings were not fully preserved. This limitation is particularly relevant given the study's emphasis on symbolic associations, emotional tone, and narrative construction. Future research could address this issue by involving native speakers or trained multilingual coders to enhance interpretive accuracy and cultural specificity.

Fifth, the lack of demographic data in Google Maps reviews restricted the ability to explore how perceptions might vary across user groups based on age, gender, cultural background, or local versus international identity. Future studies could combine UGC analysis with survey instruments or data sources that allow for demographic profiling to deepen understanding of how identity shapes place perception.

Lastly, the study relied exclusively on user-generated content and did not include complementary methods such as interviews, focus groups, or participatory observation. While user-generated content offers rich insight into public narratives, it does not fully reveal the underlying motivations, long-term perceptions, or nuanced meanings attached to place experiences. Future research would benefit from a mixed-methods design that integrates digital content analysis with in-depth qualitative methods to provide a more holistic view of urban cultural transformation and digital placemaking.

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## Appendix A

Reviewers_ID	Original_Language	Published_At	Star_Rating	Original_Text	Translated_Text	Translation_Type
R_ID601	nl	2023-01-25T16:17:07.067Z	1	Verschrikkelijk koud was binnen een uur alweer weg... Brrrrrr	Terribly cold was gone within an hour... Brrrrrr	Google Translated
R_ID321	en	2023-02-05T21:56:26.681Z	1	Nothing to do here, maybe weekends are better?		Not translated
R_ID597	nl	2023-08-19T19:37:19.098Z	1	Ligt altijd veel glas en de weg is vrij hobbelig. Irritante verkeerssituaties door gebrek aan borden/ wegmarkeringen en zebrapaden.	There's always a lot of glass lying around and the road is very bumpy. Annoying traffic situations due to lack of signs, road markings, and crosswalks	Manual correction
R_ID596	nl	2023-10-22T20:22:44.098Z	1	Beetje druk	A bit busy	Google Translated
R_ID595	nl	2023-10-24T16:56:20.964Z	1	Druk en rommelig	Busy and messy	Google Translated

R_ID591	nl	2023-01-28T14:12:24.815Z		2	Dit mag geen rommelmarkt meer genoemd worden. Veel te veel kleding veel te weinig rommelmarkt. Dit is een duur uitje parkeren en entree om vervolgens een kledingbeurs te betreden. Zeker niet voor herhaling vatbaar	This can no longer be called a flea market. Far too many clothes, far too little flea market. This is an expensive outing with parking and entrance fees to then re-enter a clothing fair. Certainly not worth repeating	Google Translated
R_ID590	nl	2023-01-29T15:38:59.963Z		2	Zeer slechte rommelmarkt nooit zo iets gezien waren binnen een 1 uur al weer weg extra hotel er voor geboekt waardeloos	Very bad flea market, never seen anything like it. We left within an hour. Even booked an extra hotel night for it — worthless.	Manual correction

R_ID589	nl	2023-02-15T17:23:45.705Z	2	Ach ff doorheen lopen.	Eh, just walk through it quickly.	Manual correction
R_ID319	en	2023-04-20T15:14:37.932Z	2	Doesn't open until 12		Not translated
R_ID316	en	2024-05-14T10:18:29.908Z	2	Went to the monthly flea market and found it to mostly contain used clothing. Big disappointment. Not into graffiti art either. Few eating opinions in the area. Liked the free ferry ride to and from the central station.		Not translated
R_ID581	nl	2023-02-05T17:40:07.816Z	3	Rommelig geheel van ateliers. Op zondag nagenoeg	Messy collection of studios. On Sunday, hardly saw any artists.	Manual correction

				geen kunstenaars gezien.		
R_ID315	en	2023-02-15T11:44:45.526Z	3	Strange little artist area, with a lovely cafe and bar area.		Not translated
R_ID580	nl	2023-04-12T06:32:58.817Z	3	Druk	Busy	Google Translated
R_ID314	en	2023-05-10T22:18:42.802Z	3	It's ok. Used to be more culturally diverse.		Not translated
R_ID313	en	2023-05-18T08:43:08.551Z	3	Beautiful and creative art		Not translated
R_ID519	nl	2023-12-10T18:57:26.597Z	4	Bijzondere plek deze werf in Amsterdam Noord. Veel restaurants en uitgaansgelegenheden. Parkeren geen	This shipyard in Amsterdam North is a special place. Many restaurants and entertainment venues. Parking no problem.	Google Translated

				probleem.		
R_ID518	nl	2023-12-25T07:36:34.783Z	4	Hippe locatie, mooi met verschillende oude en industriële elementen. Lekker gegeten (in afgehuurd zaaltje, zakelijk feest).	Hip location, beautiful with various old and industrial elements. Nice meal (in rented room, business party).	Manual correction
R_ID250	en	2024-02-27T15:04:31.056Z	4	Lots of creative activities going on here		Not translated
R_ID249	en	2024-03-08T13:34:25.075Z	4	It's a Old Retirement Dutch Shipyard conversation to Streets Art Museum workshop		Not translated
R_ID241	en	2024-11-01T03:11:51.111Z	4	It was an interesting place to visit we		Not translated

				unfortunately went when some of it was closed. Another side of Amsterdam you should explore easy to get to by ferry which is free.		
R_ID477	nl	2023-02-27T14:07:36.124Z	5	Lekker sfeertje.	Nice atmosphere.	Google Translated
R_ID476	nl	2023-02-28T20:50:28.682Z	5	Mooie gitaren gescoord!	Beautiful guitars scored!	Google Translated
R_ID223	en	2023-03-03T09:45:54.332Z	5	Awesome street art and art studios within the old ship building factory. You can walk around most the of the building for free and there is another warehouse next door with huge		Not translated

				art exhibit but that costs money. The food and beer selection at the Ijlver restaurant was amazing too!		
R_ID450	nl	2023-05-13T17:38:44.280Z	5	Mooie locatie om foto's te maken	Nice location to take photos	Google Translated
R_ID182	en	2023-05-14T11:30:20.834Z	5	Had a lovely time at Ijhallen		Not translated
R_ID181	en	2023-05-14T21:46:43.079Z	5	NDSM Amsterdam is a vibrant and exciting destination that offers visitors a unique and unforgettable experience. This former shipyard has been		Not translated

transformed into an open-air playground, complete with stunning graffiti art, buzzing cafes, and a lively atmosphere.

One of the standout features of NDSM Amsterdam is the incredible graffiti art that adorns the walls of the buildings. The art is diverse and colorful, ranging from abstract shapes and patterns to intricate portraits and scenes. Visitors can

				<p>spend hours exploring the different pieces and admiring the skill and creativity of the artists.</p>		
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## Appendix B

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Theme 1: Accessibility &amp; Infrastructure</b>					
<b>Accessible art</b>	Social Accessibility & Inclusion	Accessibility & Infrastructure	Accessibility and infrastructure refer to the physical and organizational systems that enable mobility, inclusion, and active participation in urban cultural life (Deguara et al., 2018; Gargiulo & Sgambati, 2022).	Place Physics	Values, Frames
<b>Advice</b>					
<b>Appeal to broad audiences</b>					
<b>Approval by others</b>					
<b>Artist community</b>					
<b>Community gathering</b>					
<b>Community participation</b>			Example Quotes:		
<b>Community-based artistic experiences</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Fun to go there with ferry...” (EN, 5 star rating);</li> <li>“Nice area to stroll through.” (NL, 5 star rating);</li> </ul>		
<b>Creative community</b>					
<b>Critique</b>					
<b>Discover</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Explore</b>					
<b>Family-friendly</b>					
<b>Free access</b>					
<b>Guidance of the visitor/local</b>					
<b>Insider perspective</b>					
<b>Lack of inclusivity</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Free-to-access art gallery...” (EN, 5 star rating);</li> <li>“Parking is quite nerve-racking here. Few spots, and people seem to have a hard time treating other people’s cars with care.” (NL, 2 star rating);</li> </ul>		
<b>Local opinion</b>					
<b>Open public space</b>					
<b>Personal capture</b>					
<b>Personal engagement</b>					
<b>Place to discover</b>					
<b>Public-private blending</b>					
<b>Recommendation</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Recommendation of another city</b>					
<b>Shared experience</b>					
<b>Shared value</b>					
<b>User-generated content</b>					
<b>Visitors caution</b>					
<b>Volunteering</b>					
<b>Walkability</b>					
<b>Workspace and public space tension</b>					
<b>Access for disabled</b>	Mobility Accessibility				
<b>Accessibility</b>					
<b>Accessibility (ferry)</b>					
<b>Accessibility issue</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Close to Amsterdam</b>					
<b>Convenience</b>					
<b>Cycling</b>					
<b>Digital navigation</b>					
<b>Free ferry</b>					
<b>Free parking</b>					
<b>Hard to navigate</b>					
<b>Infrastructure reflection</b>					
<b>Limited parking</b>					
<b>Navigation advice</b>					
<b>Navigation challenge</b>					
<b>Navigation issue</b>					
<b>Not far from Amsterdam</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
Parking					
Parking ticket					
Problem with parking					
Public access					
Public transport frequency					
Ride to/from Amsterdam central station					
Schedule issues (ferry)					
Transportation experience					
Visitors' motivation - parking					
<b>Theme 2: Cultural Destination Perception</b>					
Absence of artistic activity	Creative Reuse of Space	Cultural Destination	Cultural destination perception refers to how a place is viewed and	Place Meaning, Place Experience	Values, Frames
Artistic space					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Crane (hotel)</b>		Perception	experienced based on the transformation of industrial spaces into creative hubs, characterized by symbolic reuse, distinctive visual identity, and a diverse program of events that attract varied audiences (Cenci, 2018; Dinardi, 2019; García, 2004).		
<b>Creative activities</b>					
<b>Creative entrepreneurship/economy</b>					
<b>Creative facility</b>					
<b>Cultural</b>					
<b>Cultural hotspots</b>					
<b>Cultural institution</b>					
<b>Dutch cuisine</b>			Example quotes:		
<b>Educational value</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“amazing district, full of street art” (EN, 5 star rating);</li> <li>“What a cool dance event that DGTL was on the old NDSM TERRAIN with all its history.” (NL, 5 star rating);</li> </ul>		
<b>Endless discovery</b>					
<b>Event and activity organization</b>					
<b>Event impact</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Event-based</b>					
<b>Food/Drink Culture</b>					
<b>Food/Drink diversity</b>					
<b>Functional activity - boat maintenance</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“This former shipyard has been transformed into an open-air playground, complete with stunning graffiti art, buzzing cafes, and a lively atmosphere...” (EN, 5 star rating).</li> </ul>		
<b>Fuse gallery</b>					
<b>Gallery</b>					
<b>Going-out appeal</b>					
<b>Good facilities</b>					
<b>Great event venue</b>					
<b>Hilton Hotel</b>					
<b>Hotel (DoubleTree)</b>					
<b>Hotspot</b>					
<b>Hub</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>IJver</b>					
<b>International artists</b>					
<b>Loss of programming variety</b>					
<b>Market culture</b>					
<b>Market experience</b>					
<b>Market scale reduction</b>					
<b>Mixed-use urban area</b>					
<b>Multicultural</b>					
<b>Multifunctional space</b>					
<b>Museum</b>					
<b>Museum experience</b>					
<b>NDSM Loods</b>					
<b>NDSM Werf</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>NDSM-Fuse</b>					
<b>Pllek</b>					
<b>Social use</b>					
<b>STRAAT museum</b>					
<b>Treehouse</b>					
<b>Veronica ship</b>					
<b>Vintage</b>					
<b>ADE</b>	Events & Attractions				
<b>Baan met Toekomst</b>					
<b>Community Day Program</b>					
<b>DGTL</b>					
<b>Event</b>					
<b>Exhibition</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Festival</b>					
<b>Flea market</b>					
<b>GEN_T (event)</b>					
<b>Go City</b>					
<b>Harbor tour</b>					
<b>IJhallen</b>					
<b>Into the woods</b>					
<b>King's Day</b>					
<b>Leisure</b>					
<b>Lepeltje Lepeltje</b>					
<b>Lots of events</b>					
<b>NDSM open day</b>					
<b>Outdoor activities</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Performance</b>					
<b>Plein Vrees</b>					
<b>Psy party</b>					
<b>Spoon (event)</b>					
<b>Tattoo Convention</b>					
<b>Workshops</b>					
<b>A lot to see</b>	Symbolic Aesthetics				
<b>Anne Frank</b>					
<b>Art</b>					
<b>Art appreciation</b>					
<b>Art lovers</b>					
<b>Artistic complexity</b>					
<b>Artistic quality/craftsmanship</b>					

<b>Open_code</b>	<b>Axial_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code_Definition</b>	<b>Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)</b>	<b>Framework (Shifman's Model)</b>
<b>Artistic value</b>					
<b>Changing art</b>					
<b>Colorful</b>					
<b>Craft in images</b>					
<b>Creative</b>					
<b>Creative freedom</b>					
<b>Creative installations/monuments</b>					
<b>Digital art</b>					
<b>For artistic person</b>					
<b>Graffiti</b>					
<b>Graphic art</b>					
<b>Meaningful art message</b>					
<b>Modern art</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Photographic</b>					
<b>Poor quality of graffiti (art)</b>					
<b>Street art</b>					
<b>Street art lovers</b>					
<b>Symbolic</b>					
<b>Visual appeal</b>					
<b>Visual appreciation</b>					
<b>Visual density (concentration)</b>					
<b>Theme 3: Spatial Identity &amp; Urban Transformation</b>					
<b>Alternative city identity</b>	Symbolic Place Attachment	Spatial Identity & Urban Transformation	Spatial identity and urban transformation refer to the evolving relationship between people and place,	Place physics, Place meaning	Frame, Value
<b>Amsterdam's identity</b>					
<b>Authentic vs commercial</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Change</b>			shaped by changes in the physical environment, visual aesthetics, symbolic meanings and associations that develop over time (Ali, 2010; Guo et al., 2021).		
<b>Concern about change</b>					
<b>Concern about the change</b>					
<b>Critique of authenticity</b>					
<b>Critique of potential redevelopment</b>					
<b>Diverse</b>			Example quotes:		
<b>Dutch heritage</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“One of the most amazing places of its kind that I've seen. A great use of a once-great post-industrial shipyard.”</li> <li>“Super cool and rapidly changing arts place...” (EN, 5 star rating):</li> <li>“Very commercialized now...” (EN, 4 star rating);</li> </ul>		
<b>Gentrification</b>					
<b>Gentrification critique</b>					
<b>Global cultural standing</b>					
<b>Government's policy</b>					
<b>Growing fast space</b>					
<b>Heritage</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Idealization</b>					
<b>Identity shift</b>					
<b>Limited transformation</b>					
<b>Local sentiments</b>					
<b>Loss of authenticity</b>					
<b>Loss of flea market character</b>					
<b>New developments (buildings)</b>					
<b>Not touristy</b>					
<b>On-going urban change</b>					
<b>Place to stay and/or visit</b>					
<b>Potential growth</b>					
<b>Preservation</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Rapid change</b>					
<b>Redevelopment</b>					
<b>Shipyard</b>					
<b>Sustainability focus (circular businesses)</b>					
<b>Transformative place identity</b>					
<b>Under construction</b>					
<b>Visiting Amsterdam</b>					
<b>Abandoned</b>	Sensory & Experiential Atmosphere				
<b>Aesthetic appreciation</b>					
<b>Alive</b>					
<b>Alternative</b>					
<b>Architecture</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Atmosphere</b>					
<b>Atmospheric lighting</b>					
<b>Authentic</b>					
<b>Beach</b>					
<b>Beautiful view</b>					
<b>Building appreciation</b>					
<b>Clean</b>					
<b>Enjoyment of atmosphere</b>					
<b>Hidden gem</b>					
<b>Hipster vibe</b>					
<b>Historic</b>					
<b>Huge/Big (spatial scale)</b>					
<b>Industrial aesthetics</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
Industrial atmosphere					
Industrial heritage					
Inspirational					
Inviting place					
Lively atmosphere					
Lots of space					
Marine lovers					
Messy					
Near water					
Negative atmosphere					
Perceived atmosphere					
Post-apocalypse					
Punk vibes					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
Quite/calm					
Rejection of industrial aesthetic					
Spatial comfort (lots of space)					
Stylish					
Unique terrain					
Vibrant					
<b>Theme 4: Visitor Experience &amp; Emotional Engagement</b>					
Acceptance	Affective Connection	Visitor Experience & Emotional Engagement	Visitor experience and emotional engagement refer to how individuals emotionally respond to and evaluate places, shaped by their personal impressions, feelings, and the perceived value of their interactions	Place Experience	Emotions, Communicative stance
Admiration					
Awe and admiration					
Creating memories					
Disappointed					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Emotional attachment</b>			with the environment (Eronen, 2024; Ujang, 2017).		
<b>Emotional escape</b>					
<b>Emotional experience</b>					
<b>Emotional frustration</b>					
<b>Emotional/Enthusiastic</b>					
<b>Entertaining</b>					
<b>Funny tone</b>					
<b>Immersive experience</b>					
<b>Interesting</b>					
<b>Lack of connection</b>					
<b>Lack of engagement</b>					
<b>Loyalty</b>					
<b>Minimal interest</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Negative</b>					
<b>Nostalgia</b>					
<b>Personal connection</b>					
<b>Philosophical reflection</b>					
<b>Polite tone</b>					
<b>Positive</b>					
<b>Positive experience</b>					
<b>Positive initial impression</b>					
<b>Positive social environment</b>					
<b>Positive-neutral tone</b>					
<b>Recurring enjoyment</b>					
<b>Repeated visit</b>					
<b>Respect for artists</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Sentimental</b>					
<b>Social environment</b>					
<b>Strong recommendation</b>					
<b>Strong negative tone</b>					
<b>Visitors dissatisfaction</b>					
<b>Visitors satisfaction</b>					
<b>Aesthetic quality critique</b>	Experiential Evaluation				
<b>Art purchase</b>					
<b>Contrast between indoor and outdoor experiences</b>					
<b>Cost/Value Judgment</b>					
<b>Critical reflection</b>					
<b>Critique of the space</b>					
<b>Crowd &amp; Timing</b>					

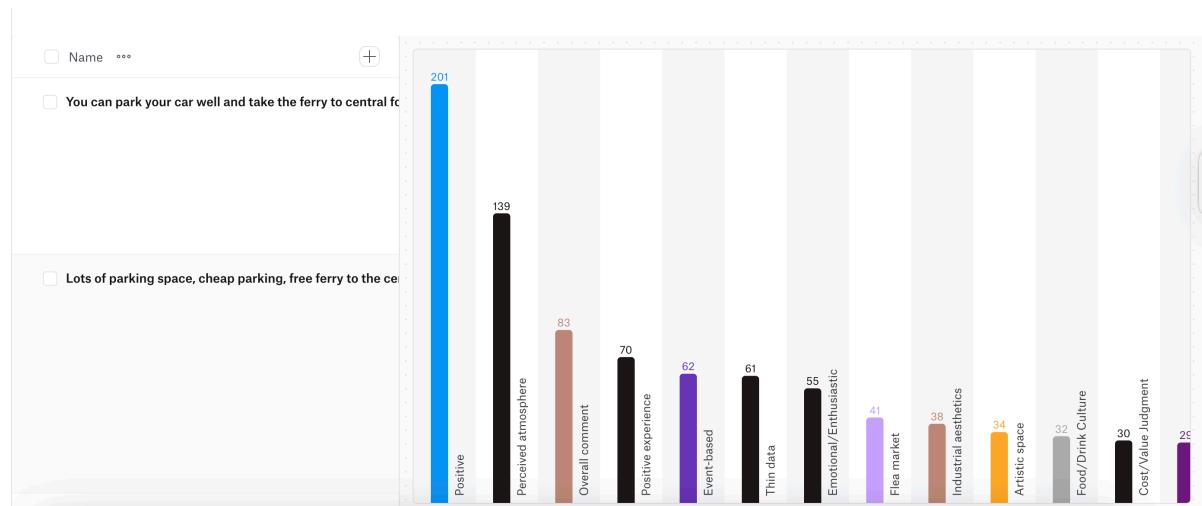
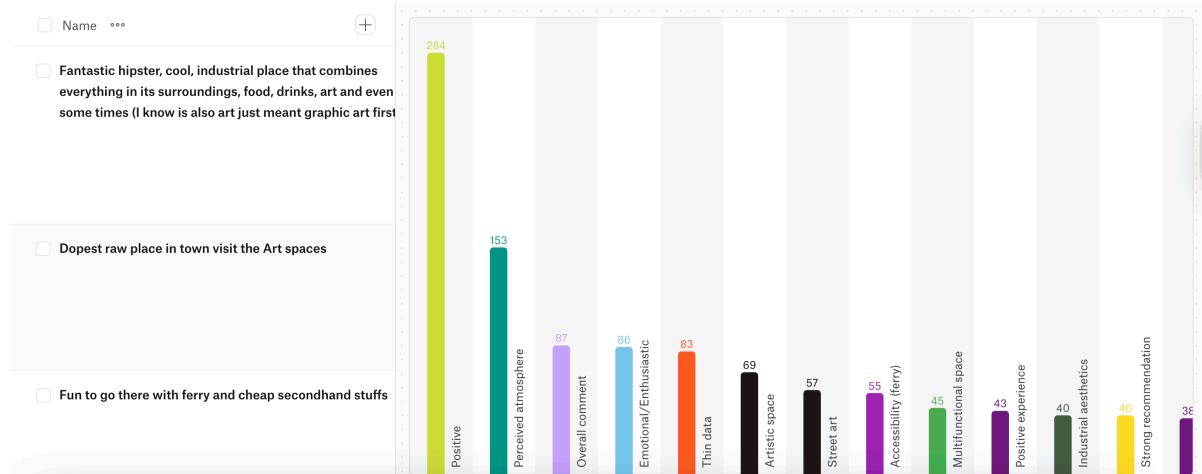
Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Environmental Factors</b>					
<b>Expectations vs Reality</b>					
<b>Facilities</b>					
<b>Food appreciation</b>					
<b>High quality</b>					
<b>Inconsistent quality</b>					
<b>Lack of comfort</b>					
<b>Lack of respect</b>					
<b>Limited product variety</b>					
<b>Lots of diversity of items/stalls (flea market)</b>					
<b>Low quality</b>					
<b>Market content critique</b>					
<b>Mixed experience</b>					

Open_code	Axial_Code	Selective_Code	Selective_Code_Definition	Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)	Framework (Shifman's Model)
<b>Negative comparison</b>					
<b>Negative social environment</b>					
<b>Negative visitor experiences</b>					
<b>Perceived misinformation</b>					
<b>Practical information</b>					
<b>Pricing Concern</b>					
<b>Purchase</b>					
<b>Safe</b>					
<b>Safety concern</b>					
<b>Service &amp; Staff</b>					
<b>Social tension</b>					
<b>Theme 5: Narrating Place through Reviews</b>					

<b>Open_code</b>	<b>Axial_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code_Definition</b>	<b>Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)</b>	<b>Framework (Shifman's Model)</b>
<b>Informal language/tone</b>					
<b>Overall comment</b>					
<b>Thin data</b>	Meta-Review Behavior	Narrating Place through Reviews	<p>Narrating place through reviews refers to the way user-generated content, such as online reviews, constructs meaning around a place by blending personal impressions with cultural expression, using emotional language, informal tone, and evaluative commentary (Shifman, 2016).</p> <p>Example quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tooo000ppp festival!! Definitely do it if you are on breath” (NL, 5 star rating)</li> <li>• “Wonderful and cosy” (EN, 5 star rating);</li> </ul>	Support all 3 pillars	Communicative stance, Values

<b>Open_code</b>	<b>Axial_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code</b>	<b>Selective_Code_Definition</b>	<b>Framework (Taecharungroj's Model)</b>	<b>Framework (Shifman's Model)</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Its awful” (EN, 1 star rating);</li> </ul>		

## Appendix C



## Appendix D

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

#### Student Information

Name: Aida Kijauskaitė

Student ID: 709418

Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000

Supervisor Name: Marlen Komorowsk - Albert

Date: 2025-06-29

Declaration:

#### Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

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

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

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

I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically ChatGPT, in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

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

#### Extent of AI Usage

Signature:

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

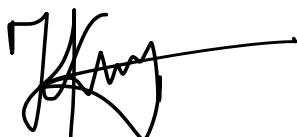
Date of Signature:

## **Ethical and Academic Integrity**

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

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

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Doe".

Date of Signature: 2025-06-29

The list of ChatGPT prompts:

- “Generate a list and a brief summary of scientific papers and articles that analyze urban regenerated areas (something similar to NDSM Amsterdam)”
- “Generate a list and a brief summary of scientific papers and articles that use Google Maps Reviews to analyze revitalized urban spaces, districts, neighborhoods, etc.”
- “Can you recommend some keywords I could use to look for similar scientific papers”
- “I found this study about the transformation of NDSM (Havik & Pllumbi, 2020). Based on this study (see pdf file attached), give me the most important takeaways regarding its history, more specifically the transformation from a shipyard to cultural hotspot.”
- “Are there any similar studies that utilized thematic content analysis for Google Maps reviews?”
- “I know there is an artist-community neighborhood in Berlin similar to NDSM but I don’t remember what it’s called. Do you know the name of that neighborhood?”
- “Explain the difference between placemaking and digital placemaking”
- “Do I understand correctly that place branding is a strategic process that shapes locations, identity, and is communicated by different people?”
- “How can I rewrite this sentence more clearly while keeping the same meaning: ...”
- “Could you help me spot any repetitions in this paragraph: ...”
- “Can you find me a synonym for: ...?”
- “Give me a list of connecting words I could use in a scientific paper”
- “Explain what is the difference between qualitative content analysis and thematic content analysis?”
- “Explain step by step how to do thematic content analysis”
- “What’s the difference between open, axial and selective coding?”
- “Can you recommend me a software I can use for data scraping? Preferably for free or with a student discount option”
- “Can you walk me through how to use Apify?”
- “On Apify, how do I select a specific time frame?”
- “Can you walk me through how to use Atlas.ti?”
- “How to I export my open codes from Atlas.ti together with the quotes?”
- “What is the shortcut to check for duplicate values on Excel?”

- “How do I know my qualitative research have reached thematic saturation?”
- “Could you help me structure the Results section for a thematic content analysis, based on these 5 themes: ...”
- “This is a section of my limitations: ..., but I find it too wordy. Please recommend how I can keep it a bit more concise and less repetitive, without losing meaning”
- “How can I change page orientation in word (from portrait to landscape) for specific pages and not entire document?”
- “How do I reference a website such as Apify in APA 7<sup>th</sup> style?”
- “How do I reference a conference paper in APA 7<sup>th</sup> style?”
- “Give me a few suggestions for my paper’s title”
- “Give me a few suggestions for this section’s sub-heading: ...”
- “Please check this text for grammar, spelling and punctuation: ...”