STEREOTYPES OR REALISTIC VIEWS?

HOW IS AUSTRIA SEEN FROM OUTSIDE?
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Auswahl und Zusammenstellung der Texte sowie didaktische Anregungen:
Mag. Kathrin Kordon und Mag. Bärbel Uitz
Stereotypes or Realistic Views? How is Austria seen from outside?

1 Introduction

In the introductory words to his book which analyses Austria’s image in the world, Schweiger (an Austrian scientist researching into the image of Austria) claims that prejudices against other countries, peoples and cultures are as old as mankind. Images of a nation influence peoples’ behaviour with regard to the buying of its products and services. Thus, whether a person buys a car or a watch, books a flight with a particular airline, chooses his or her holiday destination, etc. highly depends on the image of the product’s country of origin.

Over the last years this so-called “country of origin effect” has been thoroughly examined. It has an important impact on marketing strategies, such as the successful naming of brands and the choice of the right topics for advertisements. Marketing experts in economy, industry and service companies, therefore, strongly rely on information about the country’s image.

Snow-covered mountains, people skiing or hiking, folks in “Lederhosen” and “Dirndln”, people drinking wine at the “Heurigen” and eating “Apfelstrudel” etc. are classical stereotypical images of Austria. They would most likely be accompanied by the Viennese Waltz or yodelling. Due to the fact that Austria has assumed the presidency of the European Union at the beginning of 2006 and that the country is currently celebrating the “Year of Mozart”, Austria is well represented in the world’s press. It seems that some of the above mentioned stereotypes are omnipresent in articles dealing with the Austrian culture.

Do stereotypes of this kind give an authentic picture of the Austrian culture or do they merely represent fixed ideas about a national identity which have nothing to do with reality? This paper certainly does not seek to answer this question as it would require thorough scientific investigation. What the following pages attempt to do, however, is to view a number of classical stereotypes of Austria against their economic background. Thus, we will ask ourselves if national or cultural stereotypes arise because they are promoted for economic purposes.

In the following chapter some terminological clarifications are provided. In chapter three, some well-established positive and negative stereotypes of Austria are treated. We will also briefly touch upon a few negative images. To conclude with a “realistic” view, the paper finishes with a brief overview of facts about the Austrian economy.

2 What is a Stereotype?

In order to treat the topic of existing stereotypes of Austria effectively, one might find it useful to look at the term “stereotype” more closely. Thus, this chapter will try to define the word “stereotype”, trace back the original meaning of the word and consider its meaning in different contexts.

The origins of the word “stereotype” can be outlined as follows: The word “stereotype” was invented by Firmin Didot in the world of printing; it was originally a duplicate impression of an original typographical element, used for printing instead of the original. Over time, this became a metaphor for any set of ideas repeated identically, en masse, with minor changes. In fact, “cliché” and “stereotype” were both originally printers’ words, and in their literal printers’ meanings were synonymous. Specifically, “cliché” was an onomatopoetic word for the sound that was made during the stereotyping process when the matrix hit molten metal.

Stereotypes can be defined as “structured sets of beliefs about the characteristics of members of social categories” and the “influence how people attend to, encode, represent, and retrieve information about others, and how they judge and respond to


2 see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype
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This definition is taken from a book named *Stereotypes & Stereotyping* which treats the issue of stereotypes scientifically. Indeed, the phenomenon of stereotypes has attracted the interest of scholars from a wide range of disciplines, such as psychology, ethnology, sociology etc. However, one does not necessarily have to approach this topic scientifically. In the first chapter of the above mentioned book, the authors invite the reader to do the following: “Stop for a moment and think about one of the many social groups that make up a diverse geographic area such as Europe or the United States. You'll easily (perhaps you think too easily!) conjure up a portrait of what the people in the group are like. You may generate an oversimplified impression of the characteristics of the group as a whole - that Greeks are fun-loving, that Irish drink much, or that African Americans are boisterous. Or perhaps you will retrieve particular instances of people from the group - maybe an image of Marcello Mastroianni appears, reminding you that Italian men are good looking.” The authors claim that every individual automatically tends to produce such pictures in his or her mind.

A 19th century children's book informs its readers that the Dutch are a very industrious race, and that Chinese children are very obedient to their parents.

A negative image of a country Schweiger refers to the predominantly derogative picture of Italy presented in reports about the Mafia or thievery in touristy areas. However, this "public" opinion obviously differs from the "real" perception, as surveys show that the majority of Italy's neighbouring populations have a positive image of the country.

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4 Ibid. p.3

5 see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype

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However, stereotypes must not necessarily be confined to negative characterizations about individuals or groups, but they also have positive characterizations. There are also genuinely positive stereotypes about groups. Some groups have deliberately tried to evolve new genuine positive stereotypes for themselves. Quite clearly, positive stereotypes about a country can bring about positive economic outcomes.

One might differentiate between social stereotypes of or by groups, within groups and in culture. For this paper, the term “national stereotype [...]” “stereotypes referring to national populations” might be most adequate. Phrases like “the French are rational” or the “Russians are submissive” can be considered national stereotypes. Since this essay tries to explore the economic effect of Austria’s image, it seems more appropriate to focus on positive images of Austria. However, some negative images will also be touched upon.

3 Existing Stereotypes of Austria

“So you are from Austria, aren’t you? How nice!’ This remark, which can be heard over and over again, reflects the unproblematic, sympathetic picture existing in the world about Austria - in addition to many other Austrian images. Friendly and harmless, a great power only in the past - nowadays only as regards culture; and then the beautiful landscape: the Austria of the four M’s: Mountains and Mozart, Maria Theresia and Music.” This is how Anton Pelinka, an Austrian political scientist, summarises how Austria is often seen in the world8. “That is the Austria propagated by advertisements: ski pistes and the Spanish Riding School, and - for the really knowledgeable - a hint of Sigmund Freud, preferably without too much mentioning of anti-Semitism as described by Arthur Schnitzler in Professor Bernardi”, Pelinka goes on to describe the Austrian image.

It is important to note that for Pelinka, the terms stereotype and cliché are obviously interchangeable. “In principle clichés cannot be avoided - that mixture of prejudice and partial truth, of subjective experience and self-fulfilling fantasy”, he writes. According to him, ”clichés, however, are not just pure coincidence. Just when and how [...] clichés about Austria arise outside the country has a firm background. And this background is provided by the real history of Austria. Clichés are never the whole reality in its complexity - but neither are clichés simply coincidence.”

What, then, are the stereotypes associated with Austria? Very often, the first association with Austria is the film “The Sound of Music”: the Trapp family, in the world of yesterday amid an atmosphere filled with music, seemingly harmoniously linked with tomorrow’s world. This is the plot of the film given in the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia: In Salzburg, Austria, Maria, a woman studying to become a nun, is sent from her convent to be the governess to seven children of a widowed naval commander, Captain Georg Ritter von Trapp. The children, initially hostile and mischievous, come to like her, and the woman finds herself falling in love with the captain. He was soon to be married to a baroness but marries Maria instead. Maria teaches the children singing. Meanwhile, the Nazis take power in Austria as part of the Anschluss, and want Captain von Trapp back in service. However, during a singing performance in a guarded theatre, the whole family flees and walks over the mountains to Switzerland9.

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This Hollywood-inspired story is the inspiration for one of the Austrian images which also persists to the Austrian tourist promoters. The slogan for a conference in Salzburg held by the Austrian EU-presidency 2006 also builds on this cliché with “The Sound of Europe”. The historical reason for this phenomenon lies in the concept of “Viennoise Classicism”. “The fact that Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Lanner, Johann Strauss, Bruckner and Mahler were Austrians and that Beethoven and Brahms put down spiritual and musical roots in Vienna shows the extent to which Austria can be regarded as the homeland of music,” said the famous conductor Bruno Walter. In a newspaper article the historical roots of Austria’s musical fame are outlined. The author claims that Beethoven is considered the founder of Vienna as the musical capital of the world. Johann Strauss’s work, particularly his waltz contributed to the “popularisation of what is considered today as classical music. The Vienna state opera house became Europe’s leading musical stage. In the first decades of the 20th century, Arnold Schönberg revolutionised music with his composition methods.”

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### 3.1 Positive Stereotypes

#### 3.1.1 The Sound of Austria

“The music emanating from Austria plays such a central role that the terms “music” and “Austria” have virtually become synonymous”. This citation comes from an American web-page about Austria. It is even more striking that the associative link between music and Vienna is so strong that in Chinese the word “Vienna” means “city of music.”

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12 ibid. p.18
13 ibid. p.16
14 see: http://www.austria.org/mar01/music.html

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16 ibid.
Stereotypes or Realistic Views? How is Austria seen from outside?

18 ibid.
20 Ibid. p.30-33
23 Time: You shall go to the Ball“ January 23, 2006, p.44

the world. Schweiger’s book also clearly brings to light that Austria is still considered the “country of classical music”. Austria’s orchestras are highly appreciated all around the world. Particularly, the Viennese waltz, Mozart’s and Strauß’s music are generally perceived as typically Austrian. In Schweiger’s survey pictures of concerts in the “Wiener Musikverein”, of a glittering ball-nights or of the choir of the “Wiener Sängerknaben” were clearly attributed to Austria.

It is further stated that nowadays “the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra belongs to the best in the world” and that “the State Opera house has few rivals”. Herbert von Karajan, the late Austrian conductor, is still known all around the world, and so are many other Austrian musicians today like Nikolaus Harnoncourt or the opera singer Angelika Kirchschlager.

Austria’s musical popularity is also often conveyed in the media. The magazine “Time”, for example, comments on one of the biggest musical and cultural events, the Vienna Opera Ball, as follows: “There are Viennese opera balls on the social calendars of many big cities. But there is only one Vienna Opera Ball. The annual extravaganza that has spawned countless international imitators takes place in the Austrian capital’s State Opera house on Feb. 23 - and if you haven’t got one of the 5,000 or so tickets yet, you’d better start working the phones. To the old-money types and aristocrats that once made up the bulk of the guest list, the present-day event has been diminished by the inclusion of pop singers, politicians, movie stars and even (shock, horror) the odd porn actress. A ban of smoking, instituted at the 2004 ball, has been another blow to the faithful, as has the introduction of contemporary (nowadays you can boogie and salsa in addition to waltz). In that case, why attend? For the stunning visual spectacle, above all. Upwards of 60,000 flowers decorate the opulent 137-year-old venue, which is crammed to the rafters with staff in 19th century livery and guests in white tie or lavish gowns. Then there is the matchless beauty of the polonaise, the famous opening dance performed by handpicked debutantes. Their grand entrance is as vivid as hallucination of old Europe as you’ll ever experience - and something that even the most curmudgeonly traditionalist cannot fault.”

Particularly this year Austria’s musical spirit cannot be ignored by international media. “The Financial Times”, for example, writes: “Salzburg is calling itself the ‘stage of the world’. This week, the Austrian city may have a point as it launches epic celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of its most famous son: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart” to celebrate the Salzburg-born musician as Austria’s “national treasure”.

Another article in “The Financial Times” conveys the fact that Austria profits economically from Mozart’s popularity, particularly in the “Year of Mozart” as follows: “Thousands of visitors to Salzburg this week found themselves facing a bewigged wooden effigy in a cot beneath a neon blue halo - one of several Mozart exhibits in the house where the composer was born 250 years ago. In nearby shops they could buy a Mozart bra or sign up for a Mozart ski holiday. The more gullible tourists attended a “Meet Amadeus” event.” Purists
may scoff at the way Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is being used and abused his 250th anniversary but, in terms of worldwide recognition and merchandising, he beats any pop idol or sports star. And he does so not merely because his music represents a heavenly panacea in a turbulent world, but because he can play any role you give him – political or commercial, comic or spiritual, popular or highbrow. So it should be no surprise that Salzburg and Vienna are hoping to make record profits from €7.4bn ($9bn) Mozart “brand” this year or that Austria is coopting Mozart in a campaign to promote international harmony during its six-month presidency of the European Union.”

Quite clearly, Austria’s tourist industry profits enormously from the country’s wealth of musical “events”. Particularly, Vienna’s and Salzburg’s city tourism flourish because the towns attract a big amount of tourists due to their “musicality”. Music is an extremely efficient marketing strategy. Austrian Airlines, for example, introduced the advertising slogan “Music is in the air”27. The Vienna Opera Ball helps the Inner City’s businesses to increase their annual income. Hair dresses, beauticians, clothes shops and restaurants (particularly the famous “Hotel Sacher”) report to have most visitors and clients in the week of the Ball.

Breuss et al give a couple of factors which underline Austria’s economic success with this “product”28: The “Mozartkugel”, a fine chocolate made out of marzipan and nougat has become Austria’s most famous export product. More than 100 million pieces are produced per year. Apart from this sweet speciality, Mozart has been successfully sold in the movie industry with the Hollywood film “Amadeus” and has helped Falco, one of the most well-known representatives of “Austropop”, to receive international echo with his song “Rock me Amadeus”. 1991 the 200th anniversary of Mozart’s death was celebrated in Salzburg, which attracted thousands of visitors. Mozart was successfully promoted on ashtrays, umbrellas, T-shirts, glasses, toilet paper, dessous, etc. A famous summer and winter holiday resort (Altenmarkt-Flachau-Wagrain-Zauchensee and other places in the Pongau-region) is labelled “Salzburger Sportwelt Amadé”. These examples show that Mozart’s name can obviously be used to sell every Austrian products and services. This year, the 250th anniversary of the famous composer is celebrated with even more merchandising products, from a Mozart croissant in the bakery shops to a Mozart yoghurt in the supermarket.

3.1.2 Austria, the Country of Cultural Wealth

The preceding chapter shows that Austria’s musical history has generated the country’s image as the “country of culture”. Apart from music, there are other factors which have contributed to this image, as Schweiger’s studies show29: The following components seem to have contributed to this stereotypical image: opera, theatre, the Spanish Riding School, historical buildings (such as the Museum of History of Arts), cabs (Fiaker), fairs and traditional costumes (Trachten). Austria is generally considered a country with a glorious history rather than a modern nation.

In an article about Vienna in “The Financial Times”30, the capital of Austria, is presented as the perfect place to rediscover the elegance of old Europe. “[…] while Vienna still isn’t necessarily considered cool – we’re talking Beethoven here […], it is the perfect place to rediscover the beauty and charm of old Europe” writes Rebecca Knight in this article. From the Innere Stadt to the Opera House, from the Spanish Riding School to the

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28 ibid. p.198
30 The Financial Times: “More Beethoven than Beatles” January 8-9, 2005
Museums and Kaffeehäuser, the author recommends the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus. “This is, after all, the home of Strauss, Brahms and Beethoven.” Another travel guide article in “The Sunday Telegraph”\(^{31}\) gives a more modern picture yet not less conservative one of the Austrian capital. “Vienna is a bit like a monk with a mobile - deeply conservative, but easily seduced by novelty.”

Another report in “The Financial Times” looks at Austria's historic contribution to European culture and highlights following aspects\(^{32}\):

“The multitude of languages meant that literature was more dispersed in the Habsburg Empire, but at the fin de siècle, wealthy bourgeois homes and the Vienna coffee houses became the stage for flourishing German-language literary scene. Among them was the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who wrote the libretti for Richard Strauss’ most famous operas and co-founded the Salzburg Festival together with theatre director Max Reinhardt, and his colleague Arthur Schnitzler.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein became a pioneer of modern scientific thinking, as did Ernst Mach, Karl Popper and other thinkers in or close to the “Vienna circle”.

Thanks to Freud and his followers, who disbursed around the world after 1938, psychoanalysis became one of the most influential intellectual movements of the 20th century with vast consequences for literature, art and every-day life.

In the visual arts, Vienna was eclipsed by Paris throughout the 19th century, but found its own way with the rise of Expressionism and Art Nouveau. Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele remain some of the most sought-after artists of this period. The architects Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos, who built their best known buildings in Vienna, paved the way for internationalist style of architecture.

The destruction of its Jewry by the Nazis left a huge void in the Austrian culture. With the exception of performing music, the country failed to regain its artistic predominance in the post-war period. But there have been some exceptions. In the late 1960s, the proponents of the school of Wiener Aktionismus such as Günter Brus, Adolf Frohner, Otto Mülhl and Herman Nitsch, had a major influence on the European art scene.

Today, Austrian writers play a disproportionate role in the German language literary scene, culminating in the 2004 Nobel Prize for literature for Elfriede Jelinek, a writer with particularly musical voice in her writings and strong, often radical, political views.

Film director Michael Haneke has become one of the stars of modern European film, particularly with his latest movie Caché. Haneke does most of his work in France and in French.

Moreover, culture has become a driving force behind tourism and a pillar of economic prosperity. [...] The Burgtheater is often cited as the best drama theatre of the German-language world. In July and August, the Salzburg Festival attracts top artists and thousands of visitors willing to pay exorbitant prices.

Vienna holds its festival weeks in late spring and the town Bregenz near the border with Switzerland and Germany features the most spectacular opera setting of all on its stage on Lake Constance.

In additions, hundreds of other towns and villages organise their own festivals.

Many of them cater to popular culture but there but there are also some true gems, such as the chamber music festival founded by violinist Gidon Kremer that is held every summer in the Lockenhaus castle.”

Schweiger claims that the old-fashioned and traditional character of Austria constitutes an advantage and not, as often stated a disadvantage for Austria’s economy\(^{33}\).

\(^{31}\) The Sunday Telegraph: “Travel: My kind of town - Vienna”

\(^{32}\) The Financial Times: “Waves of creativity that have surged through Vienna”, Special report: „The Future of Europe: Austria’s Presidency“, January 27, 2006, p.6

3.1.3 Skiing Austria

Both in summer and in winter Austria is a popular tourist destination. According to Schweiger’s study, Austria is generally known as very hospitable with foreign guests.34

Austria’s Alps are certainly among the most famous ski resorts in the world and they attract thousands of domestic and international tourists. “The Guardian” describes a touristic skiing area in the Silvretta Alps as follows:35 “More than a mile up in Europe’s playground, the sprawling ski arena of the Silvretta range in the Austrian Alps is criss-crossed by 42 cable cars and ski lifts disgorging up to 20,000 skiers a day on the 130 miles of perfect pistes.”

The article ironically points out that the cliché of traditional snow-covered mountain huts with yodelling waiters in their “Lederhosen” seems to have vanished: “Planted among the peaks are cafés and restaurants, shops and bars, cash dispensers and open-air concert venues. Alanis Morissette will be yodelling in the snow here next month. Sting, Tina Turner, and Elton John have drawn thousands more up the mountain in recent years.”

The economic profit of Austrian skiing resorts is clearly conveyed in the article: “This weekend the Silvretta is teeming with Easter holidaymakers relishing the snow and sunshine against a spectacular Alpine setting. At the foot of the slopes in the Austrian village of Ischgl, the 1,400 natives have never had it so good. This weekend marks the finale to another lucrative skiing season. Over a generation, winter sport has transformed what was a sleepy mountain village into a mass tourism magnet growing fat on some of the highest land a property prices in Austria. Not content with the scale and success of the fourth biggest ski resort in the Austrian province of Tyrol, however, Andreas Seibl has his eyes set on the bigger and better. “You’ve got to bear in mind both the environmental and the economic factors” said the pony-tailed manager of the Ischgl tourism association. “But we’ve got to stay competitive. We’re getting more guests every year. We have got to expand our skiing area.”

Of course, there is a negative side to the booming alpine tourism in Austria, which is also pointed out in the article. Environmentalists fight to prevent the mountains from being more and more destroyed and exploited by the tourism industry: “On the other side of the Silvretta ski slopes soars the Piz Val Gronda, a pristine and untamed peak dropping from 2,8000 metres to the Swiss border, an Alpine wilderness broken only by splendid old wooden refuge lodge that provides shelter for ramblers, scientists and alpinists. Ischgl - its mayor, tourism association, cable car company, and leading hoteliers - are determined to develop the slopes of the Gronda, investing €8m to obtain a further 45 miles of pistes. And there’s the rub. The project is drawing a swelling resistance movement, turning Piz Val Gronda into an Alpine battlefield, a test case for the future of mass tourism in the Alps. [...] “The Alps are totally overdeveloped, the most exploited mountain range in the world”, said Michael Revaz of Cipra, the Liechtenstein-based International Commission for the Protection of the Alps.”

However, Austrian ski resorts (such as Zell am See and Kitzbühel) remain world-famous and villages like Ischgl across Austria depend

34 ibid. p.295
3.1.4 Culinary Austria

Good and plentiful food is known as one of Austria’s most outstanding significance of the “Austrian way of life”. Often, one finds stereotyped pictures of traditional Austrian food in travel guidebooks, cookery books and in advertisements. Schweiger’s image-analysis\(^{37}\) confirms the association of Austria with tasty food and good wine and consumer-analyses show that eating and drinking are highly important for Austrians. Eating and drinking, thus, both play a crucial role for both Austrians themselves and are outstanding characteristics of the way Austria is seen from outside.

One of the most striking features of Austria’s kitchen is the country’s desserts. Schweiger’s studies reveal that Austria’s degree of culinary fame is predominantly due to its sweets. The enumeration of dishes which are known as “typically Austrian” shows that sweets dominate\(^{38}\): Traditional Viennese apple strudel, Chopped pancakes with stewed plums (Kaiserschmarren), Milk-sour cream strudel, Mozartkugel, pankaces, Sacher chocolate cake, etc.

Austria’s desserts are intrinsically linked to its world-famous coffee houses (Kaffeehäuser). At all times of day, Vienna coffee shops brim over with both locals and tourists, enjoying the beverage that made the 1682 Turkish siege of Vienna a happy memory, since it was then that Austrians were introduced to the indulgence of coffee. The refinement of some of Vienna’s coffee houses is unrivalled in the world, as every coffee house patron will tell you\(^{39}\).

Studies show that Austria is not only known as the “country of wine” but it is also, statistically seen, among the countries with the highest consumption of wine per person. Wine with its most important social meeting place, the Heuriger, is the epitome of the Austrian way of life\(^{40}\). Most wine gardens - like the vineyards that provide their principal attraction, the wine - are located in the Eastern half of Austria, where both the terrain configuration and the climate favour the cultivation of grapes. Vienna is blessed with a belt of vineyard-covered hills that surround the city and provide good-quality wine.

Most Heuriger are set on the outskirts of towns or cities, respectively in villages, but always in lush vegetation, so as to provide the shade and breezy haven most city dwellers crave in summer. Then of course there are the wine cellars, for those who seek both deep shelter from the sun and the proximity of the wine stash.

Not only the setting is rustic, but also the food served. Standing in front of the self-service food counters, patrons are faced with some really difficult decision-making: the food is unsophisticated but delicious. Heavy, often fat meats - meant to mitigate the effect of alcohol - lay next to spicy, thirst-stimulating spreads and diverse salads. Home-made bread, pretzels, rolls, on

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\(^{36}\) ibid.


the one hand, and traditional desserts on the other, round up the selection. Many of these establishments look back on a century-old history and tradition, like in the Viennese suburb of Grinzing, where the oldest Heuriger was founded in the twelfth century. The ancient walls house old wine squeezers, gigantic barrels, displays of hundreds of wine-making tools, corkscrews, and the like.

But there is an additional attraction to the traditional Heuriger: the music. A unique blend of Middle-European and Austrian folklore, next to standards from all countries of the world makes up the repertoire of the Heurigen-musicians. While most tunes stem from the former countries of the Austrian or Austro-Hungarian Empire, tourists from overseas will be delighted to hear traditional music from their own home countries. Played on violin, guitar, double-bass, zither, cymbal, mandolin, etc., and sung in the language of origin, the music only further enhances the enjoyment of wine and food.

Almost as popular as the Heuriger is the Austrian version of a fast food restaurant: the Würstelstand. Patronized at all hours of the day and night by young and old, by the well-to-do and the less affluent, by the hassled and the by the flaneur, by locals and tourists alike, the Würstelstand is the third Austrian culinary institution. Though some offer simple benches and some are even walk-in kiosks, the savoury sausages to be had at such stands will be usually - as the name suggests - eaten outdoors, standing. For a modicum, you can get the most wonderful sausages on earth, ranging from the cheese-and-pork Käsekrainer, through the Burenwurst and the Currywurst, to the Wienerwurst, which is paradoxically known under this name all over the world, but is popular in Austria under the name of Frankfurter.

3.2 Negative Stereotypes

Günther Bischof, author of many articles on the topic, considers Austria’s image in the world more negative. In his essay “Experiencing a Nasty Fall from Grace...” Austria’s Image in the U.S. [...] he writes: “In the U.S., Austria’s popular image after World War II was largely defined by Hollywood. On the one hand there was seedy and corrupt Vienna in the four-power occupation of the Third Man42, on the other hand there was and is the kitschy family saga of the Sound of Music, replete with Salzburg’s beautiful landscape and music, yet with a darker underside of Nazism raising its ugly head in pre-war Salzburg. When the occupation ended in 1955 and Austria gained neutrality (one of the few miraculous stories of the Cold War), Austria’s dark past was quickly forgotten and a superficial 5-M image of Mountains, Music, Mozart, Metternich, Maria Theresia came to prevail in the U.S. (the Austrian Cultural Institute in New York concluded this from media surveys in the 1980’s). The Nazis in the popular TV series Hogan’s Heroes were Germans not Austrians. [...]”

Anton Pelinka comments on the negative stereotypes about Austria as follows: “There is nothing unusual, of course, in the employment of simplifications and prejudices in stereotyping a country and its society. What is so specifically Austrian is the extreme attribution of

an unreserved declaration of love accorded together with a sometimes equally unequivocal disdain towards such a relatively small country: such a country is seldom taken notice of by the wider international public; it appears most probably on the radar screen of global observation when it delivers ‘bad news’. The majority of negative stereotypes with which Austria is confronted circle around Austrian anti-Semitism and Austrian participation in the Holocaust, around the half-concealed opportunism concerning relations with former (even ‘seriously involved) Nazis, and around the pseudo-innocent rhetoric of leading politicians when they refer to National Socialism - the Austrian stars of the international media are generally negative heroes. And it was, and is, criticism from outside which has forced Austria to adopt a critical self-perception.

Between the perception of Austria in the West and the self-perception of Austria there is a wide gap. Among the smaller EU countries Austria finds it particularly difficult to live up to what this country is believed to be when seen from outside. The role of a great power - the Habsburg Empire, the third largest country in Europe by size of territory, and the second largest with respect to population - is contradicted by a sober, realistic view just as it is negated by Austria’s ambivalence towards National Socialism. […]"

4 The Realistic View: Facts about the Austrian Economy

The present overview is predominantly based on information provided in the CIA World Factbook 2000, the 2003 U.S. Department of State website 44 and an article in “The Herald Tribune”45.

Similar to the German economic system, the economy of the Republic of Austria can be defined as a social market economy. Austria is considered a country with a high standard of living. The country retains its position among the top European economies, according to a survey by the OECD. After Luxemburg, Ireland and Denmark Austria is the 4th richest country within the European Union having a GDP per capita of approximately 33,000 USD. Growth, mainly pushed by strong exports, has been steady but slow in the years 2002-2005 between 1 and 2.5 %. Despite the recent softness in the economy, unemployment remains relatively low. Moreover, due to its demographic position in central Europe, Austria can be regarded as a pioneer in investing in Eastern and Central Europe.

As in most industrialised economies, services constitute the most important sector in the economy (accounting for two-thirds of the employment and 62% of output). Unlike many other developed countries, industry has maintained its share of total output at around 35%. The agricultural sector accounts for a mere 1.3 % GDP. With no mineral wealth to speak of, Austria’s main resources are its skilled labour force and industrial relations. The country’s central location and high-quality tourist assets are also important (skiing, Alpine scenery and rich cultural heritage) are also important.

4.1 Historical Facts

Austria became an important force in central Europe with the formation of the Habsburg Empire in the 15th century, and remained so until the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the first word war. The Republic of Austria emerged in 1918. In 1938 Austria was
incorporated into the German Third Reich. With the departure of the victorious Allied forces in 1955, it regained its independence as a neutral country. On January 1, 1999, Austria introduced the new Euro currency for accounting purposes. In January 2002, Euro notes and coins were introduced as substitutes for the Austrian Schilling. Economists agree that the economic effects in Austria of using a common currency have been positive.

4.2 Venturing into Eastern and Central Europe

Austrian’s status as a significant gateway to Eastern and Central Europe can historically be traced back to the first decades of the 20th century. Even though the Austro-Hungarian Empire (which stretched from what is now Poland to Transylvania in Romania) collapsed in 1918, Vienna did not cease to attract writers, composers and artists from this region. When the Iron Curtain was put up by Stalin in 1948, Vienna provided shelter for refugees of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the failed Prague Spring of 1968, and persecuted Jews escaping from the former Soviet Union.

In 1989 Austrian ground was further prepared for its economic investigation in Eastern Europe: months before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his Communist Hungarian counterpart, Gulag Horn, literally cut through the barbed wire that divided Western and Eastern Europe. This action subsequently allowed 700 East Germans to reach the West without being killed.

Due to the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, Austrian companies restricted themselves to Eastern and Central Europe. Anticipating that the EU membership will bring about an economic boom to countries like Romania or Bulgaria, they have started to invest in the

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Balkans. According to the Austrian Economy Ministry, the investment in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro has been enormous over the last couple of years.

### 4.3 From state-owned Industry to Privatisation

In order to protect Austria’s largest firms from Soviet takeover as war reparations, many of them were nationalized in the early post-war period. For many years, the government and its state-owned industries conglomerate played a very important role in the Austrian economy. However, starting in the early 1990s, state-owned firms started to operate largely as private businesses, and a great number of these firms were wholly or partially privatized. Although the government’s privatization work in past years has been very successful, it still operates some firms, state monopolies, utilities, and services.

### 4.4 Agriculture, Industry and Services

Austria’s agriculture is characterized by small and fragmented farms, similarly to other west European mountainous countries. Production is relatively expensive. Austria’s agricultural sector has been undergoing substantial reform under the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) since its becoming a member of the EU in 1995. Despite the fact that Austrian farmers provide about 80% of domestic food requirements, the agricultural contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) has declined since 1950 to less than 3%.

The most important goods produced in Austria are grains, potatoes, sugar beets, wine, fruit, dairy products, cattle, pigs, poultry and lumber. Although some industries are global competitors, such as several iron and steel works, chemical plants and oil corporations that are large industrial enterprises employing thousands of people, most industrial and commercial enterprises in Austria are relatively small on an international scale.
4.5 Trade Position

Trade with other EU countries accounts for almost 66% of Austrian imports and exports. Expanding trade and investment in the emerging markets of Central and Eastern Europe is a major element of Austrian economic activity. Trade with these countries accounts for almost 14% of Austrian imports and exports, and Austrian firms have sizable investments in and continue to move labour-intensive, low-tech production to these countries. Although the big investment boom has waned, Austria still has the potential to attract EU firms seeking convenient access to these developing markets. Total trade with the United States in 1999 reached $6.6 billion. Imports from the United States amounted to $3.7 billion, constituting a U.S. market share in Austria of 5.4%. Austrian exports to the United States in 1999 were $2.9 billion or 4.6% of total Austrian exports. Among Austria’s most important exports-commodities are: machinery and equipment, motor vehicles and parts, paper and paperboard, metal goods, chemicals, iron and steel; textiles and foodstuffs.

4.6 An optimistic Outlook?

What, then, could the economic future of Austria look like? Austria will have to face the challenge of improving its economic competitiveness, says the OECD47. As Asia’s influence continues to rise, the great chance in recent years for Austria has been the market in the New Member States of Eastern Europe. A prognosis drawn up by the Federation of Austrian Industry is quite optimistic: “There is no chance of Austria returning to the cozy certainties of the years before EU accession and globalization. Businesses and employees can expect a number of far-reaching changes over the next ten years. Domestic companies have benefited from the economic rejuvenation of Eastern Europe. They must continue to bank on this upswing as part of their response to the growing pressures from Asia. In this respect, Austria should do well as a business location. Growth potential in Central and Eastern Europe will begin to flag in the medium term. But the door is still open for a lot more of the smaller local companies to take a bold leap beyond Austria’s borders”.48

The future of Austria’s economy will not only be challenged by emerging markets like India and China, but also by a growing predominance of the USA. “In order to position our Austria in the global networks and to fit it in with the requirements of a future American century there is still a lot to do”, writes Hannes Androsch, a manager and former Austrian politician50. He gives a positive outlook and argues that it will be Austria’s own choice whether the country will succeed in keeping at pace with the modern world. He concludes with the sentence: “Austria on top, when it wants to be there” and then ponders about the wording of the sentence. “Austria on top when it wants to be there” could mean “at what time” or “as soon as”, but it also suggests the conditional: “Austria on top, if it wants to be there”. It is up to us if we want to be there.50

![Graph showing exports and imports of goods 1990-2007](http://www.news.rolandberger.com/content/2Fnews2Fcontent/2F2006-02-27-Outlook_2015.html)

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, WIFO

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47 see: [www.economist.com/countries/Austria](http://www.economist.com/countries/Austria)

48 see: [http://www.news.rolandberger.com/content/2Fnews2Fcontent/2F2006-02-27-Outlook_2015.html](http://www.news.rolandberger.com/content/2Fnews2Fcontent/2F2006-02-27-Outlook_2015.html)


50 ibid. p.90
5 Suggestions for Classroom Use

5.1 Warming-up

Before you start reading texts on this subject matter, you are required to list:

a) common stereotypes of topics of your choice (e.g. cultures, people, groups of people, nations, languages, food, etc.)

b) common stereotypes of Austria by referring to your own experience (e.g. to conversations you had with “foreign” people about Austria)
The exercise can be done in pairs or in small groups. After having listed the items on a flipchart-paper and after having subdivided them in positive and in negative stereotypes, they are presented to the rest of the class and compared to the outcomes of other pairs/groups.

As a follow-up exercise a discussion in class can be initiated. Pupils might exchange their personal ideas on the origins of these stereotypes and discuss whether they are “right” or “wrong”.
5.2 Mini Research Projects and Project Work

Students are asked to carry out an interview on the issue of common stereotypes of Austria. As their interview partners they could choose:

- a person who lives abroad and “knows” Austria only from the media or other reports (students could contact a pen pal, they could use an internet forum, they could try to get in touch with somebody by using “skype” or other modern communication tools, etc.)
- a person who has just moved to Austria

If technically possible, the interview could be recorded (e.g. with a minidisk-recorder) and the most striking results are then presented to the class in a short presentation. Students can also write a short essay on their outcomes.

Students should conduct a survey with the title “Existing stereotypes of Austria”.
They are asked to formulate **fifteen comments on the Austrian culture or the Austrians in general**, e.g. “Austria is a modern country”, “Austria is known for its classical music”, “Austrian wine is world-famous”, etc.

The comments can either be based on intuitive knowledge about the Austrian image, on first results of classroom-discussions on this subject-matter or on common stereotypes treated in the text (cf. chapter 3) or in the newspaper articles enclosed in the appendix. The answers to the comments should range from “strongly agree”, “agree”, “no comment”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. Students can then interview family, friends, teachers, etc., compile the responses and analyse and comment the data.

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Students should visit **websites about Austria** which provide information for tourists and analyse to which extent common stereotypes are used in order to promote Austria (e.g. www.austria.info, www.aboutaustria.org, www.salzburg.info, www.austria-tourism.at, etc.). They are further asked to comment on the authenticity of the positive images provided on these platforms, i.e. they should discuss whether they have anything to do with reality or not.

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Students are required to find out as much as possible about **the economic profits Austria makes due to its cultural wealth** (see chapter 3.2.). Depending on their personal interests, they could, for instance, find out the number of tickets sold in various cultural institutions (museums, theatres, the Spanish Riding School), of records of Austrian artist sold per year, of tourists attracted to Austria because of the “Year of Mozart”, etc.

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The research could be carried out by visiting websites, consulting books, interviewing representatives of different cultural institutions, etc.
5.3 Working with the Text

⚠️ Students can be required to do the following exercises:

Read chapter 2 and try to answer the question “What is stereotype?” in your own words.
Do the exercise prompted by the authors Maccrae, Stangor, Hewstone:

“Stop for a moment and think about one of the many social groups that make up a diverse geographic area such as Europe or the United States. You’ll easily (perhaps you think too easily!) conjure up a portrait of what the people in the group are like. You may generate an oversimplified impression of the characteristics of the group as a whole — that Greeks are fun-loving, that Irish drink much, or that African Americans are boisterous. Or perhaps you will retrieve particular instances of people from the group — maybe an image of Marcello Mastroianni appears, reminding you that Italian men are good looking.”

Write down the key words of your brainstorming on a piece of paper and exchange your associations with your neighbour.
Get together in pairs and tell each other if you have ever been confronted with negative stereotypes. If yes, give a brief report of the situation and discuss possible reasons for it. Explain how you felt in this situation.
Read the text from the magazine “Time” about the Vienna Opera Ball carefully (chapter 3.1.1.) and sum up the main points the article makes about this event. Exchange and discuss your personal opinion about the Opera Ball in a small group. Find thorough arguments supporting your opinion. Further share your attitude towards the demonstrations which take place during the event in front of the Opera House. Could you imagine taking part in it? Why (not)?

Sum up your discussion on an overhead transparency by subdividing your opinions into arguments for and against the Opera Ball and the demonstrations. Present the outcomes of your group work to the rest of the class.
Write an essay about your opinion about Austria’s marketing strategy of its ski resorts by referring to the article in “The Guardian” (see chapter 3.1.3.). The author ironically reports that Alanis Morissette is yodelling in one of Austria’s most famous ski resort. Do you think that “events” like this attract even more tourists? What image of Austria do they convey?
In small groups collect possible measures that could be taken to protect the environment and keep up the economic success of the tourist resorts in the Austrian Alps at the same time?
5.4 Issues for Discussion

Students should discuss the following question (in class, in small groups or in pairs) and/or write an essay based on it:

Do you consider it crucial that children and teenagers are educated in such a way that they are prevented from forming biased negative stereotypes of other social groups, cultures, peoples, etc.? Why (not)? Argue your points and state where, how and to which extent educational measures should be taken (e.g. in school, in politics, etc.).

The students are asked to form five groups. Each group is provided with one of the following pictures of the Austrian advertising campaign “Joe & Sally” (as a reference you can use the following website: http://www.austria-tourism.biz/joesally/)
Stereotypes or Realistic Views? How is Austria seen from outside?

The following questions could be discussed in the groups:

- What do you regard as the key message conveyed by this advertising campaign?

- Why, according to your opinion, does the campaign use penguins?

- Which target group does the advertisement address?

- Do you think that the campaign is successful? Why (not)?

- To which extent does the picture reflect a typical stereotype of Austria?

- Can you find a relation between the picture and the stereotypes mentioned in chapter 3?
5.5. Working with the Newspaper Articles

The newspaper articles in the appendix can be used to deepen students’ understanding of Austria’s image in the media. The appendix comprises articles dealing with Austria’s EU presidency 2006 politically and economically and articles treating cultural issues.

Bibliography:


Websites:

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- http://www.economist.com/countries/Austria
- http://www.austria.org/mar01/music.html
- http://wko.at
- http://www.dasneueoesterreich.at
- http://www.statistik.at
Stereotypes or Realistic Views? How is Austria seen from outside?

Newspaper articles:

• The Guardian: “Higher and higher: ski resorts in fight to survive global warming” March 26, 2005, online edition: http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1445899,00.html

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• The Financial Times „Waves of creativity that have surged through Vienna“, Special Report: „The Future of Europe: Austria’s Presidency“; January 27, 2006, p.6


• The Sunday Telegraph: “Travel: My kind of town – Vienna”

• Time: “You shall go to the Ball“ January 23, 2006, p.44

Glossary:

ethnology

the comparative and historical study of different societies and cultures

GDP

A country’s Gross Domestic Product is one of several measures of size of its economy. The most common approach to measuring and understanding GDP is the expenditure method:

\[ \text{GDP} = \text{consumption} + \text{investment} + \text{exports} - \text{imports} \]

metaphor

an expression which describes a person or object in a literary way by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics to the person or object you are trying to describe

merchandising products

A marketing practice in which the brand or image from one product or service is used to sell another. It is most prominently seen in connection with films, usually those in current release, and with television shows oriented towards children. Trademarked brand names, logos, or character images are licensed to manufacturers of products such as toys or clothing, who then make items in or emblazoned with the image of the license, hoping they’ll sell better than the same item with no such image. Merchandising products typically include CDs, textiles, books, cups etc.

OECD

A multidisciplinary international body made up of 30 member countries that offers a structure/forum for governments to consult and cooperate with each other in order to develop and refine economic and social policy. Its work can lead to binding and non-binding agreements between the member countries to act in a formal way. The OECD is best known for its publications and statistics.

onomatopoeic word

a word which include sounds that are similar to the noises that the words refer to

sociology

the study of the relationships between people living in groups, especially in industrial societies

terminological clarifications

explanations of a word’s origin and meaning

typographical element

typography means the style, size and arrangement of the letters in a piece of printing
Globale Wirtschaft, globale Bildung

mit Wirtschaftsminister Dr. Martin BARTENSTEIN und Wirtschaftskammerpräsident Dr. Christoph LEITL
Mittwoch, 26. April 2006, 10.30 Uhr, Wiener Börsesäle, Wipplinger Straße 34, 1010 Wien

PROGRAMM

9.30 – 10.30: International Breakfast Welcome

10.30: Begrüßung:
Dr. Michael LANDERTSHAMMER
Leiter der Abteilung für Bildungspolitik der Wirtschaftskammer Österreich

key note speeches:
Dr. Martin BARTENSTEIN
Bundesminister für Wirtschaft und Arbeit

Dr. Christoph LEITL
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• HR Sr. Dr. Beatrix MAYRHOFER, Direktorin des Schulzentrums Friesgasse
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