

Prime Relocation

Defining “Swissness”



Switzerland is well-known for the traditional Swiss values of [democracy](#), [punctuality](#), [efficiency](#), [first class service](#) and [precision](#). It is also renowned for its wonderful mountains, chocolates and pen-knives. But did you know that “Swissness” is now a contemporary trendy brand and marketing tool that companies are using to their advantage to sell products? What attributes are they aiming for? It is above all the concepts of [naturalness](#), [multiculturalism](#), [fairness](#), [neutrality](#) and the [reliability](#) of that quintessential Swissness that the companies are flagging so successfully.

However, when Swissair a company that embodied Switzerland and everything Swiss was grounded in 2001, the Swiss brand suffered a deep shock and crush in reputation. Everyone thought the Swiss reputation had been ruined for good. The effect was so far reaching that an international study was launched in 2008 into reviewing the Swiss brand called “Swissness Worldwide” and was led by the University of St. Gallen. The findings were published in 2010 and found that Swissness was associated worldwide with high-end products, with beautiful landscape and scenery and also with traditional values, but the researchers also found some negative connotations associated with Swissness, maybe a trail of the Swissair crash, maybe more to do with the Swiss way.

These included concepts such as: [unfriendliness](#), [cold](#), [reserve](#), [distance](#), [political neutrality](#), [even political disinterest](#), [high prices](#) and [strange financial facts](#) as the main concerns. Within the study, Switzerland was often compared with Japan or Germany in terms of

output and efficiency, but never with any other European country. They also found Switzerland to be synonymous with top performance be it with regards to watches, the finance world, cleanliness or in terms of building quality. All traits to be proud of. So what is this strange mix of positive and negative attributes – what is Swissness all about and how is it any good when marketing a product?

As a country, Switzerland boasts a diverse cultural folk and this migration can be interpreted as a reference to a certain “[world openness](#)” and this would therefore explain why Switzerland is also well known for being a country of [innovation](#). Pocket knives were invented here, the Swatch watch and car, and of course the World Wide Web to name but a few. The Swiss are known for having a very comprehensive and top quality health system, an intact and tight family unit and security. All positives in fact.

The discussion so far seems to reinforce the concept of Swissness as being something very well definable and concrete, but in fact it may much more equate to that non-definable, non-specific success and the economic success and passion in particular that is so typically Swiss and maybe it is that which sells so well and not the cows in the meadows or the chocolates which are rather superficial after all – or are they?

Swissness, in my opinion, is embodied succinctly by the amazing Unique airport in Zürich Kloten. It just oozes sophistication, quality, space, high standards, wealth, quality of life, modernism, openness, functionality,

quality of service and that special something that other airports just don't have. It is "unique" after all!

Whatever it is, Swissness is all around, it is predominantly positive and if you are thinking of relocating here now, I hope you are intrigued to discover these all so difficult qualities synonymous with Swissness for yourself.