

How social media affects the decision making process of young travelers: correlation between instagram and Russians

Yulia Gazaryan



Author Yulia Gazaryan	
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<p>The aim of the research is to measure how Russian tourists use Instagram and whether it has an influence on their decision-making process of leisure destination. Furthermore, to find out how tourism organisations use Instagram for business and to offer suggestions for their development.</p> <p>Theoretical research includes discussion of consumer behaviour, motives to travel, push and pull factors, and decision-making process. Concept of Instagram is deeply described, its key features, content creation and marketing strategies.</p> <p>Quantitative method was used for the research. Two surveys were created to gather required data, one for Russian tourists in age group 18 - 40 and another for tourism organisations. First survey was distributed on Instagram and received 104 responses of target group, second survey was sent by email and received 8 responses.</p> <p>Russian tourists are active Instagram users and 82% of respondents check Instagram at least every couple of hours. Instagram has an influence on target group as 30% of the respondents consider it as important. On the other hand, companies have a lot of challenges in Instagram usage and need to get more knowledge about it.</p> <p>In conclusion, Instagram is a great platform to target Russian tourists, therefore companies should consider improving their brand awareness by doing paid advertisements and collaborating with influencers among tourism field.</p>	
Keywords Instagram, social media, consumer behaviour.	

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1 Introduction

Tourism is a constantly growing field and for the last couple of years international arrivals worldwide grew 4% - 6% (UNWTO, 2020). Travelling helps people to broaden their horizons, experience new things, try new food and see the places they wanted to see by themselves. Back then when Internet was not that widely used, people would go on a trip, take a lot of photos or videos and show them to their family and friends after the trip. Nowadays, when internet became common and almost everyone is using it, tourists started to share their experiences' through it, by posting photos and video on their social media. According to Emarsys, in 2019 there were 3.2 billion users which is 42% of the population on social media.

Social media is wide and includes many apps, for example Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram. Instagram was created as a platform to share photos that is why it became very popular source to share moments of their lives. Users post around 80 million photos a day. Photos posted on social media makes people motivated and eager to travel to different countries, to visit the place they saw online. (National Geographic, 2017) Many companies have noticed it and started to use Instagram as a marketing tool. According to Instagram statistics of 2020, more than 25 million of accounts are companies. This way Instagram became platform not just for fun, but also for business.

There were a plenty of researches done about social media, Instagram in particular and marketing, however the author have not seen a research based on demographic. Being born and raised in Russia, the author had a big interest in researching whether Instagram influence Russian tourists in their destination choice process or not. Especially, because Russian users take a big part of the whole Instagram audience, it takes fourth place in the world and there are 46 million of users. (Statista, 2020). Moreover, the topic is connected to author's career plans and would increase professional skills for career development in the tourism field. Therefore, author decided to apply gained at social media marketing and advertising courses knowledge to find the answer for the research question and then to create a guide which any tourism organisation can apply, in order to market their services and increase brand awareness.

Russia plays a significant part in tourism business, as the number of outbound tourists in Russia has reached more than 19 million for per period of January – end of June 2019. This is number is 9% higher than in 2018 for the same period. (Matt, 2019) According to RMAA report, Russians spent 43 billion US dollars during their trips in 2012, this moved the country to the top 5 countries based on citizens' spending. Russia kept the fifth place

for couple of years, however due to crisis in 2015 and 2016, it was not even in top 10. After the crisis, Russia raised again and was moved to 10th place in 2017, moreover in 2018 it increased by 16% and took the 8th place. Research held by NAFI in a period of December 2017 and January 2018, showed that 61% of Russian tourists use Internet in order to plan their long-distance trips. Due to cold climate in most area of Russia, citizens are looking for a warm place to travel to, they value luxury hotels, food and services. They prefer the staff to speak Russian (Horner S. & Swarbrooke J., 2016)

1.1 Key concepts

In this subchapter main concepts used further in the paper will be overviewed and explained.

Social media is a wide area of websites and applications which were created and are used to share content and communicate. Most people think of social media as an app, however at the beginning it started with a website on computer. Due to development and increased number of smartphone users, social media is commonly said to be an app. (Hudson, M. ThebalanceSMB. 2020)

Instagram is an image-sharing app with plenty of features for editing and posting both photos and videos. (Coles L., 2017, p. 121) According to poll uploaded on Statista in 2020, most global users on Instagram are 18 – 35 years old. It was the second most downloaded app on App store in 2018 (Apple, 2018) and now there are over 1 billion active users. (Instagram, 2020)

Influencers are people who have power to control other people's purchasing decisions based on their status, trustworthiness and expertise in a certain topic. Influencers on social media are users who have built close connection with their audience and was able to make them follow their lead, as well as trust their opinion. Influencers are creating trends and have a high power in affection of the audience. (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020)

1.2 Objectives and research questions

Objectives of the thesis are to understand consumer behavior and consumer decision process, define all the steps, and find out what motivates Russian tourists to travel and which factors matter the most for them in choosing a destination. Furthermore, to look at tourism

business through Instagram prospective and to understand what the best marketing strategies and advertisements for business accounts are, to find out who the travel influencers are and how their opinion affects other tourists and their decisions. The purpose is to create a guidance for anyone in the tourism field who would want to promote any destination on Instagram, for example, travel agencies who are selling travel packages in different countries or DMOs (destination marketing organizations), and would want to know how people choose where to travel and how can they promote their products or what kind of information they should have to make tourists choose their offer. Below are the identified research questions:

- Which sources Russian tourists use to learn more about tourist destinations?
- Which factors affects their destination choice process?
- Does Instagram have any influence on their choice of destination?
- How tourism companies are using Instagram features to promote their services?
- What are the key benefits and challenges of using Instagram for them?
- Where do they get the most of their clients from?
- How interested tourism organisations are to work with influencers?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The report is written in a traditionally structured way. Starting with the Introduction part where the overview of the topic and held research are presented. Definitions of key concepts are also described in chapter 1. Followed by theoretical part divided into 2 chapters. Chapter 2 includes information about consumer behaviour, motivation, overview of push and pull factors affecting traveller's decision-making process, and chapter 3 describes concepts of Instagram, marketing strategies, content creation and travel influencers.

Continuing with chapter 4 where the research process, methods, creation of surveys, as well as analysis of the received data are described. Followed by the result section where the results and summary with key suggestions are presented.

2 Consumer behaviour

Consumer behavior plays a key role in destination marketing and development. Understanding of what exactly makes customers to decide to purchase some products or services affects marketing strategies companies use. Consumer behavior is frequently changing due to internal and external factors, that's why it is crucial to be constantly monitoring your customers' needs and desires. Booking a trip requires a bigger budget and more time, than just doing groceries or buying some clothes, therefore customers usually take their time and analyze a lot of offers before deciding. Companies should analyze their customers' needs and be able to fulfill them. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007.)

The model below was presented by Hudson (2008), these seven factors tend to be the most influencing consumer's behaviour. The most important one believed to be motivations. All seven factors will be discussed in this chapter.

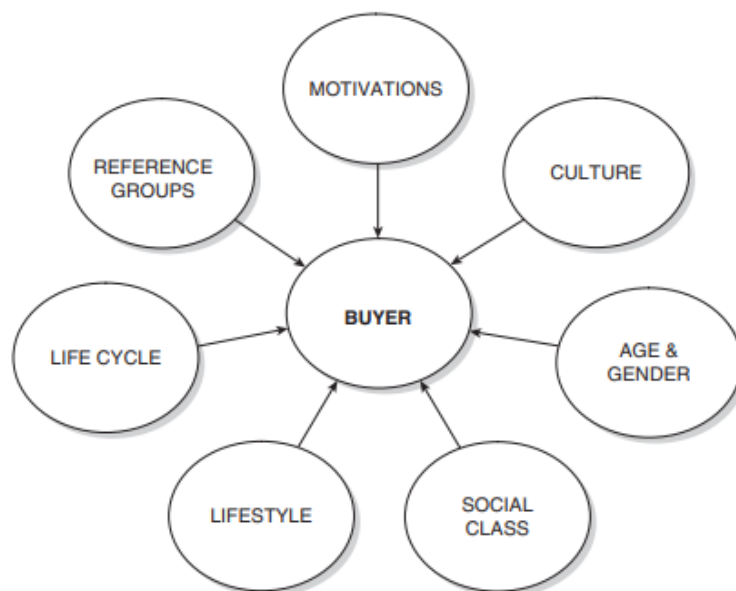


Figure 1. Factors influencing consumer behavior. (Hudson 2008)

Motivation is the strong power that makes people to do some actions, therefore it is crucial to understand tourists' motivations to travel, choose a certain destination, hotel or service. According to Hudson, needs are the key to motivation and in order to understand people's motivations, firstly you should understand their needs. The first model of human needs showed in the figure 2, it was invented by Maslow in 1943 and still stays the most relevant.

The model presents the hierarchy of needs, first one being the most crucial and the last one being the least needed for a human being. Once first need is fulfilled, motivators are changed in accordance with the next one. Nowadays, most of the needs from the model are automatically fulfilled, therefore the most important need seem to be the self-actualization which stands for self-fulfillment. (Hudson S. & L., 2017) This means that people want to develop further, learn more and this is what could be their primary motivator for actions now.



Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Maslow, 1943.)

Culture is what builds people's behaviour, it is what cause how we live, behave, communicate within the society. Culture is what sets certain norms and beliefs which affect people's reaction on different situations and their self-image. This will be further discussed on the example of Russian tourists.

Most tourism products and services are segmented by age. There are different generations and all of them have different behaviours and tends, therefore travel suppliers usually target a specific generation or age category and design their products mostly to them. In some societies, there is also segmentation based on gender. According to Hudson, nowadays more women are taking business trips than before, and they tend to be more demanding towards high-quality services and products than males.

Social class still seems to be one of the most influencing factors. It is based on wealth, income and the position a person occupies. It is believed that people from different social classes have different needs and motivations. For example, people from higher social classes tend to travel more and to choose high-quality services. (Hudson S. and L., 2007)

Lifestyle is based on how people spend their time, money and energy. It is widely used by marketers, as well as psychographics which are based on people's activities, interests and opinions. The VALS system is the best-known method to categorize people according to their lifestyle. It includes eight types: innovators, thinkers, achievers, experiencers, believers, strivers, makers, and survivors. (Hudson, 2008) This system helps to understand customers' behavior more deeply.

Tourists' decision process, needs and choices tend to change during their life cycle. People change all the time and their travel habits change with them. For example, a solo traveler would choose a different type of travel than a family traveler.

Reference groups are groups of well-educated and experienced people, who share their experience and values with those who are less educated. This influences a volunteer trends, when experienced travelers want to spend their holidays by helping others. (Hudson, 2008)

Another similar model was presented by Dixit (2017), consumer purchase decision process is influenced by internal, external and situational factors, as well as marketing mix influences. Internal influences refer to customer's personal values, needs and expectations. People that surround a customer, e.g. family, friends and relatives, society, and cultural values and beliefs are the external factors and have a huge influence on customer's decisions. (Dixit, 2017, 9.) Situational factors are not about the product, but rather about consumer's mood or time he/she has.

Marketing mix consists of four elements: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. There are two main strategies on promoting the product, first one is head-to-head and stands for competition with the same product, another one is to present your product in a smaller market where other products differ from yours. (Dixit, 2017)

Price has a big influence on customer's behavior, because from their point of view the price shows value and quality of the product. Therefore, expectations of customers are influenced by price. Place where to market and sell the product is chosen according to number of consumers, their decision-making process, quantity of products expected to be sold, its value to customers and cost of marketing channels and competition on the market. (Dixit, 2017)

Promotion of the product can be done by advertising, which is any paid way of presenting the product, by personal selling which is the seller-buyer way of communication, by public

relations which has influence on customer's emotions and values, by sales promotions which are used to increase customer's interest in the product by performing a short-term campaign, by marketing directly which refers to face-to-face, email, phone, catalogue and online marketing. (Dixit, 2017, 10.)

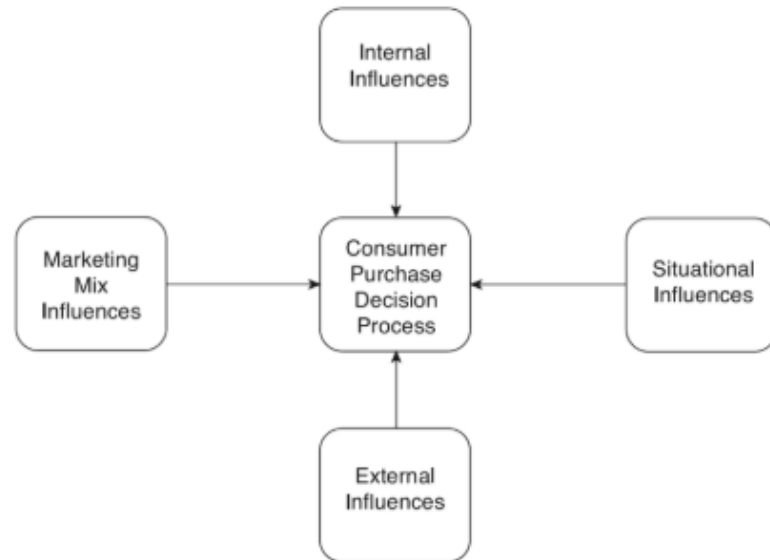


Figure 3. Overview of consumer behavior. (Dixit 2017.)

In this part of the chapter we looked at different consumer behavior models, and hierarchy of needs. What is motivation and how people get motivated will be discussed further in subchapter 2.1.

2.1 Motivation to travel

According to Swarbrooke and Horner, this topic is not fully explored, even though there are a lot of theories and different models, they are rather based on theory than a proper research. Factors which motivate people to travel are different for every tourism product, tourist's characteristics and the situation.

The figure below shows six factors that have influence and motivates a tourist to purchase a particular product. Some tourists decide to visit a quiet place to get relaxation or improve their health, this is based on physical factor. Then some people would base their choice on their own development need to be able to explore and learn something new.

(Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 54.)

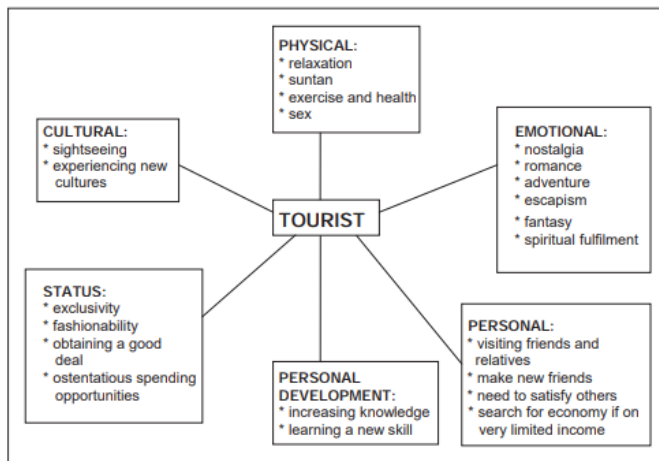


Figure 4. A typology of motivators in tourism. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 54.)

Every tourist is an individual, therefore motivators are different for every one of them. They are based on different factors such as tourist's personality, lifestyle, past travel experience, their past life memorable moments, their expectations about their own strengths and weaknesses and the way they want other people see them. All those factors can vary during the lifetime. No tourist is affected by just one motivational factor, it is always a combination of different factors. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 55.)

2.2 Push and Pull factors

The push and pull factors theory was presented by Dann 1977. Dann believed that there are only two main factors which makes people travel. One called push factor is the one which make tourist leave their place of residence, another is called pull factor and it is what makes tourists to decide where exactly to go.

Later Crompton (1979) agreed with Dann, however suggested nine motives for travelling. Seven of them were social - psychological: leaving the place of residence, eager to experience something new and self-development, relaxation, self-status, regression, relationships and facilitation of social interaction. Two of them were cultural: novelty and education.

Most push factors are individual's needs and desires, such as the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction. Pull factors are the attractiveness of a destination, including beaches, recreation facilities and cultural attractions (Uysal and Jurowski, 1996). Usually pull factors are analysed by 3A analysis,

which refers to accessibility, attractions and amenities. Accessibility of the destination should be easy, for example direct flights, convenient arrival and departure time and no transfers. Attractions are crucial in building customer's satisfied experience, for example nice beaches, museums, beautiful parks, unique attractions. Moreover, amenities are what creates the comfortable trip, luxury and comfortable accommodation, unique restaurants, shopping and many others. Besides 3A, there are other factors attracting people, such as promotion online, no visa requirements, price level and safety of the place.

2.3 Decision-making process

Decision-making is a complex process which is affected and changed by different situations and factors. According to Howard and Sheth (1969), there are three stages of consumer's commitment depending on the situation.

First one is extended problem-solving, at this stage consumer does a long research and compares different offers. Usually this happens when planning a long-haul holiday. Second one is limited problem-solving, at this level consumer already have some experience and knowledge and does a little research. Third one is habitual problem-solving, during this stage consumers make a purchase based on their previous experience and well-known brand name or offer. (Hudson S. & L., 2017)

Roles which customers play have also a crucial influence on decision-making process. It is believed that there are five such roles. (Engel Blackwell and Miniard, 1990)

1. Initiator is a person who starts the whole planning and purchasing process.
2. Influencer is a person who sets the preferences and expectations of future purchase. This could be not just one person, but a group of friends or relatives.
3. Decider is someone who has the final saying based on who has the higher status within a group and who owns the budget.
4. Buyer is a person who does the purchase and goes to travel agents.
5. User is the person who goes on the trip.

It is believed that tourism purchasing process is not much different from any other product purchasing. There are six stages showed in the figure below which a consumer is going through on the way to the actual purchase. (Hudson 2008)

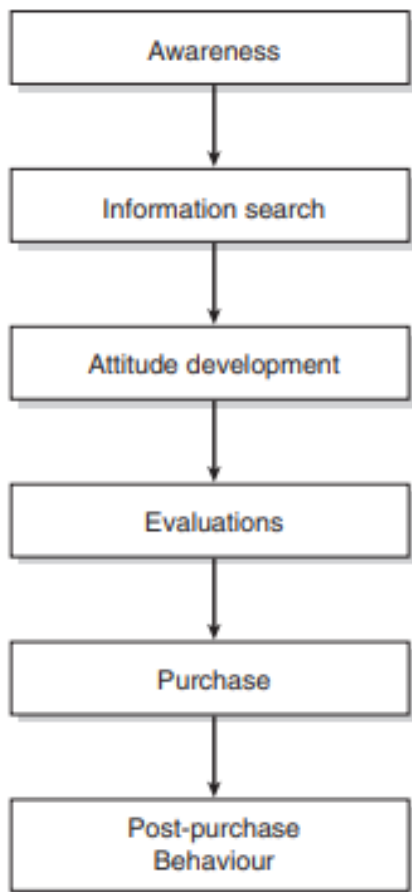


Figure 5. The Consumer Buying process. (Hudson 2008)

Consumer starts the process at the awareness stage, where he usually gets information through WOM, search engines or advertisements. The next stage is information search and refers to discussed above levels of commitment based on situations. This evolves into the attitude development, when customer gets a new view on product or a little change on already existing attitude. At the next stage, a customer will compare different offers or products and evaluate which one to choose based on friends or relative's advice, reviews etc. After this, consumer will finally make the purchase and move to post-purchase behavior stage, where the consumer's satisfaction will decide whether he/she may purchase the product or service again. (Hudson 2008)

Nowadays, everyone knows how to use different technologies, especially kids who were born after 2010 and are called Gen Alpha. According to Expedia Group research, the biggest influence on the destination have travel review sites and online agencies – 63%, then 46% are for both family, friends recommendations and search engines. 43% say that Young children have influence on their family trip destination choice and 35% say social media influence their decisions as well.

FAMILY TRAVEL DECISIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY MULTIPLE RESOURCES, INCLUDING YOUNG CHILDREN

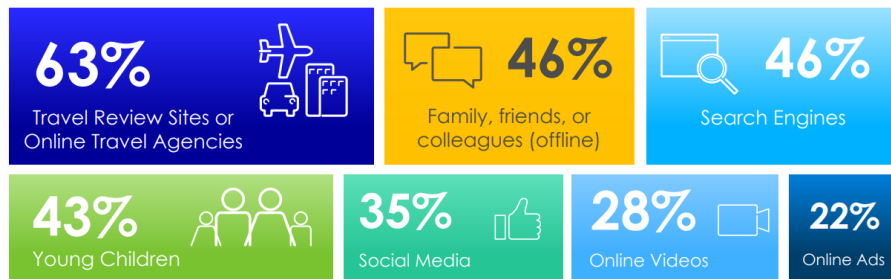


Figure 6. Family travel decisions statistic. (Expedia Group, 2019).

3 Instagram

For the last couple of years social media has grown dramatically, the number of users is growing every day and have reached more than 1 billion monthly active users on Instagram alone. (Instagram, 2020) Now using social media seem as usual as any other routine we have. Instagram is a free app, mostly used on smartphones, where people can share their photos, post videos and communicate with others.

Instagram started as a social media where you could just share pictures with your friends, however since then it has grown and developed dramatically. Nowadays, there are a lot of features which users can use to create content and communicate with his/her audience. Moreover, it developed into business platform, as it is even possible to do advertisements and different campaigns there. At the beginning, most of users were doing life-style content, however now there are a lot of different categories such as: Business, Fashion, Beauty, Medicine, Education and Tourism.

Instagram is a great source for all tourism organisations, including hotels, restaurants and resorts. Most people enjoy taking pictures during their trips and later share it with family and friends, due to Instagram it is possible to do it right away and not to wait for the moment you get home.

Moreover, possibility of using hashtags, locations search and other features for searching made it easier for people to use Instagram when planning their holidays. Therefore, tourism organisations and DMOs should use it to promote their services and products. In this chapter the concept of Instagram, its key features, marketing strategies and the content creation are discussed.

3.1 Instagram key features

Instagram has a lot of features that general users and businesses can use, such as stories, hashtags, location and IGTV. There are only three ways where you can post on Instagram, those are feed, stories and IGTV. In this chapter, the most used features will be described.

At the beginning when Instagram was just launched, the only place where users could post a picture was feed. Then every post in the feed was showed in a chronological order, now the order of posts depends on different rules and factors, for example if content seem interesting, according to amount of comments and likes, then it will be showed to a bigger number of users. Although, if it does not tend to be engaging, then Instagram supposes that this is not good content and doesn't show it that much. (Jason Miles, 2019).

When posting a picture it is possible to add location at the top of it, this allows other users to see where it was taken and check other pictures at the same location by clicking on it. Based on Social report, posts with tagged location get 79% higher engagement rate, than posts without it. Furthermore, users can tag other users, then those who have been tagged get notification and can either leave it as it is or delete themselves from the post. In the description section users are allowed to write something or add hashtags.

Hashtags are used in many popular social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Instagram has it too, hashtags are used to mark a post with a specific word or mixture of words, which users can use to find similar posts. There you can see top posts which have higher level of engagement, and recent posts which are added in a chronological order. Due to appearance of Stories, there are also showed stories posted with this hashtag. Moreover, Instagram algorithm shows related hashtags. According to Later and Hubspot, adding at least one hashtag to a post, increases engagement rate up to 12.6%, however having more than 6 hashtags can decrease the engagement. (Hubspot, 2019)

The most popular hashtags are not the most engaging, on the contrary it can cause decreasing of views, because popular hashtags are used by too many users and your post might just be lost around them.

Now many companies use unique hashtags and it is considered to be a good way to promote products or engage with audience. (Jason Miles, 2019). For example, as showed in the figure 6, Statravel came up with this unique personalized #StartTheAdventure which their followers can use and then be featured on Statravel page.

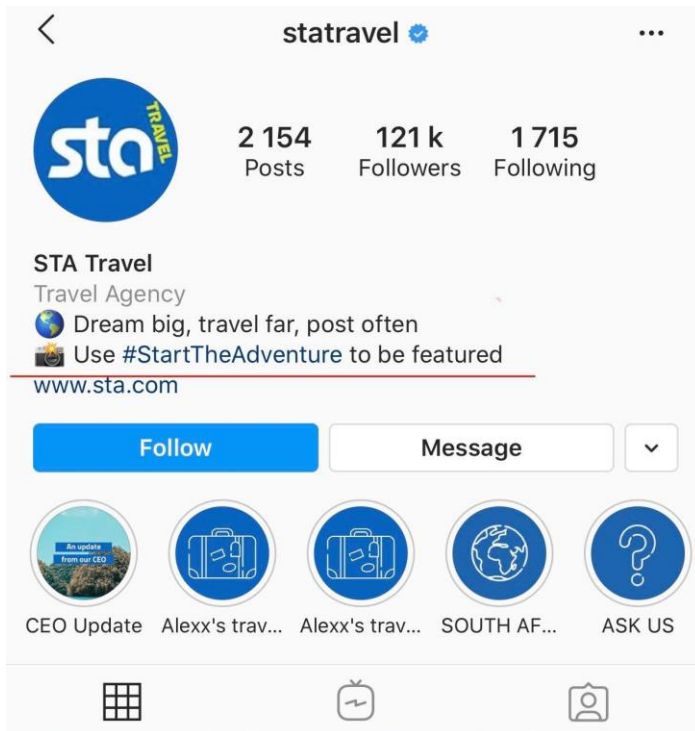


Figure 7. Personalized hashtag example on Statravel. Instagram App.

Instagram launched Stories in 2016 and two years after it had more than 400 million users per day (Jason Miles, 2019). Stories can be used to post a picture, a link, a video or boomerang, however the primer difference with a normal post in feed is that Stories can be seen only within 24h after it was posted. Although, later Instagram added another functionality to Stories and now it can be saved as Highlights on your profile page. This is widely used to create and save highlights permanently based on different topics. Screenshot below shows saved highlights, as it is showed in figure 7 down below.

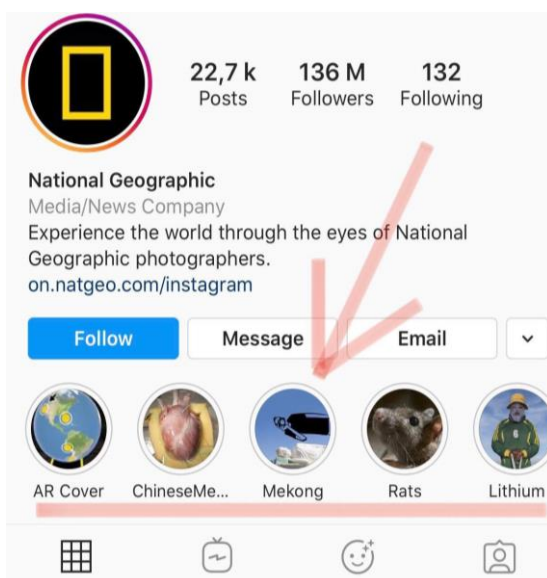


Figure 8. Highlights example on National Geographic. Instagram App.

Later, in 2018 Instagram launched one more feature which is called IGTV. This was created in order to allow users to post videos longer than 15 sec, as well as to be able to skip and pause the video. Small accounts can post videos up to 10 mins and big verified accounts can post videos up to 60 min. (Jason Miles, 2019).

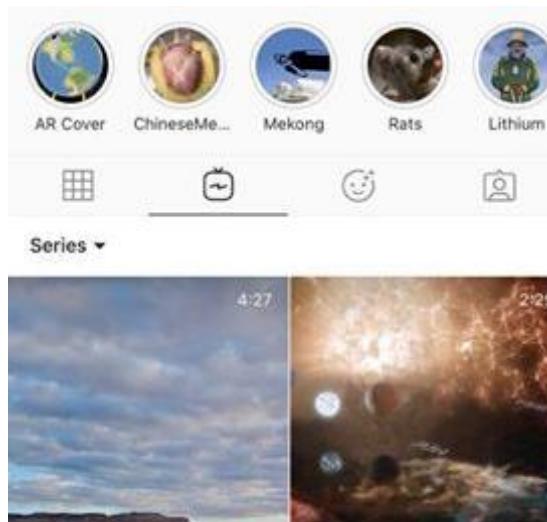


Figure 9. IGTV example on National Geographic. Instagram App.

3.2 Travel segment of Instagram

Traveling takes a big part of Instagram, according to Facebook research, 38% of active users on Instagram use the app to look at travel photos and videos from brands and influencers. On Instagram, #Travel has over 490 million posts, other most popular are #travelphotography and #travelgram with more than 115 million posts. (Instagram app, May 2020).

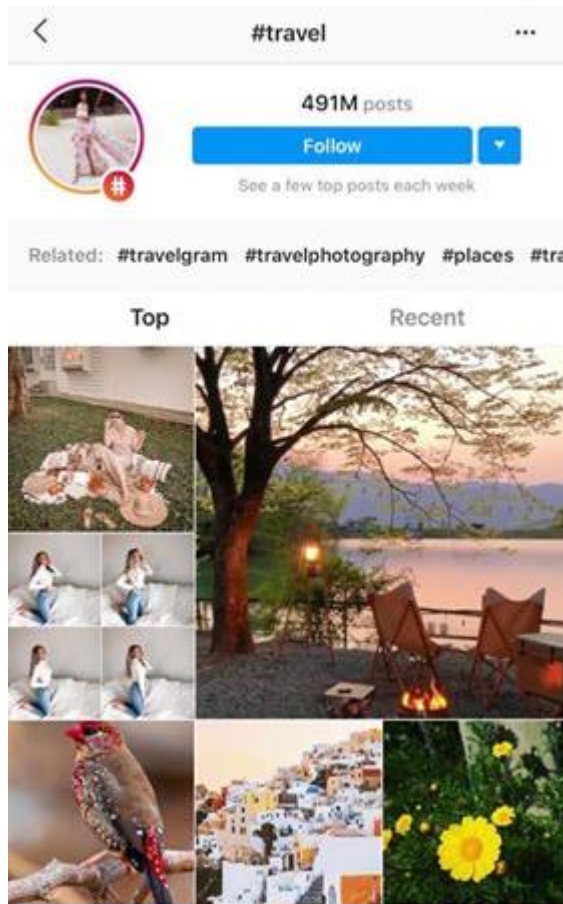


Figure 10. Travel hashtags. Instagram App.

As many new pictures are being uploaded every minute, Instagram is a great source of inspiration for many tourists. When planning a trip, users can look at beautiful pictures on Instagram and get an idea of what the destination is like. Sometimes, users just want to see the real pictures of the place and not perfect retouched photos taken by a professional. Many travel related profiles are not just posting a picture, but also writing in the description section some useful information or lifehacks about the destination. This way a tourist can save those posts and use the information given by brands or other users.

3.3 Marketing and content creation for business accounts

Nowadays, over 25 million of business accounts exist on Instagram and it is seen as an efficient and crucial platform to advertise products, because more than 200 million users visit at least one business profile per day. (Instagram, 2020) Moreover, pictures posted on Instagram get 23% more engagement, than if it was posted on Facebook. (BusinessofApps)

Successful marketing starts with basics, such as a profile name and a logo of the account. It has to be clear, rather short, meaningful and catchy in order to be easily memorised.

(Jason Miles, 2019). Bio of your profile is crucial as it is usually the first area that a user sees, therefore it should be outstanding and have a clear message what your company is about and what it can offer. Moreover, it is a good idea to add company's branded hashtag.

3.3.1 Content creation.

First of all, the feed should be catchy and cohesive, as according to Forbes 65% of people are visual learners. The purpose of that is to make users get interested and have a good first-impression. There are different types of content that companies can do, the most common one is just a picture. Below are other types with examples based on articles on Hubspot by Alicia Collins, Skedsocial by Seema Nayak and author's own observation:

1. **Behind the scene.** This pictures or videos should show the process of creation of a product or a service. This are the posts that companies usually do not do. For example, Airbaltic uses this type of posts frequently by showing their employees at work. It is also possible to repost employees' posts related to work by mentioning and tagging them, this is also what Airbaltic does.



Figure 11. Behind the scene example on Airbaltic. Instagram App.



Figure 12. Behind the scene example on Airbaltic. Instagram App.

2. **User-Generated.** Very similar to the first type, it is a post which was done by a customer using the product or service and reposted by a company. Crucial is that the company should make sure the author is tagged and mentioned when sharing. This way, a company shows that they really care about their customers and their opinion. As an example, @astarte_suites have posted this picture of guests enjoying breakfast at their restaurant.



Figure 13. User – generated content example on astarte suites. Instagram App.

3. **Humor.** Business is usually considered as no place for fun, that is why when a company post something funny, customers get interested and it increases the eengagement. Kayak is a good example of that.



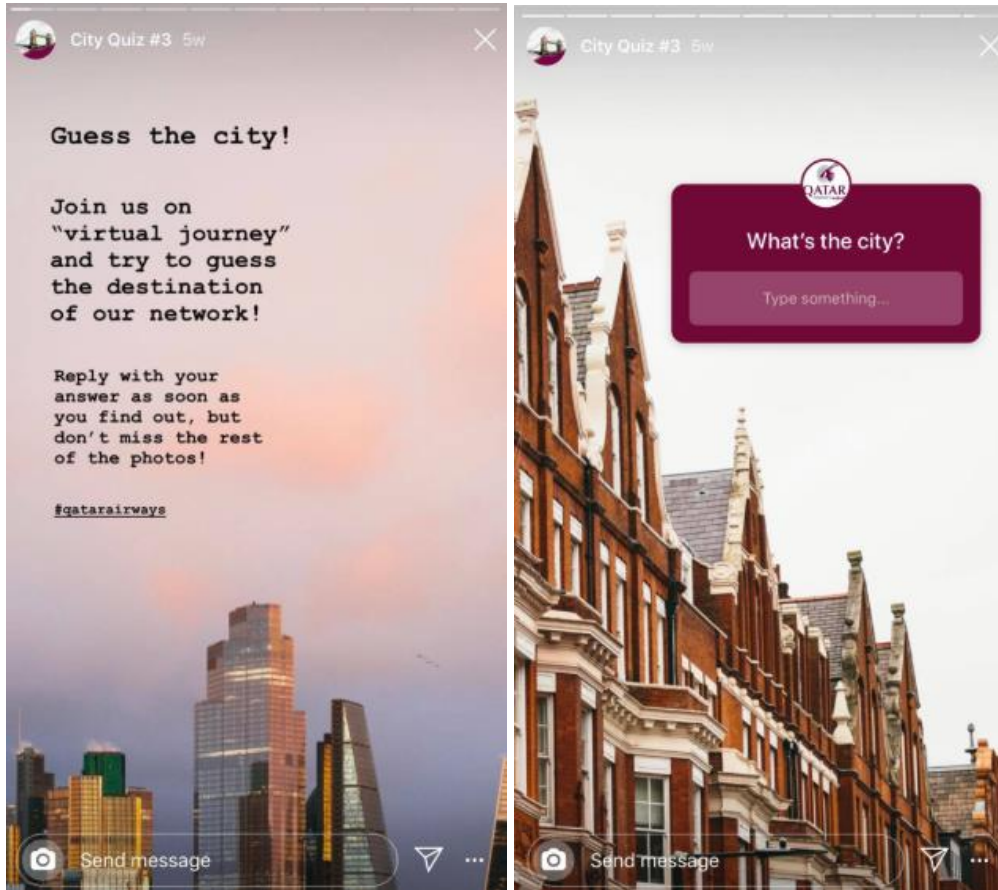
Figure 14. Humor content example on KAYAK. Instagram App.

4. **Stories answering FAQs.** Customers might have a lot of questions about a service or a product and they do, most likely they would send you a personal message. As questions are repeating, it is way more efficient to answer once and for all, and instead of writing it, which some customers would not even read, some companies use videos on stories. The whole idea is that customers can leave their questions in a special box, then a company's representer answers questions by talking. Figure below shows the example by VisitCopenhagen.



Figure 15. Stories example on Visit Copenhagen. Instagram App.

5. **Quizzes on Stories.** Many companies are using different strategies to engage their audience, appearance of Stories have brought a lot of ideas to marketing specialists. Everyone likes to spend some time to play and do something fun, therefore companies can try to use games in Stories. For example quizzes, Qatarairways shows several pictures of a certain city and then asks their followers to guess what this city is. This can be also turned into a contest with prizes.



Figures 16 & 17. Quizzes example on Qatarairways. Instagram App.

6. **Storytelling.** Storytelling is widely used in marketing, on Instagram it can be done by posting short videos that captures the customer right away and shows key offers. Discover someoneva is a great example of that, they post many short videos that each has a story to tell, as in example below in just 15 sec a customer can see what the place is like, what activities there are and also see the main message of "sending you love" which represents how the company cares about their customers.



Figure 18. Storytelling example on Discoveroneva. Instagram App.

7. **IGTV.** Similar to storytelling but allows a company to film and post a longer video. This way companies can make clips and show and talk about their services or products more detailed. Moreover, since tourism is not only about the destination itself, companies can make and post videos about almost anything. For example, greek travel agency Mouzenidis post videos related to Greece, leisure, healthy life and travel. On IGTV, they have cooking tutorials, greek language lessons, history of Greece and many others.

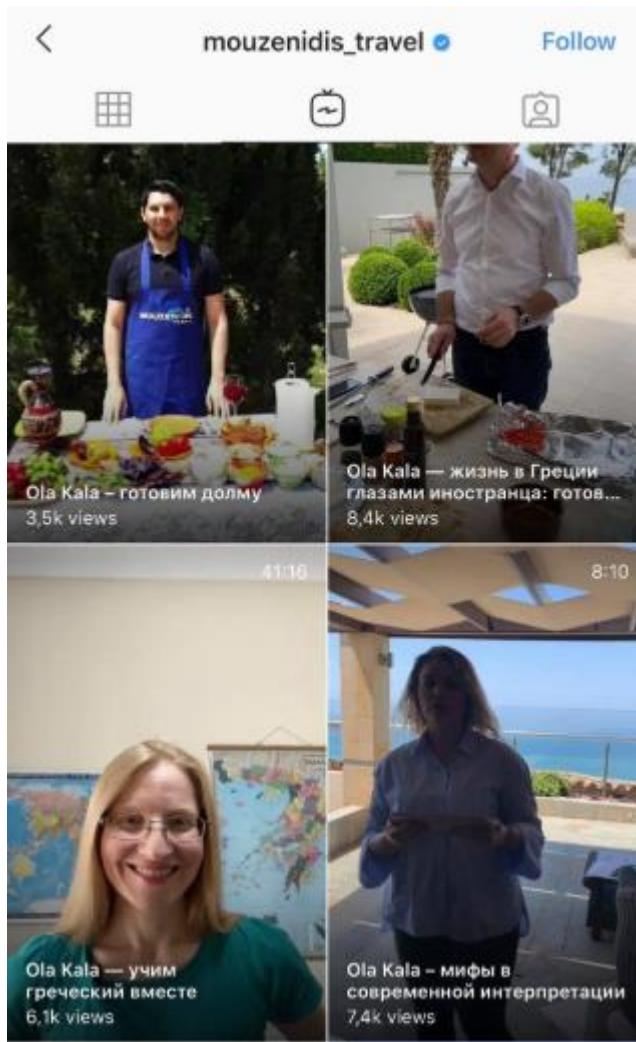


Figure 19. IGTV examples on Mouzenidis travel. Instagram App.

8. **Influencers.** This posts are usually including an influencer using or experiencing a company's product or service. This is a good way to promote company's services and widen the audience. Figure below, shows how RafflesMaldives uses it.



Figure 20. Influencers content example on Rafflesmaldives. Instagram App.

This are some of the examples of good and efficient content ideas which tourism companies can use to improve their social media presence. In the next subchapter, the author talks about marketing triggers and strategies used on Instagram.

3.3.2 Instagram marketing, paid advertisements and influencers

According to Jason Miles, there are 12 common triggers on Instagram that make people buy. All of those triggers are not something unique and hard to understand, on the contrary they are very obvious. However, the biggest challenge is to implement it in a way that it works.

1. **Love.** “Love” sign is common for Instagram, as it is used to like a picture or comment instead of thumb up as on Facebook. People constantly love something, therefore it is important to figure out what they love and create the content that fits your company and customer’s love.

2. **Desire.** Everyone has different desires, would it be to have something, to meet someone or any other, a company should understand customer's desires and find a way to fulfill it with their products.
3. **Involvement or ownership.** The goal of most marketing strategies are to create such a strong customer's engagement towards the company that customers will feel as they have influence on company's success and would want to spread a word about the brand.
4. **Justifying the purchase.** This means that customers should have a good excuse for a purchase in order to decide to make a purchase during the decision-making process. It could be a coupon, only 24h offer or buy 1 get 2 kind of offers. This is very easy to make on Instagram stories.
5. **Desire to belong.** People do not want to feel left out, therefore it is a strong trigger that can be used on Instagram.
6. **Desire to collect.** A lot of people like to collect good experiences, such as hobby, food or travel related experiences and brand's just need to think about what they can suggest.
7. **Curiosity.** This is a very strong emotional trigger that drives people to make a purchase. Companies should post pictures that leave customers wonder what the product is like.
8. **Storytelling.** Instagram is a perfect platform for storytelling as it has many features that can help to engage customers and make your story about the product or service fun and get people's attention.
9. **Greed.** This is what motivates people to bargain or to make a purchase when there is a sale. Greed is a powerful trigger that can make people act.
10. **Urgency.** People get a sense of urgency when they get a limited time offer, this can be easily done on Instagram by setting a timer on Instagram Stories and ones the time is out, the deal is off.
11. **Instant gratification.** Impulsive purchases are the biggest part of most companies' profit. When a customer decide to buy something, he/she wants it right away and instant gratification can be a trigger then.

12. **Exclusivity.** Most of people want to obtain something new and unique, which is why launching limited edition products is such a popular strategy.

Holding a contest can be a great way to increase engagement and get more clients by specifying the rules when customers have to follow company's page, like the post and leave a comment. According to tailwind research, accounts that hold contests grow 70% faster, than those that do not.

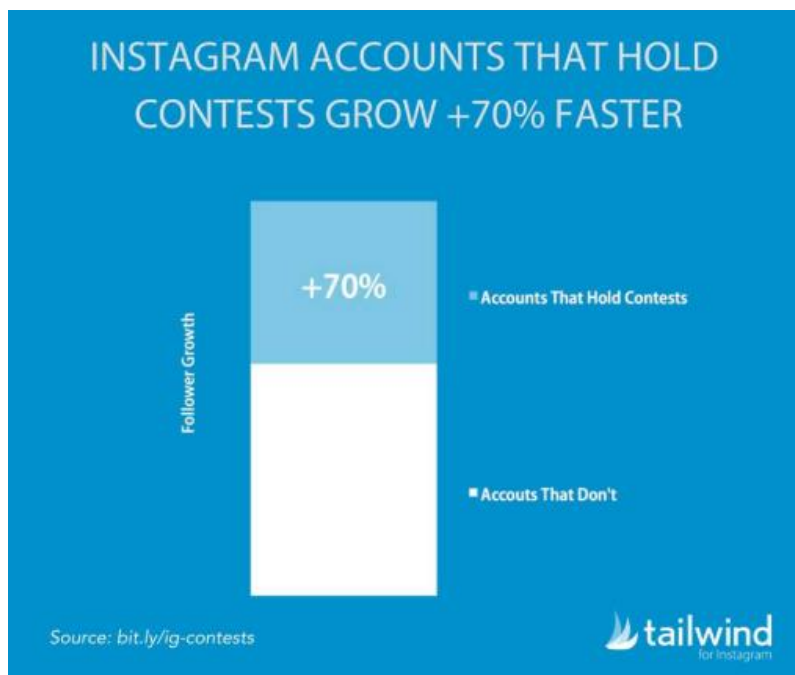


Figure 21. Follower Growth, Tailwind 2017.

The prize can be anything, some companies prefer to offer coupons but according to Jason Miles, it is better to offer a free product or service. The reason is that this way a company shows that the item does not worth that much and customers get addicted to the coupon system and end up waiting for it all the time. There are different types of contests exist on Instagram and marketers are coming up with new ideas all the time, therefore it is crucial to search for the newest and the most efficient at the time when you want to arrange it. Below are some of the ideas (Hootsuite):

1. Follow, like and leave a comment is the most common and easy to do contest.
2. Photo caption. It is a fun way to interact with your audience, a company just need to post a funny or unusual picture and ask followers to write their version of the caption in the comments.

3. Tag a friend. This is a good strategy if you want to gain more followers, because when you ask your followers to tag couple of friends, all of those tagged people will get notification and check your page.
4. Instagram stories contest. If you want to make something unusual, you can do contests using stories. Many users prefer to watch stories than feed, therefore most likely you will get a good engagement. It is possible to do quizzes, polls and shares through stories.
5. User-generated content contest. Here you could ask your customers to take a picture related to your service or with the product itself, say what they think about it and share on their feed or stories. This way you can see what they think about your product and get new followers.

It is up to the brand to choose which marketing strategy to use, the information given above can help them to see different ways and choose the best. Further the author continue to talk about paid advertisement and influencers.

Until couple of years ago, the concept of influencers was not even that common to most people, however since then influencer marketing has grown by over 48%. (Klear) Influencers are the quick and rather easy way to gain customers' support and widen the audience. It is a connection between a brand and a customer, who trust the influencer and therefore, there is a high chance it will trust to the brand too. However, it is not enough to just choose profiles with the biggest audience, some part of their audience could be fake accounts, for example, and would not benefit a company. Therefore, it is crucial to find out your target audience and have it in common with the influencer you choose to achieve a better goal. (Hubspot, 2019)

According to Hubspot's report, it is better to work with nano-influencers who have around 5k followers, because their accounts do not look as perfect as those who have millions of followers and that what makes them to be seemed as not some famous people, but rather friends. Moreover, such accounts have a higher engagement rate and they are more accessible for companies.

Following are the four steps of influence marketing by Aaron Levin (2019):

1. **Marketing objective, target audience and definition of success.**

This is a first step a company should take if they decided to do influence marketing. If a company wants to do a successful advertisement, it is crucial every campaign has a specific objective. The objective should be clear and aligned with the company's main goal. Then, it is time to think who your target audience is by creating a list of characteristics such as gender, age, location, interests and etc. This will help you to understand influencers with what target audience you need. After that, to be able to analyze whether the campaign was successful or not, you should have a definition of what you expect to have. Here a company can either use S.M.A.R.T method by George T. Doran in 1981, which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed, or the table developed by Aaron Levin:

Campaign Type	Attention Campaign	Interest Campaign	Action Campaign	Content Campaign
Objective	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Production
KPIs	Brand lift, reach, eCPM	Video views, cost per engagement, purchase intent, interest, favorability, sentiment, conversation	Website traffic (organic, direct), installs, sales, cost per acquisition	Quality, engagement, cost per asset vs. traditional production, speed
Primary platform	Instagram	YouTube, Instagram	YouTube, Instagram	Instagram
Unit cost	Audience reach, CPM	Total engagement, cost per engagement, cost per view	Cost per view on YouTube, target cost per acquisition \times total budget	Cost per asset

Figure 22. The four campaign types. (Aaron Levin, 2019).

This way if a company wants to increase awareness, then they should measure the success by brand lift, reach in total and eCPM (effective cost per 1,000 people). Their primary platform would be Instagram and the cost of their campaign would be calculated by the expected audience reach.

2. The right campaign strategy.

There are many campaigns that companies can do on Instagram. For example,

- Stories, which get high engagement and views.

- Photo advertisement, which is the oldest and easiest to make, but yet good too.
- Video, this is effective and popular way of advertisement.
- Carousel, this way it is possible to add pieces of the whole picture, creating a visual illusion.
- Advertisement in Explore, this is the place where users go to look for new accounts and posts, this is also convenient because Instagram uses already existed posts on a company's feed.

After looking at all the types of campaigns, their strengths and weaknesses, a company should decide on 2 to 5 campaign strategies.

3. Creativity, creators, and the content.

During this step a company should come up with an idea of the campaign by thinking what are the trends, what can connect them with customers and be meaningful. Then it is time to choose an influencer by analyzing their location, type of account, values, audience and number of posts.

4. Budget, targets, media planning.

This is the final step of influencer marketing and it is when a company should decide on a budget, targets and KPI that are needed to meet the goal. To do so, the company should go back to step 1 and count unit costs, then combine it with number of post/campaigns to get the overall.

All these steps can be used by companies to try and use paid advertisement and collaborate with influencers without big risks of losing budget or wasting time. If a company decides to do paid advertisements, there are three ways to purchase it: within the app by promoting a specific post a company have shared, on ads manager which uses same campaign tools as Facebook and available both on computers and smartphones, the example is showed in figure 23, and the last way to get paid ads is through Instagram partners who would do the whole process for the company. (Instagram, 2020)

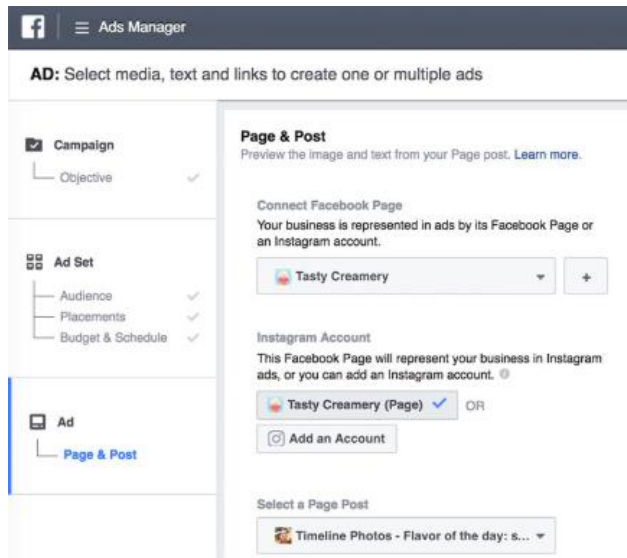


Figure 23. Ads manager. (Instagram, 2020).

When doing paid advertisements a company can target whoever they want by specifying location, gender, age, hobbies and their behaviour outside the app as well. Instagram even offers automated targeting, which is based on account's current followers' information mentioned above. (Instagram, 2020) Instagram offers four simple steps to start advertising. It all starts with creation of the page, then continues with adjustment of the advertisement which includes selection of the objective, for example brand awareness, engagements or sales. When selecting a target audience brands should make sure to look at audience size and potential reach number, it is showed in figure 24. The target audience should not be too broad, neither should it be too specific, it should preferably stay in the green zone.

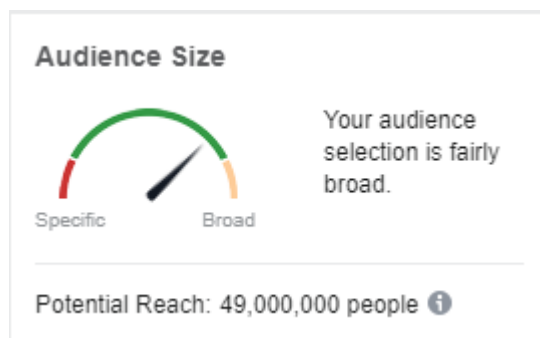


Figure 24. Audience size. Instagram advertisement tool.

After everything is set, the advertisement is ready to be published. (Instagram advertising, 2020)

Paid advertisements should be analysed regularly in order to adjust settings for a better result. (Whitney, M. 2019. WordStream) This can be done by going to account's settings

and checking Insights. According to Quintly, these are the metrics which business users can keep track of:

1. **Interactions**, simply put these are the actions taken on the advertisement.
2. **Website visits**, how many times users clicked on website link in the bio of company's account.
3. **Profile visits**, the amount of users who visited the page.
4. **Reach**, how many users saw the advertisement.
5. **Mentions**, number of times the page was mentioned by other users.

Above are the key metrics which companies should check to evaluate success of the advertisement campaign. However, as the business grows its audience might change, therefore would change settings for the campaigns, for example age and gender.

Figure 25 shows how these analytics look like on business pages.

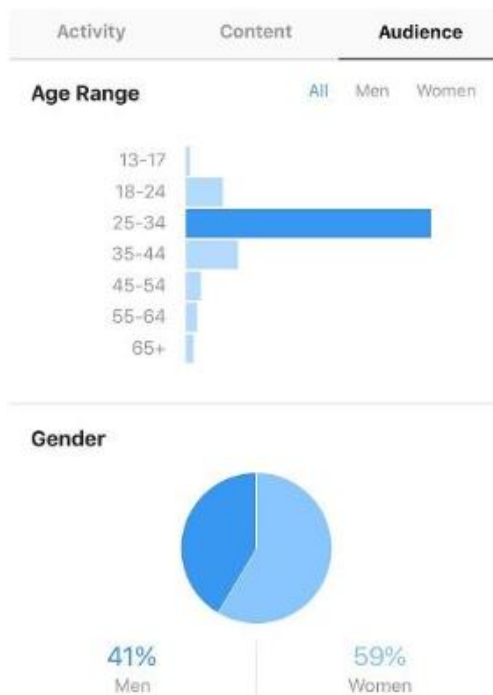


Figure 25. Audience analytics. Instagram app.

In this chapter, the author deeply explained how to implement Instagram into business and showed several examples. The next chapter focuses on research process and analysis of the data received.

4 Research methodology

Research is an investigation taken in order to gain required knowledge about some topic. The researcher should obtain deep knowledge of different research methods and use the one that is the most suitable in a certain situation based on their characteristics. (P. Brunt, S. Horner & N. Semley, 2017). The research should meet specific criterias to be called successful, according to J. H. Fox they are the following:

1. The purpose should be clearly identified.
2. The process of the research should be well explained, in order for another researcher to be able to repeat the same study.
3. The research should be designed in a way that it will lead to reliable results.
4. The data should be analyzed by appropriate tools and methods.
5. The conclusions should be reliable and valid.

This chapter discusses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Then the explanation of why quantitative method was used is given. Moreover, the process of research path and target group chosen for the research are discussed.

4.1 Quantitative and qualitative research methods

Quantitative research methods are used to collect a big amount of data and analyse it in graphics or numbers. Methods are usually used to gather data from a big part of population and present it as statistics. (Kothari, C.R. 2004) Quantitative research methods are often done in a way of surveys. Questionnaires are usually structured and have clear concrete questions organized logically. (P. Brunt, S. Horner & N. Semley, 2017)

Quantitative methods are not as flexible as qualitative, the process of gathering data and analysis are done by standart and this leads to generalised results. (John Kuada, 2012. p.104) There are also closed or open-ended questions exist, closed questions require a short answer, on the contrarery open-ended questions do not have any answer prepared and allow a longer answers. (P. Brunt, S. Horner & N. Semley, 2017)

Qualitative methods are used to collect opinions on some topic or reasons for a specific behaviour, for example. (Kothari, C.R. 2004) It includes different methods, such as observation, in-depth interview and focus groups. Those methods can help to get a better understanding of the topic, as participants are allowed to discuss it freely. Focus group is usually used if a company wants to implement a new product or go international, and they want to know what their target group would think, because then the researcher picks around 12 people of a specific background, who do not know each other, and let them discuss the product while asking probing questions to keep the discussion going. This can bring a lot of insights about the topic. (John Kuada, 2012. p.93 - 94) During the interviews are usually used unstructured questionnaires, because then respondents do not have to keep their answers short and the researcher can adjustify the interview according to the discussion. (P. Brunt, S. Horner & N. Semley, 2017) Coding and categorizing is the most suitable way to analyse qualitative data. (Uwe F., 2018)

4.2 Selected research methods and analysis

The author decided to use quantitative research method to get required answers for the research questions as the data was supposed to be measured in numerical way. Among different types of quantitative methods, there was survey performed, because there was a need for concrete data among the big amount of people.

Survey is a convenient and easy way to perform a research, because it can be created online for free and distributed on social media or email. People are more eager to do surveys online, because then they can do it during their free time. (John Kuada, 2012 p. 111) The first survey was meant to measure how often Russian tourists travel, which content is the most helpful when planning a trip and how important influencers' opinion are to them. The survey was distributed on Instagram and responses were received in a more efficient way based on the research specific.

There was another survey prepared for tourism organisations in order to find out how they use Instagram, what are the challenges and benefits. The author planned to do face-to-face interviews to get a more reliable data, however due to coronavirus situation it could not be performed and had effect on the research. Therefore, the author decided to use the same method due to lack of time.

The analysis of data received through online survey is easy due to different online tools, the author used Google forms, therefore all the responses were saved there automatically and based on answers there were graphics and polls created.

4.3 Target group for the data collection

Target group for the research was Instagram users between 18 – 40 years old who live in Russia. This age group was chosen based on Instagram users' age statistic published in April, 2020 (Figure 26). According to the Statista, the biggest part of Instagram users is in the age groups between 18 – 24 and 25 - 35, however age group 35 – 40 also takes a big part, therefore author decided to have a target group 18 – 40. These age groups are also called Gen Z and Gen Y or Millennials. There is no official dates of the beginning and the end of generations, as different resources give different years. However, author decided to stick to the information given at Expedia Group report of 2018, therefore Gen Z people are now 18 – 25 and Gen Y are 26 – 40 years old. Gen Z is the largest generation by 2020 and spend 50% of their time on social media. Moreover, both Gen Z and Millennials' have similar travel tendency. Both of generations showed interest in experiences (Expedia Group, 2018).

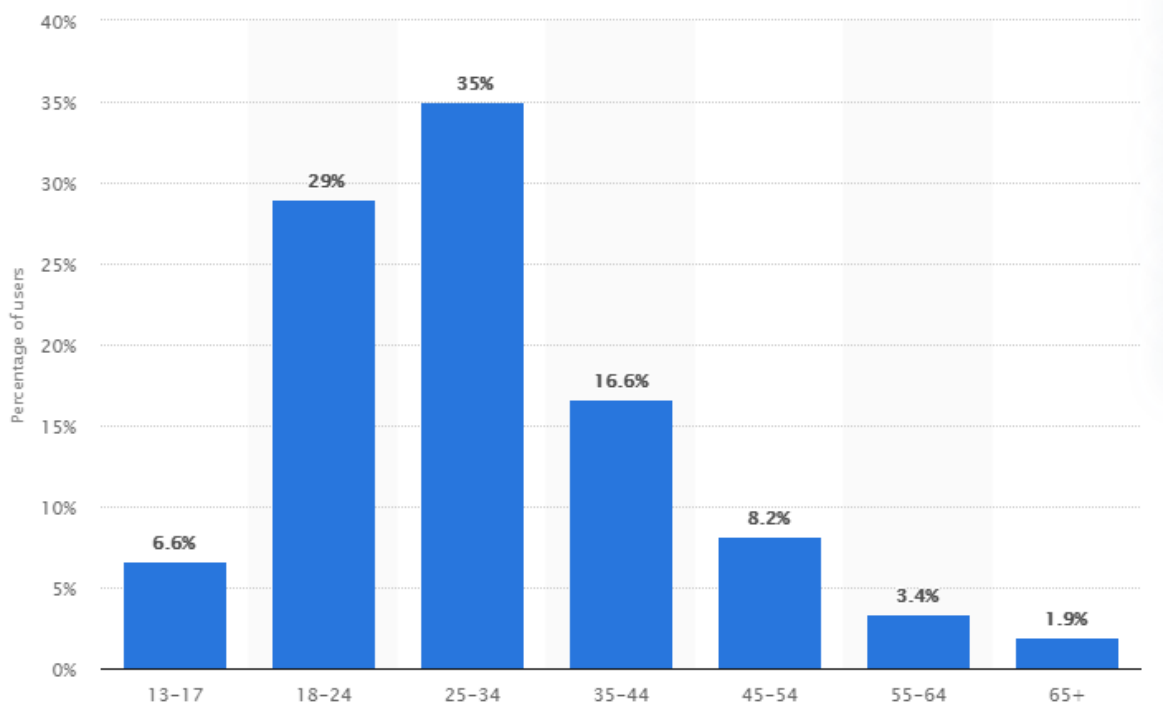


Figure 26. Distribution of Instagram users by age worldwide. Statista, April 2020.

4.4 Data collection process

Every research should start with a plan, otherwise the researcher will not know how to do it and what results should be received. There are several stages in the planning process: definition of research questions, information needed, identification of goals, creation of research, data collection, analysis of data received and presentation. (P. Brunt, S. Horner & N. Semley, 2017) The author planned thesis's research process according to these stages. Firstly, there were research questions identified for both surveys:

- Which sources Russian tourists use to learn more about tourist destinations?
- Which factors affects their destination choice process?
- Does Instagram have any influence of their choice of destination?
- How tourism companies are using Instagram features to promote their services?
- What are the key benefits and challenges of using Instagram for them?
- Where do they get the most of their clients from?
- How interested tourism organisations are to work with influencers?

After this, there was theoretical study done to obtain the information needed and related to the research topic. During the next step, objectives of the research were identified, they are explained in chapter 1 of the thesis. Continuing with the research plan, the author created two surveys through Google forms. One was meant for Instagram users and another for tourism companies, according to the research objectives and questions. Both surveys were in English and in Russian languages.

The first survey had 20 questions, including general information such as gender, age and country of residence, then questions about travel behaviour and the last part was related to Instagram. This survey was spread on Instagram, before that the account's insight about gender and location of followers was checked according with the target group. The survey received 166 responses. Participants were informed about the topic of the research, also that the survey is done anonymously and the statistical data will be used in the thesis.

Survey for companies had 12 questions and could be done anonymously if preferred so. All the questions were related to Instagram and how companies use it. Then it also had two opened questions and there was a possibility of leaving participant's own answer in several questions as well. This survey was distributed by email, there were 55 emails sent and there were 8 responses received. The author contacted travel agencies and DMOs mostly.

Trustworthiness of the research is discussed in the next subchapter.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

There are two factors that can examine the effectiveness of the research: reliability and validity. Reliability measures whether the same results can be received if another person

would repeat the same research process. The more consistent the received data is, the more reliable is the research. (Carmines E. G. & Zeller R. A., 1979) Author explained all the steps of the research process in order for other people to be able to repeat it. Surveys had many questions with a section for respondent's own answer to get the most reliable data possible. The amount of participants was enough to make statements. Thus, the study can be considered as reliable.

On the other hand, it is not just enough to be reliable, the research should be also valid. Validity of the study is measured by correlation between objectives and results received. (Carmines E. G. & Zeller R. A., 1979) Participants were asked to answer all the questions honestly and many questions had section for respondent's own answer to increase validity of the research. Results received are answering research questions, therefore the research is valid.

The analysis of the data received is explained and presented in the next chapter, followed by summary and suggestions for tourism organisations.

5 Results

This chapter is focused on presenting and explaining results received through online surveys.

5.1 Survey for Russian tourists results

There were overall 166 responses, however some part of the participants was not the target group for the research. After excluding the data of those who are not living in Russia, there were overall 118 participants left.

According to the figure below 88% of the total participants (N=118) are in the target group, but almost 12% are out of the target group picked for the research due to the age restrictions. Therefore, these data will be removed as well from the following statistics. The largest group is in the age group 18 – 25 and takes more than ½ of all participants, which is expected due to theoretical background in chapter 2, Gen Z use social media more than Millennials.

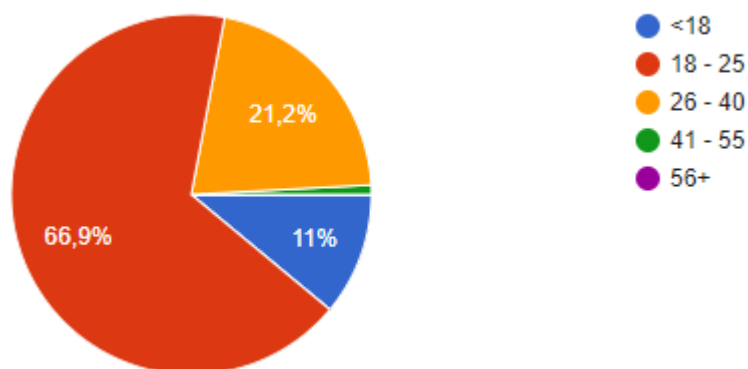


Figure 27. Age distribution.

After excluding those who did not fall into the target group based on age and country of residence, there were 104 responses left overall. As it can be seen from the figure 28, gender distribution is not even at all, there are around 95% of female and only less than 5% of male respondents. Therefore, it is not possible to use gender in any statements due to lack of data received for males' part. However, most of the questions will be combined with age group result to see if Gen Z and Gen Y have different results.



Figure 28. Gender distribution.

Then participants were asked how often they travel outside of Russia per year, it was specified that only leisure trips longer than 1 week counts. The tendency is that Russians travel only 1 – 2 times per year, see figure 29. However, almost 7% of participants say they travel 3 to 5 times per year.

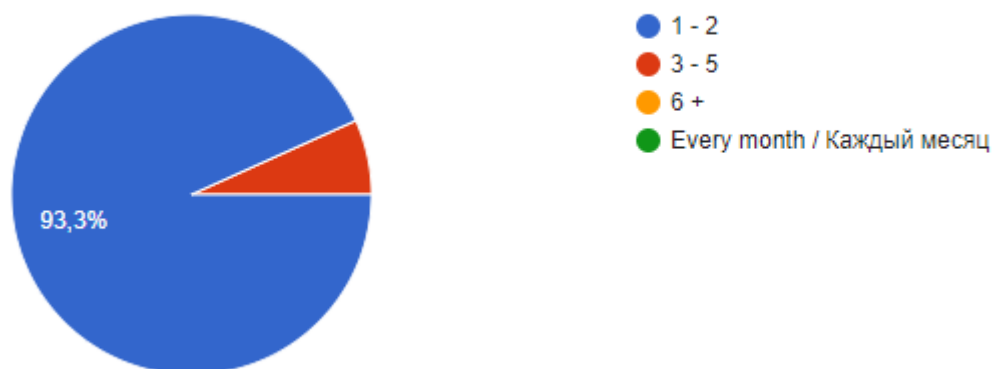


Figure 29.

The author decided to see if age has impact on how often Russian tourists travel, therefore figure 30 shows that both age generations have rather the same results, as both generations said they travel 1 – 2 times more than in 93%.

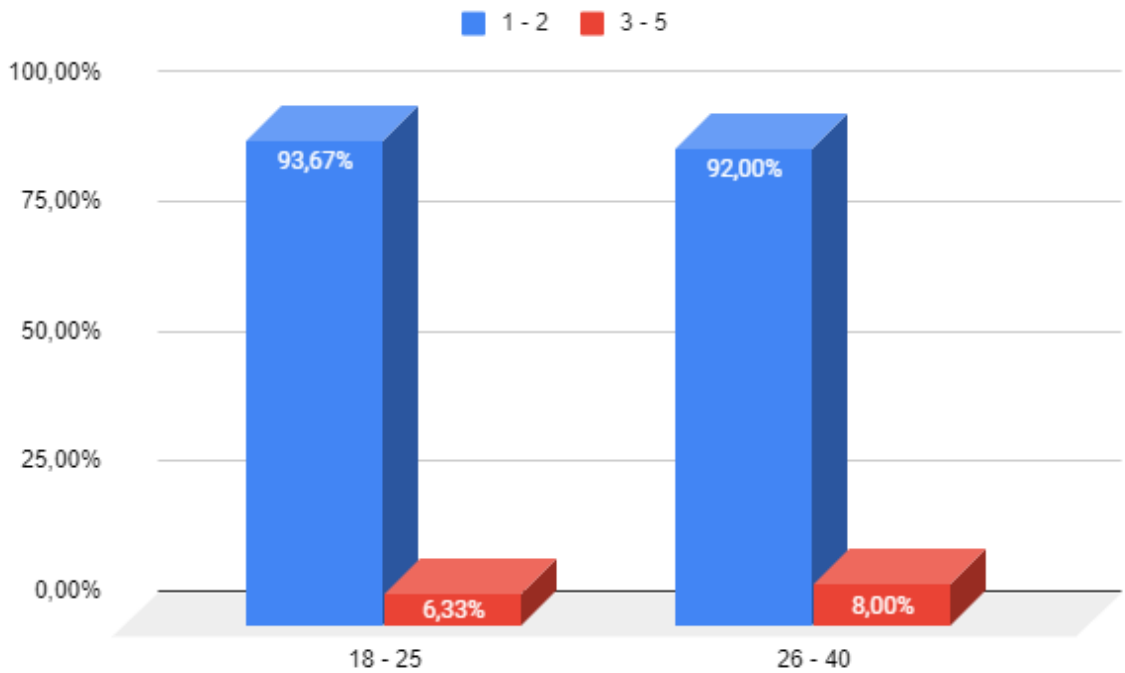


Figure 30. Age impact on how often Russian tourists travel for leisure.

The table below describes who Russian tourists usually traveling with, as it was multiple choice question, the author had to create rather big diagram to illustrate the results. According to the table 1, almost the same percentage of participants of both generations travel with family and both family and friends. There is a higher amount of people traveling alone in generation Y, which is rather expected to be so due to the age. Only 1% of all the respondents said they do not travel abroad at all for leisure. Among people aged 18 – 25, there is a higher number of people who travel with friends, this is most likely because this is young age and most people at that age do not have their own families, except the ones they were born and raised in, and therefore they still can go on a trip with friends more often.

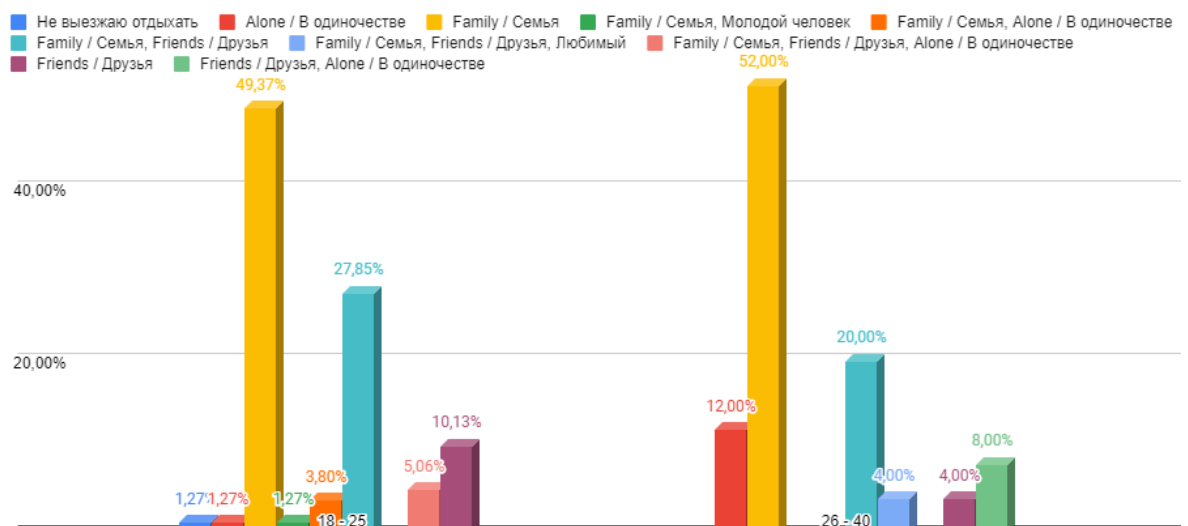


Table 1. Who Russian tourists usually travel with for leisure by age difference.

Then participants were asked to write the country where they went for leisure last time. This was open-ended question, therefore author read written comments and counted them manually. It showed that the most popular countries were Thailand, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Germany and France. Moreover, domestic tourism was also one of the most common within respondents.

After that participants were asked if they look for the information prior their trip, most of the participants answered “yes” and it made 84% of all the respondents, this was expected due to theoretical research and author’s own observations. Next question was meant to find out what made Russians to choose their last destination. It was a multiple choice question, as well as had section for one’s own answer, figure 31 shows part of the results. The full version can be found in Appendix. Based on figure 31, almost half of overall participants chose friends’ and family’s recommendation which makes 49%, next the most popular to choose was based on previous experience almost 32%. Posts on travel blogs and post on Instagram are third most influencing and take 25% and 19%. Other social media and TripAdvisor takes only about 8%.

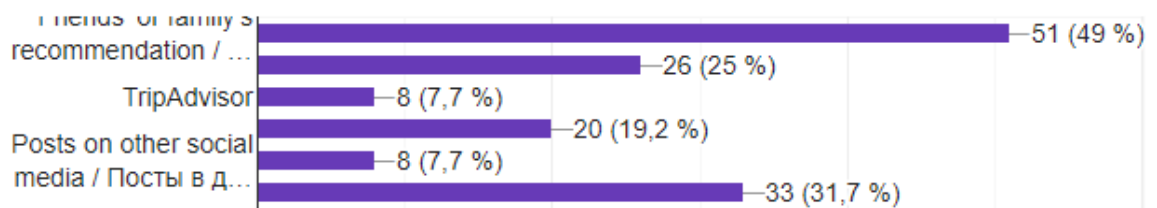


Figure 31. What made Russian tourists to choose their last destination.

Continuing with the question on which sources Russian tourists are usually using in travel planning. As it is illustrated in the figure 32, even percentage of people use Travel websites and Google (60%), then travel blogs and friends’ or family’s recommendation is another source of information. About 45 % of all of respondents says that they use Instagram when planning a trip, only around 20% of all respondents chose travel agencies as a source they usually use, this is understandable as it was mentioned in chapter 2, Gen Y and Gen Z use their smartphones a lot, therefore it must be easier and more convenient for them to look for information online.

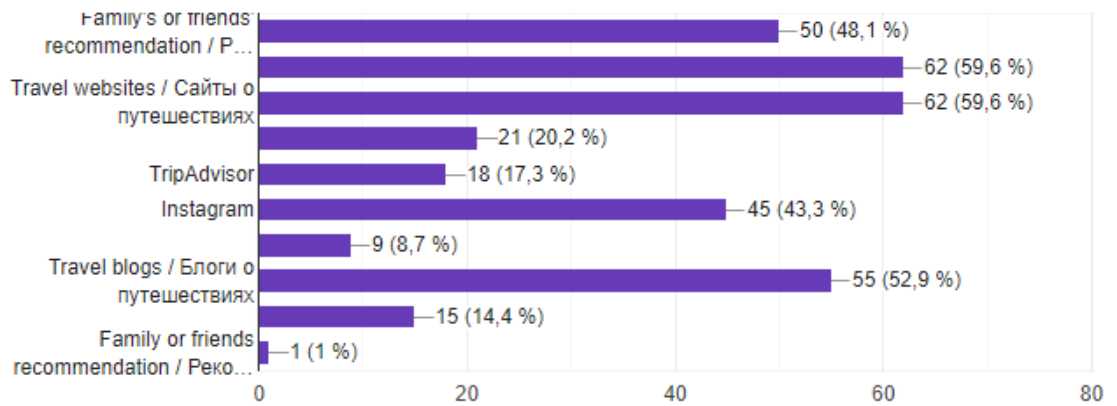


Figure 32. Which sources Russians use in travel planning.

Then participants were asked to choose which content related to traveling they find the most helpful during their trip planning. This was a multiple choice question, therefore percentages are counted out of overall number of respondents. This way, almost the same number of Russian tourists prefer both pictures of the destination and reviews (72%), then almost half of the respondents find more valuable videos of the destination and articles. Stories on Instagram are the most helpful for around 35% of overall number of participants.

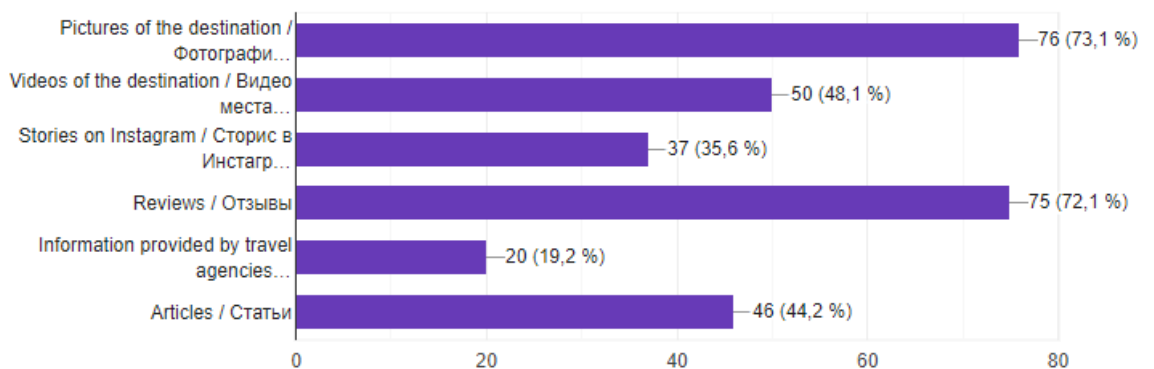


Figure 33. Most helpful content for Russian tourists in trip planning.

Next part of the survey consisted of questions about Instagram, how Russian tourists use it and what kind of content they would like to see there. It starts with a question whether a participant use Instagram or not. Since the survey was mostly distributed on Instagram, the results were rather expected, as 100% of all the participants said “yes”, it can be clearly seen from the figure 34 down below.

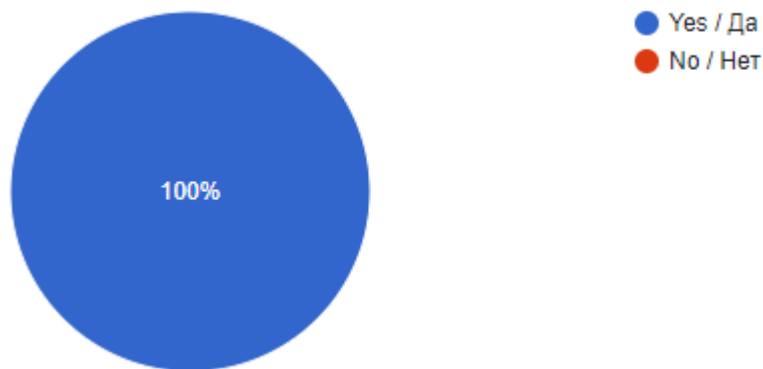


Figure 34. Instagram usage of Russian tourists.

In order to know why Russians use Instagram, there was asked question about it. On this question respondents were allowed to choose only one option or leave their own. Most of the answers leaved in “other” option said “all listed above”, therefore the author counted them as one and summed the results. Figure 35 illustrates even division between sharing pictures and videos, and to look for the inspiration, both were chosen by almost 31% of overall respondents. A little bit less than 20% use Instagram primary to look for the information and around 15% use it to communicate. All the above reasons have 3% of overall respondents.



Figure 35. Reasons to use Instagram.

Next question aimed to find out how active Russian users are on Instagram, therefore they were asked to specify how often they check the app. It was allowed to choose only one answer, however a section for “other” answer was provided. Despite on that, none of the participants used this section, therefore author believes that all the respondents were

comfortable with suggested answers. The figure 36 down below, shows that Russian users can be considered as active users, because 50% out of all the respondents said they go on their Instagram once every couple of hours, and almost 33% checks it even more frequently, which is every hour.



Figure 36. Frequency of checking Instagram.

Then the author wanted to see if there is any impact of age on the frequency. The figure 37 down below, shows that most of answers were rather even, except for the “1 – 2 times per day”, it can be clearly seen that 32% out of all participants in age group 26 – 40 use Instagram couple times per day, this could be so due to busy schedule or family.

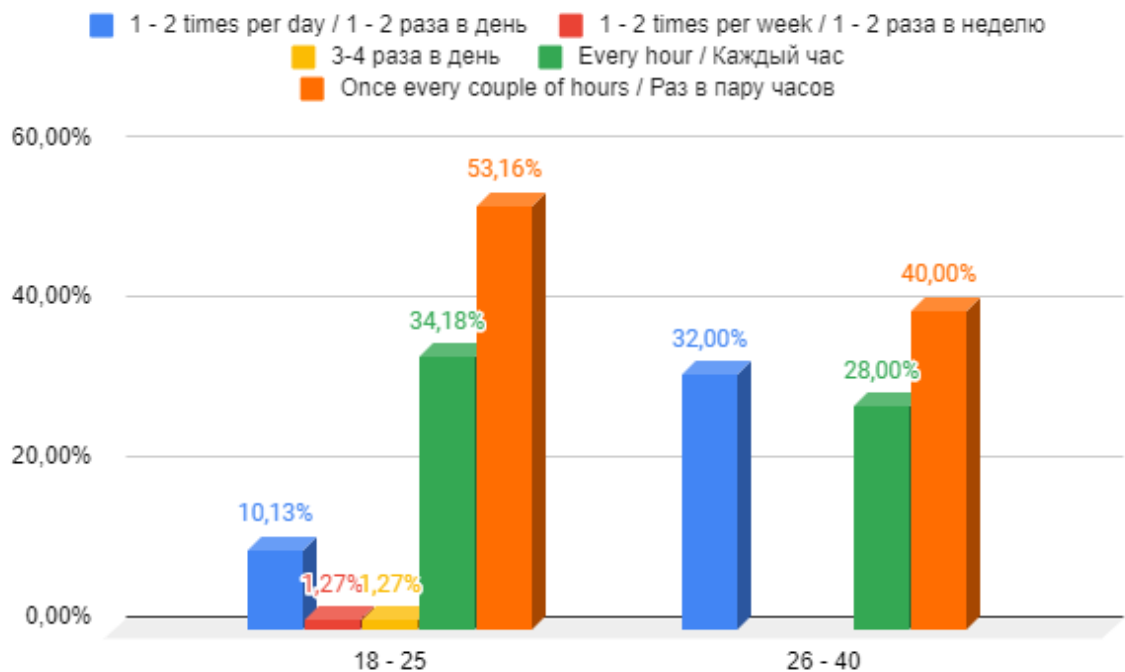


Figure 37. Frequency of checking Instagram divided by age groups.

Following questions were created to find out how popular travel part of Instagram is among Russian tourists, which travel – related content they prefer to see. Figure 38 down below, shows that users of age group 18 – 25 have a higher percentage of following travel bloggers and it takes almost 75%, than users of age group 26 – 40. According to the chart, Millennials have basically 50% who follow and who do not.

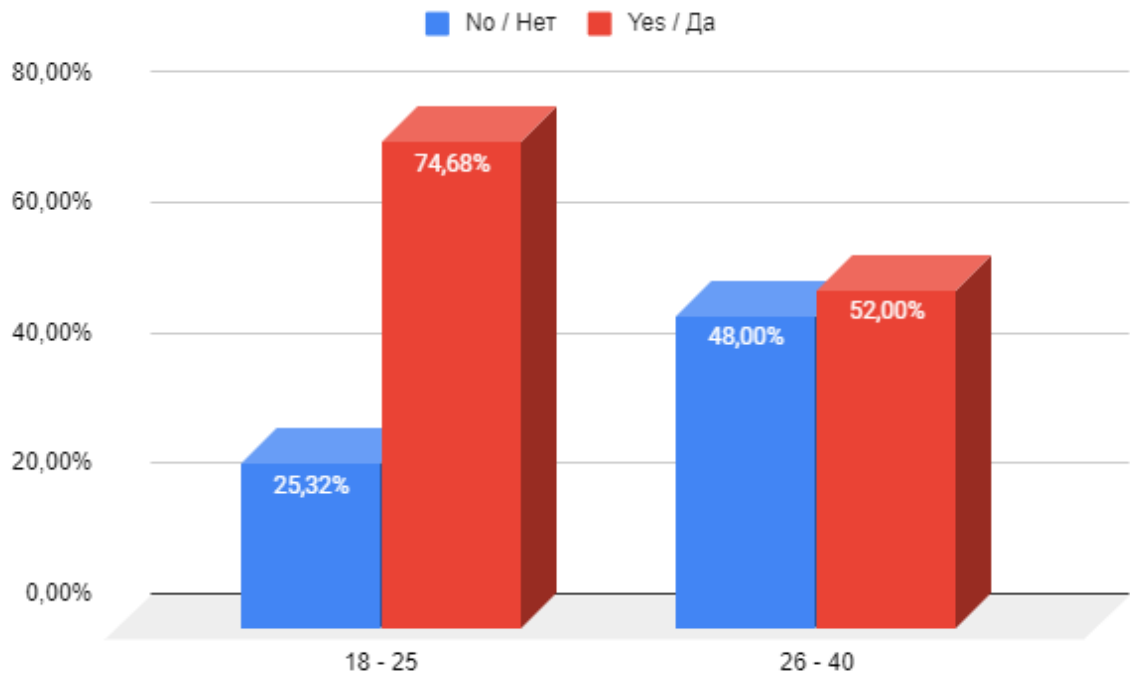


Figure 38. Travel bloggers followed.

Then participants were asked to measure how important is for them opinion of the travel blogger they follow, on a scale 1 to 5. Since, not all of respondents were following travel bloggers, this was not the compulsory question and overall amount of answers was 81.

As illustrated on figure 39 down below, most part of overall number of answered participants, say it has average influence on them. However, this was mostly chose by Gen Z as it can be seen from the figure 40, which is almost 43% out of all Gen Z respondents who answered this question. Both Gen Z and Millennials had almost the same tendency to choose “4” and it was around 30% out of overall respondents of both ages. Interesting that Millennials had a higher number of people who said travel bloggers’ opinion is very important for them, which was almost 29% out of respondents in age group 26 – 40.

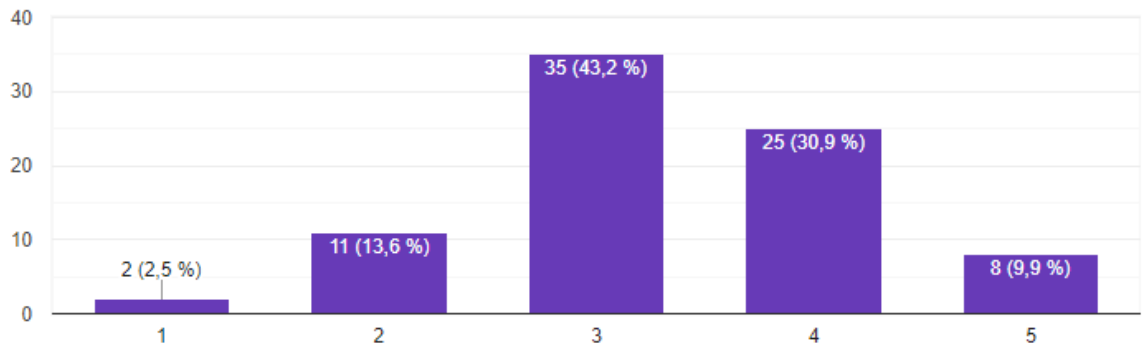


Figure 39. Importance of travel bloggers' opinion.

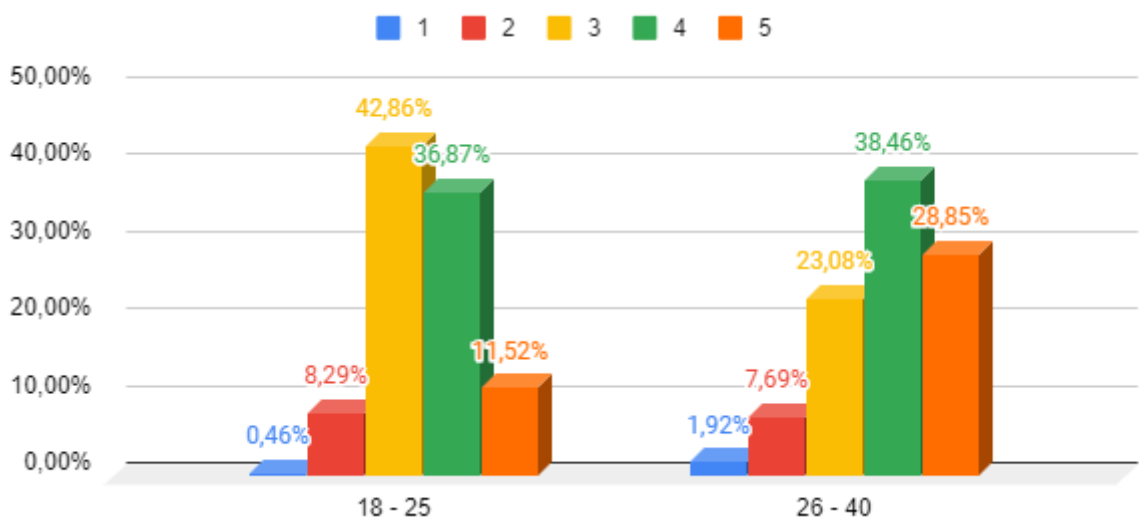


Figure 40. Importance of travel bloggers' opinion by age group.

In order to be able to compare interest of Russian tourists for different categories of accounts on Instagram towards travel category. This question allowed multiple choice, therefore participants could choose different categories, and also there was a section for "other" answer. According to figure 41, most of users follow family and friends (around 82%), this was expected since Instagram started as a place to share pictures with friends and family, as it was talked about in chapter 2. Then almost the same results were received for categories "Beauty" and "Education", around 70% of respondents chose it. Travel is in number 5 most followed categories by Russian Instagram users, almost 61% of all the respondents follow travel accounts.

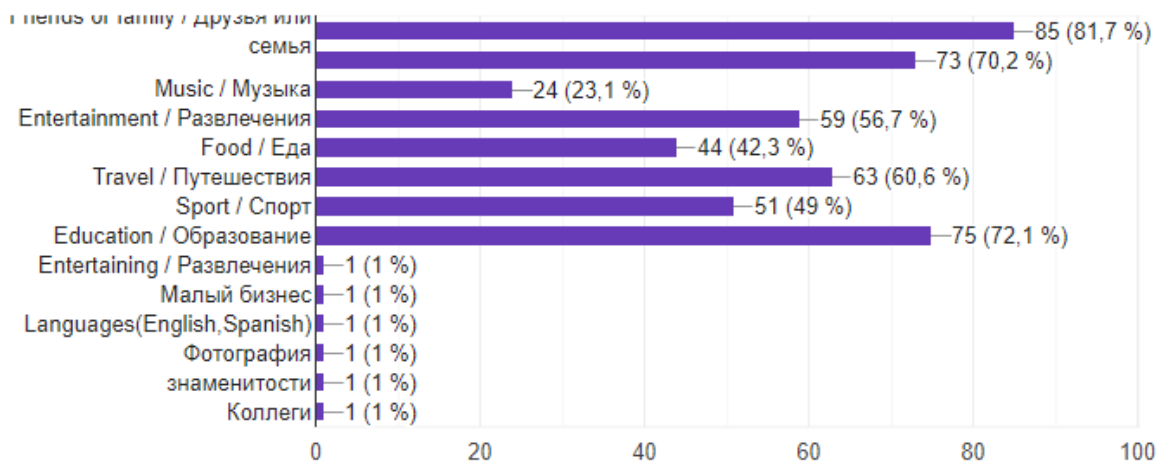


Figure 41. Popularity of different categories of accounts on Instagram.

Following questions were supposed to identify how many of Russian tourists use hashtags and location tag to search for information on Instagram. Based on the figure 42 there is almost even distribution among participants, half of respondents use hashtags and half do not. However, according to figure 43, 62% of all the respondents use location tags to look for something. Then the author wanted to see if those who use hashtags, also use location tags and the opposite, this is illustrated in figure 44 down below. It can be seen that those who said they do not use location tag, most of them are also not using hashtags (71% of the respondents who said “no”) and around 29% said they use hashtags, then out of those who uses location tags, 67% are also using hashtags, however almost 33% do not use hashtags while using location tags. Therefore, there is a slightly bigger chance of Russian Instagram users to use location tag than hashtags to search for the information.

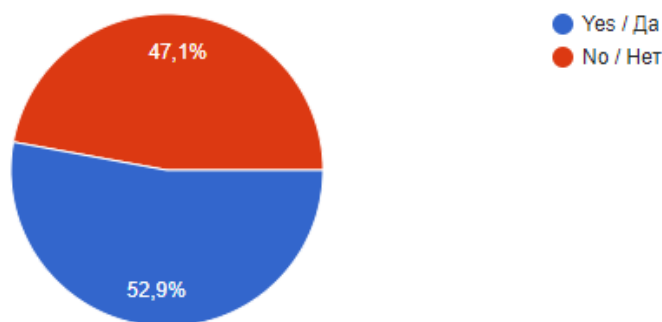


Figure 42. Usage of hashtags to search for the information.

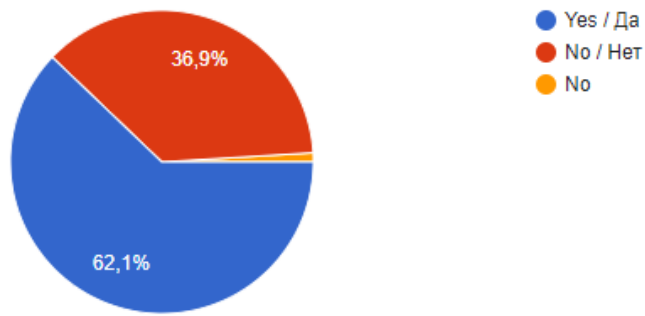


Figure 43. Usage of location tag to search for the information.

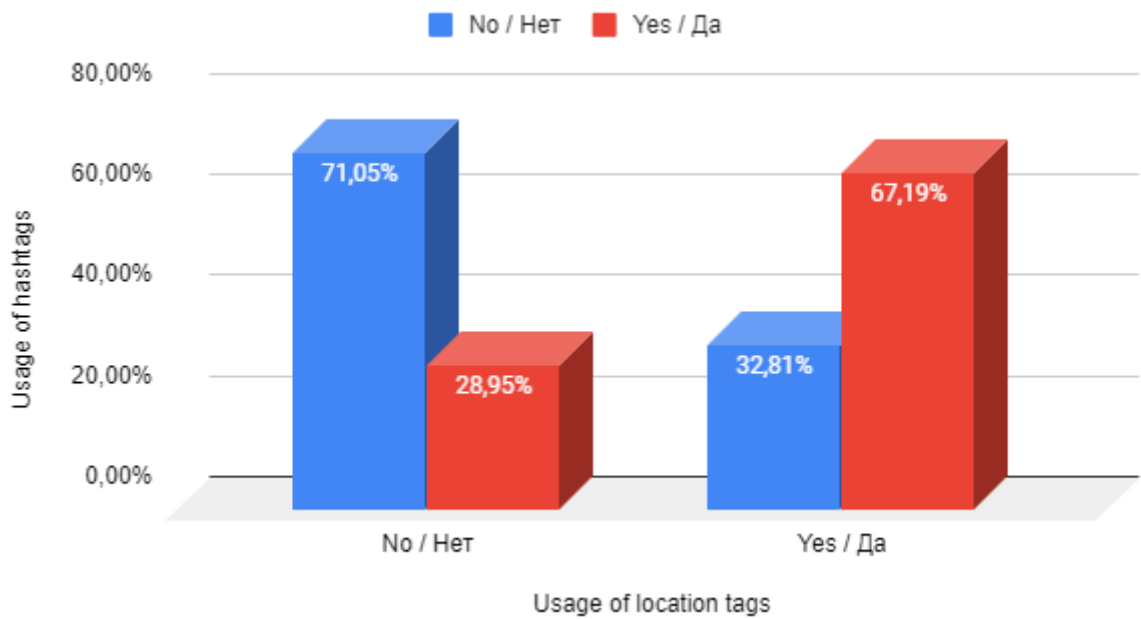


Figure 44. Comparison of hashtag and location tags usage.

More than 60% of all respondents said that they found new destinations on Instagram, therefore author wanted to see if it was due to location tags or hashtags usage. Figure 45 shows how usage of location tags help Russian tourists to discover new destination on Instagram. As it can be seen those who do not use location tags to look for a destination have 50% change of finding new destination, although those who use location search, 67% of them discovered new destination.

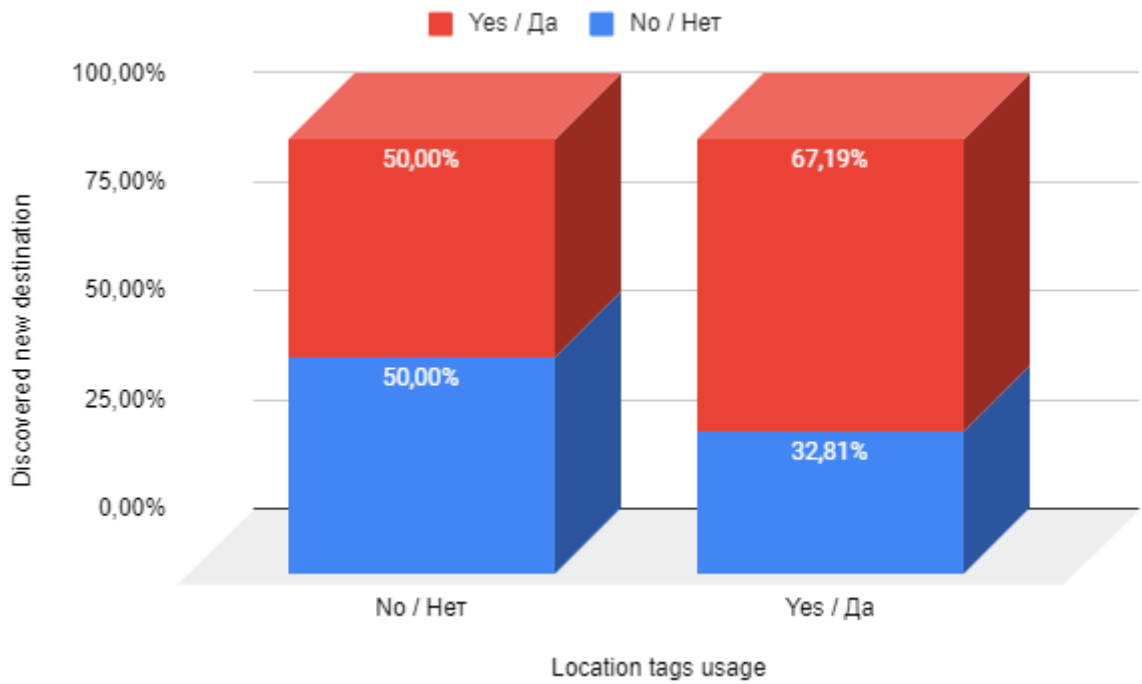


Figure 45. Location tags usage impact on discovery of new destinations by Russian users.

Same analysis was done for hashtags and it showed that there is also 50% chance of discovering new destination for those who do not use hashtags to search for the information, then 69% of respondents who use hashtags managed to find new destination.

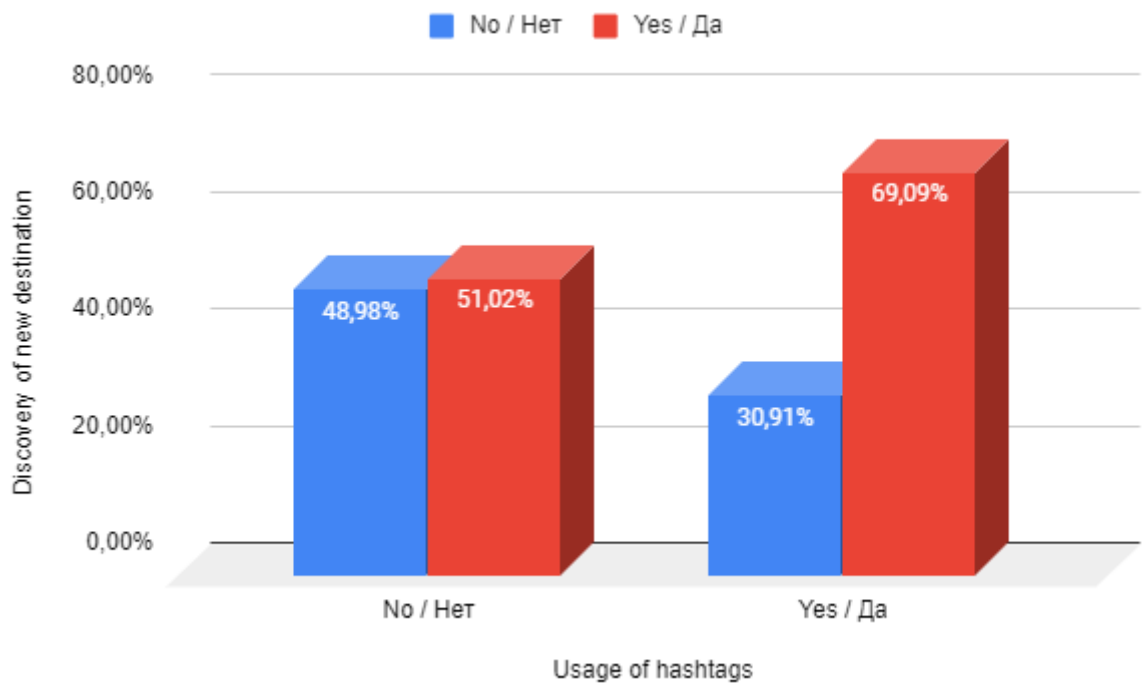


Figure 46. Hashtags usage impact on discovery of new destination by Russian users.

The final question of the survey was meant to find out which content Russian Instagram users prefer to see, it was the multiple choice question and had “other” answer option. Figure 47 illustrates that biggest part of the respondents prefer to see overview of the destination and sights, then accommodation and local food chose around 69% of respondents, 64% wants to see entertainments. According to the poll, it can be seen that all the suggested content is interesting for respondents. However, there was one “other” answer given and it said “helpful life hacks”, which could be another useful topic for other respondents as well.

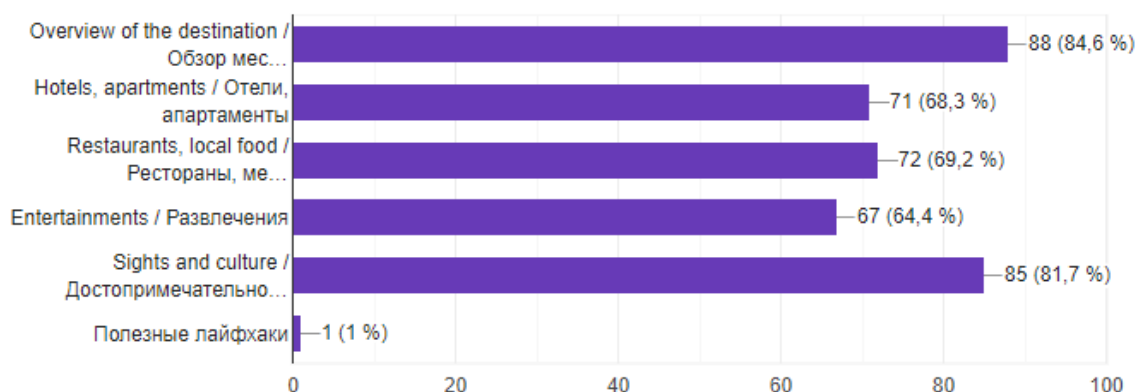


Figure 47. Most preferred content related to travelling.

To conclude, all the questions and open-ended answers are attached in the appendix section. Next subchapter will be the analysis of the survey done for tourism organizations.

5.2 Survey for tourism organizations results

Survey was sent by email to 55 companies, there were 8 responses received. Author mostly contacted travel agencies and destination marketing organizations. As the survey was voluntary with a possibility to do it anonymously, there is no enough data to compare differences of travel agencies accounts on Instagram and DMOs, therefore all the results will be presented and analyzed as for general tourism organization. Companies from different countries were contacted, the fact that survey was in Russian and English made it easier to do. The whole purpose of the research was to see how companies use Instagram, therefore no further background questions were asked and it started with Instagram related question right away. All of the companies were found online and checked for Instagram usage, however to make sure the author added question about it, as expected 100% of responded companies have Instagram account.

Author wanted to find out how many companies have purchased advertisements on Instagram, the results illustrated in figure 48 shows that the biggest part of the respondents which is 62.5% have never used paid advertisements on Instagram.

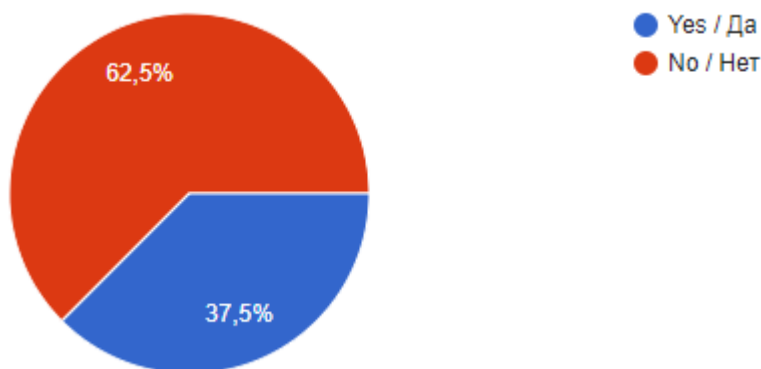


Figure 48. Tourism organizations purchased advertisements on Instagram.

Next question was connected to the above one and was aiming to learn whether organizations are collaborating with bloggers or not. In figure 49, it is showed that more than 37% of respondents do collaborate with influencers and 25% are planning to start, however 37.5% do not consider it important.

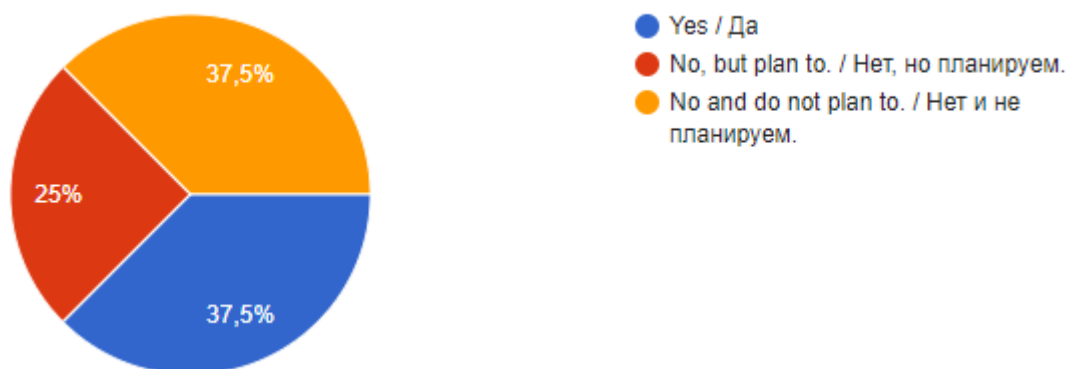


Figure 49. Organizations collaborating with bloggers.

Next two questions were open-ended, therefore author will not provide the reader with particular graphics. However the author have read all the responds due to not big amount of respondents it was easy to do, and analyzed it as a qualitative method. Full answers can be found in Appendix. Questions were created in order to see the key benefits and challenges of Instagram usage for tourism organizations. As for benefits most companies mention brand awareness and visibility of their brand, also that Instagram is a good way to promote their offers and services and more people get to see information about their destinations and it creates desire to travel there. Some companies identified communication and connection with customers the main benefit. However, one company could not identify benefits due to lack of knowledge and experience of Instagram usage.

Talking about challenges, as it is said earlier not enough knowledge about Instagram and its marketing tools is a big challenge for most companies and they do not know how and what to post on feed and stories. Another problem is lack of resources as of money or time, therefore companies are not able to keep posting regular and high quality content. Competitiveness is one more common issue, a company said the biggest challenge is to reach followers.

Next question was aiming to find out which sources used by companies' give them the most of clients. According to figure 50, 25% of respondents says that most of their clients came from company's official website. Due to lack of respondents, it is not possible to correctly measure other sources, as based on results other different channels were chosen only by 1 company each. However, there were open-ended answers and companies say that they either do not know this information or their clients come from all those channels at the same rate.

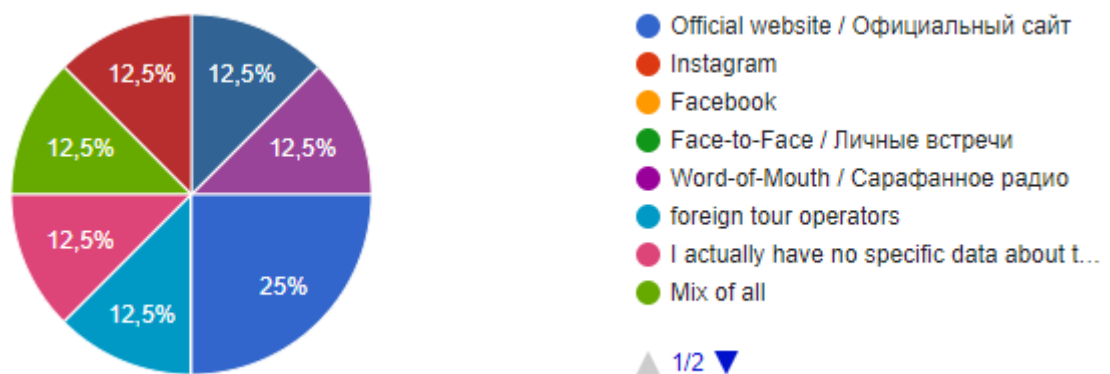


Figure 50. Channels which bring the most of companies' clients.

The research required to identify resources which companies use to communicate with clients, it allowed multiple choice answer. Figure 51 illustrates that resources were mostly personal messages it was chosen by almost 88%, another the most used ones were stories on Instagram and comment section, almost 63% of respondents chose it. One company also mentioned travel fairs face-to-face meetings.

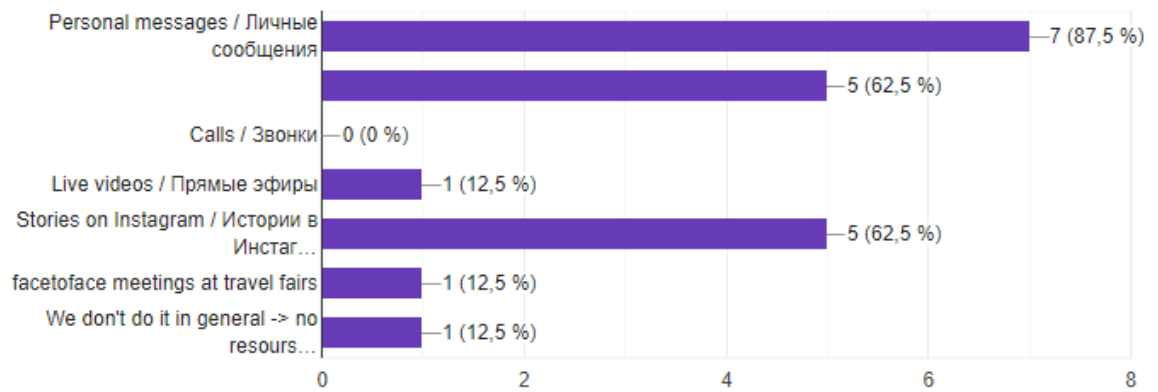


Figure 51. Resources used to communicate with customers.

Companies were asked to specify which content they produce and post on Instagram. As it can be seen from figure 52, all of the respondents post pictures, which was expected. Then short videos post 75% of respondents and Stories almost 63%, little number of companies use IGTV and do live videos.

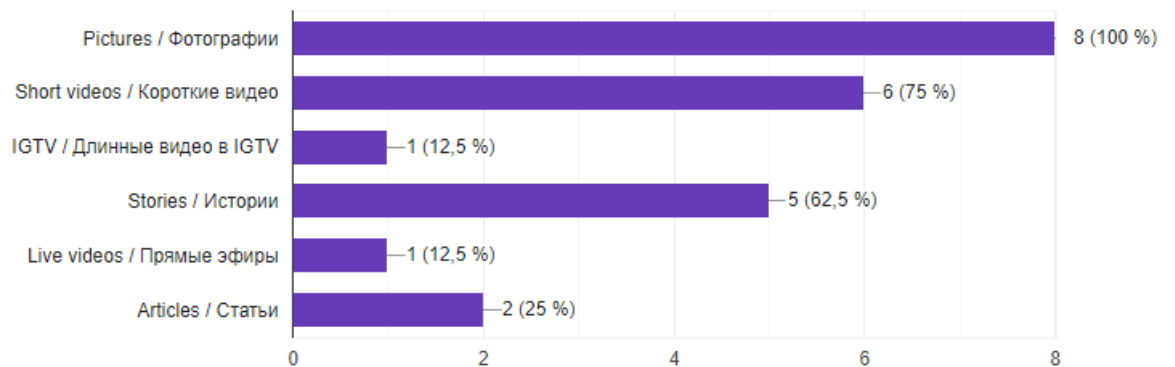


Figure 52. Content companies post on Instagram.

Next question was supposed to identify how many companies post content of Instagram at the specific time. Most of companies almost 63% said that they post at the specific time of the day, then 37% do not.

Then companies were asked if they use hashtags on their posts. According to the figure 53, all respondents use at least general hashtags. Majority of participants which is almost 88% is using unique and personal hashtags as well.

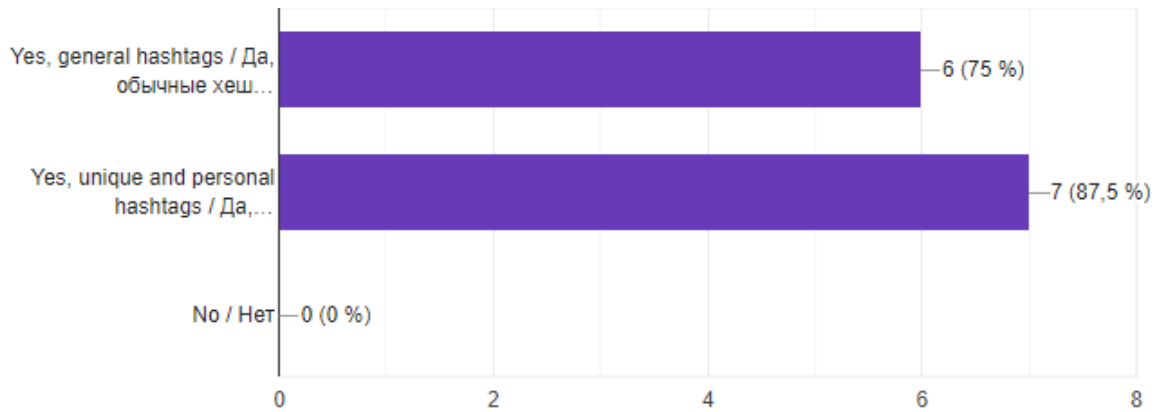


Figure 53. Usage of hashtags.

Final questions aimed to see if companies use location tags on their posts on Instagram. Based on figure 54, the majority of companies add location tags to their posts, however 25% of the respondents do not.

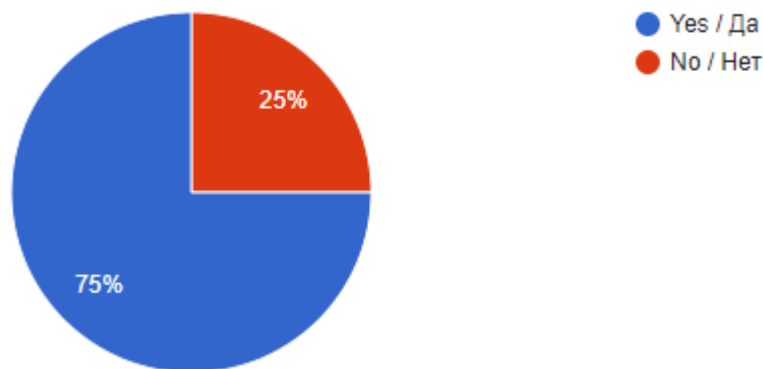


Figure 54. Location tags usage.

The analysis of results received was done and explained above, in subchapter 5.3 the author will summarize all the findings about Russian tourists.

5.3 Summary of Russian tourists preferences

Analyzation of received results allowed the author to see Russian tourists travel preferences and Instagram usage. Author start with summary for tourists, continuing with tourism organizations and finally with a list of suggestions for tourism organizations towards Instagram usage based on both surveys.

Results from the survey for tourists showed that Russian tourists do not travel very often for leisure. Most travel only 1 – 2 times per year, research was done for Gen Z and Gen Y,

therefore this applies only to them. The difference between these two generations regarding frequency of travel have not been found, according to analysis in subchapter 5.2 it is rather even. The most popular countries for Russians are Thailand, Turkey and European countries, such as Germany, Italy, Spain and France. Many participants do mostly only domestic travelling.

Research showed that most of Russian tourists among target group travel with family or friends. However, there is differences between Gen Z and Gen Y in this matter, based on the research Millennials are travelling alone more often than Gen Z, this could be so because most part of Gen Z is still rather young. Moreover, Gen Z travel with friends more often than Gen Y, most likely because Gen Y have full-time jobs, different schedules and their own families.

Based on the research, 84% of respondents look for information about future destination before going their trip. Most influencing in decision-making of tourists' last trip were recommendations by family and friends and previous experience. Around 19% of respondents said Instagram made them choose a specific destination. Furthermore, research showed that 60% of Russian tourists use travel websites and Google when searching for travel related information, 45% of the respondents prefer to use Instagram. Overall, Russians use different sources.

Russian tourists find different content helpful, however the most crucial are pictures and reviews, they were chosen by 72% of respondents. Videos (48%) and articles (44%) has almost the same importance among the target group. Around 35% of participants said stories are the most helpful for them. Furthermore, Russian tourists enjoy different content regarding traveling, 84% prefer overview of the destination, 82% want to see sights and 69% prefer to see content about accommodation options and local food.

Research showed that Gen Z and Gen Y are mostly using Instagram to share pictures, to look for inspiration and search for information. Moreover, Russians are active Instagram users, 50% of respondents check the app once every couple of hours and almost 33% every hour. Interesting, that 32% of Gen Y checks Instagram 1 – 2 times per day.

Travel bloggers are followed by 75% of Gen Z and 50% of Gen Y, therefore this is more common among younger generation. According to the survey, by 43% importance of influencers' opinion was considered as average, then 30% of both Millennials and Gen Z find

it rather important to them and 29% of Gen Y chose very important. Therefore, influencers' opinion and recommendation is the most important for Gen Y, but Gen Z finds it rather average.

The research showed that 82% of Russian tourists follow family and friends' accounts and 61% follow travel accounts which put it in number 5 most followed category by the target group.

Hashtags are used by 50% of respondents to look for information and 62% use location tags for this purpose. Based on the research 71% of those who do not use location, also do not use hashtags. 67% of those who use location tags, use hashtags as well. 33% of those who do not use hashtags, use location tags to look for information. This shows a slightly higher tendency of using location tags. 60% of Russian tourists discovered new destinations on Instagram and due to cross-analysis with hashtag and location questions, author was able to find out that 67% of those who use location tag and 69% of those who use hashtags managed to find new destination.

In the following subchapter, author gives suggestions and tips for tourism organizations regarding Instagram.

5.4 Suggestions for tourism organizations

Different insights were received on how tourism organizations are using Instagram, therefore author decided to create a table with most common challenges identified during the research, and ways of development. Suggestions were created in accordance with theoretical knowledge received during the thesis writing and author's own opinion.

Table of challenges and suggestions

Brand awareness

In order to increase brand visibility, a company should identify the purpose and values of their page. This will help them to share the right message to their customers according to company's values. Based on the research, most of companies do not use paid advertisement and this is their mistake. As it was talked deeply about in chapter 3, paid advertisement is a great way to increase brand awareness. This includes working with influencers, which most of companies are not considering to do, based on results.

Followers

Companies consider Instagram rather competitive platform. It is crucial to have an outstanding page in order to make people follow. Companies should increase their interest by writing a compelling bio, doing a contest or posting high quality content. This topic was also covered in chapter 3.

Resources (budget)

It is free to create business account on Instagram and does not require mandatory wastes. If there is no budget at all, author suggests to create account anyway and use free features such as:

- Unique and general hashtags
- Location tags
- Stories
- Interaction with customers, e.g repost them using your service or product to stories and tag them.

Content could be created by anyone on the team just with a smartphone.

Content

For the content creation, author suggested a lot of examples in chapter 3. It is crucial companies post regular. Based on the research, Russian tourist are into stories, therefore companies should start using them as well. It is easy and very interactive, as there could be done nice and simple games, quizzes and it is a great way to communicate with followers by doing Q&A.

Lack of knowledge

As for the lack of knowledge, there are different options companies have.

1. To learn by themselves, there are a lot of free sources online, and basically learn by doing.
2. Send someone from employees' to do social media courses.

-
3. Hire an expert. Instagram is a fast growing place and it created a lot of jobs options for different people. Therefore, there are many people who could do the job for the company.
-

Chapter 6 is the final and includes conclusion, trustworthiness of the study and author's evaluation of thesis writing process.

6 Conclusion

The aim of the research was to find out how Russian tourists use Instagram, what influences their decision – making process and which Instagram features they find the most helpful regarding traveling. Moreover, how tourism companies use Instagram as a marketing tool and what are the biggest challenges. Consumer behavior, motivations and decision – making process were discussed in chapter 2, followed by deep introduction into Instagram, its key features and content creation. Research was conducted and received data was analyzed, suggestions on how companies can overcome key challenges were provided.

The results showed that companies have many challenges and do not know how to reach their goals on Instagram, therefore based on survey's data author created a table with participated companies' challenges and suggestions for further development.

Surveys were anonymous and voluntary, participants' were not bond to any contract and therefore, were free to stop at any point. No harm was done by these surveys and all the participants were given necessary information about the research, as showed in Appendix. Therefore, the research was ethical.

Most crucial suggestions included information on how to increase brand awareness and visibility, how to reach more followers and how to overcome budget limitation. Moreover, what to do with lack of knowledge and how to create engaging content were mentioned in suggestions part.

To conclude, both Gen Z and Gen Y living in Russia are active Instagram users and value visual part of the app, influencers do have power over their decision – making process, therefore companies should consider doing paid advertisements and collaboration with influencers. This will help them to gain audience and increase brand awareness.

The thesis process started in the end of January and was finished in the end of May, which makes the recommended period of 4 months. The topic was chosen due to author's own interest in Instagram influence on tourism field. This research was not commissioned by any company, because author wanted to create a guide for any tourism organization to use. Thesis writing process was with no serious challenges, except for limitation of sources, because not all needed books could be accessed online and libraries were closed due to coronavirus. It was rather easy to receive data for the target group as mostly survey was distributed online.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant topic in tourism industry and author's career development • Specific target group was re-searched • Enough data gathered for target group research • Thesis done in recommended time period
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge about analysis tools • Not enough data received by companies • Changed research method for gathering data from companies due to coronavirus situation
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a wide topic and Instagram is changing fast, therefore there are opportunities for future re-search towards other target groups and deeper research.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other researches were conducted on similar topics, therefore some information could be crossing.

Above author presented SWOT analysis of the thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey for Russian tourists

1. Пол / Gender *

- Мужской / Male
- Женский / Female
- Предпочитаю не указывать / Prefer not to mention

2. Страна проживания / Country of residence *

Мой ответ

3. Возраст / Age *

- <18
- 18 - 25
- 26 - 40
- 41 - 55
- 56+

4. Как часто, в течении года вы выезжаете за границу отдыхать дольше, чем на 1 неделю? / How often do you travel outside of your country of residence for longer than 1 week for leisure per year? *

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 +
- Каждый месяц / Every month

5. С кем вы обычно отправляетесь отдыхать? (Можно выбрать несколько) / Who are you usually traveling for leisure with? (multiple choice) *

Семья / Family

Друзья / Friends

В одиночестве / Alone

Другое: _____

6. Куда вы ездили отдыхать в последний раз? (Страна) / Where did you travel for leisure last time? (Country) *

Мой ответ _____

7. Искали ли вы информацию о стране направления до отъезда? / Did you search for information about the destination before going on the trip? *

Да / Yes

Нет / No

8. Что заставило вас выбрать страну направления? (Можно выбрать несколько) / What made you choose the country of destination? (multiple choice) *

Рекомендация друзей или семьи / Friends' or family's recommendation

Посты в блогах о путешествиях / Posts on travel blogs

TripAdvisor

Посты в Инстаграме / Posts on Instagram

Посты в других соц. сетях / Posts on other social media

Предыдущий опыт / Previous experience

Другое: _____

9. Какими источниками информации вы обычно пользуетесь, чтобы узнать больше о направлении? (Можно выбрать несколько) / What sources do you usually use to learn more about the destination? (multiple choice) *

- Рекомендация друзей или семьи / Friends' or family's recommendation
- Google
- Сайты о путешествиях / Travel websites
- Тур. агентства / Travel agencies
- TripAdvisor
- Instagram
- Другие соц. сети / Other social media
- Блоги о путешествиях / Travel blogs
- Брошюры, книги / Brochures, books
- Другое: _____

10. Какой контент вам кажется наиболее полезным для планирования путешествия? (Можно выбрать несколько) / Which content do you find more helpful when planning a trip? (multiple choice)

- Фотографии места направления / Pictures of the destination
- Видео места направления / Videos of the destination
- Сторис в Инстаграме / Stories on Instagram
- Отзывы / Reviews
- Информация, предоставленная тур. агентствами / Information provided by travel agencies
- Статьи / Articles
- Другое: _____

11. Вы пользуетесь Инстаграмом? (Если "Нет", тогда пропустите вопросы 12-19) / Do you use Instagram? (If "No", skip questions 12-19)

- Да / Yes
- Нет / No

12. Для чего вы используете Инстаграм? / What is your reason for using Instagram?

- Чтобы общаться / To communicate
- Чтобы делиться фотографиями и видео / To share pictures and videos
- Чтобы искать вдохновение / To look for the inspiration
- Чтобы найти информацию / To search for the information
- Другое: _____

13. Как часто вы заходите в Инстаграм? / How often do you check Instagram?

- Каждый час / Every hour
- Раз в пару часов / Once every couple of hours
- 1 - 2 раза в день / 1 - 2 times per day
- 1 - 2 раза в неделю / 1 - 2 times per week
- Реже, чем 1 раз в неделю / Less than 1 time per week
- Другое: _____

14. Вы подписаны на каких-либо тревел-блогеров (о путешествиях) в Инстаграме? / Do you follow any travel bloggers on Instagram?

- Да / Yes
- Нет / No

15. Если да, по шкале от 1 до 5, насколько важна для вас их рекомендация? / If yes, on a scale of 1 - 5, how important is their recommendation?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Совсем не важна / Not important at all Очень важна / Very important

16. На какие аккаунты вы подписаны в Инстаграм? (Можно выбрать несколько) / What kind of accounts do you follow on Instagram? (multiple choice)

Друзья или семья / Friends or family

Красота / Beauty

Музыка / Music

Развлечения / Entertainment

Еда / Food

Путешествия / Travel

Спорт / Sport

Образование / Education

Другое: _____

17. Используете ли вы хештеги для поиска информации о направлении? / Do you use hashtags to find information about the destination?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

18.Используете ли вы поиск по локации, чтобы найти информацию о чем-либо? / Do you use the location search to find some information?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

19. Узнали ли вы о новых туристических направлениях в Инстаграме? / Have you discovered new destinations through Instagram?

Да / Yes

Нет / No

20. Какого рода фотографии/видео вы бы хотели видеть о путешествиях? (Можно выбрать несколько) / What kind of pictures/videos would you like to see regarding traveling? (multiple choice) *

- Обзор места направления / Overview of the destination
- Отели, апартаменты / Hotels, apartments
- Рестораны, местная еда / Restaurants, local food
- Развлечения / Entertainments
- Достопримечательности и культура / Sights and culture
- Другое: _____

Table 2. Responses for question 8 on what influenced the destination choice.

Family lives there
Price
Spontaneous decision
Friend lives there
Budget
Concert of favourite band
Personal interest
Language course
Football team
The best place to travel to in September

Appendix 2 – Survey for tourism organisations

1.Название компании (Оставьте пустым, если предпочитаете не указывать) /
Name of the company (Leave empty if prefer not to mention)

Мой ответ

2.Есть ли у вашей компании аккаунт в Инстаграме? / Does your company have
account on Instagram? *

Да / Yes

Нет / No

3. Покупали ли вы платную рекламу в Инстаграме для рекламы своих услуг?
/ Have you purchased advertisements on Instagram to promote your offers? *

Да / Yes

Нет / No

4. Сотрудничаете ли вы с блогерами, например тревел- блогерами? / Do you
collaborate with bloggers, for example travel bloggers? *

Да / Yes

Нет, но планируем / No, but plan to

Нет и не планируем / No and do not plan to

5.Как вы думаете, какую пользу приносит использование Инстаграма вашей
компанией? / What do you think are the key benefits of using Instagram for your
company? *

Мой ответ

6.С какими трудностями ваша компания столкнулась в использовании Инстаграма? / What are the key challenges of using Instagram for your company? *

Мой ответ _____

7. Из каких источников чаще всего о вас узнают клиенты? / Where do you get the most of your clients from? *

Официальный сайт / Official website

Instagram

Facebook

Личные встречи / Face-to-Face

Сарафанное радио / Word-of-Mouth

Другое: _____

8.Как вы общаетесь со своими клиентами? (Можно выбрать несколько) / How do you communicate with your clients? (multiple choice) *

Личные сообщения / Personal messages

Комментарии / Comments section

Звонки / Calls

Прямые эфиры / Live videos

Истории в Инстаграме / Stories on Instagram

Другое: _____

9. Какой контент ваша компания выкладывает в Инстаграм? (Можно выбрать несколько) / What kind of content do you post on Instagram? (multiple choice) *

Фотографии / Pictures

Короткие видео / Short videos

Длинные видео в IGTV / IGTV

Истории / Stories

Прямые эфиры / Live videos

Статьи / Articles

Другое: _____

10. Выкладываете ли вы свои посты в определенный промежуток времени? / Do you publish your posts at the specific time of the day? *

Да / Yes

Нет / No

11.Используете ли вы хештеги на ваших постах? (Можно выбрать несколько) / Do you use hashtags on your posts? (multiple choice) *

Да, обычные хештеги / Yes, general hashtags

Да, уникальные и персональные хештеги / Yes, unique and personal hashtags

Нет / No

Другое: _____

12.Добавляете ли вы локацию к вашим постам? / Do you add location to your posts? *

Да / Yes

Нет / No

Table 3. Responses for open-ended question on Instagram benefits for companies.

More people around the world get information about the sights of our island and get to know about our travel agency.
Especially in the travel industry is a vital part of "travel journey", during inspiration
It is too early to talk about benefits, because we just started using Instagram.
Visibility, connection with people, marketing tool, good window overall to what we offer
Brand awareness, customers see that managers are ready to communicate.
Creates desire (at tour operators and their clients) to think about Finland as a destination and possibly of our company as the provider of it
Creates desire (at tour operators and their clients) to think about Finland as a destination and possibly of our company as the provider of it It's a good way to promote our region for the tourists and show different places our city has to offer. It's also a channel of good feeling and interaction with our followers easy going.
Overall knowledge

Table 4. Responses for open-ended question on Instagram usage challenges for companies.

Reaching out to more followers and getting 10000 followers.
Huge competition
At the beginning everything is complicated from understanding of how Instagram works to content creation
Regularity, quality of content, reactivity

Lack of knowledge
Resources (time and money)
The key challenge is to determine the purpose of the channel. How does it differ from our other social media channels. For what do we use feed and stories.
We do not have resources to manage it