



## **The influence of social media on choosing Finnish destinations**

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## Abstract

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<p>Nowadays, when planning for travels, most of us go through social media sites. Facebook and Instagram are full of travel tips and photos. For most travellers, planning is a big part of the trip. Instagram is a visual platform using photos, videos and text, where areas Facebook allows to post links and articles as well as photos and text. This study is concentrating only on Facebook and Instagram.</p> <p>The aim of this study was to find out does the social media have an influence on Finnish people on choosing domestic destinations. The aim was also to find out if people see paid collaboration more reliable than user generated content or vice versa? The result will be important knowledge for content creators in travel business.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consists of consumer behaviour in the context of tourism, social media, user generated content and influencer marketing. The theory is based on literature review.</p> <p>The research was conducted via online survey distributed in Finnish travel groups in Facebook, author's personal Facebook page and was targeted for Finnish users aged 30 to 45 years olds. The survey consisted of multiple questions and few open-end questions to have more detailed answers. The survey was done using Webropol software and the analyses of the results by using Webropol's Insights, SPSS Statistical software and Microsoft Excel.</p> <p>The number of respondents were altogether 73. The study revealed that most people trust more on user generated content than sponsored collaboration. It also showed that photos and reviews from other users are considered important and reliable.</p> <p>Although this research was done independently, the results are important information for content creators, tourims companies and tour operators to understand what kind of content people are looking for when they turn to social media to search for information.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Tourism, social media, customer behaviour, user generated content, influencer marketing.

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Consumer behavior .....	3
2.1	Tourism industry in Finland .....	3
2.2	Consumer behaviour in tourism .....	4
2.3	Decision making process .....	6
3	Social media .....	9
3.1	Facebook.....	10
3.2	Instagram .....	11
3.3	Social media marketing.....	11
3.4	Moments of truth .....	13
4	User generated content UGC .....	16
4.1	Motivation for creating user generated content.....	16
4.2	Influencer marketing.....	18
4.2.1	Typology of influencers .....	18
4.2.2	Defining the influencers.....	20
4.3	The strength of weak ties .....	21
4.4.	Trust on social media .....	21
5	Research methodology.....	24
5.1	Research approach.....	24
5.2	Creating and distributing the survey.....	26
5.3	The analysis method .....	26
5.4	Background information of the respondents.....	27
6	Results.....	29
6.1	Children and their influence on destination choices.....	29
6.2	Travel habits.....	30
6.3	Use of social media.....	32
6.4	Contents of social media .....	35
7	Conclusion and discussion .....	43
7.1	Conclusions.....	43
7.2	Reliability and validity of the research.....	45
7.3	Evaluation of the thesis process and self-evaluation .....	47
	References.....	49
	Appendix 1. Survey questions .....	55
	Appendix 2. Answers to the question 11 of how children influence.....	65
	Appendix 3. Answers to the last open feedback question .....	67

## 1 Introduction

When people are planning their trips, where they search information from? Nowadays, more and more from social media. Social media allows us to dream, to gain knowledge and most of all, engage with other users, even those unknown to us. As they say, travel planning is a part of the trip, to some people even the most important part.

Social media platforms have become a major part of our everyday life. We spend hours in a day watching other people's pictures, postings and dreaming of our trips. Social media influences on our minds whether we knew it or not, it has a way of making us dream and want more. Especially in traveling, social media seems to have a big influence. Through social media we can see amazing pictures from everywhere, so it has a way to affect our thinking. It makes us want to know more about that specific place.

The basic idea of social media is quite simple; after creating a free account with a username, the user can start uploading one's own content to the sites. Depending on the platform, the content can be pictures, videos, text or links to articles. There are several social media platforms, with some differences how they operate, though.

Social media can be used to influence on our travel decisions and there are two main ways of influencing in social media: through influencer marketing and through user generated content. Influencer marketing means using someone influential online person collaborating with a brand, user generated content is the content that normal users upload to social media. Influential person in this case does not mean celebrity or famous person, it simply means a person who has certain amount of followers on social media channels and through them has an influence on their followers.

This thesis is done independently based on the author's interest on whether social media has an influence on Finnish people choosing domestic destinations. The focus group in this study are Finnish people aged between 30 to 45 years. The interest for this topic was raised after the author did her internship as a content creator and social media manager in a travel diary app start-up. The idea was raised after the company's launching of a travel site focusing on Finland. The author hopes this study to be beneficial in the future when creating content to the social media.

The questions the author wants to know are the following:

1. Does social media have influence on people's choice of destination?
2. Do people trust more on influencer marketing or user generated content?

Social media has an influence on our decisions simply because it is so greatly a part of our lives. Generation of the author herself, who didn't grow up with a phone on their hand, social media has changed the way we do our shopping, our thinking, social media shapes the world around us whether we wanted it or not. The question how much influence it has, especially in traveling is quite interesting. Can a social media post on Facebook or Instagram be the one factor that makes someone to choose their destination, solely based on that? Destination in this context means a city, a nature park, a restaurant or a hotel.

Like said before, influencer marketing means someone influential online person is collaborating with a brand, usually advertising their products by experimenting and writing reviews about it. It is paid collaboration. Influential does not mean celebrity or super star, influential is used from a person who has great number of followers in social media accounts. User generated content refers to the content users upload to social media sites. These can be videos, photos or text.

Key concepts of this study are tourism, social media, influencer marketing, user generated content and customer behavior. Social media is web-based platforms that allows users to share their own content or the content from other users. Focus on this study is on Facebook and Instagram. Customer behaviour is the motives and drives that people have to do a purchase. In this study, customer behaviour is discussed in the context of tourism.

As said, this study focuses only on Facebook and Instagram, it does not apply to other channels in social media. The age group is limited, so the results only apply to this group. The age group is limited to 30 to 45 years old's as of author's personal interest in that specific group. Topic will be discussed more in the chapter 5.1.

Chapters two to four introduce the theoretical framework for this research. The chapter two introduces the concepts of consumer behaviour put in the context of tourism. Chapters three and four introduce social media, user generated content and influencer marketing. Chosen research method is being introduced after theoretical framework and the last two chapters consist of results of the findings and discussion.

## 2 Consumer behavior

People make buying decisions every day. Understanding the consumer behavior is crucial for marketers to understand why people make the decisions they make. There are some factors that have an influence on consumer behavior, those factors are psychological, personal and social. Key to successful marketing is understanding consumer motivation (Hudson 2007, 41).

In this chapter the author wants to introduce the concept of consumer behavior and especially consumer behavior in the context of tourism. The tourism industry in Finland is also briefly explained.

### 2.1 Tourism industry in Finland

Horner & Swarbrooke (1996; 2006) define tourism as “a short-time movement of people to places outside their normal place of residence”. Tourism in Finland has become important for Finnish economy in recent years, revenue from tourism has amounted nearly 16 billion euros in 2017, overnights by domestic tourists in 2017 were 15,2 million and 6,7 million by foreign tourists. Domestic tourism generates 69 % of overall tourism demand in Finland. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2021.)

Domestic tourism is travelling within one’s country for business or pleasure away from their normal place of residence at least one night. Domestic tourism is important as the money spent on domestic tourism activities will feed the economy of that country. (Tourism teacher 2020.)

The first tourism attraction in Finland was Imatrankoski rapids in Saimaa region already in 18<sup>th</sup> century, rapids is said to be one of the most known attractions in Europe. Many famous people visited Imatrankoski rapids, and the actual tourism started when Empress Catherine II of Russia visited the rapids in 1792. It was the inspiration of many artists, painters and composers. It was also fashionable to commit suicide in the rapids. Imatra rapids became so popular that after the century, 14 daily trains came from Russia to Imatra. Together with the castle-like State hotel, Imatra rapids were the first Finnish tourism attraction. (GoSaimaa 2021).

The founding of Suomen Matkailijayhdistys (SMY) in 1887 was the start of the organized travel development in Finland. The aim of the foundation was to attract domestic and international visitors to travel in Finland and make traveling easy by developing services

and transportation routes. SMY oversaw the Finnish travel development and marketing for almost a century working in close collaboration with the government and businesses. Due to this collaboration, the national parks, hiking trails, camping sites, routes, guide services and many other travel related services were created. (Suomen Matkailijyhdistys 2021).

Today, the travel cluster in Finland consists of 28 129 companies with almost 20 billion annual turnover, employing 5,4 % of people (Jänkälä 2019). The key industries in the tourism sector are accommodation, food and beverage serving services, transport services for passengers, tour operators and travel agency services, cultural services and sports and recreation services. The tourism sector consists also of the industries that are connected to tourism, such as real estate and equip management, security, daily consumer goods trade as well as specialized store services, ICT-services, construction, waste management and food production. Also, the municipalities and their basic duties are affected by tourism, such services as medical care and rescue. Tourism also creates demand for communications and office support services. Domestic tourism accounts approximately 70 % of total tourism demand. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2020). In overall picture, tourism effects on many industries and plays a significant role in the society.

## **2.2 Consumer behaviour in tourism**

Horner and Swarbrooke (Horner & Swarbrooke 1996; 2007; 2021), define consumer behaviour in tourism as the study why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision.

There are seven key factors influencing on consumer's behavior, motivation is one of the major determinants, but cultural, personal and social factors have a significant role in consumer's buying process (Hudson 2008, 41). Figure 1 shows key factors influencing on consumer's behavior.

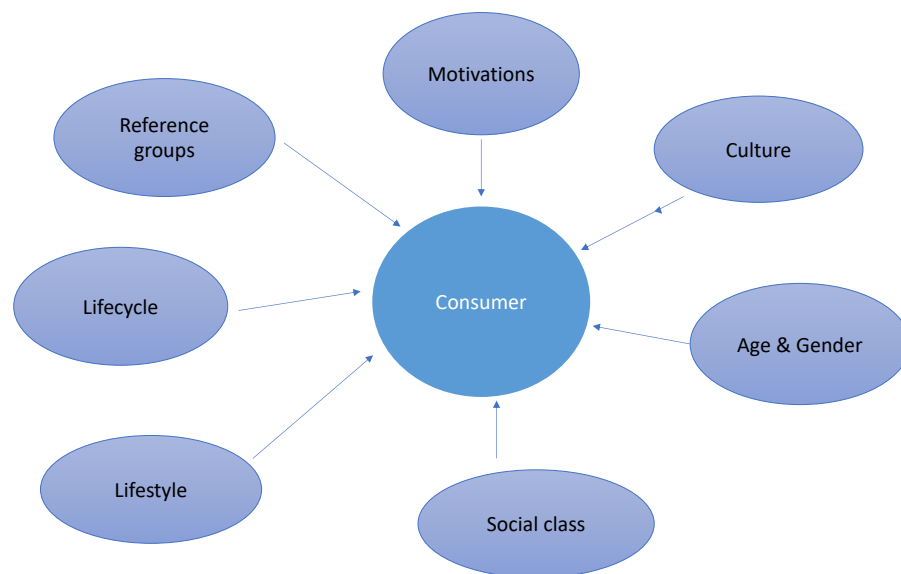


Figure 1. Factors influencing consumer behaviour (Hudson, 2008, 41).

Motivations are the inner drives that makes a person to buy something. Factors influencing motivation include learning, beliefs, attitude and perceptions. Learning refers to the experience the customer has from previous trips. In tourism context, the consumer has beliefs about companies, products or services. Attitudes are hard to change as they are gained from the experience. Perceptions is the overall picture of the world that the customer has (Hudson 2007, 43).

Culture can be defined as the person's beliefs, rituals and norms that are unique to everyone. Culture influence on how the consumer thinks, lives and communicates about things and acts on situations (Hudson 2008, 46). Kotler and Armstrong (2020,162), define culture as the "set of basic values, perceptions and behaviors learned by a member of society from a family and other institutions".

Social class is measured as a combination of several factors, such as occupation, income, education and wealth. Social class is relatively permanent, members of the same class share similar values and behaviors (Kotler & Armstrong 2020, 164). Social class is one of the most important external factors influencing on consumer behavior. Higher the level of disposable income, more likely a person is to travel (Hudson 2007, 48).



Lifestyle analyses the way people schedule their time, money and energy. Marketing researchers have combined demographic and psychological variables calling them psychographics, which measure people's activities, interests and opinions. By profiling people of groups how they live, it makes predictions about their travel motivations possible (Hudson 2007, 50).

Lifecycle states that travel patterns and destinations vary according to people's situations in life and traveler may change behavior patterns over time (Hudson 2007, 52). Life-stage segmentation provides marketers a powerful tool to better understand and engage customers, data about a consumer life stage allows marketers better to target and personalize ads (Kotler & Armstrong 2020, 169).

Reference groups or social factors such as friends, family or workplace influence on person's attitudes and behavior (Hudson 2007, 52). Studies show that these informal information channels have more influence on people than formal channels.

Swarbrooke and Horner (2007; 2021), divided motivators in tourism into two factors; those factors which motivate to take a holiday and those factors which motivate a person to take a holiday at a particular time to a particular destination. The decision can be based on one dominant motivator or several motivators that partly satisfy the need. Motivators also change over time. (Swarbrooke, Horner 2007; 2021.)

One of the most accepted theory to explain tourist motivation, is Dann's theory on push and pull factors. The push-factors are those ones that are within individual such as the need to escape. The pull-factors make people select a specific tourism destination or business within the destination (Dann 1977; Morrison 2019). Push-factors are the factors that start the process of motivating a person to travel, pull factors make people choose a specific destination or business within the destination (Morrison 2019, 486).

### **2.3 Decision making process**

It is very important to understand consumers' decision-making process even though no two traveller are the same. And no two persons make the decision the same way. The author wants to explain the decision-making process in the context of tourism.

Tourism is seen as a service rather than a product and the intangible nature of a service makes consumer highly interested and involved in the purchase-process (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 45). Figure 2 shows travel purchase behaviour process.

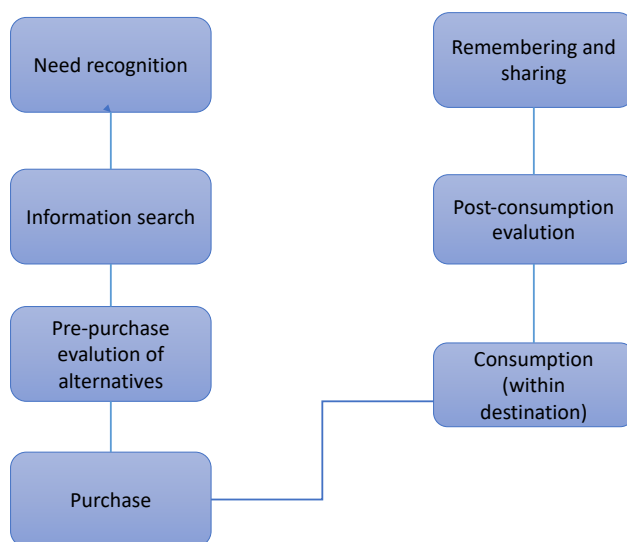


Figure 2. Travel purchase behaviour process (Morrison, 2010; 2019)

The process of decision making usually begins with awareness or recognition need. It may be initiated by commercials or by word of mouth or simply just through Internet search (Morrison 2019, 493; Hudson 2007, 57).

Next step in the decision-making process is the information search. Information can be obtained from several sources. Personal sources include information from friends and family, commercial sources are those from advertising, sales or web pages, public sources refer to social media and online searches and customer ratings (Kotler & Armstrong 2020, 175). In tourism point of view, person then finds information about destinations and services that will match to the need of the traveller. Recent studies show that Internet and social media play major role when customer research and books travels (Hudson 2007, 57).

At the evaluation stage, the consumer will make more detailed comparison. Comparison can be between destinations and choices can be made based on criteria such as price or recommendation (Hudson 2007, 57).

Purchase decision happens when consumer finds suitable destination. The choice of destination is based on consumer's accessible time and financial situation (Hudson 2007, 57). Purchase decision can still be influenced by others, and the consumer may want to confirm destination choice with interpersonal sources. Situational factors of the consumer may also change causing to a delay in the purchase decision. (Morrison 2019, 495.)

Consumption stage is the stage of experiences people have in the destination. In this stage, tourists expect that the activities, experiences and benefits they receive, matches to their preferences. Disappointment happens if the expectations are not realized. (Morrison 2019, 496.)

Next stage of purchase decision process is post-purchase evaluation. After tourists return home from their trip, they usually evaluate the destination experiences against their expectations. Satisfied customers are more likely to be repeat visitors and they will share their positive experiences via social media or word-of-mouth recommendations. Dissatisfied customers will not most likely be repeat visitors and they will share their negative experiences. Information from these interpersonal sources has more weight than destination-dominated sources. (Morrison 2019, 496.)

The final stage in the process is remembering and sharing. Looking at the amount of travel blogs or vacation photographs in social media, this stage is important for travellers as many like to share their experiences. The recommendations from visitors are very trustworthy for others considering the destination (Morrison 2019, 497).

### 3 Social media

Today, we see social media as a part of our everyday lives. It goes with us everywhere in our pockets and we can easily share a photo to our friends in all channels wherever we are. It is almost impossible to comprehend that somebody does not have any social media accounts. This chapter introduces the concept of social media focusing on Facebook and Instagram. The author wants to also explain the concept of an influencer and user-generated content briefly.

The actual roots of social media go way back in time, one can say that social media began as early as May 24<sup>th</sup> of 1844 when series of electronic dots were tapped out by hand on a telegraph machine from Baltimore to Washington. Since then, social media has come a long way to the launch of Facebook in 2004 by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg (Maryville University 2021). Today, Facebook has over 2,7 billion monthly users worldwide (Statista 2020).

Kotler and Armstrong (2020, 471), define social media as “independent and commercial online social networks where people congregate to socialize and share messages, opinions, pictures, videos and other content.”

The idea of social media is that after creating an account, anyone can share their own content or content from others to the world or to the selected group of people. Dollarhide (2020) defines social media “as computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts and information through the building of social networks and communities”.

Originally social media was a way to interact with friends and family but later was adopted by businesses which saw an opportunity in new communication method to reach out to customers. Today, there are globally over 3 billion social media users daily (Dollarhide 2020).

Kaplan and Haenlain (2010, 61), define social media as a “group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allowing the creation and exchanging of user-generated content”. Constantinides and Fountain (2008, 232), define web 2.0 to be “a collection of open-source interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes”. User generated content can be videos, posts, photos, blogposts in several social media channels. User generated content

is the content that the user is creating and promoting oneself. Most common social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and mostly for professional use LinkedIn.

Word-of-mouth communication is familiar to all of us, it is the information passed on orally from one person to another. It has been around for as long as can be remembered. With the rise of technology, the word-of-mouth has changed into electronic.

Word-of-mouth is communication concept of formal and interpersonal communication with personal recommendations about products or services. It is the oldest way of exchanging information with known individuals. Emergence of Internet technology, word-of-mouth communication extended to eWoM, electronic word-of-mouth; consumers posting their reviews or comments about a product or a service through web-based platforms. (Hussain, Song & Niu 2020). Word-of-mouth is now seen as an essential part of consumer decision making. (Moran, Muzellec, Nolan 2014).

### **3.1 Facebook**

Facebook was originally created for college students in Harvard University to share text messages between students from different universities. Facebook we now know was founded in 2006 (Hall 2021). Facebook is now the biggest social network worldwide (Clement 2020). The idea of Facebook is that after creating an account with name and added friends, it is possible to start sharing content. That content can be text, photos, videos, links, content from other people. Visual element is not necessary. Companies can create their own Facebook pages too.

Facebook is based on likings and groups, after creating a profile, the user finds the companies, public figures or groups that the user is interested in. After liking them or joining a group, their posts can be seen on user's timeline. Then it is possible to comment the content or simply like it. When companies create a Facebook page, it is usually meant for marketing purposes. Facebook works both on a desktop as a webpage or as a mobile app. From July 2020 on, most Facebook users access the platform via mobile devices (Clement 2020). The amount of mobile users in October 2020 is 98,8% of all users (Statista 2020).

### **3.2 Instagram**

Instagram is a visual platform, originally created for photo-sharing by Kevin Systrom in 2009. The Instagram app was launched in October 2010 and acquired 25 000 users in one day (Blystone 2020). In Instagram, after creating an account, user uploads content (a photo or a video) to share it with followers. The posts must have a visual element when in Facebook no visual element is required. Link sharing is not possible in Instagram. Instagram is used with hashtags to identify the topic. With hashtags, the user can find the topics that are most interesting for the user. Hashtags also help make user's account discoverable. Hashtags help user to discover relevant content by searching hashtags or clicking through posts with a particular tag (Barnhart 2020).

Hashtags are a combination of letter, numbers and emojis preceded by the #- symbol. They are clickable and are used to categorize content and make it more easily discoverable. (Newberry 2020.)

According to Statista (2021), of over 1 billion worldwide Instagram users, 33% of them were aged between 25 to 34 years old, second largest user group were audience aged between 18-24 years (Statista 2021.)

### **3.3 Social media marketing**

Social media has changed the way companies do marketing; it is something very different than before. Companies can engage and interact with their clients better than ever; it also enables customers to interact with each other.

Social media marketing is using the social media platforms to connect audiences with companies through publishing interesting content and interacting with followers (Buffer 2019).

Creating a social media strategy is important for businesses. Social media is an essential way to reach customers. Social media channels are a way to interact with customers, engaging followers in social media receives higher loyalty from customers, it brings valuable information about customer behavior and eventually brings more money. (Brandi 2019.)

Creating a social media strategy begins with setting the goals for marketing. Setting the goals allows the company to measure success. The goals can be set by using the S.M.A.R.T framework. The letters stand for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and

time bound. Second step in creating a social media strategy is targeting customers and getting to know them, how they act on social media and what channels are they using. It is possible by using different social media analytics tools. (Newberry, LePage 2021).

Next critical step is knowing and listening to the competition. Competitor analysis allows to understand the competition and how they are acting on social media. Doing a social media auditing helps to improve the content of the social media of the company. In social media auditing, it is very important to ask what works for now and what are the channels that the customers are using. Auditing also helps to improve the social media accounts and profiles the company may have. (Newberry, LePage 2021).

Next step is about the content of social media, ie. what kind of content to post. It is profitable to spy on how other businesses are doing and adapting their marketing campaign, how they get their audience to engage. Asking from followers is always a good way to understand their needs and wants. Evaluating and adjusting the social media strategy is always important. (Newberry, LePage 2021).

Social media can be divided into two; organic and paid. Organic social media means posting free content to social media accounts. Brands and businesses use organic social media to establish their personality and voice, to build relationships with their followers and to engage with their audience. User-generated content is one way to engage customers. As the social media platforms use a ranking algorithms, the reach of organic posts is very limited and it has been declining over the years. Paid social media means brands paying to social media platforms to have their content shared to new audiences. Paid social media is used to acquire new audiences and raise brand awareness, targeting to convert them into sales. (Cooper 2020). The purpose of paid social media is to ensure the visibility among followers.

According to HubSpot, the social media spending is expected to exceed 47,9 billion USD in 2021. Since 2019, the money spent in paid advertising has been on the rise and it shows that paid social media marketing is playing more important role in marketing strategies among businesses. (Coleman 2021). The benefits of using paid social media compared to organic is the speed of visibility. As the organic social media grows the audience slowly, paid can reach to new and wider audience very quickly. (Coleman 2021).

Why is it important for companies to be on social media? Simply put, that is where the audience is. As stated in the beginning, when looking for information about the destinations,

most people turn to social media for the simple reason of discovering new places and to be able to interact with other travellers and with the company itself. Even though social media is very important, the danger of it is that the companies forget their web sites. They forget to update them as they rely too much on social media.

### 3.4 Moments of truth

Moment of truth -marketing model integrates marketing variables such as shared brand experience and electronic word-of-mouth (e-Wom). Moment of truth (MOT) -marketing is the first impression a customer has of the brand or company. Consumers search information online and as e-Wom-marketing relies on the shared experiences of the customer, it affects heavily on customers's buying decisions. E-Wom-marketing bases on recommendations and customer interaction with recommendations create the concept "Moment of Truth". (Moran, Muzellec, Nolan 2014.)

Before deciding, a consumer is most likely to search information about the subject whether it is a product, company or a destination. That is the moment that Lecinski and Google call "the zero moment of truth, ZMOT". It happens in real time, any time of day, making a consumer in charge of the searched information. It is the information a consumer is pulling comparing to the information pushed. (Lecinski, 2011.)

According to TechTarget (2019), Moment of truths can be categorized as following:

- Less than zero moment (<ZMOT), a trigger or an event that inspires a customer to think about making the purchase.
- The zero moment of truth (ZMOT), the information search begins.
- The first moment of truth (FMOT), the stage where a consumer is looking at a product.
- Second moment of truth (SMOT), a stage in cycle where the consumer is buying the product.
- Absolute moment of truth (AMOT) describes the time when a product is bought to the time it is received.



- Third moment of truth (TMOT) happens when a customer provides feedback of the purchase. In every stage customer expects to receive accurate information and easy interaction with the organization. (TechTarget 2019).

Based on these moments, Brian Solis introduced in 2013 the Ultimate moment of truth (UMOT), making it the moment where people convert their experiences into discoverable content in any of the social media platforms, making it again the zero moment of truth to somebody else. (Solis 2013.) Figure 3 illustrates the cycle of moments of truth.

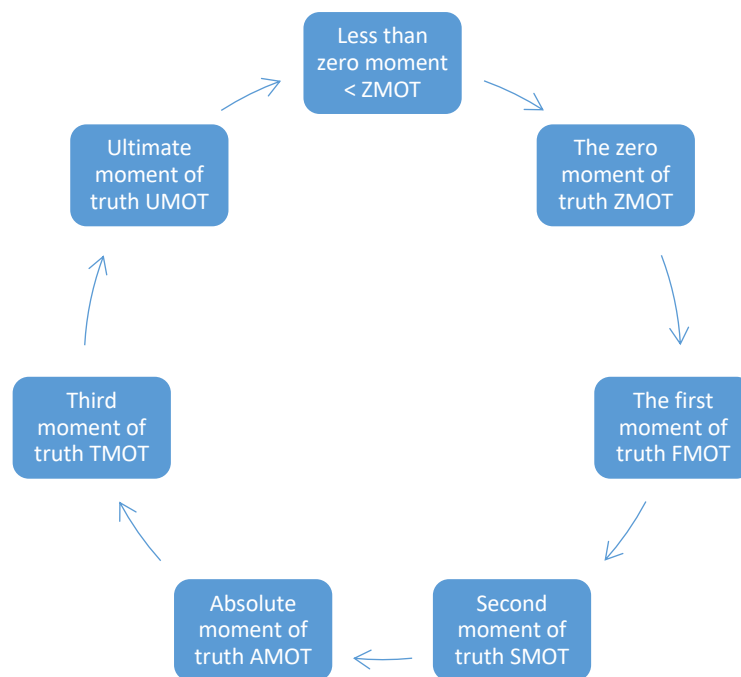


Figure 3. Moments of truth (TechTarget 2019).

What these moments of truth mean in the context of tourism? This is the author's interpretation of these moments. In the <ZMOT phase, a traveller sees an interesting photo on social media, it is followed by the phase when decides to search more information about the destination in question. FMOT happens when the traveller reads about the chosen destination or destinations. SMOT stage is the buying phase where customer books the trip, the tickets and accommodation. The AMOT phase is the waiting phase, the trip is booked but you may have to wait for it to happen. The receiving of the trip happens when a traveller is taking the trip. TMOT and UMOT phases overlap each other but to the author the difference between AMOT and UMOT is where the feedback is given. The ultimate moment of truth happens in the social media platforms, TMOT happens in the official feedback forms of the company, airline or hotel. The ultimate moment of truth is public knowledge

for everyone to see, TMOT is for the company or destination use in their marketing. And then, after marketing the cycle begins again for another traveller.

## 4 User generated content UGC

The history of user generated content can be traced as long back as 1665 when articles published in *The Journal des Sçavans* and *Royal Society* in a form of letters announcing a discovery or scientific observation. Publication of letters was not a new invention, but it made the ground for early content creation. (Brown 1992; Lobato, Julian & Hunter 2011). Today, user generated content will help travelers in their travel planning and decision-making via giving ideas and information from other travellers.

User generated content refers to the content created by the user instead of paid professionals and is mainly distributed on the Internet. The user uploads his/her content to the selected audience. The online information market is shifting towards user-centric model, making it more important to understand the motivation for consuming media. The importance for creating user generated content and the influence of it will be crucial. (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright 2008.) Also, blogs are considered user generated content and important source of information.

The motivation for creating user generated content rises from a person's own motives which are variable. User generated content is non-paid, voluntarily created making the user achieving other rewards from it, such as social and reputational benefits gaining higher visibility for them. (Sun, Dong, McIntyre 2016.)

User generated content is seen more authentic and trustworthy than traditional media because the content is made from people to people. User generated content is one of major drivers on consumers' purchasing decisions. Primary platform for user-generated content is Instagram. (Newberry 2020.)

### 4.1 Motivation for creating user generated content

Consumer's willingness to consume is dependent on the consumer's attitude towards the use of user generated content. The motives vary according to person's interest. There are several theories about attitudes but in this study the author is concentrating on the functional theory of attitudes by Daniel Katz. Daniel Katz (1960) proposed a functional theory of attitudes. The theory states that attitudes are determined by the functions that they serve us. Certain attitudes are held because they help individuals to achieve goals. Katz's

theory proposes four types of personality functions: utilitarian, knowledge, value-expressive and ego-defensive. Daugherty et al. discuss the theory in the context of user-generated content. (Katz 1960; Daugherty, Eastin, Bright 2008.)

According to Katz, utilitarian attitude acknowledges that individuals are motivated to gain rewards and avoid penalties. (Katz 1960; Daugherty et al 2008). In terms of user generated content, the motive for person to create it, is coming from their own incentives, attitude is based on person's self-interest. Knowledge-based attitude provides structured and organized environment. For the terms of user generated content, Daugherty, Eastin and Bright (2008), explain the creation of user generated content arises from the need to understand their environment or the topic itself. Value-expressive attitudes entails attitudes that express person's basic values and their self-image. On creating content, the attitude is explained that the creator feels like being a part of the online community that shares similar values that the creator. It helps to feel good about themselves and their beliefs of the world. Ego-defensive attitude protects us from the reality and truth, serving as a defensive mechanism. In the context of user generated content, the creators want to minimize their own self-doubts and have a sense of belonging. (Daugherty, Eastin, Bright 2008.)

The author believes that for most people the motivation to create user generated content is simply the idea of belonging and sharing. If the experience is good, even mind-blowing and it has made the traveller happy, the need to share the experience is big, even profound for pure pleasure. When sharing the experience, the feeling of belonging to a group is a big reward, it satisfies the needs to be accepted. Key to success for companies is happy customers. If the customer feels that the company is worth mentioning, the company can then benefit from the that experience and be able to repost it. For the customer, the reposting itself is then a reward. The author does not believe that the motivation for creating user-generated content for most people is not motivated by financial benefit, just simply the feel of the experience.

Overall, the travel industry companies should take more advantage of the user generated content as these genuine experiences are the important ones. How are travel companies able to engage people? The companies can create a certain hashtag for travellers to use, it should be simple and easy to remember. Customers are willing to use these as then they could have their photos on social media pages of the company.

For example, Sokos Hotels chain in Finland is using their #onnellistaminen hashtag to engage customers and to receive genuine experiences to use in their social media postings

(Sokos Hotels 2021). Aurinkomatkat, the biggest Finnish travel agency is using hashtag #aurinkomatkatethkiä to engage customers (Instagram/Aurinkomatkat 2021). By asking to use these hashtags, the customers could have their postings visible in the company social media account. By using these hashtags, the person can feel like being a part in bigger community. Then again, the contents of the posts must be related to the company. Many of the social media users may use the hashtags quite freely; under the given hashtag there might be something completely different.

## **4.2 Influencer marketing**

We hear the word influencer everywhere but what is an influencer? What does influencer marketing mean? Influencer marketing has become one of the leading marketing trends in recent years. Influencer marketing can be seen as a hybrid between old and new marketing means. It is an established form of marketing, enabling brand to collaborate with their chosen influencer. (Influencer Marketing Hub 2020).

The definition of an influencer according to Influencer Marketing Hub (2020) is “someone who has the power to affect to the purchasing decision of others through one’s knowledge or relationship with the audience”. What differentiates an influencer from a celebrity, is the amount of followers an influencer has online (Influencer Marketing Hub 2020). There is no exact definition of an influencer in literature, the term can refer to a group or an individual who has built their audience through social media platforms and technically speaking anyone can be an influencer. (Gross, van Wangenheim 2018.)

Influencer marketing uses endorsements and product mentions from influencers, individuals who have very dedicated follower base and are viewed experts in their niche. Influencer marketing works because of influencers’ built trust with social media followers so recommendations can be seen as a social proof. (Chen 2020.)

### **4.2.1 Typology of influencers**

Choosing a right influencer is important. A company needs to set its goals, what is the purpose of an influencer. The chosen influencer needs to have relevant audience for the company and have good engagement rate with followers so that the audience is interested what the influencer is publishing. The content from the influencer needs to be relevant, quality and authentic and the values of the influencer needs to match with the company and the influencer itself needs to be reliable. (Influencer Marketing Hub 2019.)

According to the study by Gross & van Wangenheim (2018), typology for influencers can be identified as such: Snoopers, Informers, Entertainers and Infotainers.

Snoopers are the discoverers of new platforms and their motivation is pure entertainment from making and sharing content. Content creation is their passion which they like to share with like-minded people. Motivation arises from self-expression and experiencing with others. Curiosity for exploring new tools such as cameras or cutting tools are their drivers. Snoopers also share insightful thoughts about their life to their audience and stay close contact with them. (Gross & van Wangenheim, 2018).

Informers are the opposite of Snoopers. Informers motive for creating content is to offer their expertise and knowledge in educational manner. They are seen trustworthy and credible source of information. Their high quality content is carefully investigated and planned. (Gross & van Wangenheim, 2018).

Entertainers very often are influencer-entrepreneurs who provide their audience amusement and good time. Their content varies with innovative, creativity and storytelling. They might have a team working in their background, but they are seen as one entity. The contact with audience is less frequent and close. (Gross & van Wangenheim, 2018).

Infotainers, hybrid versions of Entertainers and Informers, offer their audience their expertise and good time. Their content is informational and educational yet entertaining. (Gross & van Wangenheim 2018). Table 1. shows the typology of influencers by Gross and von Wangenheim.

Type	Motivation	Goal of content	Audience contact
Snoopers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovering social media platforms</li> <li>• Creating and sharing content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal insights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and frequent</li> </ul>
Informers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing knowledge and expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and frequent</li> </ul>
Entertainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving people good time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Personal insights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregate and moderate</li> </ul>
Infotainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing knowledge and expertise</li> <li>• Giving people good time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and education</li> <li>• Entertainment within focal domain</li> <li>• (Personal insights)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregate and moderate</li> </ul>

Table 1. Summary typology of influencers (Gross, von Wangenheim 2018).

According to the study by Chopra, Avhad, Jaju (2020), influencers were associated with synonyms like credible sources, subject experts and trustworthy. The study found that influencers bring change in behaviour at following levels: creating awareness, increasing knowledge, recommending the product and purchasing the product. (Chopra, Avhad, Jaju 2020.)

#### 4.2.2 Defining the influencers

After typology, influencers can be divided into four categories: mega, macro, micro and nano influencers. Mega influencers are the highest ranking of influencers with usually more than a million followers, and they tend to be more famous than influential. Their audience is diverse with varying topics of interest. Mega influencers reach wide but they most likely are not experts on certain subject. (Ismail, 2018). In Finland, a person over hundred thousand followers can be considered as a mega influencer (Ruotsalainen, 2019).

Macro influencers are one step down on mega influencers with the number of followers between 100 000 and one million and have gained publicity from the internet itself. (Ismail, 2018). Person with approximately hundred thousand followers is considered a macro influencer in Finland (Ruotsalainen, 2019).

Micro influencers focus on niche area and are seen as the expert of their industry. The number of followers is usually between 1000 to 100 000. (Ismail, 2018). According to Meltwater (2021), in Finland micro influencer is a person with around 2000-5000 engaged followers.

Nano influencers with their smaller amount of followers are relatively new breed. They are usually influential in their own community such as local neighborhood. (Ismail, 2018). In Finland, nano influencer is someone who has hundred up until 2000 followers who are usually from close proximate and interested in the same niche area (Meltwater 2021).

### **4.3 The strength of weak ties**

From sociology can be found a theory about the strengths of the weak ties. It can be applied to the era of Internet and social media. Sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) created his theory of the strength of weak ties stating that those people that we are weakly tied move in different circles than our own and thus have access to information that is different from what we receive through our similar environment and networks. The stronger the tie is between individuals, more similar they are and thus share same opinions (Granovetter 1973).

According to Granovetter, (1973) we have strong ties with likeminded people meaning that we usually interact with people who think similarly so it does not create any new ideas. His theory can be adapted to the internet and social media era where everyone is basically unknown to each other.

His study was done among factory workers back in the 70' s when there was no internet. The environment and the era under which the study was conducted are different, but the basic theory applies today. What Granovetter is saying in the context of tourism, is that the more we hear or read about other people's experiences from a certain destination from online platforms, the more likely we are willing to believe them as they are unknown to us and thus outside of our circle. The people close to us would have too similar opinions; it would not have the same effect on us.

### **4.4. Trust on social media**

An influencer is a person who works in collaboration with a certain brand. Credibility of the posting can be questionable if the influencer is getting paid for advertising a brand or a



destination. Promoted content or promoted advertising can be seen simply as a form of marketing.

Ridings, Gefen & Arinze (2002) define trust as “an implicit set of beliefs that the other party will refrain from opportunistic behaviour and will not take an advantage of the situation. (Ridings et al 2002; Warner-Soderholm et al 2018).

As said earlier, Web 2.0 consists of group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation of user generated content. These applications are called online social networks and they have become a major part of our everyday life. People will join to these online social networks out of a desire to be part of a community with similar interests.

Other reasons can be guidance and informational support on decision-making. (Macauley et al 2007; Grapner-Krauter 2010). Trust is important for successful online connections and interactions to occur, and these interactions rely on the level of trust between friends and service provider. (Sherchan et al 2013; Warner-Soderholm et al 2018). Study by Warner-Soderholm (2018) stated that as online users reveal personal information on online communities, it can reduce uncertainty and build trust. (Valenzuela et al 2009; Werner-Soderholm et al 2018.)

Annalect company (2017) conducted a study of Finnish consumers' attitudes towards influencer marketing (Annalect 2017). According to the study, 73% of Finnish Instagram users follow Instagram influencers, such as celebrities or specific content profiles. Most of the respondents found the tips by influencers useful and the good quality of the content increases the follower rates. According to the study, Instagram marketing works very well to younger age groups, and they are more likely to do purchase based on influencer recommendation. (Annalect 2017).

More recent study by Ping Helsinki (2019) stated that young people aged 15 to 24 trust social media influencers more than traditional marketing, they follow influencers more often and treat them like a friend whose opinions and recommendations are reliable whereas older age group over 55 years of age are not familiar with influencers and thus is harder for them to trust the content the influencers share. (Ping Helsinki 2019).

Social Media Week states that 90 % of users trust user-generated content as it is seen trustworthy and reliable information. The personal touch of user-generated content makes it seen authentic. (Social Media Week 2020.)

According to the study by MacKinnon in 2012, over 80% of the respondents use consumer review sites before making a purchase. Customer reviews are seen more reliable because of voluntary time spent in posting the review, this kind of word-of-mouth creates certain credibility. (MacKinnon 2012). As the author understands it, if people spend voluntarily their time on writing reviews, the experience has had to be so good that out of free will, without gaining anything but good will, it needs to be shared. So, if influencers are gaining money from posting content about a destination, it might influence on the feeling of the experience.

## **5 Research methodology**

In this chapter the research process for this thesis is explained. This chapter also explains why the chosen target group was selected and why the chosen method was appropriate for the research.

Research can be defined as the study regarding a specific concern or a problem using scientific methods with the purpose to do possible changes in your actions. Research methods can be broadly classified as qualitative and quantitative where qualitative usually have non-numerical data whereas quantitative is about numerical data. (QuestionPro 2021.)

### **5.1 Research approach**

Quantitative methods are best when collecting measurements and statistical data through polls, surveys and questionnaires and generalizes it across groups of selected people to explain particular phenomenon. (Muijs 2004, 1). The quantitative research bases on the numbers used in the statistical analyses, the variables. Variables such as age, gender, number of children, need to be measurable. The obtained data from quantitative research are organized and presented using tables, graphs or figures. Quantitative research does not take people's feelings or beliefs into consideration. (Regoniel 2015). One of the key issues in quantitative data collection is that the questionnaire should be clear about what information needs to be collected. Explaining why the information is needed and the purpose it will have in the research is part of the process. (Brotherton 2008, 136).

Chosen method for this research is quantitative method. As the objective for the research is to gain knowledge on does social media influence on the decisions together with which content people believe to be more reliable and generalize these answers into population among the selected target group, the author found quantitative method the best for this. The purpose of the study is to generalize these findings into chosen population and quantitative research gives the data in correct form. If going deeper into the topic, gaining more in-depth knowledge on the topic such as acquiring knowledge of the type of content that would attract and why, then qualitative research would be used. The results for the research problem in question could have been gained from interviews but due to limited time the author chose to use an online questionnaire.

Main tool is online questionnaire distributed in Finnish travel groups in Facebook. The target group for the research is Finnish people aged 30 to 45 years old for the simple reason that it is the age group that they are close to the author's age and the author is interested to know how that age group is affected by social media, how they see influencers as they usually are more influential among the younger generation. The author herself was not born in the era of mobile devices so to see the reference group's perception of the use of social media is one key factor for this study. As the study is about the use of social media and its influences, it was distributed only in an online environment. As the research is about the influence of social media on choosing a destination, the author decided to leave out the option of work-related travel for the reason that when traveling for business, the respondent usually have not been able to choose the destination.

Online survey will have its weaknesses. One of the major concerns of the author is, that people will not respond as they are tired of all the surveys or that they will not respond truthfully.

As said, the target group bases on the author's own interest among that group. This group of Millennials or Gen Y was born between 1980 and 1996, gaining the name from the proximity of the new millennium. This age group has been said to be "digital natives", with technology being part of their lives from early on. (Chen 2020). Being born on the rise of technology, millennials are said to be tech-savvy; they are online connected to their devices 24/7 and like to communicate via e-mail, text messaging or social media platforms. Millennials are also family-centric, they prioritize family over work. (Kane 2019). The description of a millennial makes them technology dependent and online so based on that definition; millennials should trust the content offered online.

One of the characteristics used to describe millennials is that they value experiences, they want to travel ethically and sustainably; reducing carbon footprint is one major driver for them. This generation of educated people is motivated to learn more and sharing information is important for them. (Cheng 2019).

In Finland, according to Tilastokeskus (2021), by the end of 2020, the amount of 30 to 45-year-olds is 1 067 292 (Tilastokeskus 2021).

## **5.2 Creating and distributing the survey**

The survey was created in the Webropol cloud platform and after few test runs and modifications was released on 15 April 2021 and was open until May 6. The survey was distributed via author's personal Facebook account into author's Facebook page and on few Facebooks Finnish travel groups. The survey was done in Finnish containing 34 questions, the last one being voluntarily feedback question or a chance to write more in-depth answers.

The survey contained multiple choice questions as well as rank order and rating scale questions. Some background questions such as gender, age and family ties were made to have the idea how and in which company the respondents usually travel. One of the background questions concerned the fact that did the respondent even travel in Finland last year at all. As the research focuses on Finnish people, the nationality of the respondents was not asked. Survey concluded of questions concerning about the use of social media and about the perceived reliability of social media content. The survey also contained two open-ended questions, one of them being optional feedback questions. The other open-ended question was related to the influence of children so that the respondent had a chance to explain how the children have influence.

The survey was made anonymously in a way that the identity of the respondent was not able to be identified. The survey was lifted once after a week, lifting meaning that it was distributed again.

The author had hoped to receive around 200 answers, hoping enough results to be generalized among the age group. The author knows very well that last year with traveling was challenging and it may have an impact on people's traveling habits.

The online questionnaire can be found in the appendices part in the thesis.

## **5.3 The analysis method**

The analyses of the results from the survey were done by using Webropol Insights, Microsoft Office Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics software. The data received from Webropol was then transferred into an Excel file. Some modifications needed to be made to make the variables and values be more compatible with SPSS. The results were converted into percentages and frequencies. To gain better understanding, the results are presented in

percentages and in the text, the percentages are rounded but the graphs show two decimals. Excel was also able to do the same statistics as the amount of data was quite small. The author did the analysis using both Excel and SPSS Software.

#### 5.4 Background information of the respondents

Some background questions such as age and gender and possible children was asked to gain basic knowledge of the respondents. The background information of the 73 respondents is being divided in the following way. As there are only a small amount of respondents, in the results no separation between gender was not made. The essential results will be discussed in the chapter six.

Of the respondents 45,8 % (N=73) were 41 to 45 years old, the percentage equaled 33 respondents. Second largest amount of respondents (23%) were in the age group of 35 to 40 years and smallest age group (30 to 34) equaled 16 respondent (22%). The gender division was quite clear; of the 73 respondents 96 % (70) were women. Only 3 men answered. Due to the small amount of men, the author is not separating male and female respondents. The age distribution is shown in the figure 4.

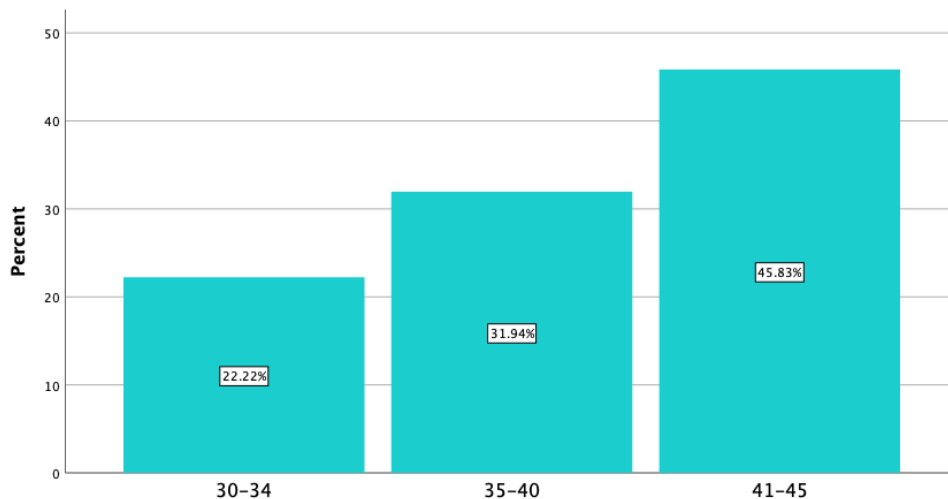


Figure 4. Age distribution (N=73).

The next background question concerned possible children of the respondents. Out of all respondents (N=73), two children (32%) were the most common. 22 % had three or more children, 21 % had only one child and the rest, 26 % were childless (Figure 5). Most of the childless were in the age group of 30 to 34-year-olds, when in the age group of 41 to 45

the two children were the most usual amount

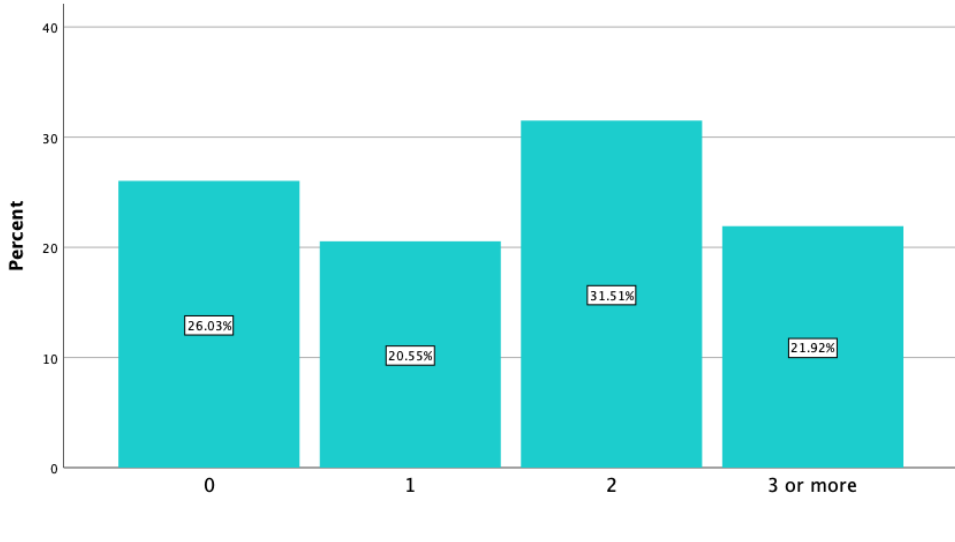


Figure 5. The amount of children (N=73).

The ages of children varied from 0 to 16 or more years and the most common age was 6 to 48% of the respondents. 46 % of the respondents said their children are aged 11 to 15, 37 % of the respondents had small children in the age group of 0-5 years and 13 (16 %) had teens over 16 years of age (Figure 6.)

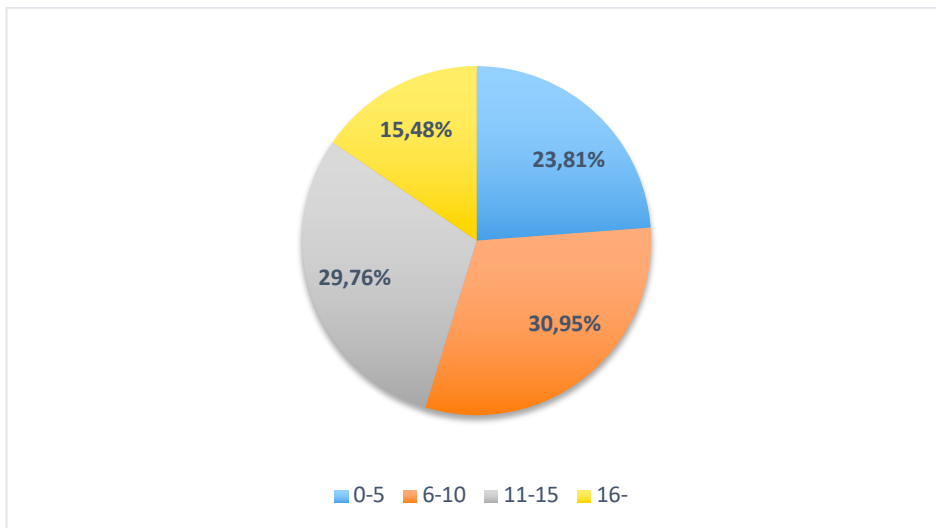


Figure 6. The ages of children. (N=73).

## 6 Results

This chapter focuses on the essential findings and results of the survey. Altogether the number of respondents were 73 which was much less than the author anticipated. The number of answers was disappointing, so these results can be generalized with hesitation. The author will introduce the questions concerning the thesis topic and those that were relevant concerning the main research questions.

### 6.1 Children and their influence on destination choices

The influence of children in the destination choices were inquired. The question was a ranking scale 1-5, one presenting no influence and 5 big influence. The children do have a big influence on the destination choices. (Figure 7).

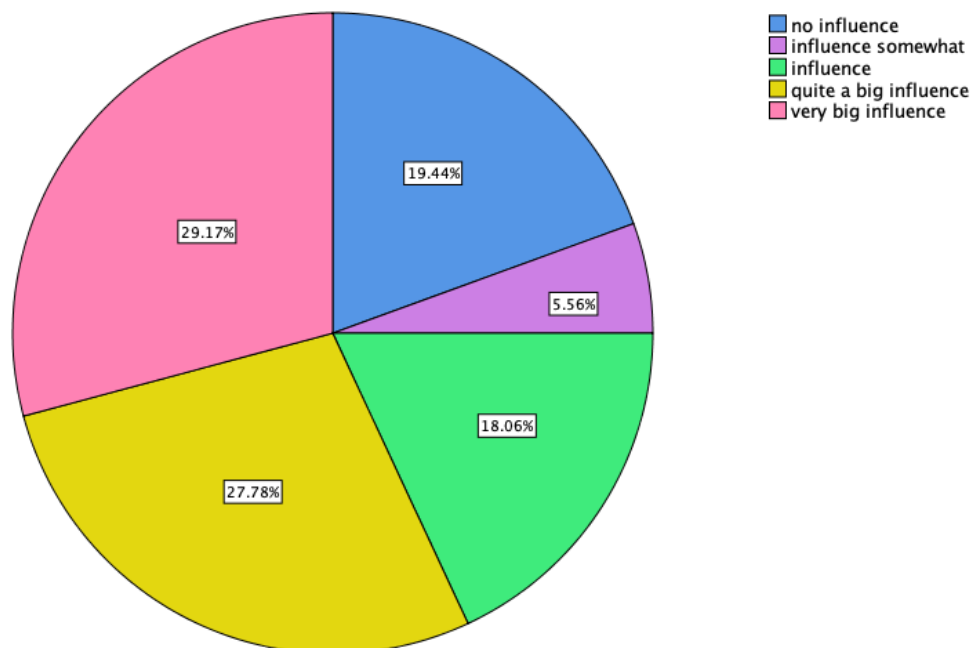


Figure 7. The influence of children (N=73).

The next question concerned how the children have influenced, it was an open question where respondents could write freely how the children influence. Most of the respondents wrote that in the destination, there needs to be activities for children. Activities are dependent on the child's age. Activities such as amusement parks or zoos were mentioned



as well as geocaching, shopping and experiences. Also, easily accessible destinations were mentioned as well as suitable and spacious facilities. Childless people stated that they will avoid destinations that are either recommended for families with children or they choose a destination that has only few families. The comments can be found in the appendix part (Appendix 2).

## 6.2 Travel habits

Travel habits of the respondents were asked to have the idea of how they travel. Majority (49%) usually travels four or more times a year, only 10 % said they travel once a year. The answers vary depending on the age group; respondents between 41 to 45 travels four or more times a year. Majority also travels both domestic and abroad (64 %). The question concerned how usually travels, it did not specify the year 2020 when travelling was made difficult and the possibility to travel abroad was uneasy. Figures 8 and 9 show the travel habits and destination preferences.

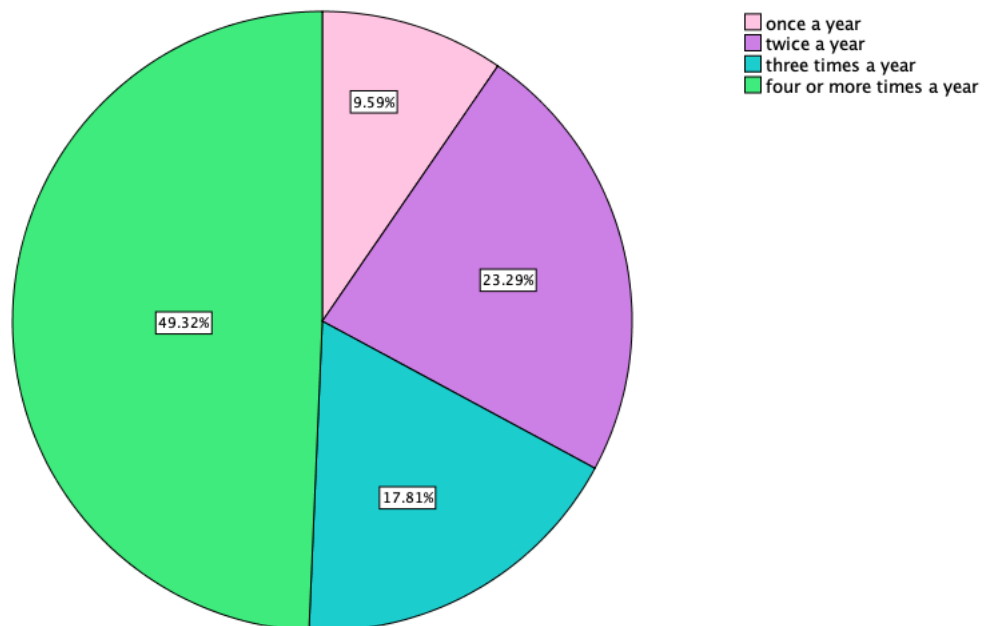


Figure 8. How often travels. (N=73).

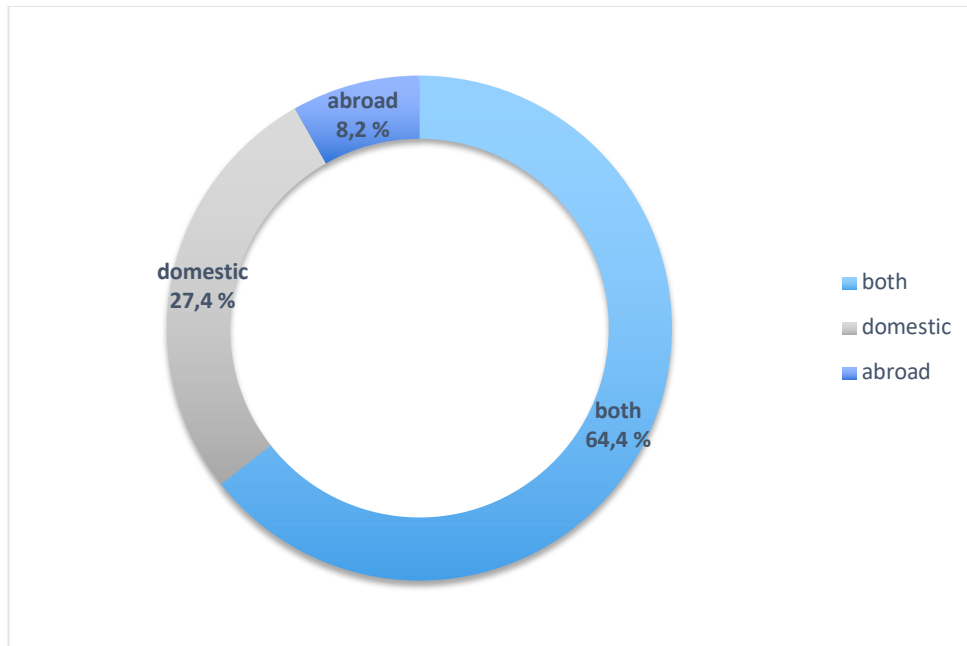


Figure 9. Destination preferences. (N=73).

Traveling with family was the most popular way of travelling, as 88 % of the respondents stated so. 40 % of the respondents' travelled with friends, only 14 % said they like to travel alone. 82 % of the respondents travelled few overnight trips in Finland in 2020. 11 % said they did only one overnight trip, 3 % did only day trips and 4 % did not travel at all in Finland during 2020. The vast majority (60%) chose a destination they already were familiar with, second popular (50 %) methods of choice was seeing the destination in Facebook. Figure 10 shows how the destination was chosen.

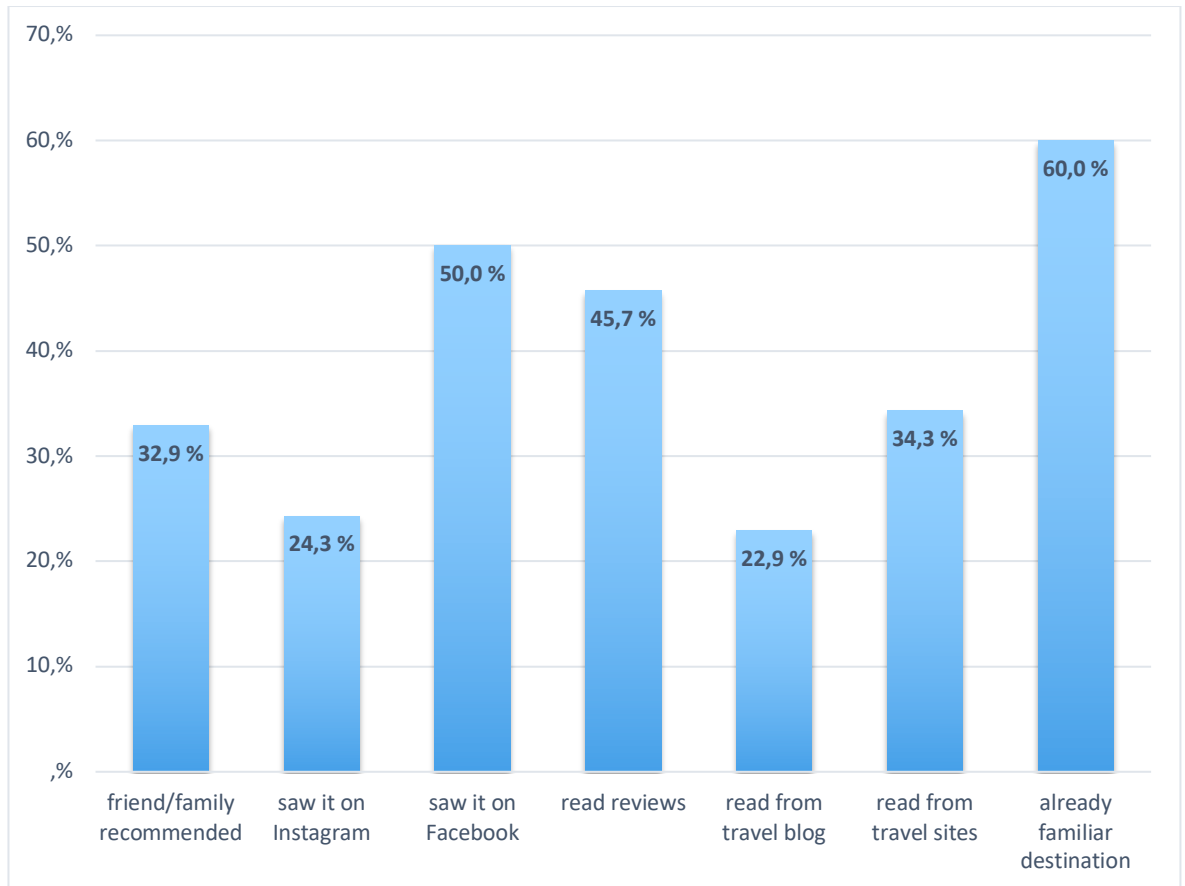


Figure 10. How the destination was chosen. (N=73).

### 6.3 Use of social media

To understand how the respondents use social media, the next questions concerned about the use of social media. Out of 73 respondents, 76 % used both, Facebook and Instagram. None of the respondents used only Instagram. (Figure 11). Especially in the age group 41 to 45, the number of Facebook users is doubled in comparing to other age groups.

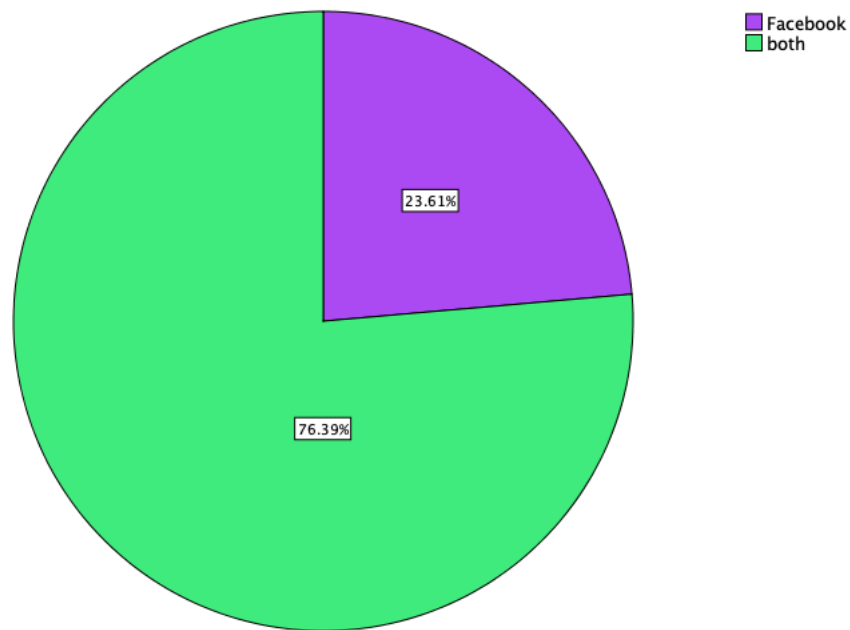


Figure 11. The use of social media channels. (N=73).

Majority (75 %) of the respondents belonged to few Finnish travel groups in Facebook, 20 % belonged to several groups and 4 % did not belong to any travel groups. (Figure 12). 66 % of respondents read Finnish travel blogs, 31 % said they never read any Finnish blogs and 3 % always reads. Travel groups give travel and destination ideas to majority (75%) and 78 % of them has executed ideas gained from the groups.

The author also wanted to know how the Finnish travel related hashtags in Instagram, such as #matkailesuomessa, #suomimatkailua, #suomiloma, are followed. 80 % of the respondents said that they do not follow those at all, 19 % follow few ones and only small number of respondents (1%) follow several of Finnish hashtags. (Figure 13).

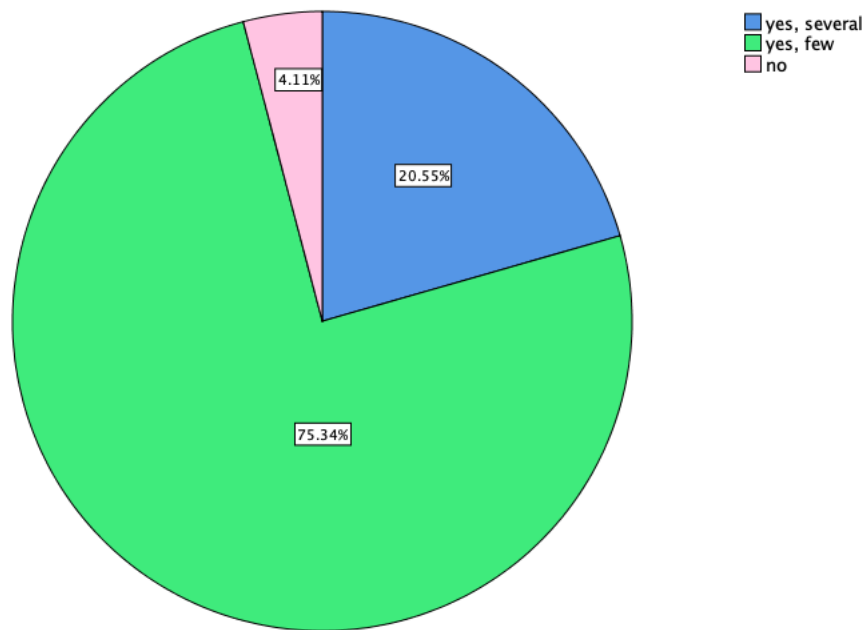


Figure 12. Finnish travel groups belonging. (N=73).

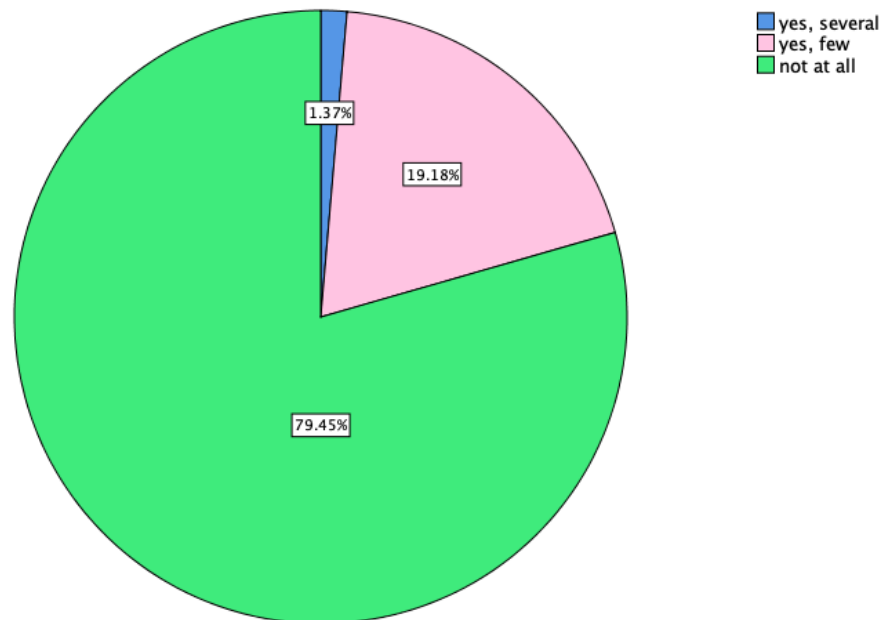


Figure 13. Finnish hashtags followers. (N=73)

The use of sources to search for information revealed that the vast majority (77 %) uses travel sites such as Rantapallo (owned by the publishing company Alma Media), Momondo (meta search site by Booking Holdings), TripAdvisor or official travel sites of the

destination. Second popular information source was Facebook with 64 %. Especially Facebook pages of the destination were used as a source to gain information. The least used source was Instagram, with only 23% using it as a source. (Figure 14.)

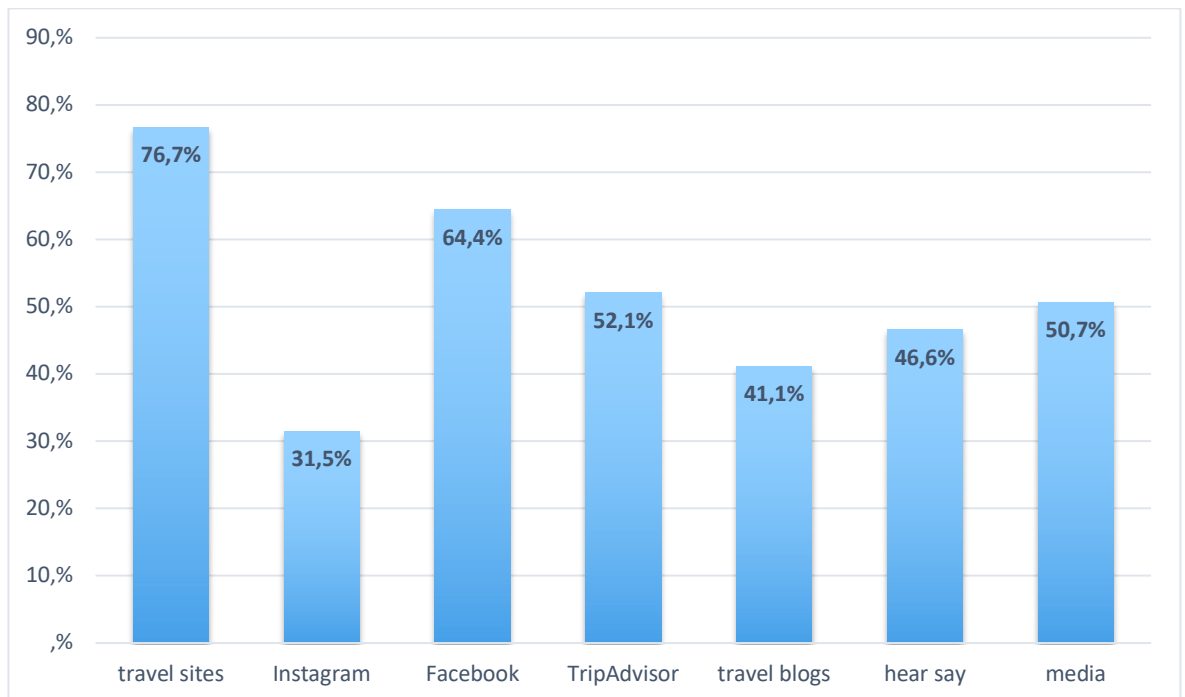


Figure 14. The sources of information. (N=73)

The author also wanted to know do the respondents ask recommendations about destinations themselves from others. Almost half of the respondents, 49 % had asked recommendations about destinations online, the other half 48 % said they have never asked, only 3 % stated to ask recommendations often. In the age group 41-45, there were altogether 32 respondents, and the division for asking recommendations was quite clear; it was divided in half, half had asked sometimes, the other half of the 32 had never asked.

61 percent of those who have asked recommendations, have acted on them. 35 % said they have never acted based on the recommendations.

#### 6.4 Contents of social media

Next topic concerned the contents of social media; what kind of contents is considered important when planning a destination and how useful the content related to the destination is seen. The importance of contents was asked in a scale, the number 1 stating the most important, number 6 being the least important. One third (32 %) of the respondents think

other user's reviews are the most important, official Visit-sites were seen second most important (23 %) and the photos from professionals the least important. Figure 15 demonstrates the importance of different types of contents.

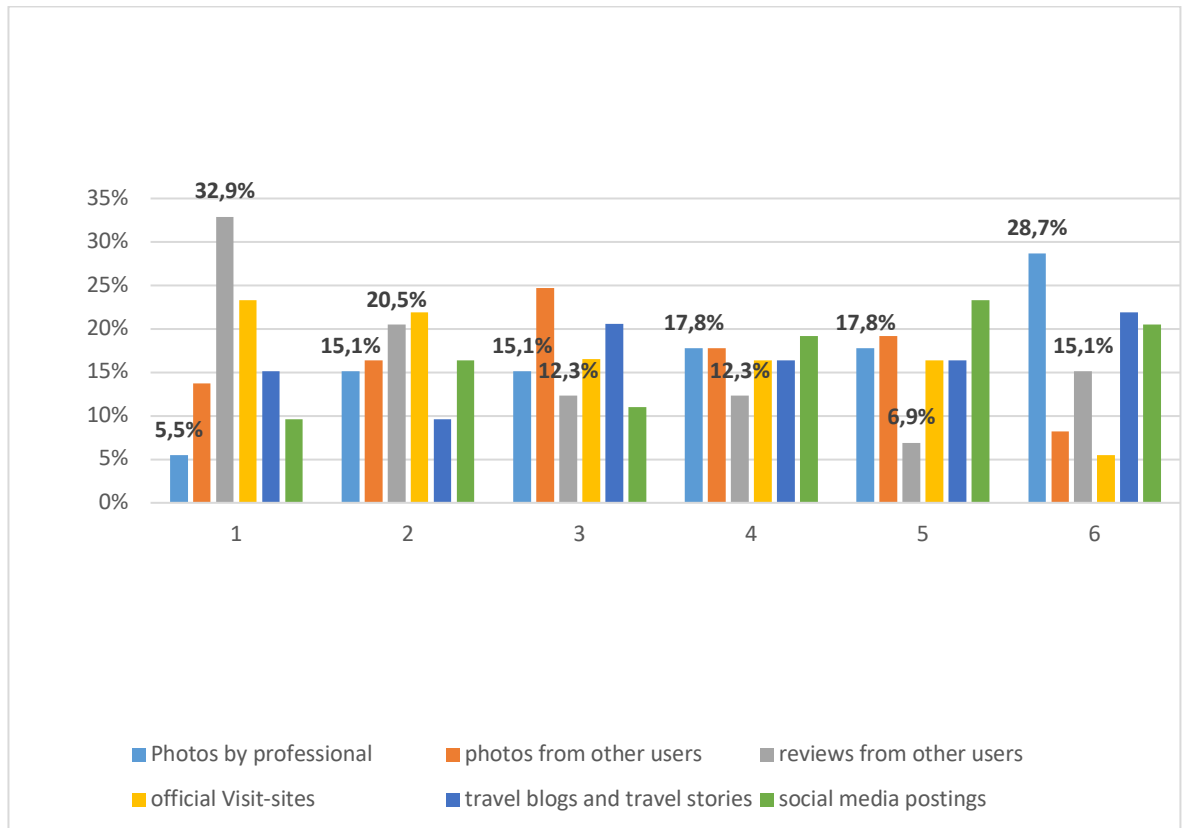


Figure 15. The important content planning a destination. (N=73).

Next question was again a scale question about the usefulness of contents of social media. Number 1 stated not useful, number 6 very useful. For 62 % of the respondents, photos were considered the most useful, and 51 % said reviews second useful. Videos were seen the least useful. (Figure 16).

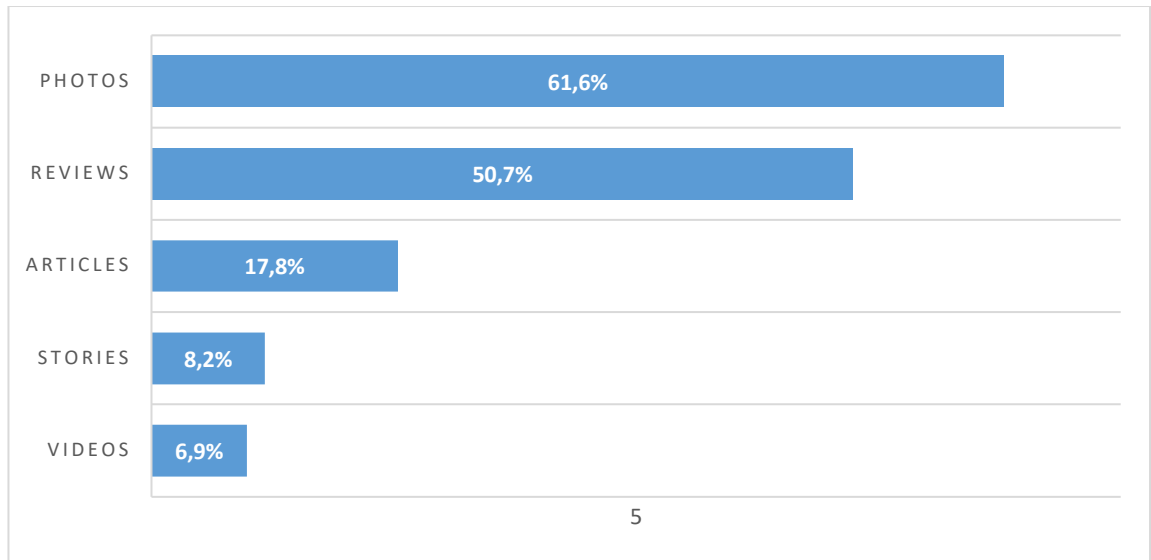


Figure 16. Usefulness of the contents. (N=73).

Travel sites such as Rantapallo, Momondo or matkailesuomessa.fi were considered quite useful, 33 % of the respondents indicated so, 7 % do not think these are useful at all and 48 % thinks these kinds of sites are reliable. Only 4 % said they do not consider these sites reliable at all. (Figure 17.)

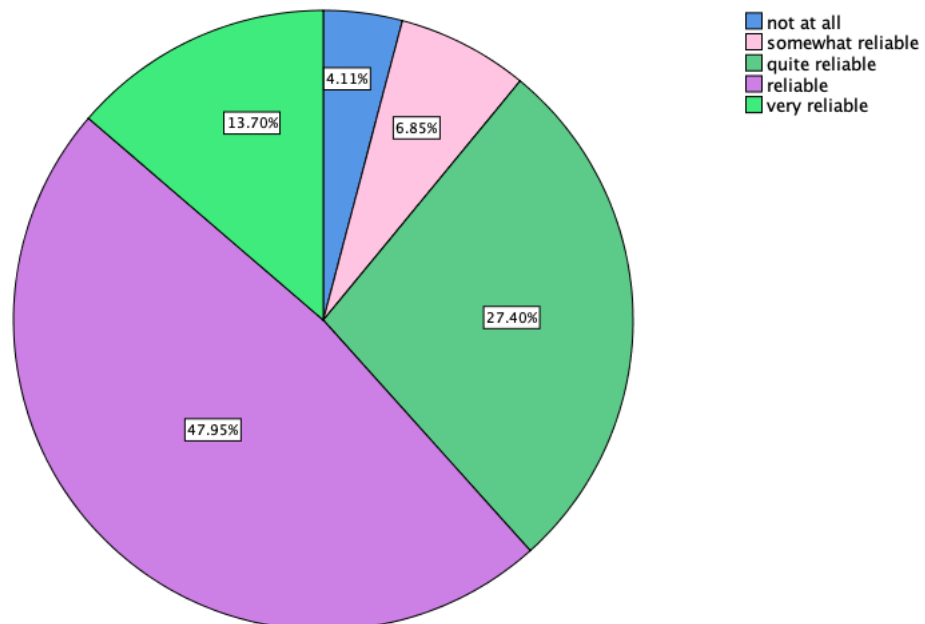


Figure 17. Reliability of travel sites. (N=73)

The respondents were also asked how much they trust in the contents related to travel in social media. On a scale 1 to 5, 1 stating low trust, number 5 high trust. Most of the users



(53 %) trust mostly in the travel related content they see in social media. None of the respondents had low trust (Figure 18). The respondents from all the age groups trusted mostly, the age did not make any difference in the level of trust.

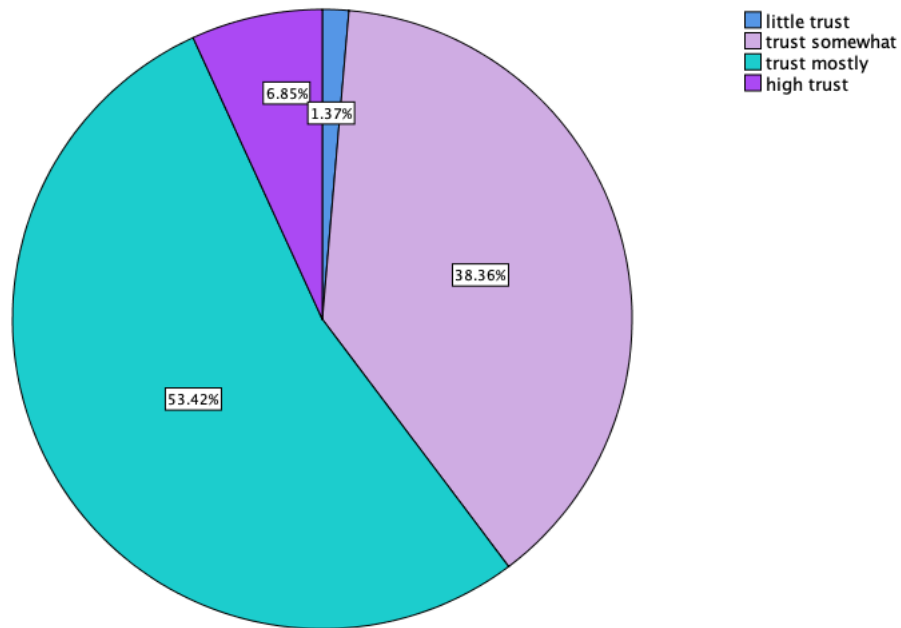


Figure 18. the level of trust in the contents related to travel. (N=73).

The trust of other users' recommendations concerning destinations was asked in a scale question 1 to 5, where 1 indicated never and number 5 always. 66% of the respondents stated that they usually trust other users' opinions and recommendations. The age did not make a difference in the level of trust in other user's recommendations. Only 3 % said they always trust. Figure 19 shows the trust on other users' opinions.

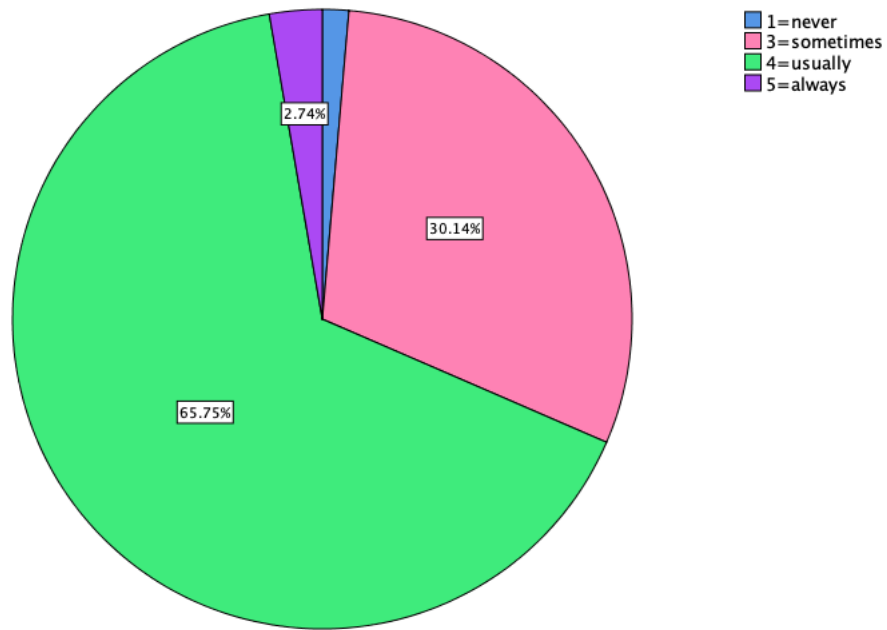


Figure 19. The effect of other user's opinions. (N=73).

The author also asked how the recommended destination has met the expectations the respondents may have had. Majority of the respondents 63 % said the expectations and the destination has met almost perfectly. (Figure 20.)

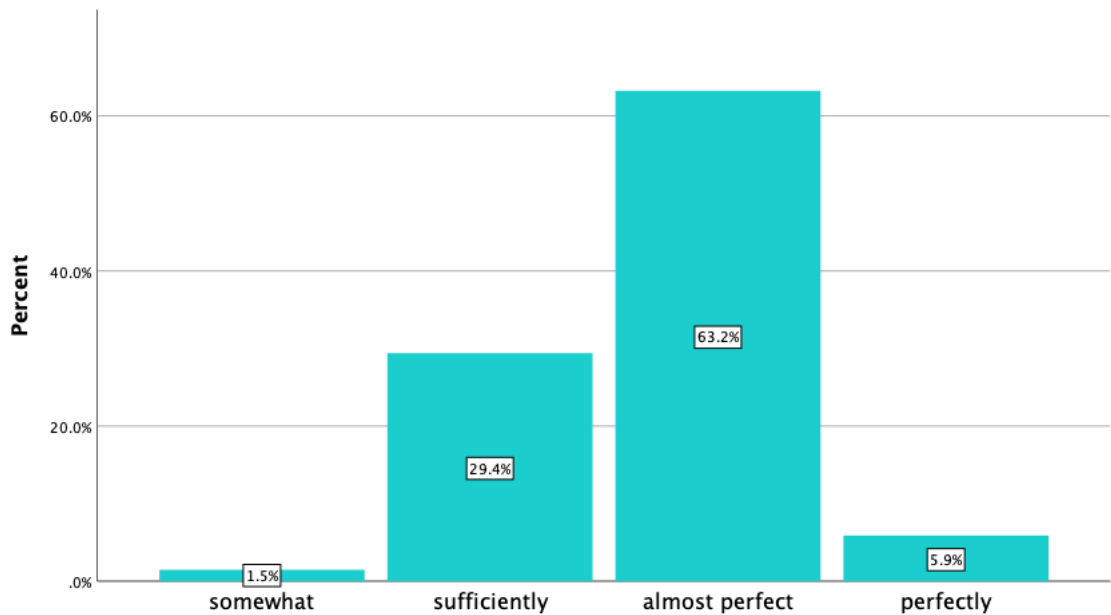


Figure 20. Expectations towards recommended destination. (N=73).

Sponsored collaborations with influencers were asked in a scale where number 1 stated not reliable at all, number 5 very reliable. As figure 21 show, sponsored collaborations with influencers were considered somewhat reliable, the median answer being 3 (45%). Reliability of the sponsored collaborations did not make a difference depending on the age group. None of the respondents see these collaborations very reliable and in the following question how the respondents will act when seeing an influencer recommendation, 75 % of the respondents said that they will search for more information about the destination from official travel sites or from the destinations' official site and from other users' experiences.

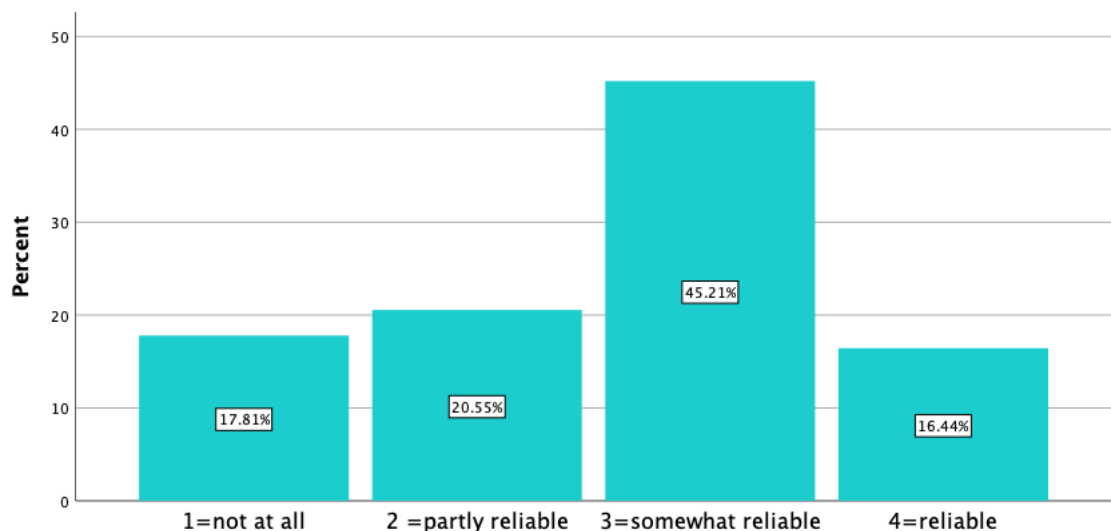


Figure 21. Reliability of the sponsored collaborations. (N=73).

Also, the majority (38 %) said that they would never reserve a destination solely based on influencers recommendations. Majority (75 %) of the respondents also stated that after seeing an influencer recommendation, they search for more information from the official travel sites and 74 % said they look for other user's reviews of the destination. The next question asked if booking based on an influencer is possible and only 3 % of the respondents said that they always book based on influencer recommendation. The majority never books solely based only on influencer recommendation. (Figure 22).

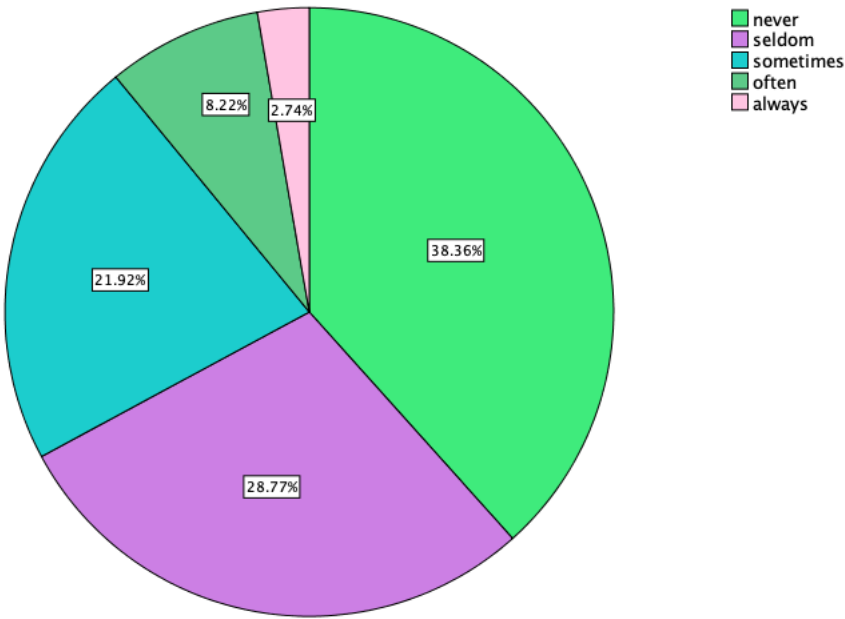


Figure 22. Reserving based on influencer recommendation. (N=73).

Figure 23 shows how majority (54 %) have sometimes recommended certain destination on social media and almost 40 % think that is likely that some other user will trust one their recommendation. (Figure 24.)

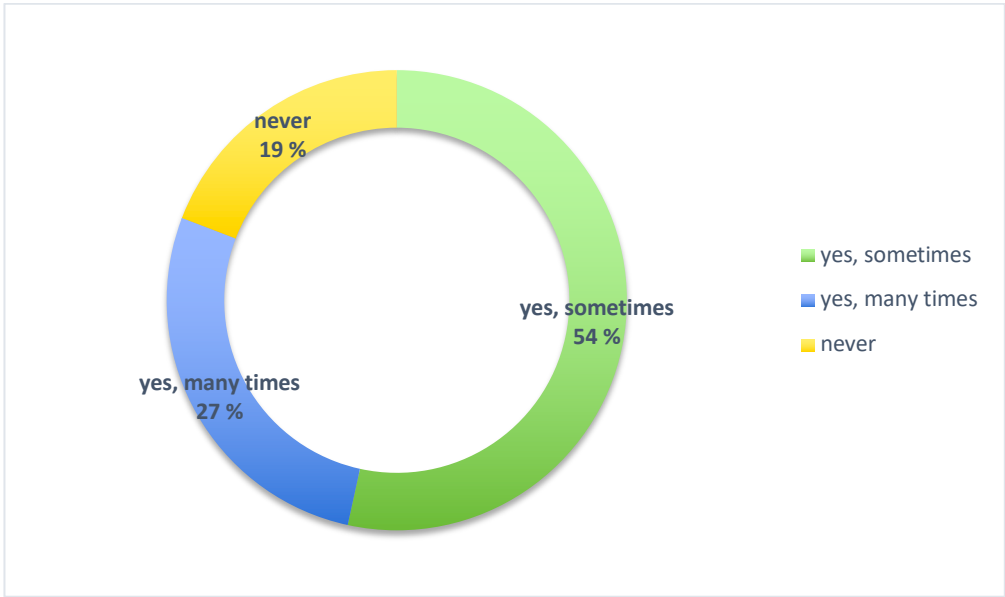


Figure 23. How many have recommended a certain destination. (N=73).

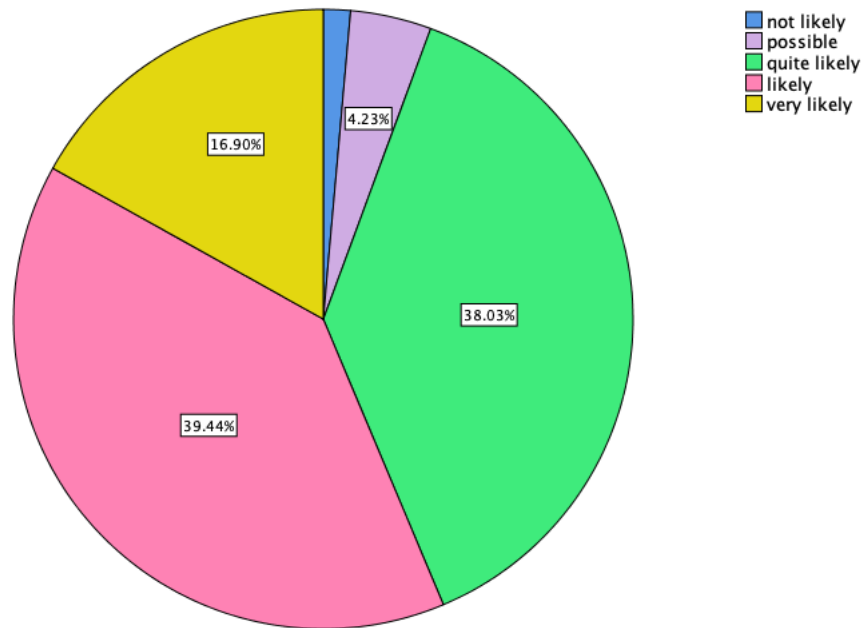


Figure 24. How the respondents think others will trust their recommendations. (N=73).

The last question of the survey was feedback question and there the respondents had the chance to also write if they felt like something was left unasked or if they had suggestions for improvements. Eleven respondents gave feedback or wrote more explaining answers. Some of the respondents commented about the chosen age group and why some of the other social media platforms had been left out.

All the comments can be found in the appendices part. (Appendix 3).

## **7 Conclusion and discussion**

This chapter focuses on the conclusions what can be made from the survey. After conclusions, the discussions on reliability and validity and self-evaluation of the thesis process will follow.

The aim of the research was to find out if social media influences on people's choices of destinations and whether user generated content is more reliable than influencer marketing. Based on the findings, some suggestions for content creators are made.

### **7.1 Conclusions**

From the results of the survey, it is obvious that social media plays a big role in choosing destinations, it has become the travel catalog for us. From social media, people can find different destinations and the additional information is easily discoverable too. Conclusions that can be drawn from the survey, is that people travel quite a lot either alone or with families and that children do play a major role in choosing the destination. There needs to be activities for children in the destination and it should be interesting for everyone. Understandably, the age of the children plays a major role in destination choices. Majority uses social media to gain information, but it is obvious that the official sites of the destination are important sources for information. Pictures are important as well as other user's experiences. The contents of social media and web pages must be aligned.

As for the research questions of the thesis, the conclusion can be made that social media influences people's choice of destination. Majority of the respondents belong to some travel related group in Facebook and gains ideas of destinations from them and then finds additional information about the destination from some other source, such as official travel sites. Also, recommendations are asked and acted on them. The author's assumption is that the reason people belong to different travel related groups is mostly to gain information about new destinations.

The contents of social media based on the results can be seen quite reliable, too. Half of the respondents stated that they mostly trust what they see related to travel and other user's experiences and recommendations were seen more reliable than sponsored collaborations. As said earlier in the thesis, consumer reviews are seen more reliable as the time spent to write the review is done voluntarily without gaining no financial or any other

advantage. Other user's experiences are genuine experiences, they are not paid opinions which then effects for the outcome of the review.

As the respondents themselves usually trust other user's opinions, it is understandable that they consider their possible recommendations reliable for other users. Regardless of the small amount of data, the results fortify the author's expectations how the social media effects. Had last year been normal, the results may have been different and the whole topic may have been different.

As familiarizing with the theory, the author began to suspect that the user generated content will be more important than sponsored one and the results of the survey seem to back up that. As the results show, user generated content is considered more important than paid collaborations with influencers. For that reason, for the content creators of travel companies, the author would suggest using more user generated content in their marketing in a form of re-posting. Reposting is usually considered a compliment so it would be very easy to gain trustworthy and reliable marketing. Reposting users' experiences will also create more authenticity and it gives the companies a marketing advantage.

The author would also recommend content creators to create suitable hashtags for use. The company using certain hashtags and by asking people to use them would also create visibility and help market the company. Engaging people by asking questions and doing polls will also increase visibility. Engaging all users is important, it will give the credibility and authenticity for the company. It also creates the feeling of storytelling as other users' share their holiday memories. As said earlier, the sense of belonging is important so via sharing other user's experiences, the company can create their own tribe of loyal followers. Personality of the company is also important to show in the social media, showing the values and the important factors for the company, it will generate more visibility and eventually generate more sales. The authenticity is important for all the companies in social media, especially travel industry. Travel decisions are personal, sensitive decisions so to avoid negative feedback and disappointed customers, the words and actions need to meet. If using an influencer, it will be very important that the influencer shares the values of the company.

More importantly, the social media and web pages need to have the same information. Not everyone uses social media, so it is important not to forget the company's web page which is the primary source of information. The author had an experience of the accommodation in Finland this summer that had forgotten to update their website. They had

made changes in their opening times announcing them only in social media so without checking it, they would have gone unnoticed. Again, not everyone uses social media, so it is important to update them both.

## **7.2 Reliability and validity of the research**

The ways to evaluate a research are reliability and validity. Both indicate how well a chosen method or technique measure something. Reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement and validity refers to the accuracy of the measurement. The study can be said reliable if same methods used under same circumstances brings out the same results consistently whereas validity refers to how accurately the method measures what it was intended to measure. For ensuring validity, the appropriate method of measurement needs to be decided. If using a questionnaire, the questions should be precisely and carefully worded. Sampling methods needs to be defined clearly too. To ensure reliability, methods should be applied consistently. (Middleton, 2019).

Out of author's own personal interest, the age group was selected to be 30 to 45 year-olds. If having wider age group, there might have been more respondents and the results would have been more generalized. The author also decided to leave out travelling for work in the survey, so it also had impact on the answers. As said before, the number of male respondents were only three, so the author decided not to separate gender. Had there been more male respondents, the answers may also be different. The author does not know the reason for such a small amount of men answering the survey, but being a mother herself, the author only suspects that trip planning is usually done by women and mothers especially which may then effect why the information search is done by women.

This research was done as an online questionnaire, so the questions for all the participants were the same. The environment where it was answered by everyone, the author could not have any say in. The author also must assume that everyone has been honest with their answers. When asking for taking part in the questionnaire, the author explained in status her update what it was for, and the respondents were able to ask questions from the author in Facebook. Even though the author tried to make questions easily understandable, the interpretation of the receiver may vary; how the respondent actually understands the question. The terms should have been explained better and the use of them consistent for everyone to understand the questions similarly.



The amount of respondents were quite small considering how much there are people in that age group in Finland. For the results to be more reliable and generalized, the sample size should have been bigger. 73 respondents in the given time limit of two weeks are very small but for the time management, two weeks was considered to be enough. Even though the study concerned does the social media have an effect on destination choices, last year being exceptional in traveling, it might have an impact on the amount of respondents. Two of the respondents were over 50, but since there was no option for that age, they have marked themselves into younger age group.

Narrowing down the topic even more and making more specified questions, the responses and results would have been more accurate. Explaining certain definitions better would also have brought more accurate answers. For example, the author should have been clearer about what travel sites mean. Now the author assumed that all the respondents comprehended it the same way as the author. The explanation for travel site was said in some of the questions, then left out for the rest of the questions, so the author assumed that the respondents remembered the explanation but it seemed that this did not happen.

The lack of male respondents also has an impact on the answers. Getting more males to answer the survey would have been good. Had there been more male respondents, the differences between gender would have shown. Now, due to the number of male respondents, all together three, the author decided not to differ gender. Being a mother herself, the author suspect that the planning of trips and destinations are more in the interest of mothers and that is one reason why male answers were missing. Or males simply do not want to take part in any survey.

As said before, travelling for work had also been left out from the survey so it will have an impact on the answers. Also, social media was now limited only in two platforms, taking more platforms along would have a difference in the answers.

As the survey was distributed in the travel groups, the respondents were also more interested in travelling than usual. Had it been distributed in some other environment; the answers could have been different. Due to the distribution in this selected environment, the target group was more accurate and their answers more valid.

Regardless of the small sample size of the respondents, the survey provided answers in the research questions therefore it can be said to be valid, however as the amount of respondents were small, real generalization to the specified age group cannot be made.

### 7.3 Evaluation of the thesis process and self-evaluation

This thesis has been the most challenging and time consuming project during the whole studies. It also was much more time consuming than the author was prepared. Time management was quite challenging as author had to work during the process and had personal issues at the same time. The author had no previous experience in conducting research and that may have had a huge impact on the outcome of the research. Had she had previous knowledge on how to carry a survey, could many parts and questions have been done better. The author should have paid more attention to the choice of words in the questions and should have been more precise on the meanings.

As the used software was also all new to the author, it took a lot of time to get to familiarize with the software and understand how it worked. The author had to spend several days to understand the basic functions of SPSS and it slowed down the thesis writing process considerably. The analyses to be more in-depth, it would have required much more time to study to understand the analyzing tools. With the help of tutorial videos, the author was able to conduct the very basic analyses.

The topic of the thesis was interesting to the author as she has worked as a content creator, but the biggest difficulty was finding the right and relevant questions to ask from the target group. Creation of the questions was also more challenging than expected. If the author had had any previous experience in that field, it could have made a difference and the questions could have been carried out and formulated much better. Also, the targeting of the questions could have been more accurate. The author has studied social media marketing and the platforms used in this study are familiar to the author. The author has some basic studies of consumer behaviour but there is a lot to learn about the topic. For that reason, the information search part also was much more time consuming than expected. The author became so interested in consumer behaviour that she will study more of the topic later. Also, the research showed the author that in the future she would want to work as a content creator for travel industry. It was very interesting to learn how people feel towards user generated content versus promoted content. User generated content gives lot of opportunities to grow client base and engage customers but also the ways to market products.

This research proves the importance of user generated content, people need and want to hear other users' experiences as a help to make their own decisions.

Making of the research was an interesting experience and it will be beneficially to all parties to understand what users are looking for when they turn to social media to search for information. This research also proves that social media is important part of travel planning.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Survey questions

#### Sosiaalisen median vaikutus kotimaisen matkailukohteen valintaan

Hyvä sosiaalisen median käyttäjä!

Opiskelen Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulussa matkailun johtamista (Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management) ja teen opinnäytetyötäni aiheesta Sosiaalisen median vaikutus kotimaisen matkailukohteen valintaan. Matkailukohteella tässä tutkimuksessa tarkoitetaan kaupunkia, käyntikohdetta (kansallispuisto, museo jne.) tai hotellia.

Tutkimus toteutetaan kyselylomakkeella ja vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja vastaukset ovat vain minun käytössäni. Vastauksista ei pysty tunnistamaan yksittäistä vastaajaa. Tutkimus on rajattu 30-45-vuotiaisiin suomalaisiin, joten kaikki kategoriaan sopivat matkailusta kiinnostuneet ovat tervetulleita vastaamaan!

Vastaaminen on vapaaehtoista ja vie vain muutaman minuutin, mutta vastaukset ovat erittäin tärkeitä työni kannalta. Toivon, että voit auttaa minua tutkimuksessani.

Opinnäytetyö julkaistaan osoitteessa [www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)

Kiittäen,

Kiti Kinnunen

#### 1. Ikä

- 30-34
- 35-40
- 41-45

#### 2. Sukupuoli

- Nainen
- Mies
- En halua kertoa

**3. Lasten lukumäärä**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 tai enemmän

**4. Lasten iät. Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.**

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-

**5. Matkustan normaalisti**

- kerran vuodessa
- kaksi kertaa vuodessa
- kolme kertaa vuodessa
- neljä tai useamman kerran vuodessa

**6. Matkustan yleensä**

- kotimaassa
- ulkomailla
- molemmissa

**7. Matkustan yleensä. Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.**

- perheen kanssa

- ystävien kanssa
- yksin

### 8. Teitkö yön yli matkoja Suomessa v 2020?

- kyllä, muutaman
- kyllä, yhden
- en, vain päivämatkoja
- en matkustanut lainkaan Suomessa

### 9. Jos matkustit, miten valitsit matkailukohteen (kaupunki, hotelli, ravintola, luontokohde jne)? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

- ystävä/perhe suositteli
- näin kuvia kohteesta Instagramissa
- näin kohteen Facebookissa
- luin arvosteluja kohteesta
- luin matkablogista
- luin matkasivustoilta
- entuudestaan tuttu kohde

### 10. Vaikuttavatko lapset matkailukohteen valintaan?

	1	2	3	4	5	
ei vaikutusta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	suuri vaikutus

### 11. Jos lapset ovat vaikuttaneet valintaan, niin millä tavalla?



**12. Mitä näistä sosiaalisen median kanavista käytät?**

- Facebook
- Instagram
- molemmat

**13. Kuinka paljon luotat näissä kanavissa olevaan sisältöön matkailuun liittyen?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
heikko luotto	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	vahva luotto

**14. Käytätkö Facebookia tai Instagramia matkaideoiden hankintaan?**

- kyllä, aina
- kyllä, joskus
- en koskaan

**15. Luetko suomalaisia matkablogeja?**

- kyllä, aina
- kyllä, joskus
- en koskaan

**16. Kuulutko suomalaisiin matkaryhmiin Facebookissa?**

- kyllä, useisiin
- kyllä, muutamiin

en

**17. Saatko ideoita ryhmistä/blogeista?**

- kyllä, usein  
 kyllä, joskus  
 en koskaan

**18. Jos saat ideoita, oletko toteuttanut niitä?**

- kyllä, usein  
 kyllä, joskus  
 en koskaan

**19. Seuraatko suomiaiheisia aihetunnisteita (esim #suomimatkailua, #matkailekotimaassa, #matkaile Suomessa) Instagramissa?**

- kyllä, useita  
 kyllä, muutamia  
 en

**20. Mitä lähteitä käytät yleensä saadaksesi tietoa matkailukohteesta? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.**

- matkasivustot  
 Instagram  
 Facebook  
 TripAdvisor  
 matkablogit  
 kuulopuhe

media

**21. Kysytkö matkailukohdesuosituksia sosiaalisessa mediassa?**

- kyllä, usein
- kyllä, joskus
- en koskaan

**22. Oletko toiminut saamiesi suositusten mukaan?**

- kyllä, usein
- kyllä, joskus
- en koskaan

**23. Minkälainen sisältö on sinulle tärkeää suunniteltaessa matkailukohdetta? Laita järjestykseen 1-6; 1 on tärkein, 6 vähiten tärkeä.**

Ammattilaisten ottamat kuvat	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6
Muiden käyttäjien kuvat	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6
Muiden matkailijoiden arvostelut	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6
Viralliset matkailusivustot (Visit-sivustot)	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5



**24. Minkälaisen sisällön koet hyödyllisenä matkailukohdetta valittaessa?  
Asteikolla 1-5, 1 tarkoittaen ei hyödyllinen, 5 erittäin hyödyllinen**

	1	2	3	4	5
Kuvat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Videot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Artikkelit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tarinat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arvostelut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. matkaile Suomessa.fi, Rantapallo ja Momondo ovat sivustoja, joilta saa vinkkejä kotimaan matkailukohteisiin. Pidätkö tämän tyyliä sivustoja hyödyllisinä?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
ei lainkaan hyödyllinen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	erittäin hyödyllinen

**26. Pidätkö edellämainittujen tyyliä sivustoja luotettavina?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
en lainkaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	erittäin luotettava

**27. Luotatko muiden käyttäjien suosituksiin?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
en koskaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	aina

**28. Sponsoroidut yhteistyöt somevaikuttajien kanssa ovat lisääntyneet. Pidätkö niitä luotettavina?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
en lainkaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	erittäin luotettava

**29. Jos näet somevaikuttajan suosittelevan tiettyä matkailukohtetta, mitä teet? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon**

- luotat sanaan ja varaat perustuen mainontaan
- haluat saada lisää tietoa kohteesta virallisilta matkailusivuilta
- etsit muiden käyttäjien mielipiteitä
- et luota mainontaan

**30. Voisitko varata matkailukohteen pelkästään somevaikuttajan suosituksesta?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
ei koskaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	aina

**31. Jos matkustit suositeltuun matkailukohteeseen, täyttikö se odotukset?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
ei lainkaan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	täydellisesti

**32. Oletko itse suositellut matkailukohtetta sosiaalisessa mediassa?**

- kyllä, useasti
- kyllä, joskus
- en koskaan

**33. Luuletko, että joku toinen käyttäjä luottaa sinun arvioosi matkailukohteesta?**

---

	1	2	3	4	5	
ei todennäköisesti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	hyvin todennäköisesti

**34. Jäikö jotain kysymättä? Haluatko lisätä kommentin tai palautteen?**


## Appendix 2. Answers to the question 11 of how children influence

- Majoituksen koko, mukavuudet (itse tyytyisi vähempää), aktiviteetti mahdollisuudet.
- - Lapsille mielekästä tekemistä
- - Etäisyydet, majoitus, tekemistä
- - Matkustamme perheenä. Usein teltalla, mutta myös hotelleissa. Matkakohteessa tulee olla hyvät saniteetitilat.
- - En valitse kohdetta suositellaan lapsiperheille
- - Viihtyvät paremmin, jos heille suunnattua mukavaa tekemistä
- - Kaikille pitää olla kivaa tekemistä. Yhdessä mietitty kohteet.
- - Majoituksessa pitää olla tarpeeksi makuuhuoneita ja että majoitus on viihtyisä koska siellä pitää viettää aikaa tavallista enemmän. Poreammeet yms on plussaa!
- - Majoituksen valintaan: sijainti, koko, palveluiden läheisyys, tekemisen mahdollisuudet
- - Valitaan kohteet mistä löytyy hyvin tekemistä lapsille
- - Lapsille tekemistä
- - Paikan monipuolisuus palvelutarjonnassa
- - Jos esim. kylpylään mennään haluan että siellä on lapsille sopiva allas ja muuten lapsiystävällinen.
- On myös aktiviteetteja lapsille
- - Halusivat nähdä netissä tapaamansa ystävän livenä.
- - Kohteessa pitää olla lapsille sopivaa tekemistä. Kesämökin valinnassa rannalla oleellinen merkitys.
- - Uimaranta piti olla hiekkaa, ei mutaa.
- - Lapsille suunnattu kohde, kivaa tekemistä kesälomapäiväksi
- - Pitää aina miettiä, että paikassa löytyy jotain mielekästä tekemistä lapsille myös; samokn yritetään miettiä että ajomatkat pysyvät maltillisina. Siten vanhempienkin lomailu on mielekkäämpää. Viime vuonna olimme kylpylälomalla täysin lasten mukaan valittu kohde, ja Lapissa puolitoista viikkoa vaeltamassa; tosin mietitty kohde ja muita tekemisiä juuri että lapsille pysyy homma mukavana.
- - Täytyy olla lasta kiinnostava kohde.
- - Harrastusten kautta valittu välillä matkakohde.
- - itsellä ei ole lapsia, mutta joskus valintaan vaikuttaa se että haluan olla rauhassa myös muiden lapsilta, eli valitsen kohteen jossa ei todennäköisesti ole kovin paljoa lapsia
- - Hotellihuone tilavampi ja ravintolapalvelut oltava hyvät. Aamiainen monipuolinen.
- - Lapsilta tietysti kysyttiin mitä toiveita heillä on, kohteet pitää olla kuitenkin sellaisia, että jokaiselle löytyy jotain mielenkiintoista tekemistä
- - Teinien kanssa voi jo valita kohteita ilman, että pitää olla huvipuistoa jne
- - Kohteen pitää olla lapsiystävällinen ja siellä pitää olla tekemistä koko perheelle.
- - Lapsille pitää olla tekemistä ja nähtävää. Kohteen pitää olla mieluinen myös heille.
- - Kohteessa en halua olevan paljoa perheitä, enkä varsinkaan pieniä lapsia
- - Lapsen kanssa reissatessa huomioi perheystävälliset lomatarjoajat. Helposti tavoitettavat kohteet.
- - Pyritään etsimään kohteita, joissa olisi jokaiselle jotakin (itselle, puolisolle ja lapselle). Välillä on kyllä tosi ihanaa päästä matkaan puolison kanssa tai ihan yksin, niin ei tarvitse tehdä kompromisseja.
- - Lapsettomana ihmisenä en halua, että kirkuvia lapsia on ylenmäärin kohteessa
- - Turvallisuus
- - Jos matka on lasten kanssa, niin kuuntelen mielipiteitä ja toiveita.
- - Majoitumme tilavammin ja mietimme, mitä tekemistä kohteessa on lapsen kanssa.

- - Että lapsille on mukava leikkipaikka leirintäalueella ym. Tai jotain opittavaa. Kun lapset viihtyy niin vanhemmillakin mukavampaa/helpompaa/rennompaa
- - Vältän paikkoja, joissa paljon lapsiperheitä
- - Pitää kiinnostaa myös heitä tai että on edes mahdollista ottaa lapset mukaan kohteeseen. Saavat toivoa teemaa.
- - Matkustetaan alueelle, jossa on sukulaisia/ystäviä, joilla on samanikäisiä lapsia. Nuoria kiinnostaa pokemon go ja geokätköt, niitä haetaan samalla. Missä on nuorille tekemistä: nähtävyyksiä, shoppailua, vaelluspolkuja, kylpylät.
- - Lapsille kiinnostavaa tekemistä oltava kohteessa, maastopyörät, kanootit, huvipuisto tms.
- - Lapsille täytyy olla tekemistä.
- - Lapsille tekemistä lähellä.
- - Sopiva etäisyys, riittävästi tilaa.
- - Mielekkäitä ulkoilu- ja telttailupaikkoja
- - Kohde täytyy olla lapsille sopiva ja hyvä jos kohteen lähetyvillä on esim. leikkipuistoja ym. tekemistä lapsille.
- - Lapsiystävälliset kohteet etusijalla
- - Lapsi on syntynyt loppuvuonna 2020, tätä ennen ei vaikutusta. Lähivuosina tuskin tulee pienen lapsen kanssa lähdettyä esim. kovin pitkille lennoille (jos se muuten olisikin mahdollista). Pitää miettiä, miten ruokinta, vaipamvaihto ja unet onnistuvat.
- - Parkkipaikkoja riittävästi, ajomatka kohtuullinen, hotellista helppo lähteä autolla käymään päiväseltään jossain.
- - Etsittiin kohteita joissa lapsillakin on kivaa tekemistä.
- - Aktiviteetit, ruokailu, kulkuyhteydet
- - Huvipuistot, kotieläinpihat, shoppailumahdollisuudet, elämykset, nähtävyydet
- - Lasten mielipiteet merkitsevät, sillä on hyvä että lapsetkin viihtyvät kohteessa.

### Appendix 3. Answers to the last open feedback question

Vastaukset
Aina kun nään/törmään/kuulen jostakin paikasta esim, netissä, ajan ohi jostakin, luen lehdestä tms niin tutkin ekana löytyykö Facebook sivuja. Paikka ei innosta, jos facea ei ole päivitetty ikuisuuksiin. Toisinaan hyvin hoidetut ja ajantasaiset nettisivut pelastavat somen puuton. Monta kohdetta jäänyt kun huonosti ollut infoa missään "parin klikkauksen päässä".
Somealustoja on muitakin kuin face ja insta, esim. twitter.
Kotimaan matkakohteen valintaan vaikuttaa myös se kuinka paljon aikaa on käytettävissä (aika kotoa kohteeseen, tai miten kiertää reittiä, jos useita kohteita) eli liikkumisen tapa ja sen helpous/suosituksset välipysähdyksistä..
Osa kysymyksistä hankalasti muotoiltu. Vastausvaihtoehdot hieman vääristävät vastauksiani. Lisäksi "matkustaminen" olisi hyvä olla selitettynä. Mitä tähän tutkimuksen mukaan sisältyy? Koen matkustamisen osittain myös sellaiseksi että siirryn paikasta A paikkaan B ja suunnittelematta käyn jossain kohteissa matkan varrella. Esim. Mökki-matka
Toivottavasti tähän sai vastata myös yli 50 vuotias monta kertaa kuukaudessa kotimaassa matkustava pariskunta. Niitä vaihtoehtoja ei alussa ollut
Kohta 9. Hyvät tarjoukset vaikuttaa erittäin paljon. Ystävät tarjoavat lomaosakkeita vuokralle, niitä käytetään aina kun mahdollista.
Vaihtoehtoista puuttui kokonaan kohteen omat nettisivut. Se on tärkein infokanava. Koska tätä ei ollut valittavissa rinnastin "viralliset matkailusivustot" tähän.
Kyselyssä olis pitänyt määritellä tarkemmin mitä tarkoitetaan matkailusivustolla. Visit-sivuja? Palveluita kuten MatkaileSuomessa.fi? Vaihtoehtoista puuttui täysin yrityksen /kohteen omat sivut, jotka itselle ovat todella tärkeä tiedon lähde.
Ehkä mä oon vaan vanha, mutta toi Insta vaan ei sovi. Enkä ihan tajunnut, tarkottiko sana "tarina" facebookin tarinaosiota vai tarinaa muuten vaan 😊
Kysely oli hassu, kun se ei huomioinut työmatkustamista ja muita sosiaalisen median kanavia, kuten Twitter. Myös Google on kätevä tapa hakea tietoa 🤖
Ikähaarukka olisi voinut olla laajempi. Kyllähän vanhemmat ihmiset käyttävät myös mediaa.
Olisin toivonut että kysely noudattaa hyvää tapaa tutkimuksen kysymyksenasettelun suhteen. Näin valitettavasti ei ollut vaan useat kysymykset olivat johdatteluvia. Tämä ohjaa tutkimustuloksia tutkijan ennako-oletuksiin perustuen, joten se on hyvä mainita

tutkimuksessa. Esimerkiksi kysymys 9 oli tällainen, valittavista puuttui lähteitä, sekä myös hinta ja sijainti, jotka ovat tärkeitä tekijöitä, eikä siinä ollut valittavissa kohtaa "muu", sama pätee kysymykseen 20. Jos tutkimuksen alussa oli termimäärittely, missäkin sen totaalisesti, esim. "Matkasivustot" ei määritelty. Jossain myöhemmässä kysymyksessä viitattiin "viralliset matkasivustot (visit)" mikä antoi olettaa että aiempi oli myös hyvin spesifi termi. Myös kysymykset "luotatko suosituksiin" oli hyvin kyseenalaisia. Luottaa merkitsee itselleni että en usko henkilön valehdelleen. Luottaa ei tarkoita että tekisin sokkona päätöksen arvostelujen/suosittelujen peruuteella ilman muiden lähteiden konsultointia. Kuitenkin kyselyn lopussa annettiin ymmärtää luottamisen viittavan ihan muuhun "luotat sanaan ja varaat perustuen mainontaan". Luotan toki että somevaikuttaja on tykännyt kohteesta, mutta en todellakaan usko sokeasti siihen että meillä on sama maku. Kysymysten ja vastausten sanavalinnoissa oli kokonaosuudessaan parantamisen varaa, jos haluttiin neutraalia kvantitatiivista tutkimusdataa.

Ensisijaisesti etsin tietoa kohteesta esim hotellista sen omilta sivuilta.