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Russian Tourists Overnighting in Helsinki: Information Search and Use of Social Media

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**Russian Tourists Overnighting in Helsinki: Information Search and
Use of Social Media**

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Russian tourism to Finland is a constantly growing phenomenon. This Bachelor's thesis focuses on researching consumer behavior of Russian tourists overnighing in Helsinki. In this research, consumer behavior regarding information search and social media behavior are highlighted in order to answer the research targets set by the commissioner, Hotel Arthur. In today's travel industry, the changes towards online booking and domination of large online travel agents force hotels to find ways to directly attract clients. Aim of the research is to discover which information sources Russian tourists use for finding a suitable accommodation in Helsinki, and whether social media is one the used sources. Objective of the research is to hopefully offer new marketing channels for the commissioner to utilize in the future.

The theoretical framework consists of a review of central theories and literature related to consumer behavior, consumer buying process and special features of consumer behavior in tourism. Companies are able to do effective marketing through understanding why certain behavior occurs among consumers and at which point of the process marketing can affect the consumers. Social media as a concept and marketing method is presented through reviewing relevant literature concerning the themes and embracing actual social media marketing protocols. Previous tourism researches related to the topic are presented in order to give perspective for survey findings.

The study was a quantitative practice-based by nature. The empirical part of this study was implemented in August 2013 to representatives of the focus group, Russian tourists overnighing in Helsinki. Research data was collected through a semi-structured survey form output in Russian language. Participants of the study were randomly selected in order to fill the requirements of an extensive sample. All together 62 survey answers were received, which as a quantitative sample is informative enough to be interpreted for discovering nuances in the consumer behavior of Russian tourists in the process of finding information and booking an accommodation for a stay in Helsinki.

Results of the study show that for Russian tourists main sources of information are Internet, recommendations of friends and family and local travel agencies in Russia. Social media is a potential tool to use when marketing to Russian tourists since both Internet and recommendations from friends and family merge in the user features of social media. Results reveal that social media is used as an information source by 29 % of all respondents. As the popularity is below one third of all respondents, use of social media has to be aligned together with other more traditional marketing efforts. Use social media among Russian consumers is a spreading phenomenon, which directions of development are important to Finnish Tourism industry operators to follow.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Information search, Russian tourists, Social media

Taika Liikanen

Helsingissä yöpyvät venäläismatkailijat: Tiedonhaku ja sosiaalisen median käyttö

Vuosi

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Tässä opinnäytetyössä tutkittiin Helsingissä yöpyvien venäläismatkailijoiden kuluttajakäyttäytymistä. Tutkimuksen keskipisteessä ovat kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, tiedonhaku ja sosiaalisen median käyttö majoituspaikan valintaan liittyvissä prosesseissa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, mitä tietolähteitä Helsingissä yöpyvät venäläismatkailijat käyttävät löytääkseen sopivan majoituspaikan ja käyttävätkö he sosiaalista mediaa tiedonhankinnassa. Tutkimuksen toimeksiantajana toimii Helsingin keskustassa sijaitseva Hotel Arthur. Tutkimuksella halutaan tarjota toimeksiantajalle suuntaa-antavia tietoja venäläisten matkailijoiden majoituspaikan valintaan liittyvästä kuluttajakäyttäytymisestä sekä tarjota ehdotuksia potentiaalisista markkinointikanavista, joita Hotel Arthur voi hyödyntää osana majoituspalveluiden markkinointia tulevaisuudessa.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys muodostuu kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen sekä kuluttajien ostoprosessiin liittyvien keskeisten teorioiden ja kirjallisuuden katsauksesta. Katsaukseen sisältyy myös näkökulma kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen matkailutuotteiden ja -palveluiden piirissä. Kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen liittyvien prosessien ymmärtäminen mahdollistaa yrityksille tehokkaan markkinoinnin sekä kuluttajan tavoittamisen ostoprosessin vaiheissa, joissa päätöksentekoon vaikuttaminen on mahdollista. Työn teoriapohjaan kuuluu olennaisesti myös sosiaalinen media ja markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa.

Opinnäytetyön tutkimusosio perustui määrälliseen tutkimusmenetelmään. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osio toteutettiin Helsingin keskustassa elokuussa 2013 haastatteleamalla Helsingissä yöpyviä venäläismatkailijoita. Haastattelumateriaalin keräyksessä käytettiin kvantitatiivista survey-kyselylomaketta. Tutkimuksen osallistujat valittiin sattumanvaraisesti, jotta tutkimukseen saatiin mukaan edustava otanta Helsingissä yöpyviä venäläismatkailijoita. Kaiken kaikkiaan 62 vastausta hyväksyttiin mukaan tutkimukseen. Kvantitatiivisena otantana 62 on suppea, mutta tarpeeksi informatiivinen suuntaa antavien tulkintojen tekemiseksi.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että Helsingissä yöpyville venäläismatkailijoille Internet, ystävien ja sukulaisten suosituksukset sekä paikalliset matkatoimistot Venäjällä ovat tärkeimpiä tiedonlähteitä majoitusvalinnan prosessissa. Sosiaalinen media on potentiaalinen markkinointityökalu kohdennettaessa majoituspalveluiden markkinointia venäläisille matkailijoille, koska se yhdistää kaksi tiedonhaussa heidän eniten käyttämää lähdettä - internetin ja ystävät ja sukulaiset. Tutkimukset osoittavat, että 29 % venäläismatkailijoista käyttää sosiaalista mediaa osana tiedonhankintaa. Koska luku on alle kolmanneksen, tulisi sosiaalisessa mediassa markkinointi yhdistää perinteisiin markkinointikanaviin. Sosiaalisen median käyttö venäläiskuluttajien keskuudessa on jatkuvasti kasvava ilmiö, jonka suuntauksien seuraaminen ja niiden adaptoiminen markkinoinnissa on tärkeää suomalaisille matkailualan toimijoille.

Asiasanat: kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, sosiaalinen media, tiedonhaku, venäläiset matkailijat

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1 Introduction

Russia is a constantly growing tourism market for Finland. According to the statistics compiled by Finnish Tourist Board, in 2012 7,6 million foreign tourists visited Finland. Of all visitors, 47 % were Russians. From 2011 the amount of Russian tourists visiting Finland grew by 10 %. (Mek 2013a.) Finland has been able to maintain its status as one of Russians' favorite tourism destination in Europe. On a worldwide scale only Turkey, China and Egypt are more popular than Finland as a favorite destination of Russian tourists. (Formin 2012.) In Finland, Lappeenranta, Helsinki and Imatra are the favorite destinations for Russian visitors. Most Russian tourists visiting Finland come from the area of St. Petersburg (80%). (Kauppalehti 2012.)

This Bachelor's thesis reviews the information channels which Russian tourists use when searching for a suitable accommodation for their stay in Helsinki. As online travel industry in Russia is estimated to grow further, the specific information about the online behavior of Russian tourists is needed for Finnish tourism market (eMarketer 2012a). The findings are based on a quantitative survey research conducted in August 2013 during the high summer season. Whether social media is an effective marketing tool for Russian tourists in search of accommodation services is the main research question for this thesis. Consequently, results of the survey are hopefully beneficial for the commissioning company of the thesis, Hotel Arthur, which operates in the very center of Helsinki. Furthermore, results of the research are beneficial for other operators in the tourism field or companies with a Russian clientele.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on approaches elaborated in the study of consumer behavior in tourism, social media and social media marketing. Analysis of literature, articles and relevant Internet based references form the theoretical parts of the study. In addition, previous studies related to the topic are introduced in chapter 2.4 in order to give perspective for the survey findings. In general, consumer and Internet behavior of Russian tourists is a topic researched by many on a global level. This research gives a new aspect to the previous studies as analyzing the choice of accommodation together with the use of social media as an information source is an essential part of marketing analysis of Russian tourism in the future.

Essentially, the research topic responds strongly to my personal interests. My relation with Russia and Russian language rose on a more advanced level during spring 2013 when I spend four months in St. Petersburg on a study exchange. History with Russia and studying Russian language dates back to year 1998 as I started to study in a Finnish-Russian elementary school in Joensuu. The motivation for this thesis is exceptionally high on the basis that my plan in the future is to be employed in the tourism industry and to use Russian language at work.

2 Key Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

In the following three subchapters the research introduces the key theories and literature as the basis for the study. Themes connected to the research topic include customer behavior theories with a link to customer behavior in tourism, theories of social media with a review on the study of most used social networks in Russia and Russian social media marketing. Researcher acknowledges that many more theories and literature sources can be found in addition to the presented one. The ones that are presented here are chosen as the most suitable for this context. The aim of the theory section is to summarize broad themes from substantive literature and to relate them to the concrete object of this study.

2.1 Consumer Behavior in Tourism

Tremendous amount of research exists on the topic of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior on the tourism industry is explanatory with same socio-psychological theories as is behavior of a consumer in any other business segment (Shoemaker, Lewis & Yesawich 2007, 172). However, there are many critical differences separating consumer behavior and tourist behavior from one another (Pearce 2005, 9).

Theories of consumer behavior act as a foundation for successful marketing actions. In order to do effective marketing, it is important to understand why certain behavior occurs among consumers and at which point of the process marketing can affect the consumers. (Shoemaker & al. 2007 175.) Andreason (1965) has proposed one of the earliest consumer behavior models, which considers the importance of information and consumer attitudes in the decision-making process. Marketing efforts of a company are recognized in the model later evolved by Nicosia (1966). The model emphasizes effects of company attempts to communicate with consumers through marketing actions, influences of attitudes in the search evaluation process, purchase process and post-purchase process. The most often displayed consumer behavior model is the Hovarth-Seth model (1969), in which the importance of inputs to the consumer buying process is underlined. Hovarth-Seth model advises the ways these inputs are considered before final purchasing decision.

Consumer behavior as a process can be divided into stages of need or problem recognition, search for information, stimuli selection, alternative evaluation, alternative comparison and final choice. The reaction which creates a need for something is an inner motivation in an individual. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 101.) On the other hand, consumer behavior refers to a process, where a consumer acquires and organizes information towards decision of purchase and uses and evaluates products or services. Consumer behavior described as a process from this viewpoint includes stages of: (1) search for information, (2) evaluation of alterna-

tives, (3) purchase, (4) delivery, (5) consumption, (6) evaluation and dispose of products or services. (Moutinho 1987, 5.)

The buying process of a consumer in the tourism field differs from traditional model of consumer buying process due to the fact the tourism product and service possess unique features. These features include intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity and simultaneous consumption of services (Shoemaker & al. 2007 172). When compared to most retail products, the pre-purchase stage in the buying process of tourism services and products occurs further in advance, involves making purchase decision from great distances and between intangible and symbolic alternatives (Crouch, Perdue & Timmermans 2004, 3). Separating feature in the purchase of a tourism service is that as a result of buying a service, the consumer never engages in an ownership, yet the value of the purchase especially concerning leisure travel is of strong emotional kind. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 70; 3).

Every consumer is an individual, therefore every individual consumes differently. Consumer behavior of an individual is influenced by many different factors, both internal and external. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 100.) Internal psychological factors include information perception, experiences and learning, personal behavior and mental structure, motives meaning internal energizing forces and attitudes. External social influences cover the role and family influences, reference groups, social class and prevailing culture and subcultures. (Hudson, S. 1999, 21-22.) Social and psychological features of an individual together with the demographic information form generalization of the individual's life style in the consumer behavior research (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 104).

The consumer data most often collected and strongly influencing on the behavior are the demographic factors of a consumer. Demographic factors cover age and age distribution, gender, marital status, place and form of residence, family size, income and outcome, profession and education, language, religion and race. Demographic data is easy to collect and it gives marketers valuable information. Consumer behavior which cannot be explained through demographic data research, psychological and social factors of the consumer are to be inspected to find causes. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 102-104).

Considering that this thesis concerns social media and Internet channels tourists use to book their accommodation, influence of IT technology on consumer behavior is essential part to be highlighted when discussing today's tourism industry. "E-tourism refers to activities undertaken on the Web and on mobiles by consumers dealing with travel inquiries and decisions. E-tourism covers all electronically mediated activities carried out by consumers from their very first intention to get away up to their return." (Petr 2009, 211.) Internet has a stable position as one of the main travel tools both for consumers and travel professionals. From consumer

point of view, Internet is used for booking, ideas, inspiration and information. Information is mostly searched on accommodation, attractions, visiting points, when to visit and examples of itineraries for the visit. (Cook, Yale & Marqua 2010, 109.)

The behavior of an e-tourist differs from the behavior pattern presented earlier. The decision-making process of an online-consumer includes: (1) pre-trip information search, (2) evaluation of alternatives, (3) booking, ordering and purchase, (4) delivery of tickets and vouchers, (5) on-trip consumption and information search and (6) post-consumption. Where the behavior pattern of an e-tourist differs from traditional consumer behavior model are the points of on-trip consumption and information search as well as post-consumption. Internet and mobile technology allow the consumer to search for information also when at the destination. This creates challenges to the seller as information has to be available for and at all stages of the trip. Internet-based tourist consumer behavior creates nuances of new kind to post-consumption. Level of satisfaction and complaints are made public by different social media channels. Electronic word of mouth spreads in the Internet fast and reaches consumers in the phase of pre-trip information search. (Petr 2009, 211-212.)

As tourism services are in a growing measure wanted and searched from the Internet, the service providers are facing a challenge of creating a balance between services offered on line and in person. Even though consumers enjoy the easiness and availability of information and services on the Internet 24/7, the fact that personalized service is available if necessary brings security to the consumer. Balance between Internet-based services and personalized customer service reassures consumer that the service provider is a professional operator with experience. (Cook & al. 2010, 346.)

Finally, a certain market of a company can be divided to different segments according to the consumer behavior appearing on the market. Market segmentation is a central marketing concept in which the consumers are segmented to different clusters of consumers according to similar consumer preferences. Market segmentation allows a company to divide their market into segments and benefit from targeted marketing. (Williams 2002, 149-150.) Market segmentation has been defined by Dibb & al. (2001) as "The process of dividing a total market into groups of people with relatively similar product needs, for the purpose of designing a marketing mix that precisely matches the needs of individual in a segment." Applying segmentation in marketing also helps to put into practice the marketing mix of four Ps, which are Product, Price, Place and Promotion. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 92; 98). Segmentation as a marketing method responds to the direction which society of consumer is heading to according to Krebs: "...society is moving away from being a "mass" phenomenon, to many smaller groups with more specific wants and needs" (Krebs 2010, 141).

In marketing, five classic criteria exist for segmenting a market. In a classic example, the market segmentation is done according to the geographical, socioeconomic, demographic, psychographic and behavioristic segmentation. Techniques of segmenting the market especially for travel and tourism are proposed by Middleton and Clark (2001). These six ways of segmenting a market in travel and tourism industry are (1) purpose of travel, (2) buyer needs, motivations and benefits, (3) buyer and user characteristics, (4) psychographic characteristics and (5) price. Swarbrooke (1999) adds to these techniques the visitor party composition, visit type and purpose and method of travel. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 96.)

Through market segmentation a company can achieve many advantages which include selecting compatible niche markets for exploiting services, differentiation of company's brands in order to avoid product cannibalism where two similar brands attract potential customers from one another, identifying new potential markets, create focused strategies, embrace customer loyalty through more targeted products and knowing thoroughly the customer segment. (Williams 2002, 150.) According to Kotler (1980), the problem companies are facing when doing market segmentation, is how to estimate the value of operating in each segment.

2.2 Social Media

Today's Web 2.0 is an advanced environment of two-way communication where companies can share information and consumers actively utilize the contents. Critical difference to previous Web 1.0 is the fact that end users are able to interact and collaborate with each other in a socialized media instead of passively browsing different websites. Internet as a two-ways social environment of communication gives companies new marketing tools. Internet allows companies to do cost-effective and even free marketing in such ways as spreading company information, attracting old and new customers, taking care of customer service and recruiting personnel. (Leino 2012, 11.) Web 2.0 has changed today's world of communication and enabled a new social media to be used for people to communicate and cultivate relationships. The change also lies in the use of electronic word of mouth as an information source for people in the process of information search. Depending on what kind of service the company which is discussed has been able to deliver, the growing use of electronic word of mouth and gained visibility for the company is either an advantage of disadvantage. (Petr 2009, 215.)

Social media can be defined as an online media in which content for media users, viewers and readers, is published. What is the crucial character that makes a media to be defined as social? According to Leino, the reason why a media is social is the possibility for genuine interaction without a control over by a higher authority. (Leino 2012, 18.) Social media is an umbrella term for various Internet-based community pages and pages for publishing and sharing content. Different social medias share a common feature of contents being created and ad-

ministered mainly by the users itself. Social media is a contrary media for the traditional mass media, such as newspapers and television, where the published contents are strictly planned and professionally produced to suit the chosen public image of the media. (Juslén 2011, 27.) As today's consumers can be segmented to special niche markets, social media is a usable channel for reaching these niches, which traditional mass media often neglects to reach. Social media enables people to interact in the niche groups of like-minded people. Therefore for marketers it is important to become part of the group. (Gillin 2009, 26.)

Social media consists of various online services which all are connected to each other by the similar user behavior and sense of community. As social media is about creating conversation, users are active on sharing their opinion and commenting on various activities. (Leino 2012, 26.) Types of social media include social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, media sharing sites, rating & reviewing sites, virtual worlds and different forums to name a few examples (Molenaar 2012, 222-223.)

Social media is a media open for everyone to use, it encourages its users to actively participate in the ongoing endeavor. Barrier for social media entry and participation is low. (Juslén 2011, 197.) Social media bridges gaps between people within long distances. Using social media is either not limited to a certain time, since users can access it at any time of the day. This is an advantage also for marketers due to the fact that social media enables marketing actions to reach international clientele and once the material is published online, it is still available to the consumers at their preferable time of use. (Gillin 2009, 110.)

Among Russian social media consumers, major social network is vKontakte, a Russian version of the globally popular networking site Facebook. Two other popular networking sites for Russians are Odnoklassniki and MoiMir which also offers email service mail.ru to online users. Of the international networking sites, Facebook, Twitter and LiveJournal are the most often used. vKontakte has 46,8 million users in Russia, which makes vKontakte the market leader in social networks in Russia. Its' growth is aligned with the number of Internet users in Russia. Second most popular online networking channel is Odnoklassniki with registered users of 39,4 million in Russia. MoiMir which operates together with e-mail service mail.ru has a total of 21,2 million users in Russia. In order to understand the popularity of Russian social medias in Russia, the fact that Facebook has 10,7 million users in Russia needs to be concerned in social media marketing planning. (Dreamgrow 2011; Rusbase 2013).

2.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a constantly growing concept, which empowers social media users to promote the marketed products or services of a company through interaction and involving the consumers in the communities related to the product (Weinberg 2009, 4). Social media marketing is part of online marketing but in the context of cultural communities which include different social networks, virtual worlds, social sites and social opinion sharing sites (Tuten 2008, 20). A company must realize that becoming public in social media, is something that can create either an advantage of free market space through praise and recommendations, or a disadvantage when a negative experience is shared on the Internet. Still, social media is the channel through which companies can integrate themselves to the presence of the consumers. (Leino 2012, 26.)

The core of marketing in a social media is to become part of the consumer community. Doing successful marketing in an online network requires the companies to get their brand and product to be part of the customer's online experience. In order to achieve that position, companies need to engage themselves with their current and potential customers and interact with them. Social media as a marketing platform gives the marketer great advantage when the visitors of the platform are engaged to participate and produce material through various contests, games and reviews. (Gillin 2009, 231.)

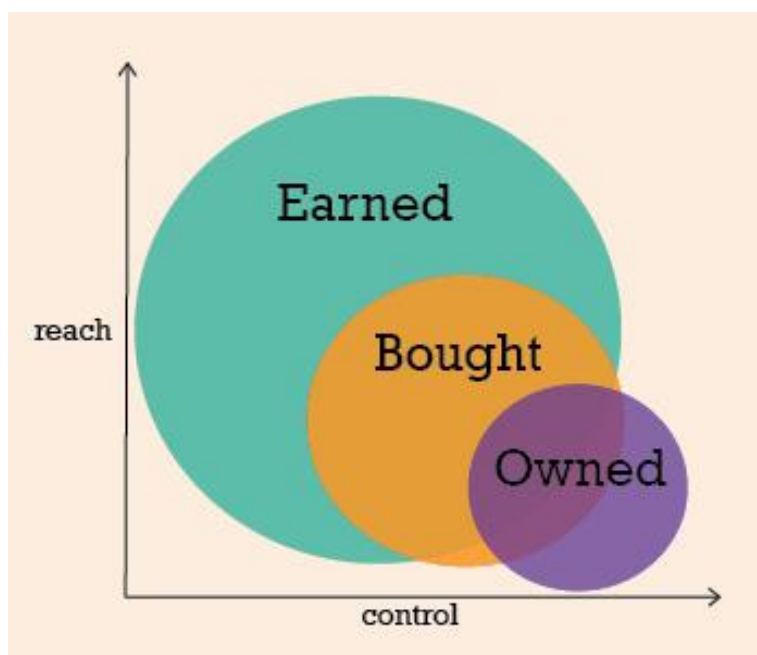
As applying any kind of new marketing tool into practice, also the use of social media in marketing needs careful planning and preparations. (Murray 2011, 12.) First step of planning is to discover the target group and the best social network for the company's niche, where contacting the target group is possible. Globally, the most popular social media channels are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. In the United States of America, these four online services go under the name of Big Four. (Leino 2012, 56.)

When the most suitable network has been chosen, preparation of a plan and the actual content for the network takes place. "Having a content ready and creating a schedule for its release is the ideal way to make sure you have something to contribute once you join the social media of your choosing." A way to get familiar with the network communicating style is to do research on what other people and companies and competitors are sharing. One must keep in mind that marketing in social media as any other kind of marketing. Marketing actions must be published regularly in order to appear as an active user, show the meaning of the social media relations and keep the followers, the customers interested. (Murray 2011, 15.)

Above all, social media is beneficial for companies to use as an e-marketing tool together with other marketing methods. Marketing in social media is a phenomenon which reinforces

other marketing methods but does not entirely replace them. The benefits that companies gain from social media marketing are the easiness of sharing content to other users and commenting on the self-created content or content created by other users. Using social media as a marketing tool also improves the image of a company and makes it more recognizable among consumers. (Leino 2012, 120.) Well executed marketing in social media brings the company improved visibility in online search results, improved and more efficient customer service, better brand awareness among the consumers, improved relations with media, improved recruitment prospects and devoted customers (Paker 2011, 5.)

Social media as part of company's marketing actions completes the trinity of own media, bought media and earned media. Owned media contains for example corporate websites, brochure, mobile applications, Facebook page and a catalog. Bought media refers to any paid advertising on TV, radio and Internet, paid search engine optimization, prints, outdoor advertising and bought Facebook ads to name a few. Earned media means any kind of word of mouth or free reputation spread by the consumers. On social platforms company can earn free media space through consumers reviewing the products and services, giving feedback in public and sharing company's material on social platforms. (Ali Consulting 2013.) As one can see in Picture 1 owned media is the kind of media the company has the most control over in comparison with earned media which directions are given by the consumers. Bought media is under control of the company yet the reach within consumers is somewhat on average level. (SOAPBOX 2012a.)



Picture 1: Owned, Bought vs. Earned Media (SOAPBOX 2012b).

The actual content shared on social media must be engaging but not in a directly sales oriented manner. Strongly promotional material on social media is not interesting to the users. Companies should concentrate on educative topics which relate and build a preference to the sold product or service. (MarketingSherpa 2009.) Following example on marketing behavior of a company marketing on the social media is applicable or example to Facebook. The company should try to fit in to the normal behavior patterns of regular individual users and encourage the users to share material, browse the company's pictures, comment wall post and status updates of the company and catch up with other online users exactly in the way as they do with any other member on social media (Bailyn 2012, 99.) When engaging to social media marketing, companies have to accept that the published material is not under their control, but in the consumers hands (Gillin 2009, 5).

Businesses are not only passively posting and sharing their material in a social media, online communication between companies and consumers has changed into a conversational way of behavior. In fact, consumers appreciate an actual personalized contact, and today that contact can well take place in a social media. Consumers are searching for new interaction with service providers for example on Facebook, where they can rate new and old products, make buying decisions and exchange thoughts about the company and its services. The consumers do most likely have another way of keeping contact with the company, but when having a contact also in social media, the relationship deepens and gains more value. (Nelson & Haddon 2012, 257; 278.)

At the point of starting to do marketing on a social media, the company should estimate features of the chosen network in a careful manner. Whether the site is conducive for marketing activities, whether the target market is already reachable and active there and what is the actual engagement with the chosen network? Company has to possess a sufficient time reserve to use in order to outcome proper marketing. (Dann & Dann 2011.)

2.4 Previous Studies on Russian Consumer Behavior in Tourism

Consumer behavior and preferences of Russian tourists is an actual topic of today's tourism industry due to the fact that Russia is a constantly growing economy with rising income and declining unemployment (eMarketer 2012b). Rise of Russian economy can be seen in continuously growing tourism from Russia to abroad. Also Finland is benefiting from this development in the form of bigger volume of tourists travelling to Finland and bringing more tourism income. In 2012 Finland travel income from Russian tourists visiting Finland was 1 351 million euros. In comparison, 2011 travel income from Russian tourists 1 147 million euros (Mek 2013b).

Numerous studies have been conducted related to consumer behavior of Russian tourists which all relate to the current thesis research. Firstly, boarder survey conducted by TAK Oy reveals the current statistics from year 2012 about Russian tourism to Finland. It gives a comprehensive overview of the current state of Russians travelling to Finland. Secondly, the following subchapters present the results of a research by Carrol Rheem, commissioned by Amadeus, leading provider of IT solutions to tourism industry on a global scale (Amadeus 2013). This research has investigated the travel planning process in six different countries in order to understand how consumers will search for travel in the future (Rheem 2012, 4). Because Russia is one of the investigated target markets of the research, the central findings are presented in chapter 2.5.2.

2.4.1 Boarder Survey 2012 by TAK Oy

Research and analysis center TAK Oy has conducted an annual boarder survey for Russian tourists since 1997 on four southeast boarder stations of Imatra, Nuijamaa, Vainikkala and Vaalimaa. This boarder survey provides information regarding travel behavior of Russian tourists in Finland, purpose of travel and expenditure. Survey also indicates the ways to spend leisure holiday in Finland. Respondents of the survey are Russian tourists travelling to Finland either by car, bus, minivan or train. (TAK 2013a). Boarder survey is originally commissioned by Finnish Tourist Board, which is an agency operating under the Ministry of Employment and Economy (Visit Finland 2013.)

According to the boarder survey 2012, Finland received 3,6 million visitors from Russia during 2012. 81 % of the 3,6 million visitors were on a leisure trip and 6% on a business trip. 71 % were on a day trip and 22 % of the respondents were overnighiting in Finland for 1-3 nights. Average stay in Finland was 1,1 nights. 54 % of the respondents who were overnighiting in Finland stayed at a hotel, 21 % at friend's/relative's home and 7 % in a rented cottage. 79 % of the respondents were from the area of St. Petersburg, 6 % from Moscow, 14 % from other areas of European part of Russia and 1 % from Asian part of Russia. 86 % arrived to Finland by land, 8 % by sea and 6 % by plane. Average expenditure of a Russian tourist in Finland reached 248 euros per visit. (TAK 2013b.)

The boarder survey also indicates essential figures related to this thesis research concerning use of Internet and social media channels among Russian visitors. 90 % of the respondents have access to Internet of which 86 % have Internet access at home, 45 % at work or at the place of study, 45 % have Internet on their mobile phone and 3 % have Internet access in other location. Regarding use of social media, the boarder survey reveals that 60 % of all respondents who have Internet access are registered to vKontakte, 20 % to Facebook, 18 % to

Odnoklassniki, 18 % to Mail.ru and 1 % are registered to other, unspecified social media. (TAK 2013b.)

The boarder survey indicates interesting facts regarding search for information concerning the travel. 51 % of all respondents did not search for any information about the current travel and 49 % did search. For the 49 % who searched for information Internet was the main source of information (41 %) which was followed by information asked from friends and family or travel agency (11%). 3 % of the ones who had searched for information in advance used magazines, guidebooks or brochures as a source of information. The boarder survey also specifies the information the respondents had searched before the trip. 39 % had searched for traffic information, 37 % for locations of stores and hotels and 36 % for hotel services. Used webpages included search engines or social media (47 %), hotel booking sites (27 %) and general tourism sites (13 %). 2 % of the respondents had used hotel's own webpages. (TAK 2013b.)

2.4.2 Empowering Inspiration: The Future of Travel Search

The research by C. Rheem discovers how consumers around the world make leisure travel decisions online and what are the consumer expectations for the future? Focus group of the research covers different cultural areas in a diverse way as U.S., the UK, Germany, India, Russia and Brazil are on the focus. The focus group from each country is limited to investigate the online behavior of adult "discretionary travelers" meaning the people travelling solely on holiday purposes, stay at an accommodation they have self-chosen and paid for and who have made a minimum of three overnight trips during the past year. The destination must have been chosen by the respondent independently, excluding predetermined destinations such as visiting a friend. (Rheem 2012, 1.) Total amount of received qualified responses was 4638 of which representatives of Russian nationality 761 (Rheem 2012, 7). This research summary presents the results concerning the 16,4 % Russian discretionary travelers.

Concerning this current thesis research, many interesting findings regarding Russian travelers can be made from Rheem's research. On average Russian discretionary traveler is 37 years old. Average annual household leisure travel expenditure is 2912 USD. 56 % of the respondents book their accommodation online and 44 % are upscale accommodation users which mean they use four or five star hotels. 86 % of all respondents own a smart phone with a mobile Internet. 47 % of all respondents are registered Facebook users keeping in mind that vKontake holds the bigger market share as a social media in Russia. Research findings indicate that with 63 % of air fare booking and 56 % for hotel, Russia holds the lowest level of online booking. Thus, Russian respondents being the strongest early technology adopters with 88 %, the willingness to adapt to online booking exists without a question.

534 respondents of the total Russian respondents had been using Internet when choosing the destination. 77 % of these respondents used general search engines, 44 % used online travel agency websites, 62 % used traveler review websites, 36 % used traveler provider websites, 37% used destination websites and 44 % travel guide websites. When asked about the used information sources in the process of comparing and choosing different leisure travel products (airline tickets, hotel rooms) 69 % of the had used websites via computer, 45 % had used personal recommendations from friends and family as a source of information, 28 % had used online advertising, 24 % had either called or visited travel providers such as airlines or hotel companies, 21 % had either called or visited travel agents for advice and 18 % had used websites or applications via mobile device as a source of information. With these previously mentioned results Russia had the highest percentage both in usage of general search engines and use of traveler review websites.

When the suitable products were found, following methods were used for booking the accommodation: 20 % visited or called retail travel agent, 19 % used a travel search engine website, 17 % called travel providers, 16 % used a travel provider website, 13 % used an online travel agency website and 7 % of the respondents used a retail travel agency website as did book at the airport and property location. The research indicates that in Russia the way of booking accommodation is still contrary to U.K and U.S where only 3 % use offline travel agencies, whereas in Russia the percentage is 20 % making offline travel agents a substantial booking channel.

Rheem's research reveals interesting facts concerning Russian travelers' social media behavior. Rheem (2012) indicates that Russian travelers are active social media site users at the point of information search and travel destination selection as they value fellow traveler perspective and use traveler review sites as information source. Using mobile phone for social network sharing is not popular as only 20 % are interested in using their mobile phone for updating a social network in order to share travel experiences and pictures. But when Russian travelers are asked to select the travel-related activities they are interested in doing through an online social network the results are opposing. More than 50 % of the respondents are interested in sharing pictures and videos from travel experiences, almost 60 % are interested in searching for travel reviews written by similar people and more than 50 % are interested in receiving recommendations from friends about local activities in the destination the respondent is travelling to. 50 % of the respondents are interested in browsing for special deals from travel companies and merely 50 % are interested in the advices friends can give regarding which travel products to purchase.

Rheem's research gives interesting information concerning the behavior of Russian travelers not only to Finland but on a worldwide scale. The results of Rheem's research can act as a

information basis and baseline for the further analysis of this exact research concerning Russian tourists information search and booking methods. The results from Rheem's research reinforces this thesis research and its objectives to discover the exact channels Russians favor when searching for accommodation information and actually booking it.

3 Thesis Objective and Commissioning Company

The objective of this Bachelor's thesis research is to discover which social media and e-marketing channels affect consumer behavior of tourists when choosing suitable accommodation? The aim is to find out what channels Russian tourists use as information source when it comes to the search of different accommodation services in the destination? The focus group of the study is Russian tourists overnighing in Helsinki. The goal set by the commissioning company, Hotel Arthur, is to discover new and useful social media marketing channels to utilize in future marketing for potential Russian customers.

The motivation to produce accurate information about consumer behavior of Russian tourists is high, since Russians are the biggest yet constantly growing group of foreign tourists staying in Helsinki. Significance of the study is proofed in many studies. For example recent statistics from year 2012 indicate that from all overnighing tourists in Helsinki, number of Russian grew with a total of 17,1 % from previous year 2011. (Mek 2013c.) That percentage is growing from year to year, which indicates that for marketing reasons it is important to clarify the effective channels in order to grow the number of Russian guests at the hotel. The results of my research will hopefully help and be beneficial for the commissioning company, sales department of Hotel Arthur, as they will be able to do more targeted and efficient marketing through social media in order to attract bigger volume of Russian tourists. Results of this study are beneficial for all parties assessing the possibilities of social media marketing for Russian tourists in the tourism sector.

Hotel Arthur is a privately owned city center hotel in the very center of Helsinki, established in year 1907. Hotel has 182 rooms and over 400 beds. Rooms are available at different room categories; standard, comfort, superior, Art Nouveau and Jugend. In addition to accommodation services, Hotel Arthur has 10 meeting and conference rooms equipped with modern meeting technology. Restaurant Arthur with 200 seats serves the guests with a daily buffet breakfast, buffet lunch and A Lá Carte in the evening. Restaurant can also be booked for private events on request. (Hotel Arthur 2013.)

Hotel Arthur is a busy hotel among both domestic and international travelers. This is shown in the occupancy of the hotel since by 20.9.2013 average occupancy rate of Hotel Arthur in 2013

is 84 %. In 2013 January with 73,22 %, July with 88,50 % and August with 94,40 % indicate the occupancy rates during high touristic seasons. In 2012 Hotel Arthur accommodated over 90 000 guests. Of all hotel guests annually approximately 12 % are Russians. Russian is the second biggest nationality among the hotel guests after domestic guests which total in 35 % of all guests. The rest 53 % of all guests divide between various nationalities. Due to the long New Year celebrations and holidays in Russia, January is the peak month of Russian tourists in Hotel Arthur. As an example in January 2012 a total of 30,3 % of all guests were Russian. (Ruotsalainen 2013.)

According to the sales director of Hotel Arthur, Tanja Tähtinen, accommodation services are marketed through different online booking channels, newsletters with occasional offers and webpage optimization to show on search engine results. Hotel Arthur also participates in different sales events such as workshops and fairs both in Finland and abroad. Sales department of Hotel Arthur constantly upholds and keeps the visibility in Social Medias up to date. Used social media channels for Hotel Arthur are Facebook and Flickr. Sales statistics of Hotel Arthur indicate that majority of all room bookings come through online booking channels of which the following three are the most often used: Booking.com, Gulliver and Expedia.

The majority of Hotel Arthur's guests are Finnish. Russian visitors are the second biggest customer group and therefore part of all marketing is targeted to potential Russian customers. Advertising in Helsinki Shopping Guide, participation in various Russia workshops, and a mutual marketing campaign with Helsinki Tourism Bureau are examples of the marketing efforts targeted to Russian clientele. (Tähtinen 2013.)

Assistant to sales director, Laura Ruotsalainen, characterizes Russian visitors of Hotel Arthur as spontaneous walk-ins who often come to the hotel without booking any accommodation in advance. They know only the hotel's location, which they have heard from friends or family, or seen on a map. Russian guests at Hotel Arthur are often couples, families with children or groups of friends; therefore they are most often in the need of bigger hotel rooms and family rooms. Compared to other nationalities visiting the hotel, Russian overnighters spend more time actually in the hotel and use the hotel facilities such as the restaurant and sauna. (Ruotsalainen 2013.)

4 Research Plan and Conduction

This Bachelor's thesis represents quantitative practice-based research method. The data for this research is gathered through a semi structured survey, which will be implemented to randomly selected focus group representatives during summer season 2013 in Helsinki. Ac-

According to the statistics compiled by Finnish Tourism Board about nights spent in accommodation facilities by month, July and August are the most popular summer months for the Russian travelers to visit Finland. Even though higher percentage of Russian tourists head to the Lakeland part of Finland, second biggest amount of them can be expected to overnight in Helsinki area. (Mek 2013d.) The survey will be output in Russian language in order to get optimal extent of precise quality information from the respondents. Language check will be done by a native Russian speaking research assistant, a student from Laurea University of Applied sciences. Minimum requirement is to receive 50 answers to the survey which forms a small, yet informative, sample of the entire research focus group. This sample will fill the requirements of a small research sample of which directional generalizations can be made. No stratification will be involved when selecting the sample.

Main fields of the study are social media, social media marketing and consumer behavior of Russian tourists. These subjects together with actual tourism statistics and theories form the theoretical framework for the study which will support the research results. In a quantitative survey study, research questions are formed in order to clarify the purpose of the study and keep the researcher focused in the core of the research (Creswell 2003, 108.) As a conclusion, this research is expected to clarify and give answers to the following research questions:

1. Which information channels Russian tourists use as information source in search of suitable accommodation in Helsinki?
2. Do Russian tourists use social media in the process of accommodation search?
3. If Russian tourists do use social media as an information source, which are the exact channels used?

Respondents are inquired general demographic information, facts concerning the current travel to Helsinki and methods of information search. All results are specified in the research results in to detail. These factors are used as point of views in the process of data analyzing. Furthermore, the collected demographic data will indicate the differences in information search behavior between genders and age groups.

4.1 Planning Process

The beginning of the thesis process takes place to autumn 2012. The researcher considers the idea of a thesis related to an actual tourism related topic. Social media and marketing are the personal points of interests and so the thesis journey begins. As the researcher decides to spend spring semester 2013 in St. Petersburg on a study exchange, working on and completing the thesis is postponed to post exchange period. During the exchange time the researcher is

actively thinking and planning the possible thesis topic. As the relation with Russia tightens, it is natural that the topic has to relate to Russians in addition to social media and marketing.

As the exchange period approaches its end, the researcher receives an interesting offer from her former employer, Hotel Arthur. Hotel Arthur has a need for a survey which covers the same wishes which the researcher has regarding a thesis topic. With a fast time frame the thesis becomes concrete and the researcher begins to actively work on it as returned from St. Petersburg. As the research plan is completed, suitable method is chosen and the topic is clarified, the survey form is created, checked by the tutor teacher and the commissioning company to guarantee the exact needed data to be received. The survey form is created in the very beginning of the process, since the need for collecting the data as soon as possible is essential in order to implement the survey during the summer season with optimal amount of Russian tourists still visiting Helsinki.

4.2 Quantitative Survey

As a research method, this Bachelor's thesis represents quantitative practice-based survey. Quantitative methods apply to explanatory research in which the aim of the study is to find causes, reasons and explanations to a certain situation or a problem. Quantitative research methods apply to the search of causal connections which targets at identifying causal relations around the research problem. In a quantitative research the target is to clarify which attitudes, actions, beliefs and events have affected to the focus phenomena with the help of surveys or structured interviews. Quantitative methods are usable to these kinds of cases especially when search of relations between different factors is highlighted. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 131.) Using the quantitative method, this thesis aims at finding relations between information search and social media.

The data of the thesis was collected by the researcher herself through a semi-structured survey form. The survey was implemented to the randomly selected target group representatives during August 2013 in the center of Helsinki. Survey as tool for data collecting is typical for quantitative research method, because it enables the following of a predetermined approach (Creswell 2002, 18-19). Data was collected mainly outdoors at highly touristic places of Helsinki center. These places included the Market Square, the Senate Square, the Esplanade Park and the Railway Square. Due to the high number of Russian tourists travelling by train, also part of the data was collected from the Central Railway Station in Helsinki. For the data collecting purposes a research permit was asked and received from VR Group, the governmental company responsible for the railway station premises. (Appendix 1).

Survey as a research method is effective since it enables the researcher to ask all the necessary information with one form. Survey is also describes as a time saving method because it can be sent to a large group of respondents at once. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 190.) Survey as a tool for data collection enables collecting a research data contains either quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a focus group. If the focus group does not fit to the research extent, a smaller sample is taken and studied. (Creswell 2003, 153.)

The survey form was structured mainly with multiple-choice questions which were numbered in advance. Multiple-choice questions allow the respondent to answer the questions so that the answers can easily be compared with one another (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 196). Options were given to the respondents in order to keep the questions simple and the questionnaire to be filled relatively fast. In order to get as much usable information as possible, respondents were able to complete the answer with additional information by specifying the answers.

The respondents of the survey were randomly selected from the target group representatives; Russian-speaking tourists. The survey form (Appendix 2) was output in Russian language in order to get optimal extent of precise quality information from the respondents. Language check and translation from the English version (Appendix 3) was done by a native Russian speaking research assistant, a student from Laurea University of Applied Sciences. The researcher also had two Russian speaking research assistants implementing the survey. Survey was given to the respondent to fill in themselves, assistance regarding the survey form was provided if necessary. Assistance was given with a neutral tone in order to avoid affecting the results at any circumstances.

4.3 Data Collection

The survey data was collected during the following days: Tuesday 6.8.2013, Saturday 10.8.2013, Sunday 11.8.2013, Saturday 17.8.2013 and Sunday 18.8.2013. A total of 62 survey forms were answered by the focus group representatives, which adds 12 answers to the set minimum of 50. During the five days when the data was collected, the researcher noticed that weekends were the most favorable time for data collecting as the focus group representatives seemed to have more time to spend at the destination compared to one Tuesday, when many of the tourists the researcher approached, were only on a one day trip and neither had no time to stop for the required few minutes. To answer the survey questions, it required approximately five minutes of the respondent's time depending on how carefully every question was read and answered.

The researcher approached the respondents by asking whether they speak Russian or either first due to the assumption or observation of Russian speaking people. After briefly introducing the research background, the researcher had to first find out whether the people are willing to answer the survey and then make sure that the selected people are overnighting in Helsinki. After finding out that the requirements of participating in the study are filled, the researcher personally handed the survey forms to the tourists to fill in by themselves.

In general people were willing to respond to the survey, but naturally the researcher met also people who were negligent to fill in the survey, especially in a careful manner. Researcher notified that the received data included answers in which the survey was clearly filled in without reading the questions and then not specifying the required information such as social media channels used. This left the researcher knowing that the respondent uses social media for information search but harmfully there is no specified information that which social media or website is being used by the respondent.

4.4 Analysis

As the gathered research data represents quantitative research, also the selected analysis method has to respond to the method. Data handling is recommended be started as soon as the required research sample is gathered and organized for the analysis. Analyzing the data is a process which includes the following phases: description, classification, linking and explanation. (Hirsjärvi & al. 2007, 218.)

Actual analysis of the research data is executed with online survey application SurveyPal. SurveyPal license is provided to the researcher by Laurea University of Applied sciences. Analysis requires for the researcher to create an online survey form and using the link to the online survey, fill in all the 62 answers one by one to the program. SurveyPal gives the researcher the benefit of complete diagrams of the entered data. In order to receive the data and the charts in English, also the survey form is created to the program in English. After that the data can be analyzed and filtered according to the desired factors and classifications.

5 Empirical Results

This chapter presents the empirical part of the research. The survey results are introduced as they are received from the respondents but with the addition of categorizing the results under describing themes by the researcher in the analyzing phase. By categorizing the received results, the received data is logically structured both for the researcher as well for the reader. Central findings indicated from the empirical results conclude the research and reflect to

the targets of the research set by the commissioning company Hotel Arthur. Conclusions made of the results give notable recommendations for future marketing targeted to Russian consumers.

5.1 Demographic Information

First four questions of the survey form enquired about the demographic information of the respondents. With the help of the demographic data, the research findings are easy to analyze and see the possible differences between different age groups, genders and cities of residence. The background information also enables the researcher to define the most typical Russian tourist overnighing in Helsinki.

53,2 % of the respondents were female and 46,8 % were male. From the total of 62 research respondents, 27 of respondents represented the age group of 25-34 which forms 43,5 % of all respondents. Second biggest amount of respondents were from age group 35-44, which forms a percentage of 24,2 % meaning 15 respondents. (Chart 1.) As the focus group of the researched required, total of 100% of the respondents were Russian by nationality. Respondents of the survey were registered residents mainly in St Petersburg 54,8% and in Moscow 25,8 %. Rest of the respondents were from other cities 19,4% which included such cities as Kirov, Jaroslav and Ekaterinburg.

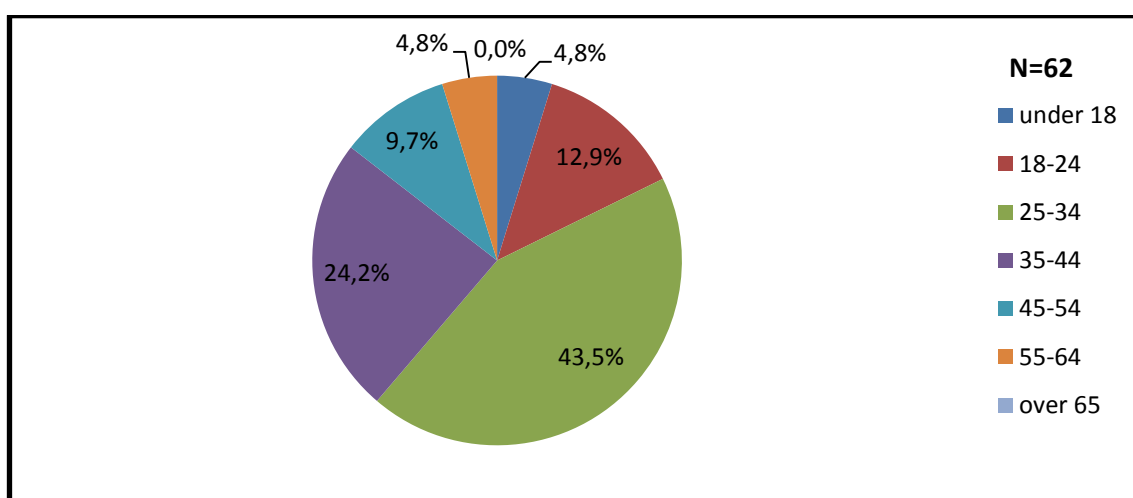


Chart 1: Age distribution.

Further on facts about travel to Finland were asked from the respondents. Firstly the received results indicated that most of the sample representatives were travelling with family 32,3 %. As a couple were travelling 25,8 % of the respondents. 16,1 % were travelling with friends as were travelling alone 16,1 %. 9,7 % of the respondents chose "other" which was

further on specified to be travelling as a part of a group (5 respondents) and with work community (1 respondent). (Chart 2).

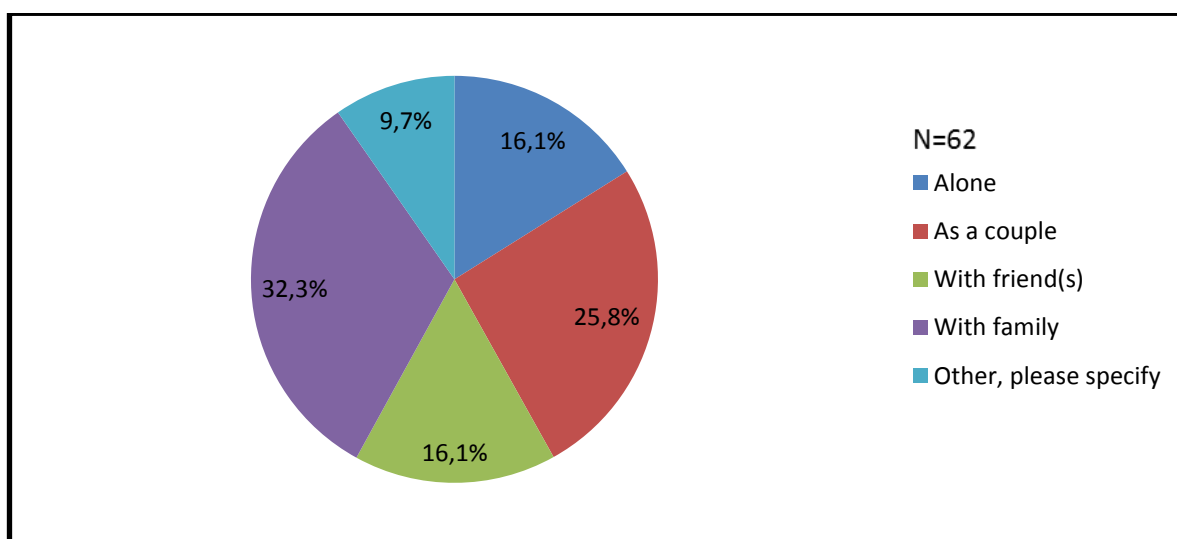


Chart 2: Form of travelling.

The survey also indicated that 61,3 % had been visiting Helsinki before and for 38,7 % of the respondents it was the first time to visit. The respondents who had visited Helsinki before, had been to Helsinki for an average of 7,07 times. Leisure 86,8 %, shopping 52,6 % and nature 42,1 % were the three most important purposes of the previous travels to Helsinki.

Based on the received demographic information of the respondents, the most typical Russian tourist of the sample is a 25-43 year old female from St. Petersburg, who has travelled to Helsinki before.

5.2 Features of Stay in Helsinki and Accommodation

Facts about respondents' current stay and accommodation were asked in the following chapter. 52,5 % of the respondents were overnighing in a hotel. 14,8 % of the respondents had chosen hostel as their accommodation. 11,5% were overnighing in an apartment hotel. Rest of the respondents were staying either at a rented apartment 8,2 %, relative's/friend's home 8,2%, summer cottage 1,6% or other 3,3 %. Other 3,3% had not specified the type of accommodation despite the survey form requested to specify in case other. None of the respondents had chosen couch surfing, mobile home or camping as accommodation form. (Chart 3.)

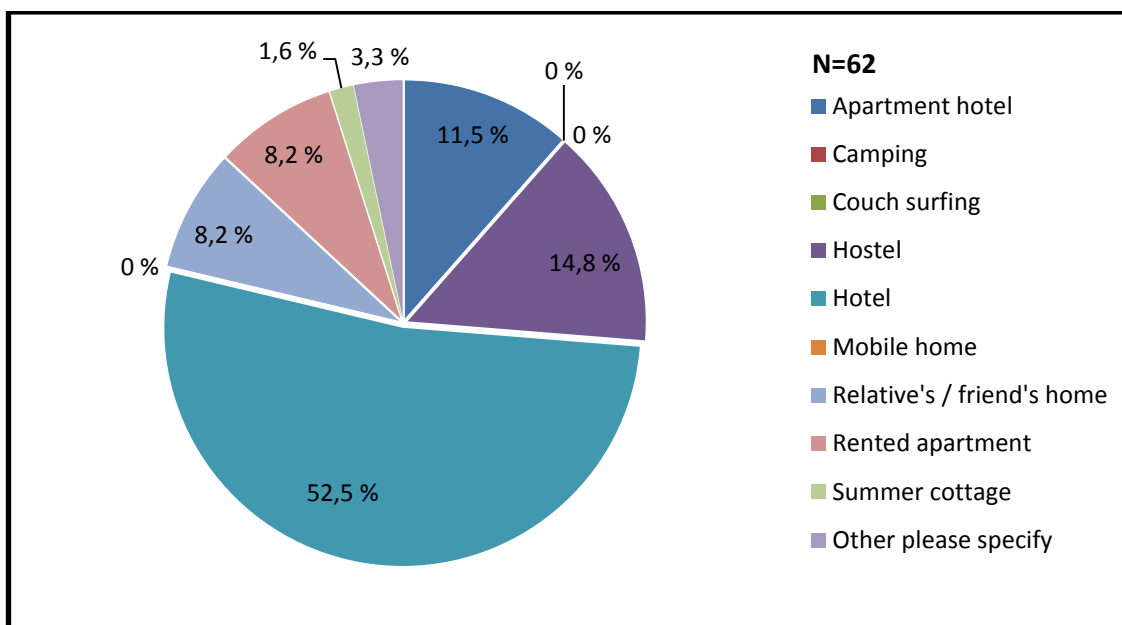


Chart 3: Form of accommodation in Helsinki.

31 of the respondents meaning 50 % had travelled to Helsinki by train. 17,7 % had come to Helsinki by bus, 14,5 % by plane, 11,3 % by car and 4,8 % with a cruise ship. Only one (1,6 %) had travelled to Helsinki with a “marshrutka bus” meaning a privately operated mini bus taxis operating between Helsinki and St. Petersburg (Chart 4). Average length of the stay among the respondents was 4,3 nights. Most of the respondents stayed in Helsinki for only one night (29%).

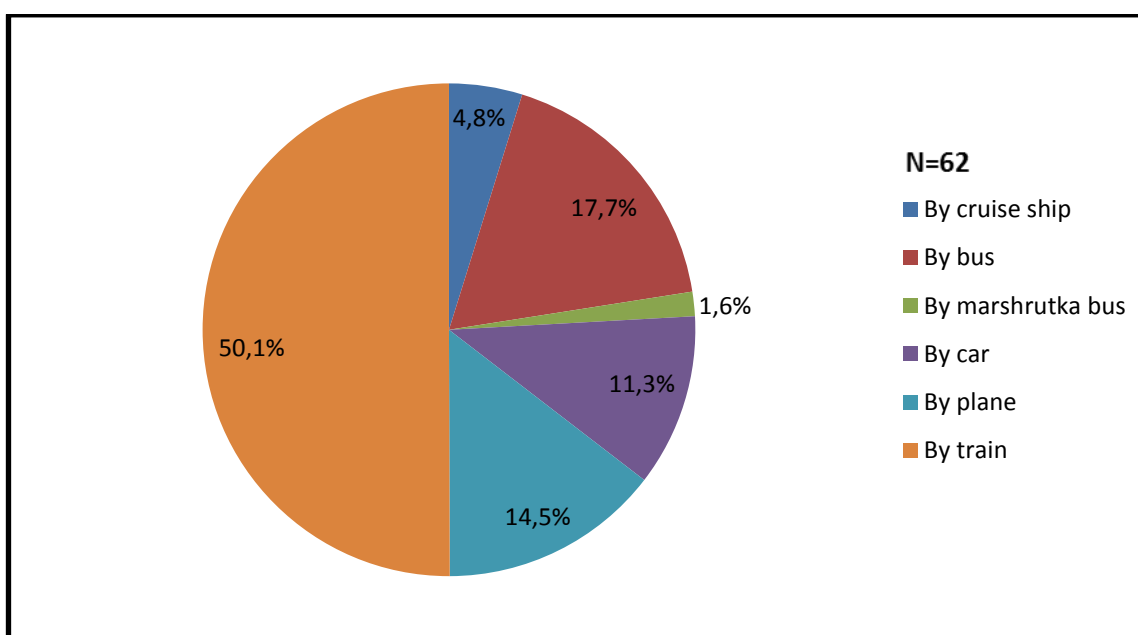


Chart 4: Form of travelling to Finland.

The respondents were asked to choose 1-3 most important motives behind the current trip. 91,9 % had chosen leisure as the motivational factor. Shopping was chosen by 37,1 % of the respondents. 22,6 % chose nature, 9,7 % chose visiting friends/relatives and also education got chosen by 9,7 % of the respondents. Business was chosen as a motive by 8,1 % of the respondents and event (specified as a music festival) by 1,6 % of the respondents. 3,2 % chose other motivational factors, which were further on specified as “sports” and “passing by Helsinki”. (Chart 5).

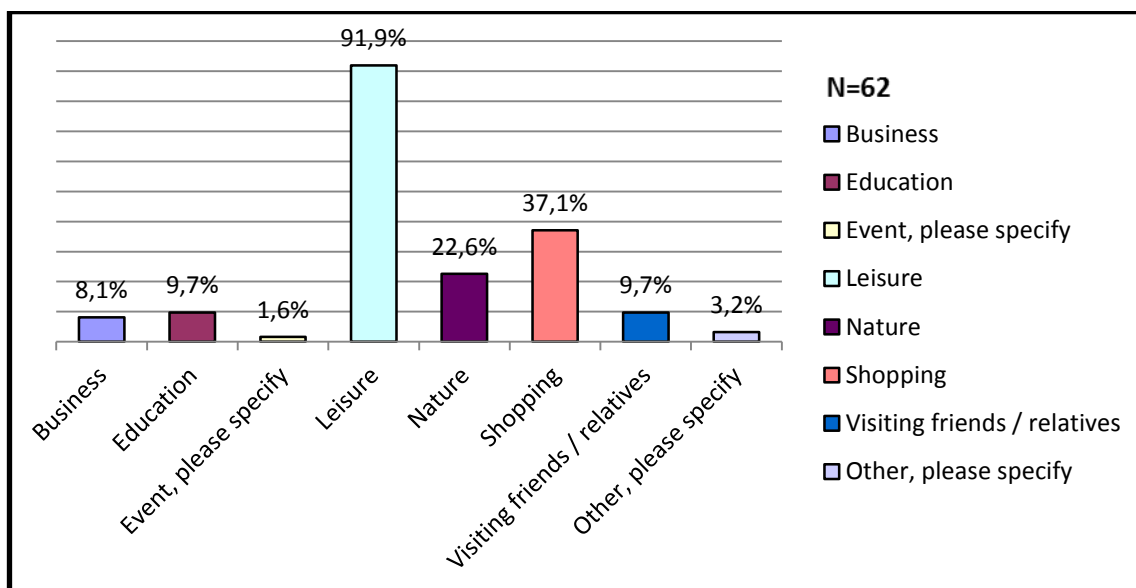


Chart 5: Motives behind travelling to Helsinki.

91,4 % of respondents had booked their accommodation prior to the trip. 8,6 % searched for accommodation after arriving to the destination. The 91,4 % were additionally asked which method of booking they had used to book the accommodation. 60,4 % had booked from the Internet using different booking channels. 25 of the respondents who specified the booking channel used answered “Booking.com”. Three specified the used Internet channels as “airbnb.com” and one respondent as “hotel website” (Appendix 4). Other booking methods the respondents had used to book their accommodation prior to the trip were travel agency (26,4 %), by telephone (3,8 %) and by email (1,9 %). 7,5 % had chosen “other” as their answer and specified the option as “directly from hostel”, “hotel website”, “own house” and “staying at a friend’s home”.

Reasons for choosing a certain accommodation were also asked from the respondents. 51,9 % of the respondents who had booked their accommodation in advance had based their decision on the location of the accommodation. 37 % of the respondents chose availability as the reason. Price was chosen as the criteria by 33,3 % of the respondents. 18,5 % made their decision because of recommendations from friends/family, 13 % because of reviews on social me-

dia and 9,3 % because of discounts. 5,6 % chose as the reason “other” which was then specified as interest and other hotels being sold out.

From the respondents who had not booked any accommodation before the trip, 80 % trusted on the recommendations from friends/family when finding the accommodation when in the destination. 20 % had found about the chosen accommodation by visiting the local tourism information desk. This question was not answered by all the ones who did not book before the travel since there were only five instead of eight who answered the question.

All in all 74,2 % of the respondents had done their travel arrangements individually. 17,7 % had done their travel arrangements through a travel agency. The rest 8,1 % had their travel arrangements done by an organization or work place.

5.3 Information Search and Use of Social Media

All in all, the survey revealed that from the 62 respondents 18 uses social media as a source for information when searching for a suitable accommodation at a destination. This makes a total of 29 % who use social media and 71 % who do not use social media as an information source. The survey also required the ones who do use social media to give more detailed information and define the exact websites that are being used by these travelers. Social media as a concept was not introduced to the respondents and therefore whether the following services count as social media is fully dependent on the understanding the respondent has regarding what social media actually is.

1. foursquare.com
2. foursquare, tripso
3. vKontakte
4. vk.com
5. israelinfo
6. otziv.ru
7. moi mir
8. vk.vom
9. vKontakte, twitter
10. foursquare, Booking.com
11. foursquare, tripso
12. Booking.com, tripadvisor.com
13. Booking.com, vk.com
14. Booking.com
15. vk, facebook, airbnb

16. google, yandex

17. Forum Vinskogo

Further on the respondents were asked to choose 1-3 information sources they use for searching suitable accommodation. One of the respondents did not answer this question and therefore a total of 61 answers were received. 42,6 % meaning 26 of the respondents chose “other website” as a source for information. Other website was then asked to be defined and 25 of the 26 respondents specified other website as “Booking.com”. Other website was specified also as “airbnb.com” by two respondents and “worldwide” by one respondent.

Second most popular option for an information source was recommendation of a friend and family, which was chosen by 18 % of the 61 respondents. 16,4 % of the respondents used online search engines as source for information, and eight of the 10 who chose search engine as information source, defined the search engine to be Russian search engine yandex.ru. Online map services for example Google maps and Yandex maps were chosen as information source by 14,8 % of the respondents. Same amount of respondents, 14,8 %, chose travel agency in Russia as an information source. Travel guidebook was the most often used printed material used for information search with the percentage of 9,8 %. 8,2 % used Russian vKontakte as a source for information and 6,6 % Facebook. Both Helsinki Tourism Portal (visithelsinki.fi) and hotel’s own website was used as information source by 6,6 % of all respondents. National tourism of Finland (visitfinland.com) was selected by 3,3 % of the respondents. Brochure of certain accommodation services was used by 3,3 % of the respondents.

Blogs were used for information search by one respondent meaning 1,6 %, no blog was specified with a name or the actual site. Other social media was chosen by 3,3 % meaning two respondents and one was specified to be website by name otziv.ru. Completely other source was chosen by 8,2 % of the respondents who were either staying at a friend’s/relative’s home (3) or in case the respondent was travelling as a part of a group, no information search had been done by the respondent.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter presents the substantial conclusions drawn from the empirical results of this Bachelor’s thesis. Recognized behavior patterns and explanations for certain results are analyzed according to the central themes and targets of the research. The aim of the research was to discover the information sources Russian tourists use in search for accommodation and whether social media is used among Russian consumers. Finding new marketing channels to utilize in future marketing was essential aim of the research.

Internet is the major source of information for Russian tourists when in search of a suitable accommodation. As well as the information search takes places on the Internet, so does the actual booking of accommodation. Booking.com, was most often mentioned as a source of information as 40,9 % of all respondents had used it for information search. Again, Booking.com was the most popular Internet channel to actually book the accommodation. Booking.com as an accommodation booking site holds features of a social media because the consumers who have booked their accommodation through Booking.com are able to give feedback in a public manner visible for all Internet users. Research results emphasize the fact that Hotel Arthur receives most of its room bookings from Booking.com. Even though the commissioning company is already aware of the beneficial partnership with Booking.com, the results indicate that among Russian consumers role of Booking.com is significant.

The research shows that social media as an Internet based information source is somewhat one of the central tools among Russian tourists. Research discovered that 29 % of the respondents use social media as a source of information. No major difference could be identified between female and male respondents in the use of social media. Of both genders, 27,3 % of female respondents and 32,1 % of male respondents answered yes for using social media as an information source. Shown in the age distribution of social media users, 27 % belong to age group of 25-34 and 27 % to age group of 35-44. 22 % of the social media users were aged between 18-24 years. None of the social media users was over 65 years old. According to the specified social medias used for information search by the respondents, potential channels for Hotel Arthur to utilize in future marketing are vKontakte and Foursquare.

vKontakte is a similar social network service to Facebook which allows users to message publicly or privately, create groups, public pages and events and share and tag images, audio and video. vKontakte can be used for marketing purposes through establishing a public page for a company, to which consumer can become part of. vKontakte company page has to be updated regularly and content has to be engaging for the network users. (Wikipedia 2013.) Knowledge of Russian language is essential when marketing on vKontakte due to the fact that registered users are mainly from Russian-speaking countries.

Foursquare is a location based network, where users share their location with friends by “checking-in” to the current location by their mobile phone. Users can rate the services and give tips to other users. Foursquare has over 40 million users worldwide. (Foursquare 2013a.) Companies can take over their listing and market through updating company and service availability information on Foursquare and give special rates for Foursquare users. Additionally, Foursquare listing can be linked to company website and other social media profiles such as Facebook or Flickr. (Foursquare 2013b.) Hotel Arthur is listed on Foursquare, but it is not actively used for marketing purposes. As checked from the Foursquare listing of Hotel Arthur,

a total of 2301 check-ins have been done by 20.9.2013 to Hotel Arthur which is a high volume of social media users. Notably, 12 out of all 23 reviews of Hotel Arthur in Foursquare were written by Russian foursquare users. Clearly a network of Russian online consumers exists on Foursquare and therefore activating Hotel Arthur's listing is highly recommendable.

The results of the survey confirm that yandex.ru is the utmost used search engine for Russian consumers. Beneficial in marketing purposes is to strengthen the search engine visibility through optimization, especially on yandex.ru and yandex online map service maps.yandex.ru. As characterized earlier by Ruotsalainen from Hotel Arthur, Russian hotel guests come often to the hotel without booking accommodation prior to the trip. The results indicate that the travelers who had not booked accommodation prior to the trip, 80 % trust recommendations of friends and family when choosing suitable accommodation at the destination. This feature encourages companies to be visible and active on social media, where also friends and family of the consumer are present. Visibility on online map services, both google.maps and yandexmaps, is indeed important in attracting travelers who come to Helsinki without booking accommodation in advance. As the survey results indicate, location is the number one criteria (51,9 %) for choosing a certain accommodation. For this reason, search for accommodation might start from looking for a centrally located accommodation, as Hotel Arthur, from the online map with a mobile device.

As travel composition of the respondents indicates, most of the Russian tourists travel to Helsinki with family, in a couple or with friends. Marketing of rooms suitable for two or more people is recommendable, especially during holiday seasons. In comparison with other central hotels in Helsinki, Hotel Arthur is not identified only as a business hotel with small rooms for business traveler but as a diverse hotel with numerous family rooms and rooms for three or four people. Availability of these rooms could be emphasized when marketing for Russian clientele in order for the consumers to be aware of the versatile room selection. Bearing in mind that research results show that location, availability and price are the main criteria for Russian tourist when choosing a suitable accommodation. Bigger rooms for three to four people are often competitive in price wise, since the costs of the room can be shared between more people.

As indicated in boarder survey 2012 by TAK Oy, Internet 41 %, friends and family 11 % as well as a travel agency 11%, are the three most important sources for travel information search. Research results of this survey emphasize the results of boarder survey. 42,6 % chose Internet, 18 % friends and family and 14,8 % chose travel agency in Russia. Role of travel agency as an information source is still significant in Russia. When the respondents were asked how they had made their travel arrangements, 17,7 % of all respondents had used services of a local travel agency in Russia. As well as boarder survey 2012, also Rheem's research confirms the

significant role of a travel agency in Russian outgoing tourism as 20 % of all accommodation bookings are made through a travel agency as in U.K. and U.S the same figure is a minimal 3 %.

The motives behind travelling to Helsinki correspond to the fact that the survey form was implemented during summer holiday season. As 91,9 % of the travelers were on leisure trip and 8,1 % on a business trip. Comparing to the results of boarder survey 2012 conducted by TAK Oy, among all travelers from Russia to Finland in 2012, share of business travelers was a modest 6 %. Additionally, nature as a motive for travel with 22,6 % relate strongly to the time of travel as Finland offers many nature activities in the summer, which attract Russian tourists.

On the whole, central findings of this thesis relate to purchase process of suitable accommodation for travel to Helsinki among Russian tourists. Role of Internet is significant, as both information search and the actual booking are done mainly online. Booking.com as a single accommodation booking channel stands out, as majority of the respondents specify it as the used channel for booking accommodation. As Russian tourists trust on peer traveler reviews as an information source, meaning of Booking.com for Russian tourists is no surprise as a major feature of Booking.com is the availability of reviews found on the site.

As a conclusion of the results, social media is definitely a usable marketing tool aside with other online visibility. All online presence should be linked with the used social media channels in order to outcome an active online profile for the company. To be present on Russian social medias and social medias with a Russian clientele is important in order to be seen as an attractive service provider among Russian consumer. Findings of the thesis indicate that visibility on Foursquare and vKontakte would be beneficial for Hotel Arthur to use as new marketing channels. Marketing in foursquare does not necessarily require knowledge of Russian language since it is an international social network. On the contrary, being able to outcome successful marketing on vKontakte, proficient capability in Russian language is essential in order to ensure smooth communication with the network users.

6 Reflection on the Thesis Process

The reflection part includes the self-evaluation and learning outcome of the researcher regarding the entire thesis process. Evaluation of research ethics and the reliability and validity of the thesis are speculated by the researcher. Finally, ideas for further research are presented at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Self-evaluation

Assessing entire thesis process, it has been a highly successful one for the researcher's own learning and from the point of view of the first comments of the commissioner. Hopefully the research can bring a small contribution also to more general discussion and future analysis of Russian tourism. Through a quantitative survey the researcher has gathered an interesting sample of the focus group. For a quantitative survey, a sample of 62 is small, but informative enough to be interpreted for discovering nuances in the consumer behavior of Russian tourists in the process of finding information and booking an accommodation for a stay in Helsinki. Topic of the thesis is actual and its' findings are useful not only to tourism sector. Personal interests towards Russian tourism to Finland have kept the researcher motivated to the work throughout the process. The researcher is very pleased with the process especially since personal interests and Russian language skills have been useful and an advantage in order to perform the work. In addition the timing for conducting the research was perfect, since the relationship with Russia had tightened during the exchange period in spring 2013. The researcher had also conducted all other studies by the time of starting this process, which led to a full concentration in the research.

The theory and literature basis for the thesis gave inspiration and conceptual base for the practical research task, and it supported the identification and formulation of the empirical results and findings. Even though consumer behavior and social media are themes with multiple fields within the main theme, researcher acknowledges that in Bachelor's thesis of this content, only small part of key theories can be presented. All in all, the researcher has been able to review the literature related to this exact topic, which support the empirical part. In addition, recently conducted researches regarding this topic act as a baseline for the results of this Bachelor's thesis and form the context for future discussion about them.

When looking back at the process, some changes in the chosen ways of performing the research would have made it more applicable in this case. The focus group of the thesis could have been more limited. Now that the focus was on Russian tourists overnighing in Helsinki, it could have been narrowed down to Russian tourists overnighing at a hotel in Helsinki. This way the results might have given more detailed information of the process of accommodating in a hotel in Helsinki. Though, in that case reaching the focus group would have required more effort and time when contacting people on the street for interviews and would have not been within the time frame of the researcher.

Researcher was very pleased with the attitude and support of the commissioning company since communication worked well and instructions for the work were clear and informative. Researcher felt being trusted and could proceed with the work individually with having back-

up from the company in case assistance was needed. Conducting a Bachelor's thesis commissioned by a company is productive, when both parties share a mutual motivation and target, as it was in this case. The researcher was given feedback from the commissioning company which indicated satisfaction towards the working methods of the researcher and the actual results. According to the commissioning company the co-operation with the student in the thesis process was smooth and rewarding. The commissioning company and the researcher jointly contributed to the ideation of the research questions and topics of study. In this way the commissioning company's point of views and challenges were well covered in the research. Therefore, the research results are well targeted to answer the commissioning company's marketing questions.

All in all, learning outcome for the researcher is significant. This thesis process has taught the conduction of a thesis research with all the various parts to it. It has been an educative project, which has improved the time management and organizational skills of the researcher, being solely responsible for the entire process. Researcher has gained and improved professional skills to surely be utilized in the future carrier.

6.2 Ethical Assessment

Chances are that during a research process ethical issues arise at all points of data collection, data analysis, interpretation and writing. The researcher identified these risks in advance since it is the first proper research for the researcher to personally conduct and neither previous experience nor knowledge is gained to advice at the point where ethical issues might arise. Literature sources were used in order to define the ethical guidelines for a research.

Creswell (2003) identifies the possible ethical issues which might arise at the point of data collection; putting the research participants at risk, not respecting a vulnerable population, violating human rights or forcing people to participate at the study just to name a few. At the point of analyzing the research data, the researcher must keep in mind the following ethical aspects: is the anonymity of the respondents secured? Is the data kept in a secure place to avoid misuse? Does the researcher provide the analyzed data accurately? What might destabilize the ethical standing of a thesis at the point of writing and disseminating are issues related for example to use of biased language or falsifying the findings at any circumstances. (Creswell 2003, 64-67.)

During the thesis process the researcher took the ethical issues in consideration at all points of the work. Issues concerning the anonymity and respect towards the respondent were taken into account carefully. The cover letter of the survey form included a brief but informative introduction to the coming research and a mention of anonymity of the respondents which

was respected fully by the respondent at all times. As the survey form was output in Russian language, no ethical issues related to language and not understanding a form output in English for example was created. All participants took part voluntarily and no forcing was used as a method at any point. The respondents were allowed to ask questions and clarifications concerning the survey form and assistance were given at all times in a neutral manner. Also a permission was requested from VR Group to access the railway station where the researcher new many potential focus group representatives would be spending time.

At the point of analyzing and writing the report of the received results, the researcher respected the originality and authenticity of the collected data and therefore no falsifying of the data took place. Respect towards the collected data also relates to the respect the researcher has for the commissioning company and the workload done in other the gather the research data and so the results of the thesis wanted to be published in an accurate form. The researcher also considered the possibility of losing motivation and belief towards the done work in case falsifying the results. Due to the fact that the thesis process has in a comprehensive manner been an ethical one, the researcher has been able to conduct the process till the end with confidence. Knowing that the process has been a successful one, the researcher is pleased to present the outcome of the research and leave the process behind with satisfaction.

6.3 Reliability and Validity

When assessing the reliability of a research the focus is to a high degree on the repeatability of the measurement. If the research would be conducted again, would the results be the same? This is a hard question to answer when a small case study is concerned, especially as Russian tourism is in such a fast process of change, but for the given moment and limited case special attention was given to secure the reliability of the research. To ensure that research is reliable, in a quantitative research a specific description on how the research was conducted at each point is essential. (Hirsjärvi, S. & al. 2004, 216-218.) Concerning this research the requirements of reliability are fulfilled. As the researcher owns the skill of Russian language, both in writing and spoken, the risk for misinterpreting information is minimal. Survey form has been translated and checked by a research assistant who has advanced English skills, native Russian language skills and knowledge on the tourism industry and central concepts. Therefore the survey form is reliable and has collected research data from Russian tourists in a precise manner.

Validity of a research measures the applicability of the chosen research method and meters from the point of view that have they been the right ones in order to measure the right variables or phenomena and get the wanted results in the end. One way to guarantee the validity

of a research is to use multiple research methods in the process. The term used for multiple research methods is *triangulation*. (Hirsjärvi, S. & al. 2004, 216-218.)

Applying validity into practice, the research data for this research was collected with multiple research methods of quantitative semi-structured survey and theme interview (Appendix 5). Theme interview has been the method used to receive valuable information from the commissioning company concerning the current profile of Hotel Arthur as an accommodation service provider. Additionally, information concerning Hotel Arthur's marketing efforts and customer profile were gathered in the interview creating a baseline for the results and conclusions of the survey findings.

6.4 Further Research Topics

Significant future change in current incoming tourism from Russia to Finland is the possible inception of visa free travel policy between European Union and Russia. Research and analysis center TAK Oy has conducted a research in August 2013 on the influences visa freedom would have on Russian travel to Finland. The report indicates that in case visa is no longer needed for travelling from Russia to Finland, an annual growth of 3,1 million visitors is expected. As 80 % of all Russian visitors travelling to Finland are from St. Petersburg, visa freedom would add the number of visitors from Moscow. This means that more money would be spend on services and accommodation due to the longer distance and the fact the most likely visitors from Moscow would rather be overnighing at the destination than on a one day trip. After launch of visa free policy, Russian visitors are indicated to generate an income of more than a billion per year to restaurant and accommodation sector which is at this point on an annual level of 200 million.

This growth sets challenges to tourism structure of Finland including hospitality and accommodation service providers. The amount of Russian tourists overnighing in Finland is estimated to multiply by four which may lead to inadequate number of hotel rooms especially during high touristic seasons. Visa freedom between Finland and Russia would lead to annual 11,4 million overnights in Finland by Russian visitors, which means that amount of Russian overnighers would be bigger segment than all other nationalities together.

In case visa freedom will be applied to practice, Finland becomes more achievable to Russian population, but so do other European markets. Until today trip to Finland has been an easy cause for a Russian tourist to receive a Schengen visa, through which access to other countries part of European Union is permitted. This causes a challenge to Finnish travel marketers as to travel businesses in Finland.

Further research topics arise from findings gathered by TAK Oy (2013). As a greater volume of Russian tourists are expected to travel to Finland, also more efficient marketing is to be done in order for a company to attract customers to come to their services. As the stay at a destination and money expenditure is estimated to grow through visa freedom, income from tourism automatically grows. Service providers of different fields have to be able to grow with the industry and reach the multiplying masses of Russian tourists. (Rusgate 2013.)

Interesting for future tourism industry would be to research the attitudes of local accommodation service providers towards the increasing amounts of Russian tourists. What would be the general attitude? Would the increase be seen as positive or negative? Are the service providers prepared or preparing for the possible change? What are the efforts put on the level of service in order to be able to serve Russian clientele better as visitor flow grows? This research topic could be applicable for example to a hotel chain operating in Finland or certain focus group of individual entrepreneurs from different fields of hospitality and management. Research could be conducted as a thesis by a Bachelor in Hospitality and Management or Business Administration student.

On the basis of this Bachelor's thesis research, future topics for research would be to further research the users of social media among the Russian consumers travelling to Finland. The research could be a quantitative one, in which the focus group would include only the users of social media who are staying at a hotel. Destination would be Finland, but not necessarily limited to a certain city. The data could be easily collected through a two layer Internet-based survey form, which would first identify the social media users, who would then be asked for further details. This kind of research would be dependent on receiving a permit from hotels to use Russian customer registers and listings of their e-mail addresses.

Researcher encourages students at the phase of choosing a research topic to relate their thesis with Russian tourism to Finland and online consumer behavior. Russian tourism to Finland is an ongoing and growing endeavor with possibly radical changes to it in the coming years. As use of Internet and social media in Russia tend to spread among consumers, interesting nuances to tourism might be worth a research. Furthermore, broad viewpoints can be found from various literature sources to formulate a theory part for the chosen topic.

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Appendix 1. Research permit from VR Group



Tapahtumalupa

Nro

22

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VR-Yhtymä Oy myöntää tapahtumaluvan:
Helsingin asemalle, haastattelututkimusta varten

Toiminta-aika: 17.-18.8.2013

Toimintalupaan liittyvät vastuu- ja turvallisuusseikat

Luvan saaja vastaa kaikista toimintaan/tapahtumaan liittyvistä kustannuksista sekä mahdollisista vahingoista että myös siitä, mikä aiheutuu VR:lle, VR:n henkilökunnalle tai kolmannelle osapuolelle.

VR ei vastaa mistään vahingosta, joka aiheutuu luvansaajan omaisuudelle tai henkilökunnalle ellei vahingon näytetä johtuneen VR:n tai sen henkilökunnan tuottamuksesta.

Toimintaohjeet

- Radalle ei saa mennä
- Ajoneuvolla ajo laiturialueella on kielletty
- Ratapihalla ja raitteilla liikkuminen on ehdottomasti kielletty.
- Laiturin reunaa ei saa mennä 1,5 m lähemmäksi ellei nouse junaan tai tule junasta pois
- Valot eivät missään muodossa saa häikäistä veturin kuljettajaa tai laitureilla taikka muualla rautatiealueella liikkuvia matkustajia.
- Valo- tai muut rakenteet eivät saa nousta radan sähköjohdinten yläpuolelle tai olla asetettu niin, että ne voisivat kaatua johtimille tai radalle.
- Ajolankoja eikä sen tukirakenteita saa mennä 3m lähemmäksi millään pitkällä esineellä sähköiskuvaaran vuoksi. Lisäksi on varottava sähköveturin tai junan kattorakennelmia ja virroitinta.
- Kuvaukset ja valaistus on suoritettava niin, ettei aseman toiminnalle, matkustajille tai junaliikenteelle aiheuteta häiriötä eikä liikenneturvallisuutta vaaranneta. Muita matkustajia kuvattaessa heiltä on pyydyttävä siihen suostumus.
- Töyherryksiä (graffiteja) ei saa näkyä kuvissa.
- Asemarakennuksen sisällä mikään tapahtumassa käytetty esine / asia (esim. mikrofonin varsi) ei saa mennä 3m ylemmäksi hälytysvaaran vuoksi
- Kuvaukset/tapahtuma ja sen järjestelyt on suoritettava edellä mainitun lisäksi paikalla sovittujen ehtojen ja ohjeiden mukaisesti. Muutoin on noudatettava, mitä on säädetty yleisillä paikoilla kuvaamisesta / toimimisesta.
- Tapahtuman jälkeä tapahtumapaikalle ei saa jäädä mitään jälkiä tapahtumasta.
- Tämä lupa pitää mukana tapahtumassa.

Luvan myöntäjä ja yhteyshenkilö: Pertti Jelekäinen puh. 040 8622370

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Appendix 2. Survey form in Russian

Мотивация и действия туристов в процессе поиска информации

Данный опросник является частью работы на получение степени бакалавра Университета Прикладных Наук Лауреа. Объектом данного исследования являются социальные сети и каналы онлайн маркетинга, оказывающие влияние на потребительское поведение российских туристов в процессе выбора подходящего типа размещения.

Цель – определить, какими каналами социальных сетей пользуются туристы в качестве источников информации, когда возникает необходимость изучить различные услуги по предоставлению размещения в месте отдыха.

Вся полученная информация останется анонимной и будет использована исключительно автором в данной работе. Заполнение опросника займет 5-10 минут. Спасибо за Ваше участие!

Тайка Лииканен

Программа обучения в области туризма, Университет Прикладных Наук Лауреа

Демографическая информация

1. Возраст

- до 18 лет
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- старше 65 лет

2. Пол

- женщина
- мужчина

3. Гражданство _____

4. Страна и город проживания _____

Пребывание в Хельсинки

5. Я путешествую

- в одиночку

- в паре
- с другом / с друзьями
- с семьей
- другой вариант, пожалуйста, укажите _____

6. Вы посещали Хельсинки раньше?

- да, количество посещений _____
Каковы были основные цели Вашей поездки?

Выберите **1-3** наиболее подходящих варианта

- бизнес
- образование
- отдых
- посещение друзей, родственников
- природа
- события, пожалуйста, укажите _____
- шоппинг
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____
- нет, это первый раз

7. Тип размещения в Хельсинки, где Вы остановились в настоящее время?

- апартаменты
- арендованная квартира
- дача
- дом на колесах
- дом родственника / дом друга
- кемпинг
- отель
- поиск спального места "Couch surfing"
- хостел
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____

8. Где Вы нашли информацию о выбранном Вами типе размещения? Выберите **1-3** наиболее подходящих варианта.

- онлайн источники: интернет**
 - сервисы онлайн карт, например, yandex maps, google maps
 - национальный туристический портал (visitfinland.com)
 - туристический портал хельсинки (visithelsinki.fi)

- информационно-поисковые системы, например, yandex
пожалуйста, укажите _____
- социальные сети
 - блоги, пожалуйста, укажите _____
 - Facebook
 - TripAdvisor
 - Vkontakte
 - другие социальные сети, пожалуйста, укажите _____
 - сайт отеля
 - другие сайты, пожалуйста, укажите _____
- печатная продукция**
 - брошюра
 - объявление в газете/ журнале: пожалуйста, укажите _____
 - статья в газете/ журнале: пожалуйста, укажите _____
 - туристический путеводитель, пожалуйста, укажите _____
 - другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____
- рекомендации друзей/родственников**
- профессионалы сферы туризма**
 - информационный туристический офис в хельсинки
 - туристическое агентство в хельсинки
 - туристическое агентство в россии
- телепрограммы, фильмы, пожалуйста, укажите _____**
- другие источники, пожалуйста, укажите _____**

9. Пользуетесь ли Вы социальными сетями в процессе поиска информации при выборе типа размещения?

- да, пожалуйста, укажите сайты _____
- нет

10. Цель вашей поездки: выберите **1-3** наиболее важных варианта

- бизнес
- образование
- отдых
- посещение друзей/родственников
- природа
- события, пожалуйста, укажите _____
- шоппинг
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____

11. Организация поездки осуществлена

- рабочей организацией
- с помощью туристического агентства
- самостоятельно
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____

12. Как вы добирались до Финляндии?

- на автобусе
- на корабле
- на маршрутном такси
- на машине
- на поезде
- на самолете

13. Продолжительность пребывания

- один день
- одна ночь
- две ночи
- три ночи
- четыре ночи
- если более, укажите количество ночей _____

14. Вы бронировали номер заранее для поездки в Хельсинки?

- да
- нет

Если да:

Каким образом вы бронировали ваше размещение?

- Интернет, пожалуйста, укажите сайт _____
- электронная почта
- телефон
- туристическое агентство
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите _____

Что повлияло на принятие решения?

- доступность
- объявление, увиденное в _____

- расположение
- рекомендации друзей/семьи
- скидки
- цена
- членство
- отзывы в социальных сетях, пожалуйста, укажите сайт (и какие замечания по сайту)_____
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите_____

Если нет:

Где вы нашли информацию о наличии возможности размещения в месте отдыха?

- интернет-материал, пожалуйста, укажите_____
- непосредственно в отеле
- печатная продукция, пожалуйста, укажите_____
- рекомендации друзей/семьи
- сервисы онлайн карт, пожалуйста, укажите_____
- туристическое справочное бюро, пожалуйста, укажите_____
- другое, пожалуйста, укажите_____

Спасибо за Ваше участие в исследовании!

Appendix 3. Survey Form in English

Tourist motivation and information search behavior

This questionnaire is part of Bachelor's thesis work at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. The objective of this Bachelor's thesis research is to discover which social media and e-marketing channels affect consumer behavior of Russian tourists when choosing the suitable accommodation. The aim is to find out what social media channels tourists use as information source when it comes to the search of different accommodation services in the destination. All responses will be kept anonymous and used solely by the author for the Bachelor's thesis. The questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Taika Liikanen
Degree Programme in Tourism
Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Demographic information

1. Age

- under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- over 65

2. Gender

- Female
- Male

3. Nationality _____

4. Country and city of residence _____

5. I am travelling:

- Alone
- As a couple
- With family
- With friend(s)
- Other, please specify _____

6. Have you visited Helsinki before?

Yes, number of visits:

What were the main motives for your visit last time(s)? Choose 1-3 most important

- Business
- Education
- Event, please specify which event
- Leisure
- Nature
- Shopping
- Visiting friends, relatives
- If many reasons, please specify

No, this is the first time

7. Form of accommodation in Helsinki where you are currently staying?

- Apartment hotel
- Camping
- Couch surfing
- Hostel
- Hotel
- Mobile home
- Relative's / friend's home
- Rented apartment
- Summer cottage
- Other, please specify_____

8. From where did you receive information about the selected accommodation? Choose 1-3 most important

Online sources: Internet

- Online map services e.g. yandex maps, google maps
- National tourism portal (visitfinland.com)
- Helsinki tourism portal (visithelsinki.fi)
- Search engine, please specify_____

Social media

- Blogs, please specify
- Facebook

- Tripadvisor
- Vkontakte
- Other social media, please specify _____
- Hotel's own website
- Other website(s), please specify _____

Printed material

- Brochure
- Newspaper/ magazine advertisement: which newspaper
- Newspaper/ magazine article: which newspaper
- Travel guide book, which guide book
- Other, specify _____

Recommendation of a friend/relative

Tourism professionals

- Tourist information office in Helsinki
- Travel agency in Helsinki
- Travel agency in Russia

TV programs, films, please specify

Other source(s), please specify _____

9. Do you use social media for information search when choosing your accommodation?

- Yes, please specify the sites _____
- No

10. Motives behind travel to Helsinki: Choose 1-3 most important

- Business
- Education
- Event, please specify _____
- Leisure
- Nature
- Shopping
- Visiting friends, relatives
- If many reasons, please specify _____

11. Travel arrangements done

- By organization or work place
- Individually
- Through a travel agency
- Other, please specify _____

12. How did you travel to Finland?

- By cruise ship
- By bus
- By marshrutka bus
- By car
- By plane
- By train

Stay in Helsinki

13. Length of stay

- One day
- One night
- Two nights
- Three nights
- Four nights
- If more, please specify the number of nights__

14. Did you travel to Helsinki with booking accommodation in advance?

- Yes
- No

If yes:

Which channel did you use to book your accommodation?

- Internet, please specify which site _____
- Telephone
- Travel agency

What affected your decision making?

- Advertisement, seen where? _____
- Availability
- Discounts
- Location
- Membership
- Price
- Recommendations from friends/family
- Reviews on the social media, please specify which site _____

If no:

Where did you find information about the available accommodation services when in the destination?

- By visiting tourism information desk, please specify _____
- Directly from the hotel
- Online map services, please specify _____
- Online-material, please specify _____
- Printed material, please specify _____
- Recommendation of a friend/family

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 4. Specifications to the method used for booking accommodation

Internet

1. booking.com
2. booking.com
3. booking.com
4. booking.com
5. booking.com
6. booking.com
7. airbnb.com
8. booking.com
9. airbnb.com
10. booking.com
11. booking.com
12. booking.com
13. booking.com
14. booking.com
15. booking.com
16. booking.com
17. booking.com
18. booking.com
19. booking.com
20. booking.com
21. booking.com
22. hotel website
23. airbnb.ru
24. booking.com
25. booking.com
26. booking.com
27. booking.com
28. booking.com
29. booking.com

Appendix5. Interview for Hotel Arthur sales management

1. Interview of Hotel Arthur's sales director Tanja Tähtinen and assistant to sales director Laura Ruotsalainen
2. What are the most used marketing channels used to market Hotel Arthur's accommodation services?
3. What is the most important marketing channel for marketing of Hotel Arthur's accommodation services?
4. According to the booking statistics, what is the most beneficial marketing channel for Hotel Arthur's accommodation services?
5. Which booking channels bring the most room bookings to Hotel Arthur? Mention at least three channels.
6. How does Hotel Arthur target the marketing of accommodation services to Russian clientele?
7. What is the significance of Russian clientele to Hotel Arthur?
8. How would you characterize the Russian client segment of Hotel Arthur?
9. Other comments

Thank you for the Interview!