Perceptions of experience marketing of ski resorts in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland

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Abstract

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The objective of this thesis is to analyse the experience marketing content of ski resorts in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland and study how this marketing content creates people's perceptions towards the countries as winter holiday destinations. The thesis looks at destination image formation based on these perceptions and introduces the experience marketing of the ski resorts Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton am Arlberg from Austrian Alps and Levi, Ylläs and Ruka from Finnish Lapland. The research looks at the experience marketing content from all the six ski resorts' official websites and Instagram channels, which are maintained by the local destination management organisations (DMOs).

The theoretical framework introduces central concepts of the study, such as ski resorts of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as tourism destinations and the role of destination management organisations in destination marketing. Common experiences in ski resorts are presented through six experience categories and the concepts of destination image and individual perceptions are introduced. The second part of the theory discusses experiences and marketing. The theories concerning experience realms and product specific elements of experiences are explored. Afterwards the experience marketing is discussed together with the concepts of visual content, website marketing and social media marketing through Instagram.

The research was conducted as multimethod research. First, the qualitative method of content analysis was used to objectively observe and analyse the experience marketing content of the six ski resorts. As the second method, quantitative research was used in the form of an online Webropol survey to collect statistical data on the subject. The survey was open for one week and collected 57 individual responses during this period.

The content analysis demonstrated that the countries focus on different experience elements in their content, but that they also share similarities in their ski resort marketing. Both countries highlighted the experience opportunities within sports and nature. Austrian Alps stood out with downhill skiing focused marketing, but the Alpine traditions were also present. Finnish Lapland highlighted the Northern winter, often together with local animals and especially Northern Lights. Based on the survey results, the most important and attractive elements that the respondents were looking for in the destinations was to experience and enjoy the nature. The DMOs that succeeded to display the local nature and activities in a versatile way in their marketing were seen as attractive choices.

The results derived from the multimethod research indicated that the experience marketing content can effectively influence the perceptions towards the individual ski resorts, but also towards the destination image of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations. All the DMOs could benefit from evaluating their experience marketing content to see, that they are offering diverse opportunities in experiences and activities, where the local nature is highlighted and offered as a meaningful experience in itself.

Keywords
Perceptions, experiences, marketing, ski resorts, destination image

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1   Introduction

The thesis author's interest for activities that create memorable and meaningful experiences in beautiful natural locations has kept on growing. The author's most memorable experiences in recent years have often happened within ski resorts in Finnish Lapland and Austrian Alps. The mountainous landscapes of Austrian Alps and its many state-of-the-art ski resorts are quite different, when compared to the lower altitude but higher up North resorts of Finnish Lapland. The countries are situated very differently in Europe but both destinations can offer many interesting winter tourism experiences within their ski resorts. This got the author thinking about experience marketing and how that marketing content creates perceptions about Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations.

This research studies the experience marketing content of three ski resorts of Austrian Alps to the experience marketing content of three resorts in Finnish Lapland. The resorts in Austria are all located in the Alps and work as a representation of Alpine ski resorts of the country. From Finland, all the chosen three ski resorts are in the region of Finnish Lapland and work as a representation of the resorts in the region. The ski resorts chosen from Austrian Alps for the study are Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton am Arlberg. Within Finnish Lapland, the ski resorts chosen are Levi, Ylläs and Ruka.

When ski resorts want to display their selection of experiences, images and videos can be a powerful tool to attract visitors with different interests. This thesis research is interested in finding out how the perceptions of offered experiences are created through the images and videos, that Austrian and Finnish ski resorts showcase through their website and Instagram marketing. The official websites and Instagram accounts for each ski resorts are maintained by the local destination management organisations (DMOs). DMOs are primarily engaged in the destination marketing and management by leading and coordinating tourism activities under a coherent strategy. DMOs bring together tourism service providers and help to develop and manage these tourism related partnerships and the destination. (Wang 2011, 5-8; World Tourism Organization 2007, 2-3.) The experience marketing within the ski resorts' official websites and Instagram pages will be classified under six broad categories of skiing and snowboarding, ski touring and cross-country skiing, program services, leisure and wellness, passive nature experiences and finally, culture and events. The categories will be developed based on the case study of different experiences in ski resort industry.

1.1   Objective and methods

The objective of this research is to find out, how the chosen ski resorts of this study create the overall perception of experiences and how that affects people's overall destination image of Finnish Lapland and Austrian Alps as winter destinations. The research reviews the experience marketing that the ski resorts have done in their official websites and Instagram accounts and the aim is to understand what kind of image and perceptions of experiences the content shared by the ski resorts create in the people viewing the material.

The research question setting in this study will be following:

- Main research question: What overall perception the experience marketing of the ski resorts creates of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations?

- Sub-question 1.: What is the individual perception of each ski resort, based on the images used in their website and Instagram marketing?

- Sub-question 2.: What type of experience marketing images improve the perception of country destination image?

- Sub-question 3.: How does individual perception on experience marketing affect the way the ski resorts are perceived?

- Sub-question 4.: What aspects of the experience marketing would make the individual choose one of the six ski resorts of the study as their tourism destination?

The study will look at experiences as a marketing tool and how the theory of Experience Realms by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore and the Experience Pyramid model by Sanna Tarssanen connect with the perceptions of the experience marketing content of the ski resorts. The Experience Realms by Pine and Gilmore are characterized across two dimensions: guest participation and connection (environmental relationship). Together, the dimensions of guest participation and connection define the four realms of an experience, which are entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 45-53.) The Experience Pyramid by Tarssanen represents the ideal tourism product, that includes all the elements of a meaningful experience. The Experience Pyramid examines experiences from two perspectives: on the level of product's specific elements and on the level of customer experience. Product specific elements are individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast, and interaction. Customer experience elements are motivational, physical, intellectual, emotional, and mental level. (Tarssanen 2009, 11-16.) This study focuses on the product specific elements of the Experience Pyramid model since the research concentrates on experiences for their product qualities.

The study will commence as a research-oriented, multimethod thesis. The research will first apply qualitative methods by commencing on a content analysis, which will look at the

images and videos used for experience marketing in the ski resorts websites and official Instagram pages. Content analysis is a research method where information is screened and analysed to identify patterns and categories. This information may be in the form of visual material such as pictures. (Shani & Wang 2011, 136.) In the content analysis of this study, the experience marketing content of the ski resorts will be subjectively analysed and coded under the six experience categories mentioned before. The Experience Realms by Pine and Gilmore will be the framework in the analysis for examining, how the experience realms are visible in the marketing.

The thesis will also use quantitative approach with a survey that aims to collect numerical and statistical data on the experience marketing perceptions through a sample of the population. The survey will use written questions and photo elicitation as a tool to gather information on survey participants' perceptions. Photo elicitation is the technique of inserting photographs or other type of visual images into research (Harper 2002, 13). The pictures used for the photo elicitation will be taken from the chosen six ski resorts' Instagram pages. The survey will be performed by browser based Webropol tool and shared through social media WhatsApp to collect survey participants.

The thesis topic was chosen based on the author's personal interests and experiences within ski resorts in Finnish Lapland and Austrian Alps. The comparison of ski resort experience marketing with Finnish Lapland and Austrian Alps helps to understand the image building of destinations and why the experience marketing matters in how people perceive the destination. The aim is to find out how both countries can strengthen their experience marketing and which type of images support people's positive perceptions towards the destinations. With this thesis, the goal is to develop the author's future career path towards the marketing and managerial operations within ski resort industry, both locally and globally.

1.2   Delimitation

The thesis subject is delimited to discuss the destination management organisations' experience marketing of the three ski resorts in Finnish Lapland and the three ski resorts in Austrian Alps. The platforms for researching the experience marketing will be the DMOs' official ski resort websites and Instagram accounts. The study is limited to focus on the experience marketing content during the winter season. Ski resorts often operate year-round, with services also during the summer. For this reason, only images and videos containing winter elements, such as snow and winter activities, will be a part of the research.

1.3   Key concepts

Austria is a country in Central Europe and mostly covered with the Alpine mountain region (Vanat 2021, 1-2). Finnish Lapland is the largest and northernmost region of Finland, with some of the most snow-guaranteed ski resorts in the world (Finnish Ski Area Association 2017a; House of Lapland s.a a). Ski resorts offer services such as accommodation, restaurant options and shopping opportunities. The primary product offered by ski resorts is skiing facilities with ski schools, equipment rentals, ski lift tickets and season passes to customers. (Hudson & Hudson 2015, 28-29.)

In tourism, experiences have been defined as active processes, where the traveller passively or actively engage in the formation and creation of the experience (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal 2017, 1). Experiences and their meanings appeal to travellers' needs, such as novelty, excitement, and enjoyment. Experiences contribute to the enrichment of a sense of wellbeing. (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal 2018, 2.)

Marketing is the process which enables companies to create value for customers and society, which results in successful customer relationships (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2022, 31-32). Within marketing, image is generally described as a mental construct, which is developed by the consumers. This mental construct is formed based on few selected impressions. Consumers develop images based on all their experiences at a visited destination. (Frochot & Batat 2013, 116.) Perception influences the way people subjectively select, organize, and interpret information (Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik 2018, 172).

Engaging the audience visually is essential in modern marketing world. Visual content catches attention and directly affects human emotions. By using imagery in different forms (e.g., videos and images), companies can prove their expertise in the field and develop visual presentations of their products. Visual content helps the brand to be more approachable. (Manic 2015, 89-91.) Websites are designed to engage customers and draw them closer to a purchase of the company's product or other desires marketing outcomes, such as awareness or intention to return to the website. Website represents the integrated platform that supports all other promotional and retail activities. (Kotler & al. 2018, 487-488.) Social media platforms attract customers, who gather online to socialize and exchange views and information. Social media platforms are important to the online interactions among potential customers. (Kotler & al. 2022, 491-492.) From the wide selection of social medias, this thesis will focus on Instagram. Instagram is social medium with the emphasis on visual content. Businesses may use Instagram to promote their brand, product, and services. (Decker 2017.)

2   Ski resorts as tourism destinations

To understand what ski resort means in a destination level, the concept of tourism desti-
nation needs to be explained. The United Nations World Tourism Organization, also ab-
breviated as UNWTO (2007, 1), defines a local tourism destination as a physical space, in
which a tourist stays at least for one night. Destination includes tourism products such as
attractions, support services and tourist resources, which are accessible within one day's
return travel time for the tourist. Destination has physical and administrative boundaries,
which define the destination's management. Images and perceptions held on the destina-
tion characterize its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stake-
holders which often include a host community, and destination can network and nest to
form bigger destinations. The size of a destination can be on any scale, from a whole
country to a small region, for example. Destination can also be a village, town, or a city.
Destination can even be a self-contained centre, such as Disneyland. (World Tourism Or-
ganization 2007, 1.)

Destination contains several elements. These elements create the attractivity for the visi-
tor and satisfy the traveller's need on arrival. Basic elements can be divided into attrac-
tions, amenities, accessibility, image, price, and human resources. (Cho 2002, 144-145;
World Tourism Organization 2007, 1-2.) Attractions are elements that serve as a drawing
force to a destination and motivate for visiting the place. These may contain natural, built,
cultural and social attractions. Natural attractions can be e.g., the scenery or climate and
built attractions can be the resorts in a destination. Cultural attractions can comprise of
museums and social attractions can be the experience of meeting the locals of a destina-
tion and taking part in their way of life. Amenities make the stay for visitors possible by in-
cluding basic infrastructure, accommodation, and services. Accessibility refers to reaching
the destination, which is strongly related to the transport infrastructure. Images represent
the ideas and beliefs that the visitors have about the destination. Hence images are in
central interest in destination marketing. Image of a destination is discussed more in sub-
chapter 2.5. The price element can be the sum of travel, accommodation, and experience
services at the destination. Human resources in a destination are also a vital aspect of the
tourism experience. Human resources include the local communities in the destination
and tourism workforce affects the tourism destination delivery. (Cho 2002, 144-145; World
Tourism Organization 2007, 1-2.)

With the above-mentioned definitions of a destination, the author of the thesis can evalu-
ate the concept of a destination on different levels. For example, Austria and Finland can
be destinations as a whole country level. Also, a region from the country such as the Al-

pine state of Tyrol from Austria or the region of Finnish Lapland in Finland, can be described as a destination. As an example of a village destination, Sirkka in Finnish Lapland's municipality Kittilä can be mentioned. Sirkka is a village of under a thousand inhabitants (Kittilä s.a) but it is still a lively tourism destination, since the village hosts one of Finland's most popular ski resort destinations, Levi.

Based on the characterizations and literature on the destination concept by World Tourism Organization (2007, 1-2) and Cho (2002, 144-145), the thesis research author may conclude that a ski resort is an example of a self-contained centre and a destination, that can provide the basic elements of attractions, amenities, accessibility, image, price, and human resources. Ski resorts often have multiple natural attractions, such as scenery of snowy mountains or hills and a cold climate during winter. Built attraction may include the aerial lifts (e.g., chairlifts, gondolas, and cable cars) which are used for transporting skiers to the ski areas (Vanat 2021, 6). Based on the conclusions of the thesis author, ski resorts offer amenities to a variable extent, but usually always provide basic infrastructure and amenities which enable the visitors to participate in the attraction of skiing. These basic amenities often include visitor information centre, accommodation options and ski equipment rental facilities. Ski resorts are often in rural areas and accessibility can comprise of many different elements, such as air passenger services, road infrastructure and railroads. Ski resorts often operate ski bus services within the resort to help customers to reach the ski hills and aerial lift stations. The image of a ski resort as a destination usually comprises of unique landscape, safety measures for skiing and the services the resort offers. Prices between ski resorts may vary greatly, depending on where the resort is located and does the resort have an image of a more upscale "luxury resort" for example. The size of the ski resort, e.g., the number of skiable slopes and ski lifts also affects the pricing of the resort. Human resources are the workforce within a ski resort, that help visitors to enjoy the resort offerings.

The beginnings of commercial ski tourism dates to early 20th century mountaineering, where non- and low- commercial cross-country skiing was the predecessor to commercial downhill (also known as Alpine) ski tourism (Steiger, Scott, Abegg, Pons & Aall 2019, 1343). Today ski resorts offer services such as accommodation options, restaurants and bars, ski equipment rentals and shopping opportunities. The primary products offered by ski resorts are downhill skiing and snowboarding facilities, where operators offer ski schools, ski lift tickets and season passes to customers. (Hudson & Hudson 2015, 28-29.) Ski resorts need to have elevation, terrain, and snow conditions to allow visitors to engage in the sport of skiing and snowboarding in favourable conditions (Hinch & Higham 2011, 97). Ski resorts can be divided into three categories. First one, national resorts, attract people mostly from within a region, state, or province within a country. Second is regional

resorts, to which skiers travel to from hundreds of kilometres to reach. Third category is top-class international destination resorts which attract skiers from all over the world. (Hudson & Hudson 2015, 28.)

2.1 Destination management organisation (DMO)

Destination management organisations (DMOs) are primarily engaged in the destination marketing and management by leading and coordinating tourism activities under a coherent strategy. DMOs bring together tourism service providers and help to develop and manage these tourism related partnerships and the destination. (Wang 2011, 5-8; World Tourism Organization 2007, 2-3.) DMOs operate with the aim of attracting visitors to the destination, supporting local entrepreneurs and tourism companies, and by contributing to the wellbeing of residents living within the tourism region. For DMOs, being credible and legitimate as a tourism organization is vital. (Björk 2017, 142.)

Destination management organisations generally belong to one of the following departments: National Tourism Authorities (NTAs) or National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), Regional, provincial, or state DMOs (RTOs) or local DMOs. NTAs and NTOs manage and market tourism at a national level. RTOs are responsible for managing and/or marketing tourism in an administrative or local government region such as country, state, or province. Local DMOs are responsible for the managing and marketing of tourism on a smaller geographic area or a city or town. (World Tourism Organization 2007, 3.) Ski resorts in this study fall under local DMOs. Each ski resort is marketed and managed under their respective local DMOs, which maintain the ski resorts' website and social media presence by giving the local tourism service providers visibility and a platform to market their offerings within the ski resort and in the surrounding area.

2.2 Ski resorts in Austrian Alps

The European Alps are one of the most frequently visited mountain destination in the world. Austria shares the Alps with six other countries: Germany, Italy, France, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and Slovenia. (Bausch 2022, 109.) The Alps are the largest inbound ski market on the planet, with 43% of the worldwide attendance. Austria is covered mostly by mountains and over half of the country is located above 500 metres from sea level. Winter sports appeared in Austria already at the end of the 19th century and after the Second World War, winter tourism progressively developed into a major industry with a strong ski culture. (Vanat 2021, 35-36.) On the map of Austria (see figure 1) Ischgl ski resort, the Mayrhofen ski area and St. Anton am Arlberg are situated in the state of Tyrol, which is known for being the "Heart of the Alps" (Tyrol s.a. a). Tyrol is home to over 80 ski areas

and has a reputation for being the best destination for skiing and snowboarding in the Alps, thanks to the state's many top-class ski resorts (Tyrol s.a. b).
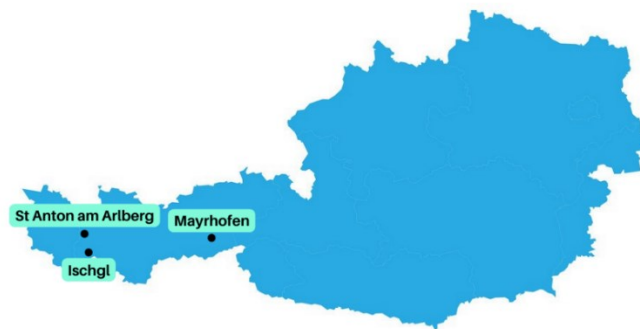

Figure 1. Map of Austria and the locations of ski resorts Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton am Arlberg (adapted from VectorStock s.a)

2.3 Ski resorts in Finnish Lapland

Finland hosts approximately 75 ski resorts. Finland doesn't have any mountains but a wide variety of hills, with mostly snow-sure conditions and a long season that can last from October until May. (Visit Finland s.a. a.) Most of the ski resorts in Finland are small local hills, but the biggest resorts are in the fells of Finnish Lapland (Visit Finland s.a. b). Lapland is the northernmost region in Finland, covering nearly one third of the country (House of Lapland s.a. a; Visit Finland s.a. c). Finnish Lapland's ski resorts are some of the most snow-guaranteed in the world (Finnish Ski Area Association 2017a). Finland's main ski resorts are Levi, Ylläs and Ruka (Vanat 2021, 68). As illustrated in figure 2, Levi and Ylläs are in the Lapland region, but Ruka is situated just outside of the geographical border of Lapland (Euroopan lentokentät 2019). Ruka is still seen as part of the Lapland in Finnish tourism marketing, since Ruka offers experiences associated with Lapland (Visit Finland s.a. c). Within the thesis, Ruka is therefore discussed as one of the ski resorts of Finnish Lapland.

Figure 2. Map of Lapland region in Finland and the locations of ski resorts Levi, Ylläs and Ruka (adapted from Visit Finland s.a. c)

2.4 Experiences in ski resorts

On top of the primary service of downhill skiing and snowboarding facilities, ski resorts often offer a wide variety of other experiences and activities. Since the variety of available tourism activities and products within and surrounding ski resorts can be extensive and vary greatly between Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland, only some of the experiences that are important for the research topic will be introduced. These experiences are shortly summarised into six categories:

1. Skiing and snowboarding
2. Ski touring and cross-country skiing
3. Program services
4. Leisure and wellness
5. Passive nature experiences
6. Culture and events

These six categories are formed based on the thesis author's interpretation of some of the usual experience elements, that are often marketed and offered by ski resorts in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland. They are generalisations that embody the assumptions of the writer on some of the most important experience elements that can be usual and commonly available in the ski resorts of the Austrian Alps and/or Finnish Lapland. The categories were formed to give the author a base, in which different experiences and the corresponding experience marketing elements can be easily allocated to. Since the purpose of the study is to find out these experience elements in the ski resort marketing, these six experience categories will be later discussed again in the content analysis of the research methods.

2.4.1   Skiing and snowboarding

Like mentioned earlier, the primary product of ski resorts are downhill skiing and snow-boarding facilities (Hudson & Hudson 2015, 28-29). Downhill skiing (also known as Alpine skiing) is the sport of sliding down snow-covered hills with ski equipment (Canadian Ski Council s.a. a). Like skiing, snowboarding is a winter sport that involves descending a snowy slope. Snowboarding has been developed with the inspiration from skateboarding, sledding, surfing, and skiing. (Canadian Ski Council s.a. b.)

2.4.2   Ski touring and cross-country skiing

Ski touring, also known as backcountry skiing, means skiing in unmarked and unpatrolled areas outside a ski resort. Ski touring is done without the help of ski lifts or other means of transportation to get up the hill or mountain. Instead, the touring skis and snowboards are specially equipped with features that enable the skier to hike uphill. (Parra 2018.) Ski touring is popular among the Austrian Alps that offer a diversity of off-piste routes from beginners to experienced ski tourers. Ski touring is recommended to do with an experienced backcountry guide who can show the best ski touring routes and teach about safe travelling in the backcountry. (Tyrol s.a. c.)

In Finland, cross-country skiing is very popular and even dubbed as the national sport of the country (Visit Finland s.a. d). The longest cross-country ski networks in Finland are in the large ski resorts of Lapland, with Ylläs hosting the largest selection of skiing tracks (Gofinland s.a). Also referred to as Nordic skiing, cross-country skiing is often done on rolling landscapes and in different terrain than downhill skiing. Cross-country skiing is done by kicking and gliding forward with the special skis designed for the style of skiing. (Pasteris 2018.)

2.4.3   Program services

Destination products are the attractions, experiences, facilities, and amenities offered to the travellers of a destination. The destination "product" is a combination of these elements that create the total experience for potential customers. (World Tourism Organization 2007, 83.) These destination products can be program services, which exist in a huge variety. Only few of these program services which can be found in either in Austrian Alps or Finnish Lapland, or both, are introduced within this section. The purpose for this is to give the reader an overview of different program services within ski resorts. In the content analysis of the ski resort websites and Instagram channels, the author may come across experiences within program services that haven't been mentioned and introduced in this

section. Still, these program services will be classified and analysed in the content analysis, to give a deeper dive into the experience marketing.

Animal related safaris with huskies and reindeers are a common tourism product in Finnish Lapland. Tour operators offer safari trips with the animals, which can last from half a day to multi-day experiences. Husky tours often include the experience of spending time with the huskies and learning about their importance in the Lapland region. (Rabinowitz 2021). In husky safaris, a sleigh ride is pulled by husky dogs and these experiences are very popular among visitors (Ruka s.a. a). Reindeers are a common sight in Lapland and the animals' herding originate from the Lappish indigenous Sámi people, who are known for reindeer husbandry. Finnish reindeer farms are often at the top of traveller's bucket lists and give the visitors the chance to learn about reindeers and the lives of the reindeer herders. For many visitors, the highlight of the experience is the reindeer sleigh ride. (Visit Finland s.a. e.)

Snowshoeing is a form of winter hiking over snow with the assistance of snowshoes. Snowshoes are footwear that feature a wide frame, which helps the person wearing the shoes to float on top of snow layers. (Undiscovered Mountains 2019). Snowshoes give the freedom to hike into untouched nature and walk effortlessly through snowfields. Snowshoeing is easy to learn and doesn't require previous experience. Both Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland offer possibilities for snowshoeing with the help of professional guides. (Tyrol s.a. d.; Visit Finland s.a. f.)

2.4.4   Leisure and wellness

After-ski (originating as après-ski from French) marks the time spent socialising and having fun after a day spent skiing on the slopes. After-ski parties are often enjoyed in bars and restaurants found in the ski resorts' slope area. Many after-ski bars have live music, DJs, or other entertainment to lift the party atmosphere. (Crystal Ski Holidays 2021.) In Austrian Tyrol, all three resorts chosen for the thesis are famous for their after-ski culture. Ischgl ski resort has been called the "Ibiza of the Alps", while Mayrhofen ski area is famous for the Harakiri club. St. Anton am Arlberg hosts one of the most famous after-ski huts in the Alps: The Mooserwirt. (Austria s.a. a.) From the Lappish ski resorts, Levi is especially known as a party destination, with bars such as Vinkkari and Tuikku being popular among after-ski crowds. Ylläs has after-ski bars on both valley stations with live concerts (Skiresort s.a), and Ruka hosts a wide selection of bars and nightclubs (Ruka s.a. b).

On top of entertainment, wellness facilities are often served in ski resorts. Wellness tourism can be linked to health, quality of life and wellbeing (World Tourism Organization and

European Travel Commission 2018, 54). The Austrian Alps state of Tyrol has rich history in spas, and the region's many wellness and spa resorts are marketed with the health benefits of natural springs and fresh Alpine air (Austria s.a. b; Tyrol s.a. e). Finland is known for the sauna culture and sauna experiences are popular in Lapland (Lapland s.a). In Ylläs ski resort, visitors can experience the only sauna gondola lift in the world (Ylläs Travel Information s.a a). Sauna is often combined with ice swimming, which is advertised as having positive impacts on overall health and seen as traditional Finnish well-being (Visit Lapland 2020).

2.4.5   Passive nature experiences

Most of the above-mentioned experiences require the visitor to at least partly be involved in the experience actively. In nature, the visitor can also take part in completely passively. Passive engagement may be observing the sights, and the nature can influence the traveller as an esthetic experience. In esthetic experience, the individual just wants to be within the experience of admiring what they are seeing. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 53.) Experiencing nature with all senses, especially feeling the sound of silence can be very rejuvenating experience for people living in hectic environments. Studies have shown that being in touch with nature may increase visitors' experiences of wellbeing. (Komppula, Konu & Vikman 2017, 127.) Natural attractions, such as mountains, are often the focus of visitor attention and motivation for the destination visit (World Tourism Organization 2007, 1).

Finnish Lapland's nature is known for vast wilderness with peace and quiet, lots of snow and especially the chance to see the Northern Lights (House of Lapland s.a. b). Northern Lights tourism business is hugely popular in Finnish Lapland, where the Aurora Borealis phenomenon can be visible 200 nights a year (Visit Finland s.a. g). Austrian Alps on the other hand are the perfect destination to experience nature with big mountains. For travellers, mountain regions have provided natural landscapes and adventure with the sense of spirituality, thanks to the mountains' majestic heights. (Romeo, Russo, Parisi, Notarianni, Manuelli & Carvao 2021, 2).

2.4.6   Culture and events

Culture and various events create interest and attractiveness for ski resort destinations. Finnish Lapland is closely tied with the indigenous Sámi people and their Arctic culture. Lapland offers exhibitions and museums to experience the genuine Sámi culture, while strengthening visitors' respect towards nature. (Inari-Saariselkä Tourism s.a.) Austrian Alps and Tyrol are famous for the countless huts and inns, serving local delicacies and warm hospitality. In Austrian Alps, old meets new with centuries old castles and fortresses next to modern architecture. (Tyrol s.a. f.)

Huge amount of sporting competitions, music events and other celebrations are also a part of Austrian and Finnish ski resorts. Sporting competitions such as the 15-kilometre obstacle course race "Winter Warrior Finland" in Ylläs or "The White Thrill", a legendary ski race in St. Anton am Arlberg, are only a fraction of the many sport events within the ski resorts in Finnish Lapland and the Austrian Alps (Ylläs Travel Information s.a b; St. Anton am Arlberg Tourism Association s.a a). Springtime marks the end of season for most ski resorts, which is celebrated with music events featuring world-class artists. For example, Ischgl ski resort organizes Top of the Mountain - festival at the end of each Spring (Tyrol s.a. g), whereas May Day celebrations are famous in the ski resorts of Finnish Lapland to wrap up the skiing season. Levi ski resort celebrates first of May with a traditional May Day parade, while Ruka hosts an event with snowboarding competitions (Levi s.a a; Ruka s.a. c).

2.5   Destination image and individual perceptions

This part looks at the theoretical framework on destination level image formation and the power of perceptions. Destination image has become one of the major concepts in tourism destination marketing (Shani & Wang 2011, 130). Unique characteristics, or "image", is central in attracting travellers to a destination. Even if a destination has an extensive variety of attractions and amenities for travellers, this doesn't help the destination to benefit from it, if the travellers are not aware of these offerings. The destination image can be promoted through means of marketing, for example. The image of a destination consists of uniqueness, sights, scenes, environmental quality, safety, service levels and the friendliness of people. (World Tourism Organization 2007, 2.) Destination brand also affects the way the travellers perceive the destination. Brand gives destination certain traits and identity, such as name, logo, symbolic value, colour, or slogan, that distinguishes the destination in the minds of consumers as having certain character, personality, and identity. Branding is a way of promising the consumers with pleasurable and memorable experiences and strong destination brand provides functional, emotional, economic, and psychological value and benefit for the consumers. This creates meaningful and effective relationships between the destination brand and the consumers. (Tasci 2011, 137.)

To understand how an image forms for a destination, it is important to acknowledge how advertising messages, such as individual images, create the whole destination image. In the concept of marketing, image is generally described as a mental construct, which is developed by the consumers. This mental construct is formed based on few selected impressions. Consumers develop images based on all their experiences at a visited destination. Destinations also create selective impressions in the consumers. This means that the

consumers consider the information that is most closely tied to their own personal interests. Personal interests are not objective facts, but subjective feelings and opinions about the visited destination. These subjective feelings and thoughts may concern the destination's services, socio-cultural norms, or the level of local hospitality towards visitors, for example. (Frochot & Batat 2013, 116.) But still, experience through prior travel to the destination is not necessary for beliefs and opinions to be formed toward the type of image, which is projected or received about a destination (Gartner 1994, 193). Personal interests also affect the travellers' consumer behaviour. Studies in marketing have suggested, that the image of a destination channels consumer behaviour. (Frochot & Batat 2013, 116.)

People learn about the surrounding world through the flow of information through five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. This sensory information is received, organized, and interpreted in an individual way. Perception is the process by which people subjectively select, organize, and interpret information. This helps in forming a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Same stimulus can create different perceptions based on the person who is looking at the material. Perceptual processes are divided to selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. Selective attention means the tendency for people to screen out most of the information to which they are exposed. Selective distortion describes people's tendency to interpret information in a way, that supports what they already believe in. Selective retention is the process where people are likely to remember good points about a product or service that they favour, and forget good points made about a competing product or a service. The perceptual processes of people's selective attention, distortion, and retention result in the need of destination marketers to work hard to get their desired message through with their marketing content. (Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik 2018, 172.)

3 Experience marketing

In research literature, experiences have been explained and defined in multiple ways. Experiences in tourism have been considered active processes, where the traveller passively or actively engage in the formation and creation of the experience (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal 2017, 1). Experiences and their meanings tend to appeal to travellers' needs, such as novelty, excitement, and enjoyment. Experiences contribute to the enrichment of a sense of wellbeing. (Prebensen, Chen & Uysal 2018, 2.) When destinations want to advertise their selection of experiences, they aim to engage and be noticed by the potential customers through marketing. Simply explained, the definition of marketing is the process, which enables companies to create value for customers and society, which results in successful customer relationships. Strong customer relationships capture value from the customers and society in return. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2022, 31-32.) In today's marketing world, marketing is often in digital format. This means that the marketing objectives are achieved through integrating digital media, data, and technology with traditional marketing communications. Digital marketing focuses in managing online company presence in different forms, such as company website and social media company pages. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2019, 9.)

3.1 Experience Realms

One of the highly referred research of experiences has come from the authors of The Experience Economy, by Joseph B. Pine and James H. Gilmore. Pine & Gilmore have characterized meaningful experiences (2011, 45-46) in "Experience Realms" (figure 3) across two dimensions: guest participation and connection (environmental relationship). The first dimension, guest participation, has two ends on a horizontal spectrum: one end point represents passive participation and the other end active participation. In passive participation, the guest doesn't influence the performance, they are merely experiencing something through listening or observing, for example through watching a performance. At the active participation end of the horizontal spectrum, the customer engages and creates the performance, which carries out the experience. These participants include skiers, for example. The second dimension of experiences, connection, or environmental relationship links the guest with the event or performance. At one end of this vertical spectrum lies absorption and at the other end is immersion. Absorption occupies the customer's attention by bringing the experience into their mind from a distance. As an example, when a person is watching an alpine ski race in St. Anton am Arlberg from their TV, they are absorbing the experience. If the person is attending the ski race physically in the audience next to the racing slopes, they are immersed in the experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 45-46.)
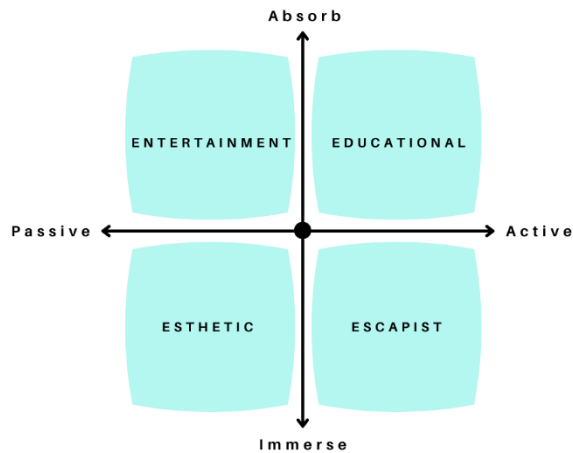
Figure 3. Experience Realms (adapted from Pine & Gilmore 2011, 46)

Together, the dimensions of guest participation and connection define the four realms of an experience. As shown in figure 3, these realms are entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic. Entertainment occurs, when guests are passively absorbing the experience through their senses, for example when viewing a performance or listening to a concert. Educational experiences are absorbed actively since they require participation from the person. In educational experience, the guest is in the role of a student who actively engages the mind, the body or both to learn something new. For example, educational experience takes place, when a customer is attending a snowshoeing course or a guided hiking tour. The third experiential realm, escapist, contains greater immersion than the two previously mentioned realms. In an escapist experience, the guest is actively involved, such as when they are hiking on a mountain or snowboarding down a slope. In the fourth realm of esthetic experience, the person is immersed in an event or environment but doesn't affect it in any way. Admiring the scenery at the top of a mountain's viewpoint is an example of an esthetic experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 47-53.)

The most meaningful and engaging experiences can encompass all the four realms and centre on the "sweet spot" in the middle of the framework (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 58). Ski resorts could benefit from assessing their experience marketing to find out, how the marketed experiences can offer the "sweet spot", that leave a lasting impression on the customers. Pine and Gilmore discuss the realms and dimensions of experiences (2011, 60-61) within the ski resort business as following: escapist experiences are naturally a part of ski resort operations, with the central sports of skiing, snowboarding and other sports as the primary offering. Educational value is reached with lessons on different sports, such as downhill- and cross-country skiing. Entertainment is present with after-ski parties and with good luck on a cloudless night, visitors may experience the esthetic realms by admiring the Northern Lights or a golden sunset on the snow-covered hills. Still, the Experience

Realms could be taken even further. Ski resorts could think about experience elements in places, where they are not seen as a norm yet. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 60-61.)

3.2 Experience Pyramid model

At best, a meaningful experience is a positive, unforgettable experience that can lead to personal change. The Experience Pyramid model by Tarssanen (2009, 11) offers another tool of analysing and understanding experience content in tourism. The Experience Pyramid (figure 4) represents the ideal product, that takes into consideration all the elements on all levels of a meaningful experience. The Experience Pyramid examines experiences from two perspectives: six levels of the product's specific elements on the horizontal axis and five levels of the guest's own experience on the vertical axis. Experience Pyramid helps to design tourism products, that include all the elements for a meaningful experience. (Tarssanen 2009, 11-12.)
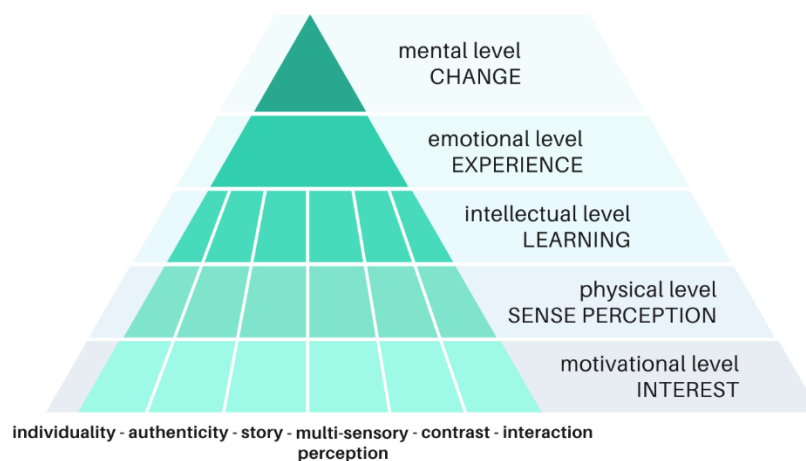

Figure 4. The Experience Pyramid (adapted from Tarssanen 2009, 11)

On the horizontal axis the product specific elements (on figure 4 above) from left to right are individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast, and interaction. Individuality means the uniqueness of the product, that no similar product or service exists elsewhere. Authenticity stands for the credibility of the product in the customer's eyes. A product or service is authentic if the customer regards it credible and genuine. The product's story is closely linked to its authenticity. A credible and authentic story appeals to the customers' feelings and allows them to experience the product or service on an intellectual and emotional level. Multi-sensory perception supports immersion to the product and when carefully designed, strengthens the chosen theme of the product or service. Contrast is the difference from the perspective of the customer. This means that the product should be different from the customer's everyday life and give the experience of something new and out of the ordinary. Interaction indicates successful communication be-

tween the service provider and the customer, but also between the product and its pro-
ducer. In a group setting, successful interaction makes the customers feel like a part of a
community and adds social value. In an individual service, the personal interaction be-
tween the service provider and the customer helps in staging the experience to the cus-
tomer successfully. (Tarssanen 2009, 12-14.)

Aho (2001, in Tarssanen 2009, 15) points out that the vertical axis of customer experience
(figure 4) illustrates how the guest experience is constructed from interest to the experi-
ence and the conscious processing of it, which leads to a meaningful experience and a
mental change in the customer. The five levels from the bottom of the vertical axis to the
top are motivational, physical, intellectual, emotional, and mental. In motivational level, the
interest of the customer is awakened and the expectations for the product are created
through different marketing tools. The marketing of the product should already offer all the
elements from the horizontal axis by being individual, authentic and with a good story,
multi-sensory, interactive and offer contrast. La-Salle & Britton (2003, in Tarssanen 2009,
15) have pointed out that on the physical level, the customer experiences and perceives
the product through their senses. A good product offers a pleasant and physically safe ex-
perience, and the technical quality of the product is tested on this level. The physical level
processes the sensory stimuli and makes the customer act accordingly: the customer
learns, thinks, applies their knowledge, and forms opinions. (Tarssanen 2009, 15.)

La-Salle & Britton (2003, in Tarssanen 2009, 15) describe the next level, intellectual, as
the milestone that makes the customer decide if they are satisfied with the product or not.
As Perttula (2004, in Tarssanen 2009, 16) states, the meaningful experience is then expe-
rienced on the fourth level, emotional. Since individual emotional reactions are hard to
predict and control, all the basic elements for a meaningful experience must be taken well
into account on the levels of motivational, physical, and intellectual. If this has been done
right, the customer will feel the emotional level of the experience as positive. The cus-
tomer will then feel excited and considers the experience meaningful. On the mental level
a positive emotional experience may lead to the experience of personal change. As Aho
(2001, in Tarssanen 2009, 16) describes it, this changes the customer's physical state,
lifestyle or state of mind permanently. If this mental level is reached through the emotional
experience, the customer feels they have developed or changed as a person or gotten
something new to complement their personality. Meaningful experience can lead to dis-
covering new outlook on life and adapting hobbies that weren't part of the customer's life
before. (Tarssanen 2009, 15-16.)

3.3 Visual content in marketing

Human perception is mostly visual, with over 90% of the daily processed information coming from visual receptors. In a modern marketing world, engaging visually is essential. Visual content catches attention and affects human emotions directly. Visual content is easy to understand, even between people with different cultural backgrounds and languages. By using imagery in different forms (e.g., videos and images), companies can prove their expertise in the field and develop visual presentations of their products. Visual content inspires and improves social engagement. Visual content helps the brand to be more approachable and easier to relate with. (Manic 2015, 89-91.) Sightseeing and images are a defining aspect of tourism. Since the visual world is a major aspect of the holiday experience for the visitor, images from the "must-see" sites of a destination can work as a motivator for the individual to "understand" these places prior to visit. This motivation leads to the need to travel to that destination and to experience the destination by seeing the sites. (Moir 2010, 165-167.)

3.4 Website marketing

Websites are a tool for online marketing. Websites are designed to engage customers and draw them closer to a purchase of the company's product or service. Businesses may also have other desired marketing outcomes, such as seizing the potential customer's awareness and increasing their intention to return to the website. Website represents the integrated platform that supports all other promotional and retail activities. (Kotler & al. 2018, 487-488.) Websites are often the destination of a company's marketing campaigns and must be found by the potential buyers. It is important for a website to be easy to navigate so that the website visitors can quickly find what they're looking for. (Zahay 2020, 27.) Successful websites offer great service to the site visitor by providing information, contact and relationship with the business, transaction, and entertainment services. For a tourism related business, the website should entail content that is interesting and beneficial for the site visitor. Some of these elements are destination highlights, inspirational content through images and videos that encompass storytelling, and recommendations for site visitors to turn them from lookers to service buyers. (European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organization 2014, 73.)

3.5 Social media marketing: Instagram

There are many social media networks, such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok and Instagram. From social medias, this thesis only uses Instagram for the research on experience marketing of the ski resorts. For this reason, this section gives an overview of social media as an umbrella term and the different functionalities social media can offer

for businesses. After this, Instagram as a social media platform will be introduced more in detail.

Social media provides opportunities to extend customer engagement and offers an ideal platform for real-time marketing (Kotler & al. 2018, 47). Social media platforms attract customers, who gather online to socialize and exchange views and information and are therefore very important for the online interaction among potential customers. (Kotler & al. 2022, 491-492). Today's businesses use social media to refine their target markets and engage with their consumers more personally and interactively. The new marketing way is to focus on customer-engagement, which fosters direct and continuous customer involvement. This helps to shape the brand conversations, the experiences with the product and the community feeling. Customer-engagement marketing makes the product and brand a meaningful part of the consumers' lives. (Kotler & al. 2022, 41.)

Instagram is social medium with the emphasis on visual content and it is the second most accessed social media network after Facebook. Many businesses have Instagram accounts to promote their brand, product, and services. But since competition for visibility and attracting followers is high, businesses need to spend time in developing their distinct marketing strategies on Instagram. Companies can use Instagram to convert loyal channel followers to paying customers. The business can do promotions, contests, live product launches and other campaigns on their Instagram channel. This creates interest and buzz around their products and services. (Decker 2017.)

Images are the most common type of posting in Instagram (Decker 2017). In tourism, carefully selected and edited travel photos are popular and can transform travel destination imagery and tourist behaviour (Volo & Irimiás 2021, 2). Still, Instagram users appreciate genuine and authentic posts from the brands and companies they follow. People engage more when the business focuses on quality and not in sheer advertising. Lifestyle shots and behind-the-scenes pictures that reflect the company culture make the business interesting and easily approachable. The company can also post videos and images to educate their followers on how to best use the products. (Decker 2017.)

4   Research methods

This part of the study introduces the multimethod research approach and how qualitative and quantitative researching are explained in theoretical literature. The main research question of the thesis is:

- What overall perception the experience marketing of the ski resorts creates of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations?

The main research question is supported with sub-questions:

- Sub-question 1.: What is the individual perception of each ski resort, based on the images used in their website and Instagram marketing?

- Sub-question 2.: What type of experience marketing images improve the perception of country destination image?

- Sub-question 3.: How does individual perception on experience marketing affect the way the ski resorts are perceived?

- Sub-question 4.: What aspects of the experience marketing would make the individual choose one of the six ski resorts of the study as their tourism destination?

Multimethod research is an approach, that combines different research methods to give a more comprehensive and multifaceted observation on the given subject (Brewer & Hunter 2005, 2). Multimethod research can also be referred to as research triangulation (Kananen 2011, 42). The aim for using multimethod research is to deepen the interpretations and understanding of the researcher's research questions and to find corresponding results between research materials (Vilkka 2021a, 70). Multimethod study helps the researcher to produce more credible and valid research results (Kananen 2017, 155). This multimethod study applies both qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative research is a method based on the interpretation of different phenomena. It can for example describe subjective experiences and opinions and draw personal conclusions based on those viewpoints. (Vilkka 2021a, 11.) Qualitative research is best adapted to situations, where the phenomenon is not well known within research literature and the researcher aims to get a deep understanding of the studied subject. Qualitative research is interested in how people experience and view the reality. The researcher is the main instrument for collecting and analysing information, from which the reality is filtered down into research results. Qualitative research is often descriptive, and the researcher is interested in processes, meanings and understanding of a phenomenon with the help of words, texts, and pictures (Kananen 2017, 33-36.) Material for qualitative research may be gathered from sources such as first-hand observations, interviews, written literature,

and audio-visual materials such as pictures, videos, and voice recordings (Kananen 2017, 82-124).

The second method is quantitative research. Heikkinen, Raatikainen and Vilkka (in Vilkka 2021a, 14) explain that quantitative research is based on statistics and numerical analysis. The quantitative research method proceeds with the assumptions, that with right tools of measuring, experimenting, and testing, the researcher can achieve to collect valid information, that is based on reality and can be used to describe the opinions or results of a larger population and therefore is not depended on one individual. Quantitative research is an efficient method when the researcher aims to understand and explain what sort of experiences and perceptions people have about given subject and how these experiences and opinions are divided within people. Researcher is interested in how the results can be analysed and understood in numeric form, and what sort of causal connections can be generally found between the experiences and interpretations. (Vilkka 2021a, 14.)

4.1 Content analysis

The qualitative research method within this study is content analysis. Content analysis is a research method in which information is screened and systematically analysed to identify patterns and categories. This information may be in the form of pictures and other visual material. (Shani & Wang 2011, 136.) Content analysis helps to create a summarised and general description on the studied phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 87). Content analysis aims to describe the content verbally and it is methodically and theoretically flexible way of researching (Seppänen 2005, 145-146). Coding is one of the research stages in qualitative research and basic tool within content analysis. Coding means organising and categorising the research material, which leads to the actual analysing stage of the research material. Coding is a way of connecting and separating the researched material based on the qualities the researcher is looking for. This means that similar attributes within the analysed content are grouped together and named after the common qualities. Since coding can give the researcher rich and multidimensional information about the studied subject, it is important to guide the coding process by keeping the central research problem and research questions in mind. (Juhila s.a.)

The aim of the thesis is to find out what sort of overall perception the experience marketing of the ski resorts creates of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations. The research aims to get this information by screening the DMO websites and Instagram accounts for experience marketing material with the help of content analysis. Both images and videos will be considered as experience marketing content in the content analysis. The ski resorts Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton am Arlberg from Austria and

Levi, Ylläs and Ruka from Finland were chosen as representations. The Austrian resorts give a representation of Austrian Alps ski resorts, whereas the resorts in Finland are a representation of the ski resort offerings in Finnish Lapland. Content analysis was chosen as the qualitative approach on the subject since it gives the researcher the possibility to analyse the experience marketing content for each country carefully and with subjective perception to the topic. The experience marketing content will be analysed based on the Experience Realms by Pine & Gilmore introduced earlier in subchapter 3.1 Experience Realms.

The observation frame (table 1) made for the content analysis consists of top row with five individual columns. The studied ski resort's DMO website address and official Instagram account name can be found from the top left corner. During the entire content analysis, the image and video information pulled from DMO website will be marked with * (one star symbol) and the content analysed from the DMOs official Instagram account will be marked with ** (two stars symbol). This way, the reader can tell apart from which source the information has come from.

Table 1. Content analysis observation frame

Name of the ski resort *DMO Website **Instagram account				
Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
1. Skiing & snowboarding				
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				
3. Program services				
4. Leisure & wellness				
5. Passive nature experiences				
6. Culture & events				

First column in table 1, "Image / Video content" lists the experience categories, which were listed previously in the theoretical framework under subchapter 2.4 Experiences in ski resorts. The six experience categories are:

1. Skiing and snowboarding
2. Ski touring and cross-country skiing
3. Program services
4. Leisure and wellness
5. Passive nature experiences
6. Culture and events

These six categories will work as the framework for observing and coding the experience marketing content found from the DMO websites and Instagram pages. The experience marketing content including visual representation from any of the six categories in picture and video form will be part of the analysis and coded into the right horizontal category row. For example, the experience marketing with the images and videos concerning the activity of skiing and snowboarding, will be coded in to the first horizontal row: "1. Skiing and snowboarding". When the content analysis on the DMO website and Instagram comes across images and videos containing ski touring and cross-country skiing, these experience marketing elements will then fall into the second horizontal row: "2. Ski touring and cross-country skiing". Same procedure will be done for each experience category column.

In table 1, the next four columns are the Experience Realms, which each have their own pillar from left to right: Entertainment, Educational, Esthetic and Escapist. Based on the image and video content, the experiences will be allocated to one of these pillars. For example, if the image or video has content where visitors are admiring Northern Lights in Finnish Lapland, the content will go to the horizontal row "5. Passive nature experiences" and will be allocated under the column "Esthetic". In that individual box, the content will be described with few words that best define the image or video of the experience.

Before the content analysis is commenced, the ski resorts chosen from Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland will be briefly introduced. The ski resorts' website landing page screenshots are added under the resort descriptions to give the reader an idea what the DMOs' websites look like. Screenshots from each DMOs' official Instagram accounts can be found from the appendices. Content analysis for each ski resort is done in the order that the resorts are introduced below.

4.1.1 Studied ski resorts in Austrian Alps

Ischgl ski resort (figure 5) is the third-biggest ski resort in the state of Tyrol in Austria. The resort hosts over 200 kilometres of groomed slopes and has a snow guarantee from November to the beginning of May. Ischgl ski resort has 45 cable cars and ski lifts, that can transport almost 95 thousand people per hour. (Ischgl s.a.) Ischgl has the most luxury 4-star and 5-star hotels of all Austrian ski areas (Austria s.a. c.). Screenshot of Ischgl's Instagram page can be found in appendix 1.
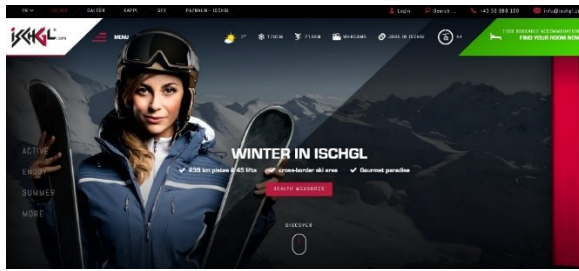
Figure 5. Ischgl website front page (adapted from Ischgl s.a)

Mayrhofen (figure 6) is located at the end of the Zillertal Valley and is one of the top winter sport destinations in Tyrol for intermediate and expert skiers. Mayrhofen also has the steepest ski run in all of Austria called Harakiri, which is one of the biggest attractions in Mayrhofen. Mayrhofen is popular among freestyle skiers but also has options for beginners and families, with six different ski areas to choose from. (Tyrol s.a. h.) Mayrhofen offers 142 kilometres of groomed sloped and 60 cable cars and ski lifts (Mayrhofen s.a. a). Screenshot of Mayrhofen's Instagram page can be found in appendix 2.
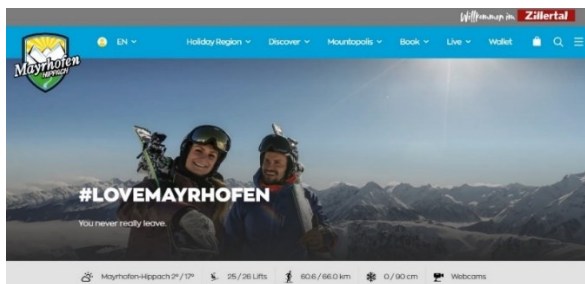

Figure 6. Mayrhofen website front page (adapted from Mayrhofen s.a. b)

St. Anton am Arlberg (figure 7) is Austria's largest interconnected ski area. St. Anton consists of seven interconnected villages and offer over 300 kilometres of marked slopes. St. Anton has 88 cableways, and the region is a founding member of a quality association "Best of the Alps". (St. Anton am Arlberg Tourism Association 2021.) St. Anton is considered the birthplace of alpine skiing and has been in operation for more than a hundred years (Tyrol s.a. i). Screenshot of St. Anton's Instagram page can be found in appendix 3.
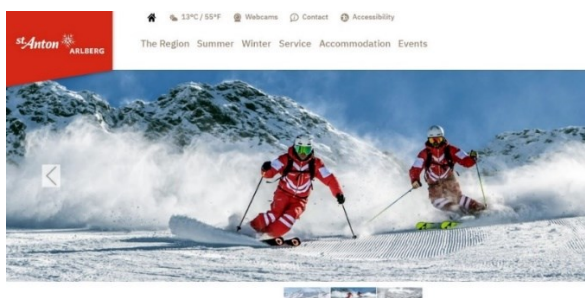

Figure 7. St. Anton am Arlberg website front page (adapted for St. Anton am Arlberg Tourism Association s.a. b)

4.1.2   Studied ski resorts in Finnish Lapland

Levi (figure 8) is one of the most popular ski resorts in Finland. Levi hosts the Alpine Ski World Cup races every year and it is the only resort in Finland with world cup level slopes. (Visit Finland s.a. a.) In 2022, Levi was awarded the best ski resort in Finland by the international World Ski Awards in country-specific ski resort category for the second year in a row (Levi 2022a). The ski resort has 43 slopes and 27 ski lifts (Levi 2022b). Screenshot of Levi's Instagram page can be found in appendix 4.
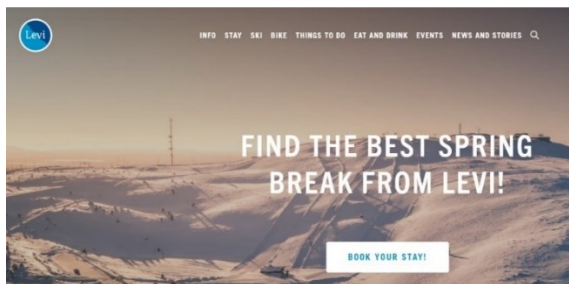

Figure 8. Levi website front page (adapted from Levi s.a. b)

Ylläs (figure 9) is the largest ski resort in Finland, with 63 slopes and 29 ski lifts (Visit Finland s.a. a). Ylläs also has the longest ski slopes in Finland and the highest peak of the hill is located 719 metres above sea level (Ylläs Ski Resort s.a. a). Ylläs is situated between two authentic Lappish villages, Äkäslompolo and Ylläsjärvi, which gives the skiers the possibility to ski to both villages in one day (Ylläs Ski Resort s.a. b). Ylläs ski resort is in Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park, which is Finland's third largest national park (Ylläs Travel Information s.a. c). Screenshot of Ylläs Instagram page can be found in appendix 5.
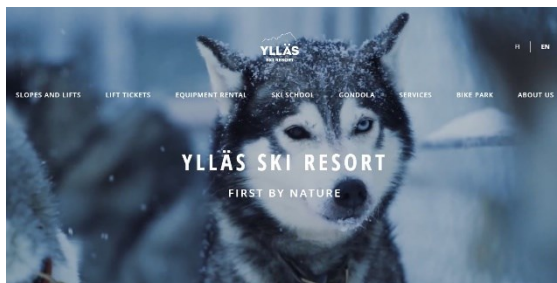

Figure 9. Ylläs website front page (adapted from Ylläs Ski Resort s.a. c)

Ruka (figure 10) is one of the most snow-sure resorts in Europe (Visit Finland s.a. a). Ruka's ski season is the longest in all of Finland, with over 200 days. This is possible with the local climate and the resort's investments in the snowmaking machinery (Finnish Ski Area Association s.a. b.) The ski resort offers 22 ski lifts and 39 groomed slopes (Ruka s.a. d). Screenshots of Ruka's Instagram page can be found in appendices 6 and 7.

Ruka's DMO has divided the marketing content into two separate, official Instagram accounts: "rukakuusamo" and "rukaskiresort". Both Instagram pages will be part of the content analysis. Ruka-Kuusamo Instagram page can be found in appendix 6 and Ruka ski resort in appendix 7.
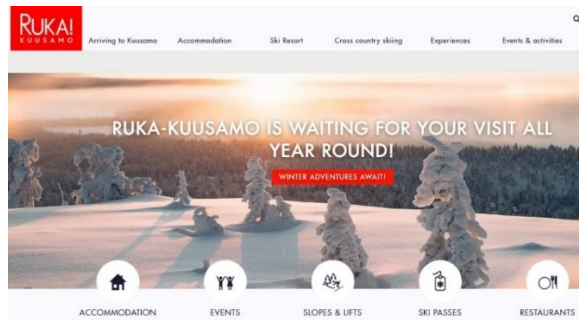

Figure 10. Ruka website front page (adapted from Ruka s.a. e)

4.2   Survey

Since quantitative research is an efficient method for collecting answers to questions and getting numerical data, the quantitative method approach within this thesis is a survey with questions and photo elicitation. Survey is the most common research method for collecting information within quantitative study. In survey, the respondent reads the survey questions and answers the survey in writing. This type of research material collecting is beneficial, when collecting answers from a big and dispersed group of people. (Vilkka 2021b, 76.) In photo elicitation photographs are inserted into a research interview. The benefit of using images in addition to text is that images stimulate deeper elements of human consciousness than words alone. (Harper 2002, 13.) Within destination image formation studies, photo elicitation is a method of presenting photographs of a destination to the participants of a study to investigate their perceptions (Shani & Wang 2011, 136-138). Photo elicitation may add reliability and validity to a survey and support the written questions (Harper 2002, 22).

4.2.1   Data collection and question types

The thesis looks at peoples' perceptions on experience marketing and the results will be collected from a sample of the population. Determining the sample or a group of participating people is an important step in the survey. Two main sampling techniques exist: probability and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling every member of the population has a chance to be selected to the survey. In a non-probability sampling, individuals are selected on non-random criteria and not everyone has the chance to be included in the research. The survey for the thesis is done with non-probability convenience sam-

ple. This includes the individuals who are most accessible to the researcher. Also snow-ball sampling is used, meaning that the survey participants are asked to recruit other participants to answer the survey. (McCombes 2022.)

The survey sample should include at least a hundred participants, when the target group is compact, and the results are studied in general level. The number of respondents should be between 200-300, when the population is divided into groups that the research is focused on. The number of participants for national consumer research should be between 500 to 1000 respondents. (Heikkilä 2014, 43.)

When planning a survey, the questions that need to be answered and the objective of the research must be clear. Well-written questions and the right target group are prerequisite for successful quantitative research. The survey should start with simple warm-up questions to awaken the respondent's interest towards the survey. The survey form and the instructions for filling out the survey need to be clear. (Heikkilä 2014, 46-47.)

This thesis uses demographic, Likert scale, picture choice, open-ended and closed-ended questions. Demographic questions ask for personal information from the survey participants. The questions can be about the respondents' age, gender, and nationality, for example. (Typeform s.a. a.) Likert scale questions generally come in 5-point or 7-point scales to find out about respondents' opinions on certain things. The choices range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", which can give the researcher a holistic view of the respondents' opinions. Likert scale also includes a mid-point for neutral answer, such as "neither agree nor disagree" (Typeform s.a. b). Picture choice questions embed pictures as a part of the survey, which can make the survey more interactive for the respondents (Typeform s.a. c). In open-ended questions, the respondents write their answers to a text box. This is a good way to collect more meaningful answers. Closed-ended questions are answered with a simple "yes" or "no". (Typeform s.a c.) The respondents are also asked to rank their choices in preference order, based on how they perceive the experience marketing content. Photo elicitation is therefore present often in the survey.

4.2.2 Survey design

The platform for the survey will be the internet based Webropol tool, since it's easy to use and gives the opportunity to gather a lot of respondents. Due to the study's specific topic on perceptions, the aim of the survey was to gather 100 respondents. The survey will be distributed through social media WhatsApp, where respondents are asked to share the survey forward with their networks. The survey will be conducted in English and therefore the respondents need to be able to understand the questions in English writing.

The survey can be viewed in appendix 8. The first page of the survey has an introduction to the topic and the approximate time of completing the survey is mentioned. On the second page, preliminary background information is collected with three questions about the respondents' demographic attributes: age, gender, and nationality. Although the study doesn't have a specific target group, these questions were a part of the survey since they could give interesting information about the respondents and work as good warm-up questions. The 4th and 5th questions ask the respondents if they have visited a ski resort in the Austrian Alps or Finnish Lapland before.

The 6th question asks the respondents' perceptions on the experience marketing of Austrian Alps ski resorts. The respondents are asked to look at a picture collage of nine images taken from Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton in the given order and answer Likert scale questions. All the images are taken from each DMOs' official Instagram channel. The Likert scale questions are based on the Experience Pyramid's product specific element attributes of individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast, and interaction to find out, how the respondents feel these elements are a part of the experience marketing pictures that they are viewing. The Experience Pyramid's five levels of customer experience won't be part of the research, due to the main interest being the marketed experience products. The Likert scale is 5-scale, with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 3 as the middle scale "Not sure" and 5 as "Strongly agree". In the 7th open-ended question, the respondents are asked to describe the ski resorts in Austrian Alps with three separate words, based on the pictures seen before. Questions no. 8-9 are identical to the Likert scale questions and open-ended question from questions no. 6-7, but the studied ski resorts are Finnish Lapland's Levi, Ylläs and Ruka in respective order with image collage of nine pictures. Therefore, this part of the survey asks about the perceptions towards the experience marketing of Finnish Lapland.

Question no.10 asks the respondents to look at destination pictures A-F and rank them in order of personal preference, where 1st choice is the most attractive and 6th is the least attractive. The order of the pictures is:

A. Ischgl
B. Mayrhofen
C. St. Anton am Arlberg
D. Levi
E. Ylläs
F. Ruka

The pictures don't show the names of the ski resorts or any writing or logos, that would reveal which destination is which. This approach to choosing the marketing images was

used so that ranking the destinations in order of preference would be as unbiased as possible for the respondents, since individuals may have visited or heard about some of the ski resorts before taking the survey and have therefore already created a personal perception and image of that destination. By showing pictures only, the respondents will hopefully focus on the images themselves and not on the image they might already have about a certain destination. After the respondents have ranked the destinations, question no. 11 asks what characteristic in the destination pictures influenced their ranking order. The respondents get to choose one option out of seven that best describes their opinion. The first six options are based on the experience categories formulated previously within the thesis: skiing and snowboarding, ski touring and cross-country skiing, program services, leisure and wellness, passive nature experiences, and culture and events. The question also has an open-ended option, where the respondents can write their answer if none of the above options described their reason for the ranking order.

The survey was tested on five volunteers between 5th and 6th of April 2022. The feedback on the survey was that the questions were understandable but for some respondents took more than five minutes to complete. For this reason, the introduction text was updated to inform the respondents that completing the survey may take about 5 to 10 minutes. Some of the wordings in the questions were refined to make them easier for the respondents to understand. After these changes the survey was sent out to public on 7th of April.

5   Results

This chapter presents the multimethod research results. The research was commenced with qualitative method of content analysis and quantitative research was commenced via survey. The goal of the research was to find out answers to the main research question and sub-questions. First the results of content analysis will be introduced, and the survey results will be discussed afterwards.

5.1   Content analysis

The results of the content analysis will be first presented for the ski resorts in Austrian Alps and then for the resorts in Finnish Lapland. The coded information that was gathered in the content analysis for each ski resort in the Alps will be summarised to one observation frame for that country. Then the results will be discussed to see, what type of experience marketing content was found in the analysis. Afterwards the ski resorts are analysed individually to see, what perceptions the experience marketing created for each resort. After the analysis is completed for the resorts in Austrian Alps, the same procedure will be done for the resorts in Finnish Lapland. The final discussion for content analysis will handle Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland together to find out, what similarities and differences the countries have in their experience marketing.

5.1.1   Austrian Alps ski resorts

The results of the content analysis for Austrian Alps can be viewed in table 2. The experience marketing with entertainment elements were summarized into the column Entertainment Realm for all the three resorts. Based on the analysis done on the ski resorts' websites and Instagram accounts, some of the resorts used ski animal mascots in their marketing, which is attractive entertainment for kids in the slopes. One Austrian resort had husky rides in their marketing, which is not a common product in Austrian ski resorts generally. Festivals within ice sculptures, comedy and after-ski were seen in the marketing content and live music with traditional Austrian twist was visible in some of the experience marketing.

Table 2. Content analysis Austrian Alps ski resorts

Austrian Alps ski resorts: Ischgl, Mayrhofen & St. Anton am Arlberg				
Image / Video content	**Entertainment Realm**	**Educational Realm**	**Esthetic Realm**	**Escapist Realm**
1. Skiing & snowboarding	• Ski animal mascot	• Ski school with kids & adults • Ski maps • Women's day skiing • Snow safety • Instructional ski techniques	• Spring skiing • Steep & groomed slopes • Valentine's Day skiers • Skiers admiring views from chairlift • Chairlifts and gondolas	• Snow park • Pro skiers • Smiling skiers on front page • Skiing above clouds • Deep powder skiing • Solo skiing
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing		• Cross-country skiing course • Ski tour camp		• Ski tourers • Freeride area • Spring cross-country skiing
3. Program services	• Husky ride	• Ski touring safety • Children camps • Ski mountaineering		• Tobogganing experiences • Morning snowshoe hike • Tandem flight & paragliding • Snowtubing • Winter hiking trails • Ice skating • Winter climbing route
4. Leisure & wellness	• Fine dining			• Smoke / regular sauna & fitness • Ice swimming • New lux spa opening • Mountain VIP Club
5. Passive nature experiences		• Eagle training	• Sunrise and sunset on mountain • Aerial drone pictures & videos • Deep snow • Big mountain scenery with trees • Heavy snowfall	
6. Culture & events	• Ice sculpture competition • Comedy festival • Spring after-ski festival • Traditional food & music • Live music on the mountain	• Skiing man from 1950's • Snowboarders from 1990's • Area history signposts • Traditional music and clothing	• Local folklore • Old historical huts • New Year's fireworks on the mountain	• Bungee jump event • Ski Bingo competition • The White Thrill – competition • Freeride world tour • Slopestyle contest

The DMOs had a lot of experience marketing content within the column Educational Realm in table 2. All the ski resorts marketed their ski school offerings and informational pictures and videos on snow safety were visible both in website and Instagram marketing for all the three resorts. Marketing was also done for certain special days, such as Women's Day. Instructional videos about skiing techniques were also shared in St. Anton's social media. Austrian ski resorts often marketed program services such as ski mountaineering and ski touring safety camps. Ski camps for children could often be found in the marketing materials. Eagle training was seen in many marketing images of Mayrhofen, which gave the sense of both educational experience and passive nature experience. Historical pictures with ski and snowboard tourism from past decades was found from the marketing content, which worked as a representation of the resorts' long culture in skiing. Traditional Alpine music and clothing were often seen in the marketing.

In Esthetic Realm, the ski resorts marketed sunny Spring skiing and steep, perfectly groomed slopes (table 2). Valentine's Day was celebrated with a special skiing performance. A lot of the images also included skiers taking in the scenery form the chairlifts and gondolas. The experience content for passive nature experiences was extensive and offered many pictures and videos of sunrises and sunsets on the tree-lined mountains, aerial views of the scenery and heavy, perfectly white snowfall covering the ski resort areas. Local folklore could be felt in some of the images and traditional Alpine huts with historical value were part of the marketing. An impressive video of New Year's fireworks on the mountain top of St. Anton gave the feeling of celebratory outdoor events.

All the Austrian ski resorts offered experiences within the Escapist Realm in table 2. The experience category for skiing and snowboarding had extensive amount of visual marketing of skiers and snowboarders in high altitudes, immersed in experiencing the deep powder and freestyle parks. A lot of professional skiers and snowboarders were part of these images and videos. Doing activities as a solo traveler was a recurring theme in the images too. Both ski touring and cross-country skiing could be found in the marketing content, although marketing towards ski touring was more recurrent. Vast freeriding areas had visibility in the social medias and websites. Program services were visible with both family-friendly activities and more advanced sports. Tobogganing was marketed as a family-friendly experience in all the three resorts. Extreme sports were also marketed, such as paragliding and climbing. Leisure and wellness were marketed with luxury spa opening, sauna facilities and fitness services. Ice swimming was also an opportunity in St. Anton am Arlberg. Culture and events could be enjoyed with sport theme, such as bungee jump event and Ski Bingo competition. The culture around skiing was evident with competitions such as professional Freeride world tour and smaller scale slopestyle contests.

Ischgl ski resort (appendix 9) had most visual marketing for luxury travel and high-end services compared to any of the other ski resorts. The nature and snowy mountain scenery were marketed extensively in the DMO's Instagram, whereas the overall look on the website is very clean, sleek, and dark toned with the black and red colours, that come from the resort's logo. Ischgl had the ski resort logo visible on a lot of the Instagram marketing and the region's branding was prominent in the marketing content, where the black and red colours were often seen paired up with the experience marketing. Large-scaled music events and big outdoor terraces with hundreds of people was a recurring theme in the images. Many images were also marketed with couples enjoying the activities together.

Mayrhofen's content analysis can be reviewed in appendix 10. This resort's Instagram gave the impression of pure mountain scenery, stillness, and spaciousness. Many of the images displayed skiers, free-riders and ski tourers enjoying the activities alone, which gave the sense of immersive experiences and spirituality that could also be achieved by solo travelling to the destination. Local traditions were present in a lot of the marketing content and different competitions were seen throughout the winter season marketing.

Content analysis on St. Anton am Arlberg's (appendix 11) marketing stood out with the cohesive theme of pictures with white, blue, and red elements. Both the website and Instagram had a lot of pictures of the snowy mountains with bright blue skies and skiers in red ski clothes. Heavy snowfall and powdery slopes were a recurrent theme in the pictures. St. Anton's logo is red, therefore the brand seemed visible and strong in the marketing content. St. Anton stood out as the only ski resort from the Austrian trio with the marketing

of husky rides in the region. The traditional villages surrounding St. Anton were often part of the marketing images.

5.1.2 Finnish Lapland ski resorts

Results on Lapland's content analysis are summarized in table 3. In the Entertainment Realm, the most marketed experiences in program services involved animal safaris with huskies and reindeers. The ski animal mascots were also in many of the marketing pictures and for Ruka the mascot was a smiling reindeer, who was seen sledging with kids. Entertainment was visible in after-ski parties and Spring festivals, one of them being a snowboard competition during May Day celebrations. Santa Claus was also part of the experience marketing on Instagram, appearing in all the three DMOs' content.

Table 3. Content analysis Finnish Lapland ski resorts

Finnish Lapland ski resorts: Levi, Ylläs & Ruka				
Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
1. Skiing & snowboarding	• Ski animal mascot	• Ski school • Ski patrol • Alpine training park • Building the snow park	• Gondolas and chair lifts	• Spring skiing • Snow park • Off-piste skiing and snowboarding • Skiing under Northern Lights • Pro skiers and snowboarders
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				• Cross-country family skiing • Sunset ski touring • Dogs on cross-country ski trails
3. Program services	• Husky safaris • Reindeer safaris • Husky puppies petting for kids • Reindeer feeding		• Fireside coffees	• Sunset snowmobiling • Horse riding • Nighttime photoshoots • Winter hiking, biking & camping • Paragliding • Children sledging • Northern Lights Expedition • River floating • Reindeer yoga
4. Leisure & wellness			• Igloo hotel views	• Ice swimming • Sauna gondola above clouds • Hot tub • Spa • Ice sauna
5. Passive nature experiences			• Sunset and stars on fells • Northern Lights • Snowy sceneries • Frozen cabins • Pink and golden moments • Reindeers in the wild	• Aerial pictures of people on the fells • Couple hiking in waist-deep snow • Wedding couple under the Northern Lights • Feeding birds
6. Culture & events	• Spring After ski parties • Snow festival • Wappulounas • Santa Claus		• Traditional wooden cabins	• Snow village • Reindeer racing • Night skiing • Stiga racing • Slalom contest for kids

Marketing content that resonated with the Educational Realm (table 3) was mainly focused on educating about the role of ski patrols and ski school for both children and adults were offered. Levi also had images and videos from the Alpine training park, which was perceived as educational content on professional athlete level. Timelapse video of the snow par was also seen in the content.

Many pictures and videos could be coded into the Esthetic Realm in table 3. Gondolas and chair lifts and atmospheric fireside coffee brewing images were part of the marketing content of every DMO. Accommodation marketing was visible with Igloo hotel images of

Northern Lights under a glass ceiling, which gave an idea of special accommodation options. The special nature of Lapland was represented in a lot of the marketing, with different shots of the fells illuminated under sunsets, the stars, and Northern Lights. Often the colors in the pictures and videos were pink and golden from the sunsets. Reindeers were in a lot of the pictures, running free in the forests and fells. Finnish traditional wooden cabins with frozen windowsill and smoking chimneys were a common sight in the marketing content.

Most of the experience marketing content was coded under the Escapist Realm in table 3. Skiing and snowboarding were marketed with Spring skiing and freestyle videos from the snow parks of the resorts. Skiers were filmed having fun in the wild terrain and many videos were done together with professional skiers and snowboarders. Many images had cross-country skiing with families and dogs. Ylläs had pictures of ski touring in the sunset. Selection of program services was vast in the marketing content of all the Finnish DMOs. Activities such as snowmobiling, and horse riding were recurrent in the marketing content and there were photoshoot trips during nighttime. Hiking, biking, and camping in the snow were also part of the marketing. From extreme sports, paragliding could also be found. Pictures of children sledging in Ruka with the ski animal mascot gave the sense of family-friendly program services. Northern Lights were seen in many of the marketing images too. Special activities such as yoga among reindeers and icy river floating could be found from the marketing content. Leisure and wellness were offered with ice swimming and special gondola and ice saunas. Hot tubs and spas were commonly found from the ski resorts' websites and Instagram. Passive nature experiences could be seen in many aerial pictures of people on the fells and hiking in deep snow. Bird feeding and bird watching was a recurrent theme too. Culture and events were visible with snow villages with staged lights and installations. Competitions with reindeer and Stiga racing were part of the marketing during Spring. Events held for kids only could be found too.

Levi's content analysis is collected in appendix 12. The indigenous Sámi people were part of the marketing material. The marketing images were cohesive between the website and Instagram, since both sites marketed extensively experiences that are unique to Finnish Lapland: Northern Lights, reindeers grazing wild among people and the untamed wilderness. Speciality accommodation and restaurants serving local food were also actively part of the marketing images. Based on the marketing content, special celebrations such as weddings were often organized in Levi.

Ylläs content analysis can be found under appendix 13. Ylläs website stood out from the other ski resorts by being the only one with a looping video on the landing page. The

video showed many experiences, such as husky rides, Northern Lights, the nature of Lapland and snowshoeing. This gave the feeling of activity-rich destination with a lot of natural beauty. Ylläs Instagram gave the sense of stillness and quietness within a lot of outdoor activities. Overall, the marketing in the DMO's Instagram highlighted a huge variety of winter sports options.

Ruka's (appendix 14) content in the analysis stood out with a lot of freestyle skiing images. Also, the many ski and snowboard competitions hosted in Ruka were visible in the marketing. Ruka's speciality, night skiing with light installations, was also in a lot of the images and videos which gave a sense of very immersive skiing and snowboarding experiences. Ruka shared a lot of similarities with the other Finnish resorts when it came to the marketing of the local nature. This was seen with the many pictures and videos of golden and pink sunsets on the fell, accompanied with deep powdery snow.

5.1.3   Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland

Based on the content analysis on the Austrian Alps and Finnish ski resorts, all the studied DMOs make great effort towards their experience marketing. The ski resorts focused on marketing their strongest and most attractive characteristics. Often the nature seemed to be the only factor, that was distinctly different between Alps and Lapland. For Austrian Alps, a lot of the marketing was around images of the huge size of the resorts and endless seeming ski opportunities on the mountains. Also, the ultra-modern facilities, which included big gondolas and lift stations, were seen in a lot of the marketing. Cultural heritage and experiences within traditional music, clothing and food was often represented in the Austrian marketing. The images invited guests to come and experience the Alpine culture as a part of the ski holiday. Finland's ski resort marketing stood out with the focus on pictures of the coldest times of the winter, with frosty and snow-covered trees and landscapes. Animals such as reindeers and huskies were constantly part of the marketing and Northern Lights were seen in a lot of the content. For skiing, Finnish resorts stood out with the golden and pink sunset moments, that were often part of the evening skiing images and videos.

5.2   Survey

The survey (appendix 8) was open for one week, between 7th until 13th of April 2022. The survey was distributed with a public internet link through WhatsApp groups. The respondents were also requested to forward the survey link to their other social groups. Most answers came on the first four days of the survey being open. The responding rate dropped down after the fifth day and some WhatsApp groups were reminded to go answer the survey. The survey gathered 57 respondents in total.

5.2.1 Demographic questions

The survey started with demographical questions of respondent's age, gender, and na-
tionality. These questions worked as a warmup for the respondents and are not in high
value of the results of the research. Therefore, these results are briefly summarized.

From 57 respondents, over half were aged between 25-31 years. The amount of people in
this age group was 34, being 60% from total of 100%. Second most respondents with
21% were aged 18-24. Third-most respondents were aged between 32-38 with 14% of re-
sponses. In fourth place came the respondents aged between 53-59 years, with 3% of the
participants. Most of the respondents were female with 82% of the individual respondents,
leaving the male respondents to 18% of the total. Most respondents had Finnish national-
ity with 79% of the total participants, which is 45 respondents out of 57.

Afterwards the respondents were asked if they had visited Austrian Alps or Finnish Lap-
land before. The respondents who had or hadn't visited Austrian Alps before were divided
quite equally. From the total respondents, 44% had visited Austrian Alps before and 56%
had not visited. From the total of 45 Finnish respondents, 20 had visited Austrian Alps. In
question no. 5, the distribution of respondents who had or had not visited Finnish Lapland
before was more significantly divided to majority and minority. The respondents who had
visited Finnish Lapland before was 82%, leaving just 18% of respondents as the ones who
hadn't visited. From the participants with Finnish nationality, 39 out of 45 in total had vis-
ited Finnish Lapland.

5.2.2 Likert scale and open-ended questions

Identical Likert scale questions were used to ask the respondents about their perceptions
on the experience marketing of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland ski resorts. The ques-
tions were formulated based on the qualities of the Experience Pyramid's product specific
elements (Tarssanen 2009, 12-14). Question no. 6 asked the respondents about their per-
ceptions on Austrian Alps, based on image collage that was combined from nine images
taken from the official Instagram accounts of Ischgl, Mayrhofen and St. Anton.

As figure 11 shows, the product specific element of interaction received the highest aver-
age score of 4,7 for Austrian Alps. The respondents mostly agreed strongly that the expe-
riences could be shared with other people partaking in the experiences. After interaction,
the element of contrast got the second-highest average score of 4,5. This meant that the
respondents mostly strongly agreed that the experiences could provide them with some-
thing out of the ordinary and different from everyday life. The respondents agreed that the

experience marketing could be perceived having Multi-sensory elements that could involve all their senses. The element of multi-sensory perception received the third-highest average score of 4,0. All the respondents weren't sure if the images from Austrian Alps offered the element of authenticity, but still the majority agreed that the marketing portrayed genuine and authentic experiences with the fourth-highest average score of 3,7. The element of individuality scored less, with the fifth-highest score of 3,5. This meant that the respondents didn't agree too strongly, that the experiences looked unique. The element of story received overall the lowest average score of 3,0 from the respondents. Most of the respondents were unsure or didn't agree that the experiences had deeper meaning.
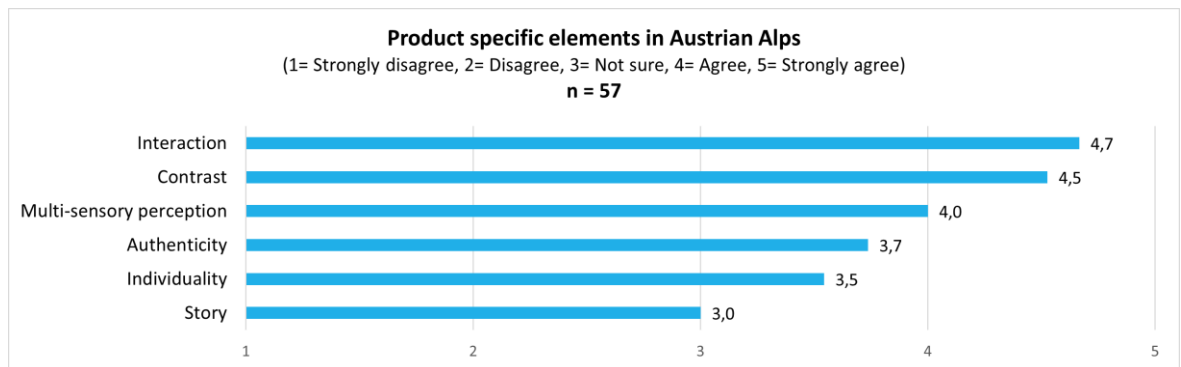

Figure 11. Product specific elements in Austrian Alps experience marketing

In question no. 7 the respondents got to write three open-ended words in free-form text boxes, where they were asked to describe the ski resorts in Austrian Alps, based on the perceptions the pictures in the previous question had created in them. Out of 57 respondents, only one left this open-ended question unanswered. The words written by respondents were collected and inserted into a word cloud seen in figure 12. Word cloud is a visual representation that highlights popular words and phrases, based on the frequency and relevance in the text the words have been taken from (MonkeyLearn 2022). For Austrian Alps, the word fun was mentioned 25 times, which made it the most frequent description of the Austrian ski resort experience marketing. After the word fun, the respondents mentioned beautiful, sunny, and relaxing most frequently. When assessing the pictures from the Alpine ski resorts, many respondents also wrote down sporty and adventurous.

Figure 12. Word cloud Austrian Alps

The same Likert scale questions were asked about Finnish Lapland in question no. 8 with an image collage taken from the Instagram accounts of Levi, Ylläs and Ruka. The results can be seen in figure 13, where the same highest overall average score was shared with two product specific elements: contrast and interaction. Both elements received the average highest score of 4,6. The respondents agreed mostly strongly that the experiences could offer something out of the ordinary from everyday life and that the experiences could be done in a group and shared with friends and family. The second-highest average score came for the element of individuality, which received 4,5. This means that the respondents agreed mostly strongly that the experiences shown in the images of Finnish Lapland looked unique. Third-highest average score of 4,4 was given to the element multi-sensory perception. The survey participants mostly agreed that the marketing images promised experiences that could be felt with all the senses. The element of authenticity was ranked in fourth place with average of 4,3. The respondents agreed mostly that the experiences in Finnish Lapland were genuine. The lowest overall score came for the element of story, with the average of 4,0 which means that most of the respondents agreed that the experiences had deeper meaning behind them.

Figure 13. Product specific elements in Finnish Lapland experience marketing

In question no. 9 the respondents wrote down the three words they felt best to describe the ski resorts of Finnish Lapland, based on the experience marketing images seen before. From the 57 survey participants, 56 people answered and the word cloud (figure 14) was created based on the collected words. Most common word to describe Finnish Lapland was unique, which came up 15 times in the survey. Other popular words to describe the images from the ski resorts in Finnish Lapland were beautiful, magical, and relaxing. The respondents also used words like nature and peaceful often to describe their perception on the marketing images.

Figure 14. Word cloud Finnish Lapland

5.2.3   Destination ranking

In the last part of the survey, the respondents got to rank the ski resort destinations in order of personal preference and give a reason for the ranking order. The results for the ranking task can be viewed in table 4. In the seven columns from left to right are first the column "Destination" and then the destination ranking number from "1st" to "6th". The ski resorts are listed under the left-most column "Destination" in order of the ranking from first to sixth.

As the first step, all the numerical results on the column "1st" were examined to see, which destination got the highest number of votes for the 1st placement. After that, the same procedure was done for each column in order from "2nd" until the "6th". The highest scores in each column are highlighted. The results showed that Levi was most often ranked as the 1st choice based on the attractivity of the experience marketing pictures of that destination. As table 4 shows, Levi received 28 out of the total of 57 votes for first place. Ylläs came in 2nd place with 17 votes from the total of 57 respondents. Mayrhofen came to the 3rd place with 13 votes. The third place was followed with the 4th place, where Ischgl was chosen with 13 individual votes. Both Mayrhofen and St. Anton received 13 votes each in the 5th placement but since Mayrhofen had previously been voted to the 3rd place with the majority of the votes, St. Anton positioned on the 5th place on this ranking. In the last 6th place came Ruka, that received 18 votes from the total of 57 respondents.

Table 4. Destination ranking

Destination	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Levi	28	12	7	8	1	1
Ylläs	6	17	8	9	9	8
Mayhofen	3	7	13	11	13	10
Ischgl	7	11	9	13	9	8
St. Anton am Arlberg	10	8	9	5	13	12
Ruka	3	2	11	11	12	18

After the ranking task the respondents were asked to give one reason to what influenced their ranking order. In question no. 11 the respondents were given seven options and they could choose one that best described the influencing factor for the ranking. The results can be seen in figure 15. The results show that almost half of the respondents, 49% chose Nature as their primary influence for the ranking order of the destinations. This makes Nature the most popular characteristic, that the respondents were looking for in the marketing content. The second-most popular factor among the respondents influencing the destination ranking was Leisure and wellness services. This meant that 19% of the respondents did the destination ranking based on the feeling they got about the destination offering services such as accommodation and restaurant options, after-ski parties and spa and sauna facilities. The third-most influencing factor among the respondents in destination choice was the possibilities within skiing and/or snowboarding in the destinations. This category got 12% of the respondents' answers.

Influencing characteristics for destination ranking
n = 57

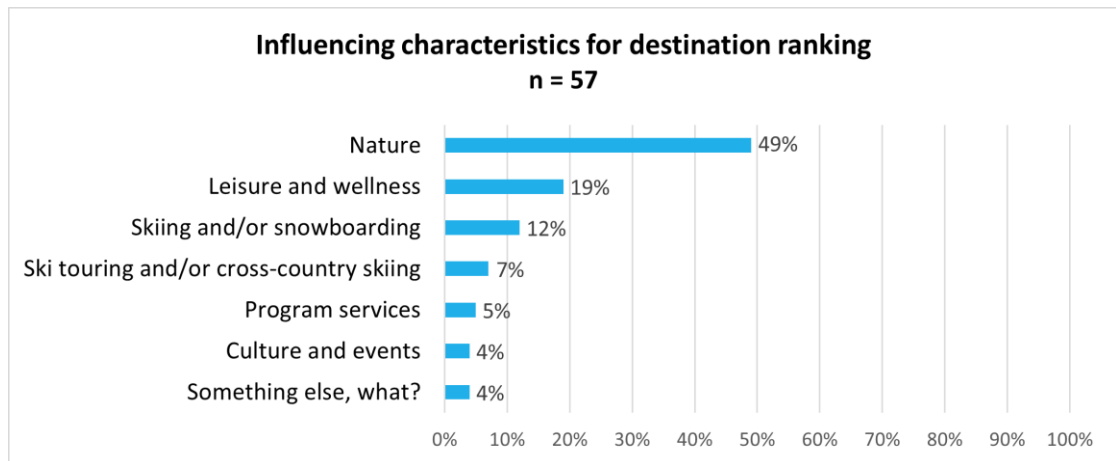| Category	Percentage
Nature	49%
Leisure and wellness	19%
Skiing and/or snowboarding	12%
Ski touring and/or cross-country skiing	7%
Program services	5%
Culture and events	4%
Something else, what?	4%

Figure 15. Reason for ranking order

In figure 15, the category of Ski touring and/or cross-country skiing got the fourth-most answers. From the survey participants, 7% from total chose this option to be best to describe their opinion. Program services came to the fifth place with 5% of the survey participants choosing it as the primary influencer of the ranking order. These respondents were mostly interested in the safaris and guided tours, that they perceived the destinations could offer. The categories Culture and events and the open-ended option came to a shared last place in the survey. Both categories got 4% of all the respondents' votes. Respondents that were looking for Culture and events were attracted with the destinations that seemed to offer festivals, museums, and local tradition.

In the last open-ended "Something else, what?"- option, the respondents could write the factor that mostly influenced their ranking order of the destinations, if the options above didn't describe it. Two respondents out of 57 wrote an open-ended answer to the question. One respondent evaluated skiing and culinary experiences as equally important in the destination. Another respondent appreciated remote environment and authentic nature, where the destination's quietness and small number of visitors were seen as an attractive factor when choosing the destination.

6   Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings made in the multimethod research process and reflects them with the theoretical framework. Afterwards, the research questions will be answered, and conclusions will be drawn based on the findings. The author aims to give suggestions for future research on the studied topic and the trustworthiness of the research will be considered. Lastly, the learning process and reflections on the author's thesis journey will be presented.

The first part of the research was done with the qualitative method of content analysis. As stated in subchapter 2.1, destination management organisations (DMOs) aim to attract visitors to the destination, support local tourism providers and be credible and legitimate as a tourism organisation (Björk 2017, 142). The results of the content analysis showed that all the local DMOs studied from Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland make great effort towards their marketing content. Experience Realms by Pine & Gilmore (2011, 46-56) were the basis of coding the information found in the content analysis. All the DMOs were able to provide meaningful experiences through their marketing, and the dimensions of guest participation and connection (environmental relationship) were part of the offered experiences. These dimensions varied between different experiences, but all in all the marketing for all the six resorts promised with activities that could be both passively and actively enjoyed by the guest. The guest connection (environmental relationship) had elements both for absorbing and immersing oneself in the offered experiences.

Like the authors of Experience Economy state, the most meaningful and engaging experiences encompass all the four experience realms and create a "sweet spot", that offers all the elements of an experience for the guest (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 58). Based on the research of Austrian and Finnish ski resorts, this "sweet spot" is not an individual experience, but rather the combination of the different experiences in the destinations. This gave the image of destinations, that can provide the traveller with the choice of attractive experiences and the chance for the guest to create their personal "sweet spot", based on what they perceived as a meaningful experience.

The content analysis also highlighted some differences in the countries' experience marketing. The Educational Realm with local culture, traditions and people were strong in the Austrian marketing. The long history within life in the mountains were evident in the content of Austrian resorts and the importance of local community, even amidst a buzzing tourism destination, could be felt in the marketing. Lapland's content in the other hand seemed to highlight nature and animals, without the presence of people. As stated in sub-

chapter 2.4.5 Passive nature experiences, studies have shown that nature connection increases overall wellbeing (Komppula, Konu & Vikman 2017, 127). Finnish ski resorts seemed to highlight the opportunity for visitors to find rejuvenation and wellness just by entering the nature within the resort regions.

Whereas the qualitative content analysis gave the author a tool to analyse the experience marketing content from a detailed subjective viewpoint, the second research method of quantitative survey offered a way to collect data with larger, statistical, and numerical value. The survey gave the chance to collect respondents' perceptions on the experience marketing of the ski resorts and to find out, what sort of overall image the marketing content can create for an individual resort and on a whole country destination level. Destination image and individual perceptions were discussed earlier in subchapter 2.5, where it was established that people perceive and interpret information subjectively based on what they personally like and believe in. The survey confirmed that people have varying perceptions on what they found likable or attractive in the destination marketing images. Still, the survey respondents also shared some common perceptions and feelings about the experience marketing. This created collective perceptions on the destinations.

The Likert scale questions were formulated with the intention of finding out, how people would perceive the product specific elements of Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen 2009, 11-12) as visible dimension in the marketed experience content. The Pyramid model is a tool for designing meaningful experiences in tourism and therefore the objective was to see, how well the DMOs were able to sell the idea of meaningful experiences, just through their visual marketing. The average scores from each product specific element gave an idea on how the respondents perceived the experience marketing on a country destination level in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland. Overall, Austrian Alps marketing scored on average lower on all the elements than Finnish Lapland. The only exception was the element of interaction, in which the Alpine marketing scored higher than Lapland. The reason for Austria scoring overall mostly less than Finland could be affected by many reasons. Most of the survey respondents had Finnish nationality and more than 80% of the overall respondents had visited Finnish Lapland before. As a comparison, less than half of the respondents had visited Austrian Alps before. As Kotler & al. (2018, 172) state in the subchapter 2.5, people remember the good points about a product or service that they favour or are familiar with. The familiarity and personal experience with Lapland among Finnish people might therefore affect the higher scores given to the home country. An interesting way to test this hypothesis could be to execute the survey again, but with a target group of an even amount of Austrian and Finnish respondents or with a sample of population that had never visited either country. The reason Austrian Alps did better in the level of interaction could perhaps be due to the Alps seen as a destination, where the respondents would

travel to with family or group of friends and be more inclined to interact with local people and service providers.

The Likert scale questions were supported with the respondents' written words that expressed how they perceived the marketing images. For Austrian Alps, some of the popular words to describe the country included fun, beautiful, sunny, and relaxing, but other words such as absence of diversity, basic and touristic were also mentioned. For Finnish Lapland, the most common results of unique, beautiful, magical, and relaxing had many similarities with the Austrian resorts. Some of the more uncommon ways to describe Lapland were boring, dark, and local. These results for Austrian and Finnish resorts could still give silent signals to what are the downsides or unattractive factors within the destinations. Most of the respondents' words were still positive, depicting the country destinations as mostly interesting and attractive.

The results from the destination ranking were surprising and interesting. Ski resorts from Lapland came in first, second and last place. Austrian resorts were ranked in places from third to fifth. When looking at the results, Levi's experience marketing could be described as successful and attractive given the first place, with Ylläs coming to a strong second place. The Austrian resorts had a lot of similarities to each other, when it came to the experience marketing images. Most images included mountains with steep skiing, that in survey participant's eyes could possibly be perceived as only accessible to expert – level skiers. Recreational skiing and other experiences and activities other than skiing weren't as common in the marketing of the Alpine resorts. This could be one of the reasons why Austrian resorts were ranked closely to each other and none of the Alpine resorts reached the first or second place in image attractiveness, whereas the Finnish resorts had diversity of activities visible in the marketing content. Still, not all resorts from Finnish Lapland score high in the ranking task. Ruka came in as the last choice, based on how the respondents perceived the marketing images. This could be due to Ruka's images being mainly about skiing and snowboarding and the pictures being like one another. Since the survey needed to be limited in length and not all the image variations of the ski resorts' marketing content could've been part of the survey, the thesis author's choice of image collages can affect how the resorts are perceived. If the image collage from Ruka had been one with more versatile images, it could've possibly influenced the ranking more.

The author had to make decisions when it came to choosing which images to use as a part of the photo elicitation of the survey. The images weren't altered in any way by the author, but only images that didn't have text, branding or other elements that would direct the respondent's attention could be used in the survey. This limited the options of choosing the pictures from some of the ski resort Instagram pages remarkably, since Instagram

image postings made by the ski resorts often had small icons, texts, or other elements that could've been a distraction, if they were visible for the survey participants in the photo elicitation tasks.

The destination ranking was followed with the last step where the respondents were asked to give reason for the ranking order. The options were formulated based on the experience categories in subchapter 2.4 Experiences in ski resorts. Almost half of the respondents chose the option: This destination seemed most attractive for experiencing and enjoying nature. This choice for destination ranking and attractiveness could be explained with the theory of positive wellbeing effects of nature in subchapter 2.4.5. It seems that nature's impact on traveller's wellness and the esthetic elements of nature have a strong attractive power on people. Like stated in the theoretical literature, natural attractions are often the main motivation and attraction for a destination visit (World Tourism Organization 2007, 1). The escapist experience realm (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 49-53) is also closely tied together with nature and the experience marketing images from the ski resorts promised activities that are done in nature.

As discussed in chapter 2, destination contains several elements that create attractivity for the visitor: attractions, amenities, accessibility, image, price, and human resources (Cho 2002, 144-145; World Tourism Organization 2007, 1-2). The leisure and wellness services were second most popular option for destination choice and therefore the respondents could find attractions and amenities in the destination pictures, that gave them the perception of fun, social and accessible destination with options for relaxation and activities. The last category gave the respondents the chance to write their open-ended answer. These answers highlighted, that the destination choice is a sum of many elements and destinations with space and quietness are seen as attractive. The ski resort DMOs seemed to be aware of people being attracted towards the feeling of spaciousness with the many images of empty, quiet, and natural sceneries.

6.1   Conclusions

The research sub-questions will be answered next, based on the overall results and discussion on the topic. After the sub-questions, the main research question will be answered. The conclusions derived from the research will be used to give suggestions for improvement and future research on the topic.

Sub-question 1.: What is the individual perception of each ski resort, based on the images used in their website and Instagram marketing? Ischgl ski resort stayed true to the destination's image of high-end luxury services. The experience marketing portrayed activities

within skiing and program services in beautiful, expensive looking settings. The marketing was often targeted for couples, honeymooners and in celebration of special occasions. Mayrhofen ski resort stood out with meaningful experiences in nature. The marketing content was often focused on travellers enjoying the activities alone. This gave the sense of a destination that offers a space to express oneself as an individual. St. Anton am Arlberg seemed a family-friendly destination with options for many holiday activities. St. Anton offered husky rides as the only Austrian resort in the study, which gave the sense of a destination adapting new program services. Levi marketing felt extensive and all-encompassing, with nature and Lappish "magic" often highlighted. The experience marketing gave a sense of high-quality destination, with something for everyone. Ylläs resort gave the sense of sports, peace, and spaciousness. The marketing highlighted Lapland's natural beauty and a place to escape hectic life. Based on experience marketing, Ruka ski resort felt fun and adventurous with the focus on many skiing possibilities. Ruka seemed to host different events frequently, which gave the sense of a perfect destination for people looking for competitions and parties within skiing and snowboarding. Like the other Finnish resorts, many images also had the local animals as part of the content.

Sub-question 2.: What type of experience marketing images improve the perception of country destination image? For Austrian Alps, the diversity of activities wasn't always present in the marketing content. By portraying the activities outside of skiing more widely, the resorts could attract more of the international visitors, whose main purpose of winter holiday isn't skiing or snowboarding related activities. For Finnish Lapland, the absence of local traditions and delicacies in the experience marketing was surprising. Also, the Sámi culture wasn't portrayed in the content often. The elements of culture, tradition and local folklore in the marketing could improve the visitor's perception on how they can experience the local living in an authentic way.

Sub-question 3.: How does individual perception on experience marketing affect the way the ski resorts are perceived? As the survey showed, people are attracted to different activities and look for various elements in the marketing images. People mostly found it important to find elements of activities that they are personally interested in. For some, the perception of the destination offering peace and quietness was a key factor, while some individuals appreciated social activities. For some, the combination of certain offerings in the destination was important.

Sub-question 4.: What aspects of the experience marketing would make the individual choose one of the six ski resorts of the study as their tourism destination? Based on the survey results, the importance of nature became evident in the destination choosing process. People appreciate and look for pure nature, that gives them wellbeing and sparks a

sense of wonder. The marketing content should therefore highlight the nature found in the destination.

Main research question: What overall perception the experience marketing of the ski resorts creates of Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland as winter holiday destinations? Through the marketing content, Austrian Alps was perceived as a high-quality skiing destination with picturesque and awe-inspiring scenery. Through content analysis on the Austrian resorts' marketing, the feeling of world-class skiing facilities with international visitors was strong. The main driver to visit the Austrian destinations did seem to be skiing within the ambience of the majestic mountains. Wellness and leisure were also presented with many indoor and outdoor spa opportunities and after-ski options. From other activities, ski touring and tobogganing seemed to be a popular reason to visit Austrian Alps. This destination felt like it was packed with memorable experiences in locations and environments, where the nature sometimes felt even extreme. Within the respondents, Finnish Lapland was seen as a snowy, winter wonderland destination. The content analysis gave the impression of a destination where skiing and snowboarding weren't always the most popular reason to visit the destination. Alternative reasons for a visit were other activities, such as cross-country skiing and the unique nature. The marketing gave the impression of an untouched, remote location with hidden wonders and unique experiences.

6.2   Suggestions for further research

For further research on the subject, the importance of soundscapes in experience marketing content could be discussed and adapted to the research. A lot of the marketing content was in video form with music or other sounds, that can be heard during the activities in ski resorts, such as people and laughter. The natural sounds of wind howling in the fells or mountains and snow crunching under winter boots were also part of the soundscapes. These elements can be an essential part of feeling the story behind the experiences. In this study, the experience element of story wasn't felt strongly for Austrian Alps or Finnish Lapland. Since this study focused solely on the visual aspects of the experience marketing, the next step could be to consider how the marketing content creates feeling through the other senses than vision, too.

Another way to continue the research into more profound results could be to have more extensive photo elicitation as a part of the research. Due to the limited nature of time, not all photo variations were possible to be included in the survey. All the destinations could have the opportunity to be as equally and diversely presented in the picture choice tasks with more detailed questions about the different experience categories, for example. This would require the surveys to be longer and more time consuming for the participants.

Also, individual interviews where the participants could express their personal opinions on the topic could give more thorough results.

The topic could also benefit from research into perceptions of people, that have never visited either countries or in general are not at all familiar with the winter activities that the ski resorts usually offer. The DMOs of the destinations in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland could analyse the balance of their experience marketing content to see, that all the offered experiences are equally present and marketed within their websites and social media channels. The destination and the activities need to be felt as accessible to the visitor, meaning that there's something for everyone and the level of enjoyment in the destination is the same, no matter where the traveller's main interests are. Since nature is a strong attractive force, it is necessary for the ski resorts to consider how they can best market and highlight their natural strengths.

6.3 Reliability and validity

The research needs to be assessed for its reliability and validity. Reliability and validity are concepts, that help to evaluate how well the research methods measure the research subject. Reliability means the consistency of the method. The same research results should be achieved when the method is reproduced under the same conditions as before, meaning that the results cannot be accidental or random. Validity refers to the method's accuracy of measuring what it is intended to measure. The researcher may easily start focusing on wrong topics within research if the objectives of the research aren't clear enough. The research problem setting needs to be precise and the research methods thoroughly planned. (Heikkilä 2014, 27-28; Middleton 2022.)

Since this thesis study was commenced as multimethod research, the reliability and validity had to be considered for both qualitative and quantitative method. The purpose of choosing a multimethod way of researching was to generate multifaceted research results, that could give a deeper understanding of the topic. The qualitative method of content analysis is subjective by its nature, so a more generalising and data-driven method of quantitative survey helped to create more feasible research. The research methods were decided early in the thesis process, but minor changes were done to the research questions along the way. The thesis topic had many intangible, theoretically complex elements such as the concept of individual perceptions and meaningful experiences. For this reason, the research questions needed to be revised to make sure, that by the time of commencing on content analysis and survey, the research problems were in their final form.

As a qualitative method, content analysis was a successful tool for analysing and collecting information from the ski resorts' experience marketing content. The method was flexible for interpreting visual information but also labour-intensive, since all the content had to be reviewed manually. The reliability of using content analysis to study experience marketing in the DMO websites and social medias can also be complicated to measure. The perceptions and thus results could look very different, when commenced by a different researcher. Also, the image and video content in the ski resorts' websites and Instagram platforms were often updated, changed, or even deleted by the DMOs, which influenced the overall look and feel of the focus points in the experience marketing. Still, it gave a multifaceted perception to the topic which helped to formulate the research results.

The quantitative method of survey was created with reliability and validity in mind by making the questions as easily understandable as possible. During the 1-week survey participant collection time, 57 individual answers were collected. These formed the sample of the study. The goal for the sample size was originally 100 respondents, but since no more than 57 respondents completed the survey within the deadline, the sample size was then smaller. This smaller sample could still be considered sufficient due to the thesis topic's specific nature on individual perceptions. Common perceptions but also varied opinions within population could be found in the smaller sample size.

6.4   Reflections of learnings

The thesis process was educating and gave a lot of insight and professional skills towards academic writing, critical thinking and researching. Formulating the final thesis topic took some time but the idea of wanting to study Austrian and Finnish ski resorts were within the author's main interests from the start. The way in which to implement ski resorts and these countries into research finally took shape with the study on experiences, marketing, and perceptions, which were found to be interesting subjects to research as well. The writing and information searching process was prolonged since it was sometimes difficult to find theoretical literature to support the study. Also learning to bridge the studied information together to create well summarised theories was challenging at times. The thesis writing timeline and completing the research paper took longer than originally planned, but in the end having ample amount of time for the process was only a positive factor. It gave the opportunity to be thorough with the topic and focus on the reading and writing process.

The thesis supervisor gave a lot of valuable guidance throughout the process and the discussions gave new ideas and interesting viewpoints to the topic. The meetings helped to keep the writing process in track and encouraged the author to make personally fitting

choices, giving the freedom of writing in a personal way. The supervisor's feedback was always considered helpful and encouraged to push forward with the study.

A lot of new information on the marketing strategies of the studied DMOs and destination image formation through perceptions were acquired through the thesis process. With more time and resources, the topic could've had more detailed research outcomes and results. But still, all things considered, the research felt successful and the goal of answering the research questions and concluding the study was completed. The author's personal interest towards meaningful experiences, marketing, and the tourism destinations in the Alpine and Lappish regions has only grown within the study and the knowledge derived from the thesis process will be used to grow professionally and with the aspiration to build a career within these industries in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Ischgl Instagram
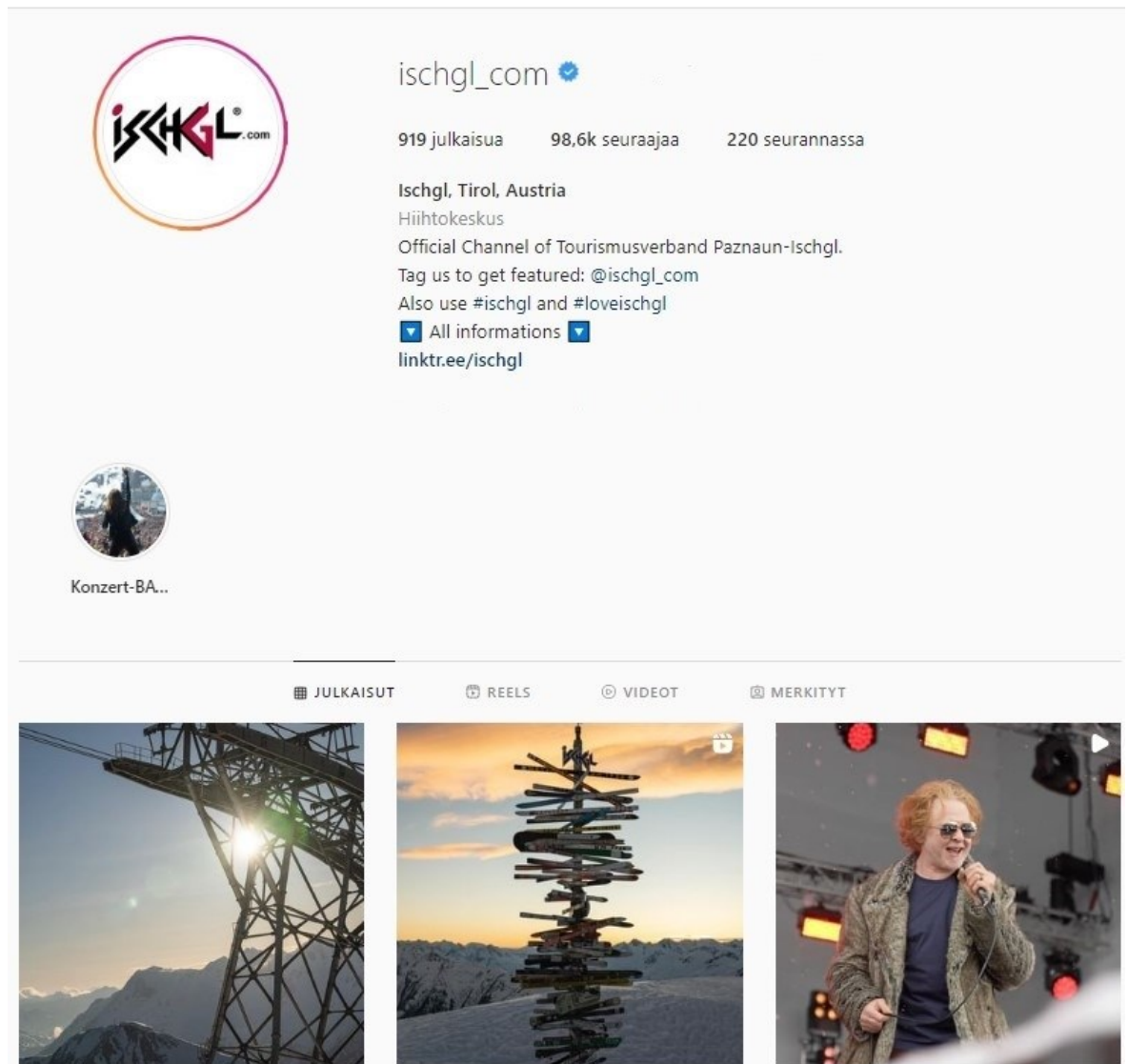
Appendix 2. Mayrhofen Instagram

mayrhofenimzillertal

1 361 julkaisua   48,6k seuraajaa   193 seurannassa

Mayrhofen im Zillertal
Official account of tourist board Mayrhofen-Hippach. Tag @mayrhofenimzillertal and use #lovemayrhofen! ❤️ ⛰️
linktr.ee/MayrhofenimZillertal

Eierjagd 🥚

⊞ JULKAISUT   🎬 REELS   ⊙ VIDEOT   👤 MERKITYT

Appendix 3. St. Anton am Arlberg Instagram
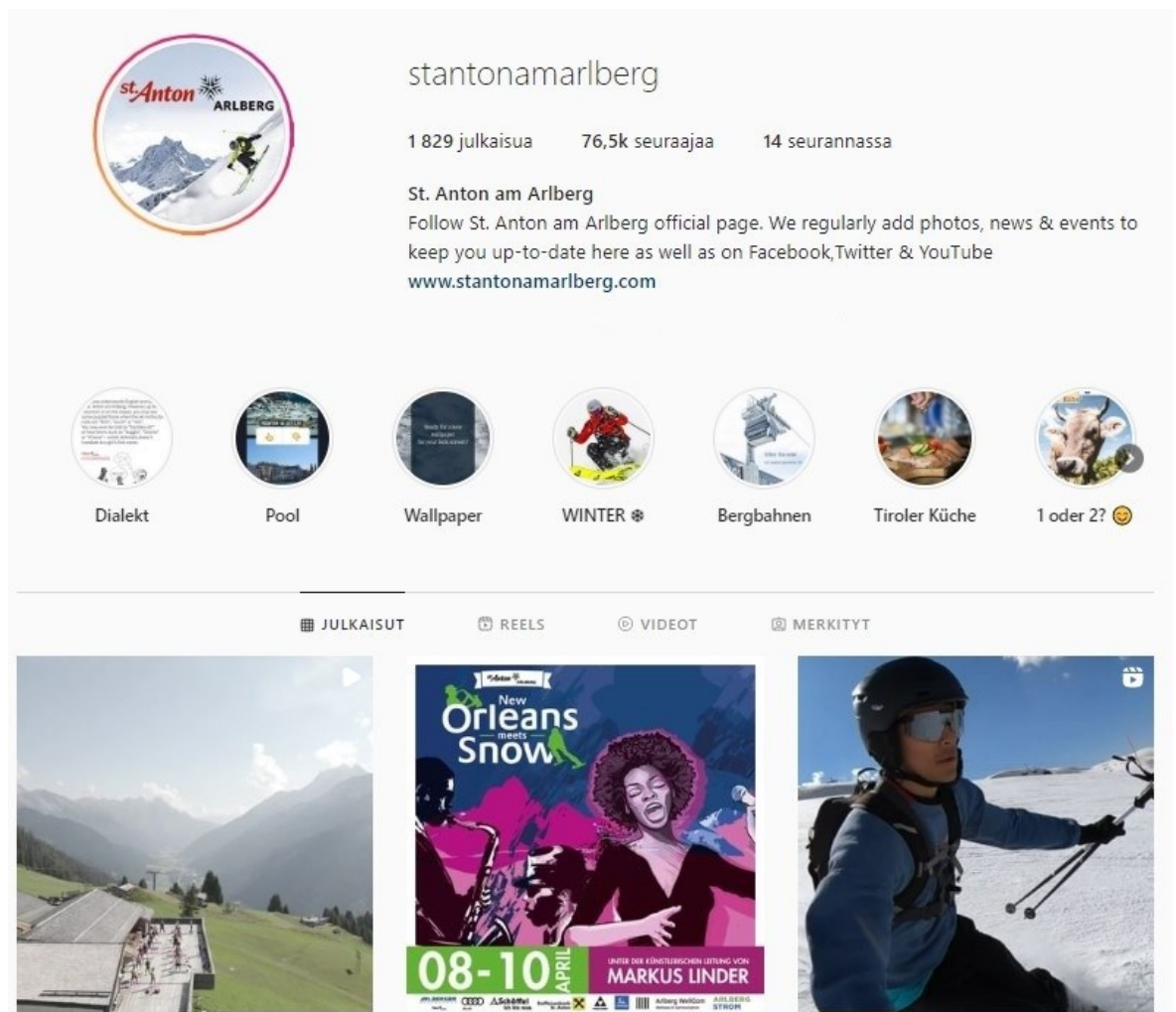
Appendix 4. Levi Instagram
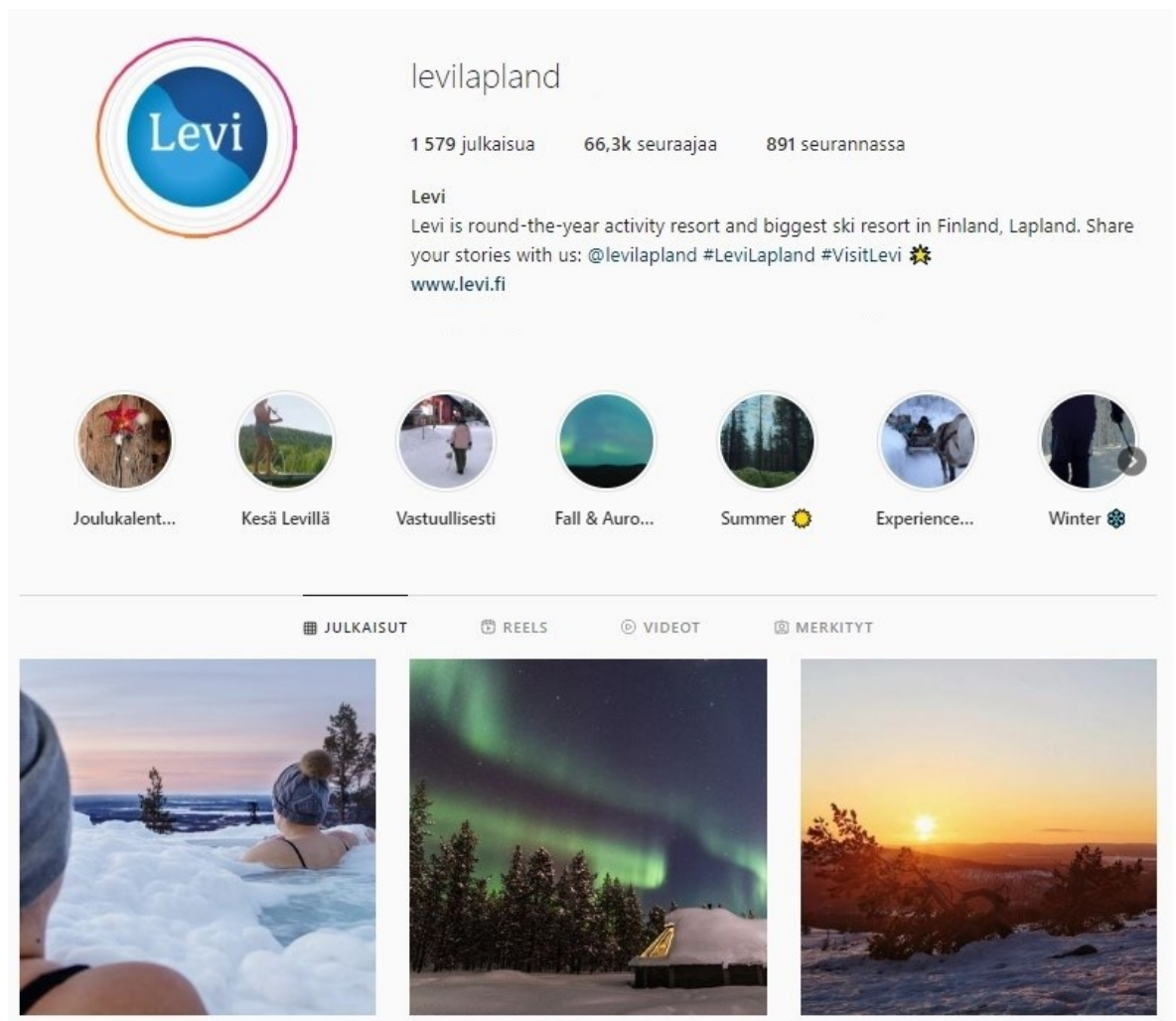
Appendix 5. Ylläs Instagram
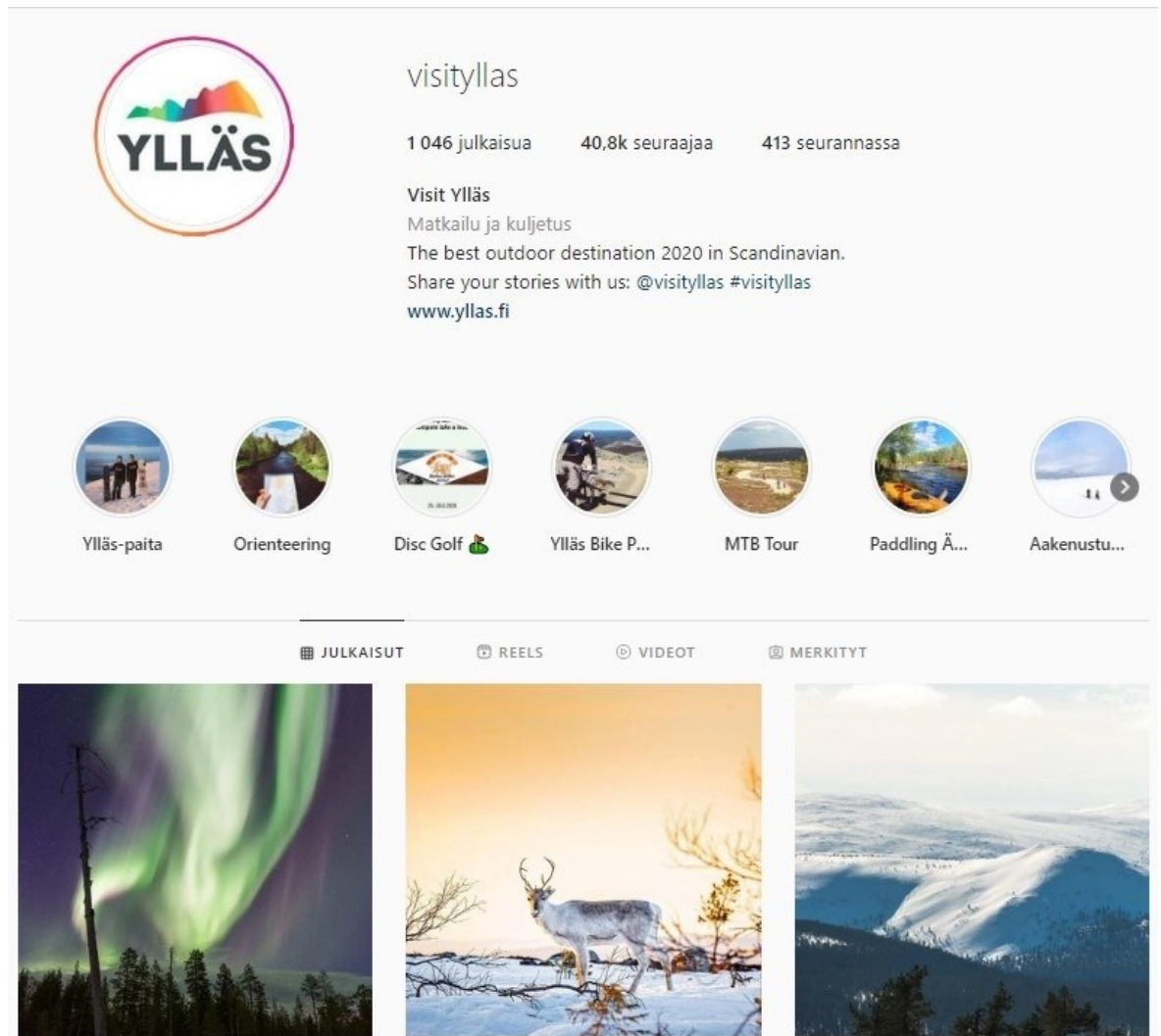
Appendix 6. Ruka-Kuusamo Instagram
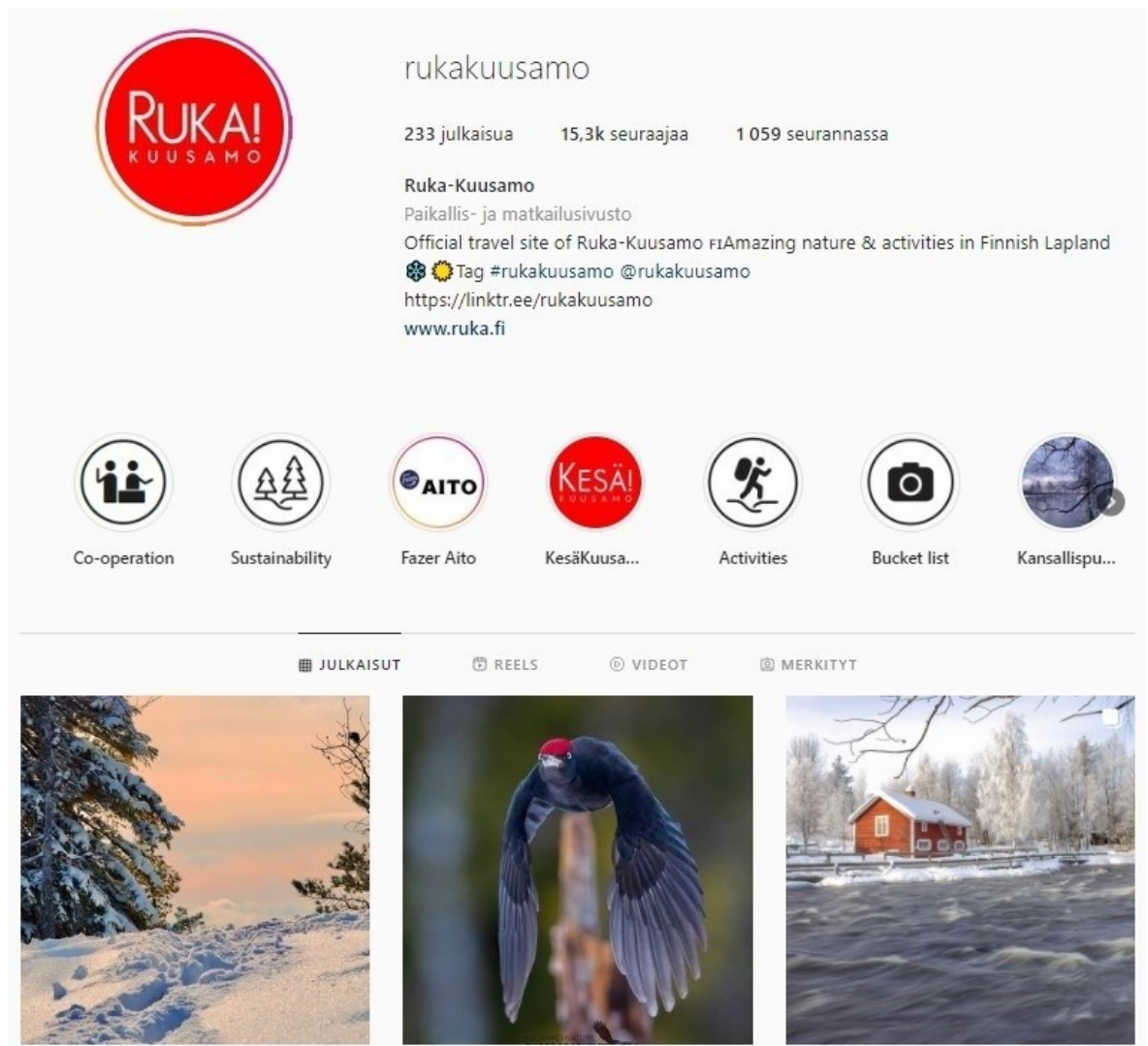
Appendix 7. Ruka ski resort Instagram
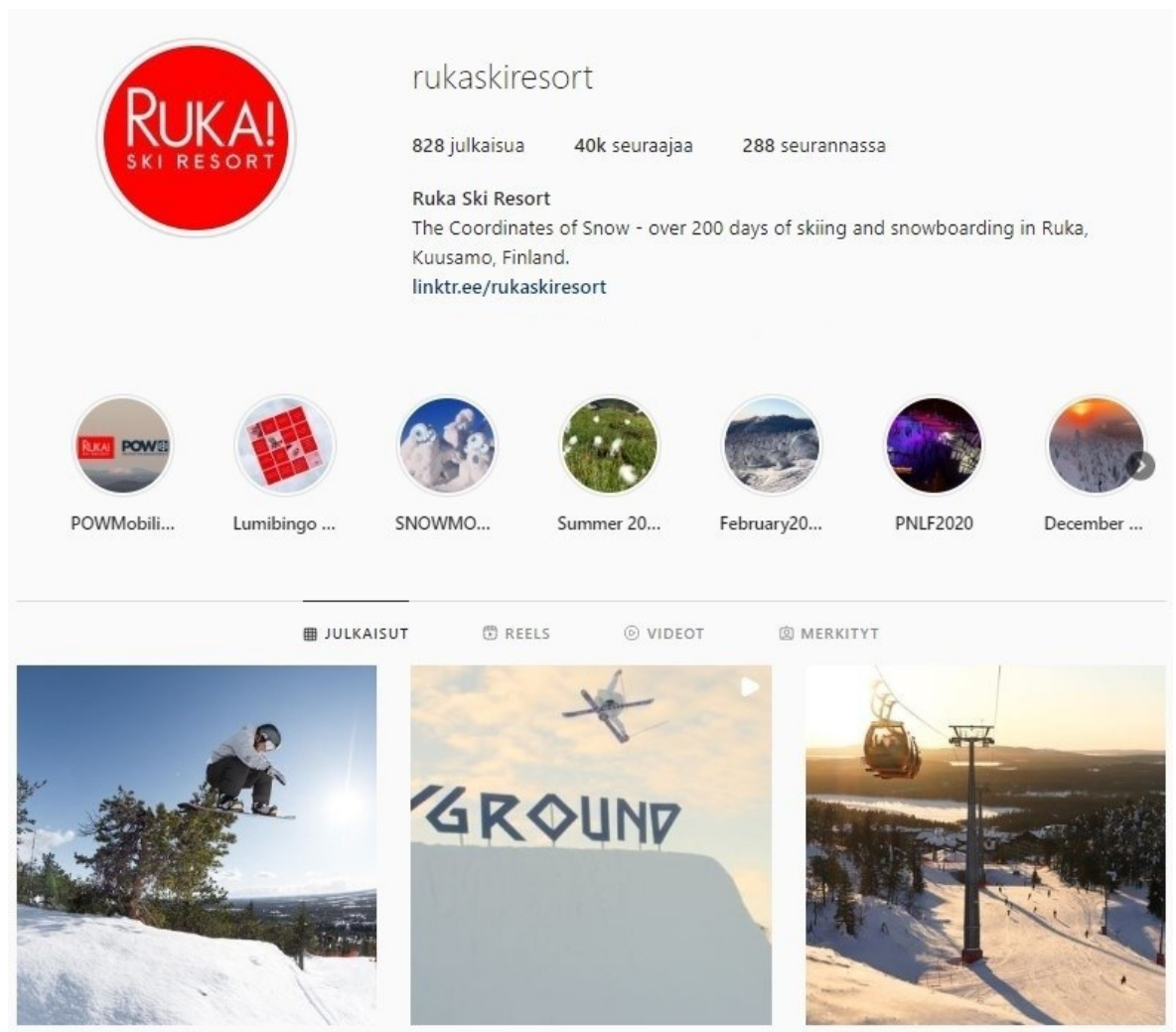
Appendix 8. Survey

Ski resort experience marketing

(i) Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Hello!

I'm studying tourism and travel in Haaga-Helia and currently working on my bachelor's thesis. I'm researching experience marketing of ski resorts in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland and the power of perceptions. This thesis study wants to find out how people perceive experience marketing and how images can create attractivity and interest towards visiting ski resort destinations in the Alps and Lapland.

Answering the survey takes about 5-10 minutes and there will be questions, photos to look at and open-ended questions, where you can write your answers.

All the answers will be handled anonymously and I would highly appreciate it, if you can take the time to answer. The thesis will be published in Theseus later this year.

Thank you!

~Sara

Seuraava

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Ski resort experience marketing

These preliminary questions gather background information and ask about your familiarity with ski resorts in Austrian Alps and Finnish Lapland.

1. Age group *

○ Under 18

○ 18-24

○ 25-31

○ 32-38

○ 39-45

○ 46-52

○ 53-59

○ 60 or older

2. Gender *

○ Female

○ Male

○ Other

○ Rather not say

3. Nationality *

○ Finnish

○ Other in Europe

○ Other outside of Europe

4. I have visited or spent a winter holiday in a ski resort in Austrian Alps *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

5. I have visited or spent a winter holiday in a ski resort in Finnish Lapland *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Edellinen Seuraava

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Ski resort experience marketing

(i) Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

The first part of this survey looks at some of the experiences in ski resorts of the Austrian Alps. Imagine that you were to take part in the experiences and answer the questions based on the feeling the nine images below are giving you.

Ski resort experience marketing in Austrian Alps

6. How do following statements best describe your perception on the experience marketing of the ski resorts in Austrian Alps, based on the pictures above?
(1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Not sure, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree) *

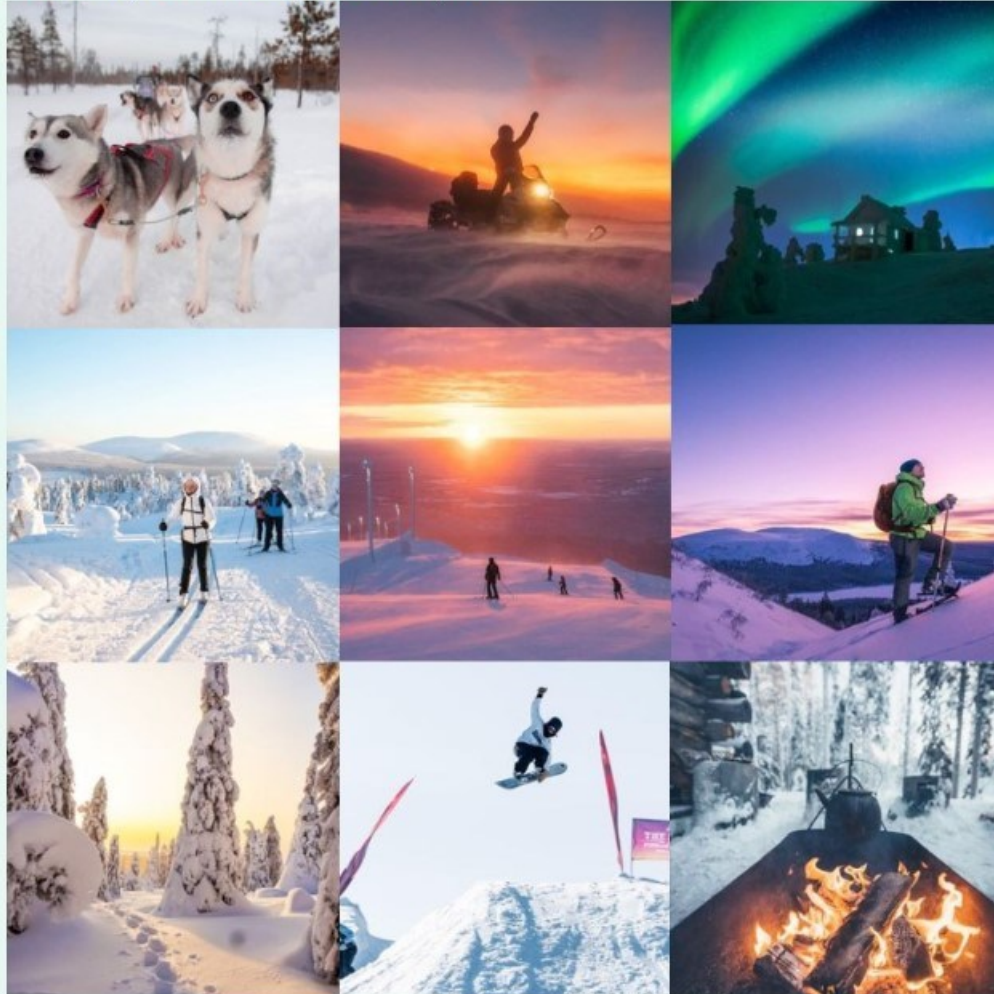|	1	2	3	4	5
Individuality: These experiences look unique	○	○	○	○	○
Authenticity: I feel like these experiences are authentic and genuine	○	○	○	○	○
Story: There is a deeper meaning behind these experiences	○	○	○	○	○
Multi-sensory perception: I feel like the experiences would involve all my senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch)	○	○	○	○	○
Contrast: These experiences would provide me with something out of the ordinary and different from my everyday life	○	○	○	○	○
Interaction: These experiences could be done in a group and I could share the experiences with the people around me (friends, family, guided tour group)	○	○	○	○	○

7. With three words, how would you describe the ski resorts in Austrian Alps, based on the pictures seen above? *

Edellinen Seuraava

Ski resort experience marketing

The second part of this survey looks at some of the experiences in ski resorts of Finnish Lapland. Imagine that you were to take part in the experiences and answer the questions based on the feeling the nine images below are giving you.

Ski resort experience marketing in Finnish Lapland

8. How do following statements best describe your perception on the experience marketing of the ski resorts in Finnish Lapland, based on the pictures above?
(1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Not sure, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree)
*

	1	2	3	4	5
Individuality: These experiences look unique	○	○	○	○	○
Authenticity: I feel like these experiences are authentic and genuine	○	○	○	○	○
Story: There is a story with deeper meaning behind these experiences	○	○	○	○	○
Multi-sensory perception: I feel like the experiences would involve all my senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch)	○	○	○	○	○
Contrast: These experiences would provide me with something out of the ordinary and different from my everyday life	○	○	○	○	○
Interaction: These experiences could be done in a group and I could share the experiences with the people around me (friends, family, guided tour group)	○	○	○	○	○

9. With three words, how would you describe the ski resorts in Finnish Lapland, based on the pictures seen above? *

[▲▼]

[▲▼]

[▲▼]

(Edellinen) (Seuraava)

Ski resort experience marketing

(i) Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

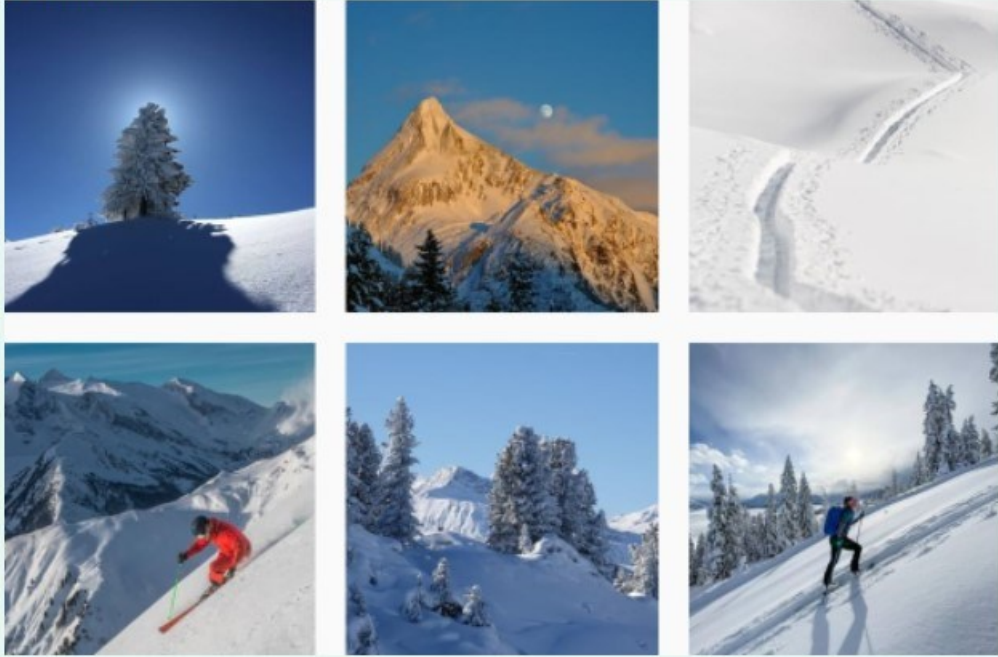In this last part of the survey, look at the pictures from destinations A, B, C, D, E, F and G below. Based on the feelings the destination pictures create, how would you organise the destinations from the most attractive to the least attractive? In question 10, you get to rank the destinations in order of your personal preference.

Destination A.
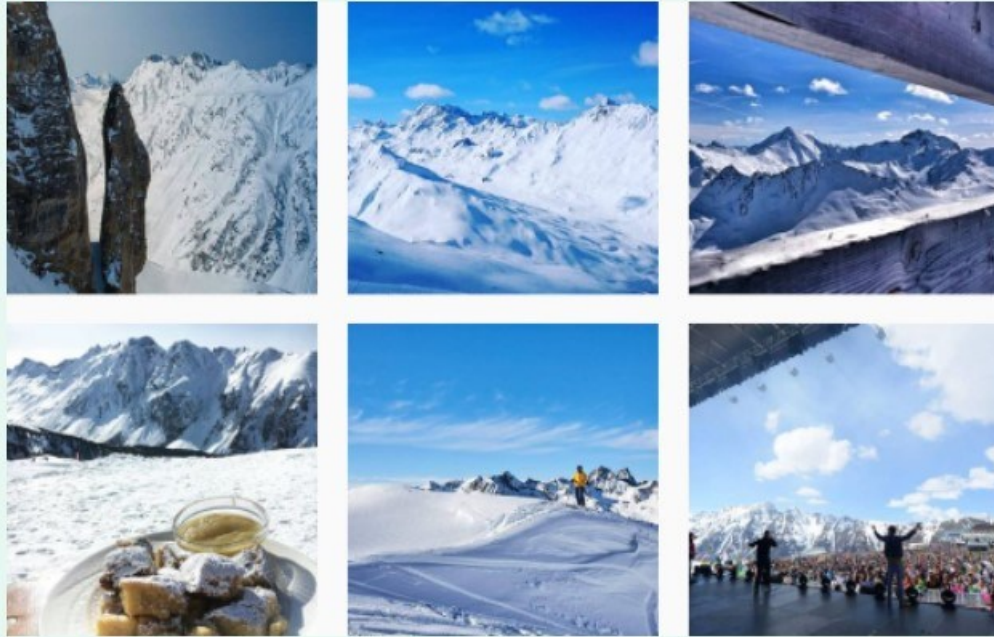
Destination B.

Destination C.
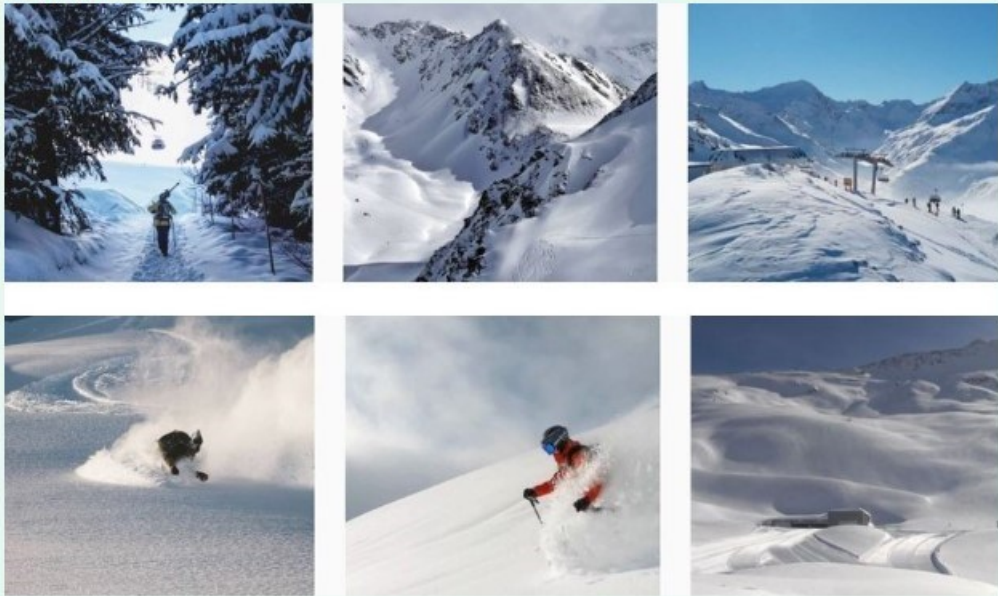
Destination D.

Destination E.

Destination F.
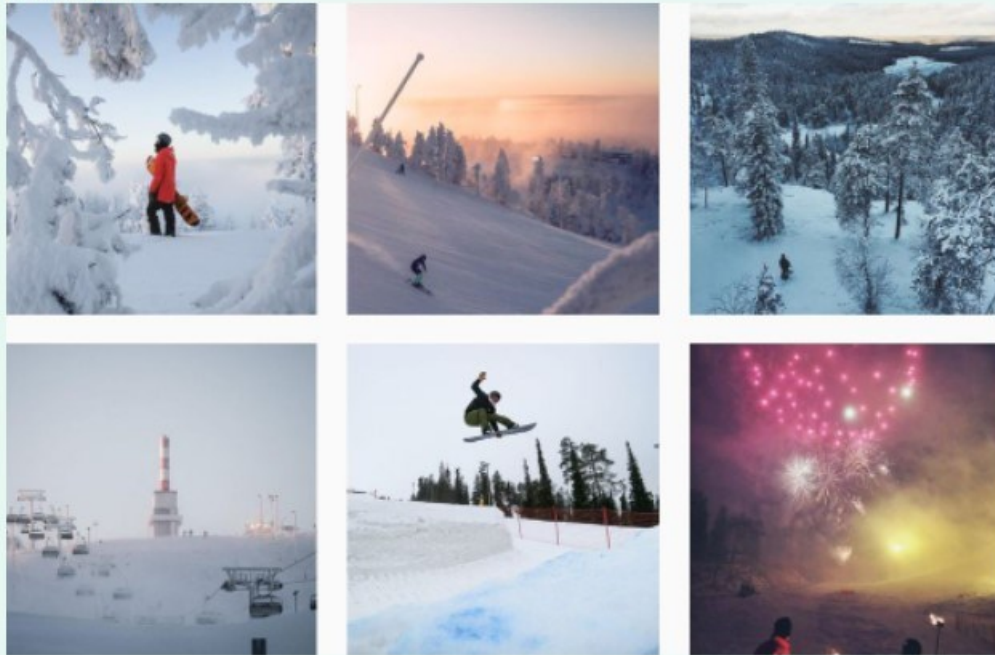
10. Based on your personal preference, how would you rank the destinations? Your first (1st) choice is the most attractive choice, and your sixth (6th) choice is the least attractive choice. *

Destination A.	Valitse ▼
Destination B.	Valitse ▼
Destination C.	Valitse ▼
Destination D.	Valitse ▼
Destination E.	Valitse ▼
Destination F.	Valitse ▼

11. What characteristics in the destination pictures influenced your ranking order the most? Choose the option below that best describes your opinion. *

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for skiing and/or snowboarding

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for ski touring and/or cross-country skiing

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for program services, such as different activity safaris and guided tours

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for leisure and wellness services, such as after-ski parties, accommodation and restaurant options, spas and saunas

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for experiencing and enjoying nature

◯ This destination seemed most attractive for culture and events, such as music and sport festivals, museums and experiencing local tradition

◯ Something else, what?

Edellinen   Lähetä

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Appendix 9. Ischgl content analysis

Ischgl *https://www.ischgl.com/en **ischgl_com				
Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
1. Skiing & snowboarding		*Ski school *Ski maps **Snow safety	*Skiers admiring views from chair lift *Spring skiing *Steep slopes	*Snow park video **Pro skiers *Smiling skier on front page
2. Ski touring and cross-country skiing		*Cross-country skiing course		*Ski tourers *Freeride area
3. Program services				*Night tobogganing experience *Morning snowshoe hike **Couples and newlyweds enjoying activities
4. Leisure & wellness	*Fine dining **Slope terraces full of people			**New lux spa opening *Mountain VIP Club
5. Passive nature experiences			*Aerial resort pictures & Videos *Sun and snow **Drone videos **Sunset on slopes *Mountains and trees	
6. Culture & events	*Ice sculpture competition **Live music on the mountain	**Skiing man from 1950's **Snowboarders from 1990's **Area history signposts		

Appendix 10. Mayrhofen content analysis

Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
Mayrhofen *https://www.mayrhofen.at/en/ **mayrhofenimzillertal				
1. Skiing & snowboarding	**Ski animal mascot	**Women's day skiing *Ski school **Snow safety course	**Groomed slopes	**Powder skiing **Smiling skiers on front page *Skiing above clouds **Solo skiing
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				**Cross-country skiers **Lone ski tourer on the mountain
3. Program services		*Ski touring safety		*Tobogganing family **Tandem flight *Snowtubing
4. Leisure & wellness				
5. Passive nature experiences		**Eagle training	**Sunset on mountain **Aerial shots of empty mountains and forests	
6. Culture & events	*Comedy festival *Colorful spring after-ski festival *Traditional food & music	*Traditional music and clothing	**Local folklore *Old historical huts	*Bungee jump event **Ski Bingo competitions *Slopestyle contest

Appendix 11. St. Anton am Arlberg content analysis

St. Anton am Arlberg *https://www.stantonamarlberg.com/en/home* **stantonamarlberg**				
Image / Video content	**Entertainment Realm**	**Educational Realm**	**Esthetic Realm**	**Escapist Realm**
1. Skiing & snowboarding		*Snow safety **Instructional ski techniques **Ski school	**Valentine's day skiers **Chair lifts and gondolas	**Deep powder skiing
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				*Spring cross-country skiing
3. Program services	**Husky ride	*Children camps *Ski mountaineering **Freeriding camp **Ski tour camp		*Winter hiking trails *Kids tobogganing *Kids ice skating *Winter climbing route *Paragliding
4. Leisure & wellness				*Spa, sauna & fitness *Smoke sauna *Ice swimming
5. Passive nature experiences			**Deep snow **Sunrise and sunset loops *Big mountain scenery **Heavy snowfall	
6. Culture & events			**New Year's fireworks on the mountain **Traditional villages	*The White Thrill – competition **Freeride world tour

Appendix 12. Levi content analysis

Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
Levi *https://levi.fi/en **levilapland				
1. Skiing & snowboarding	*Ski animal mascot	*Alpine training park *Ski school *Building the snow park	**Gondolas and chair lifts	*Spring skiing *Snow park
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				*Cross-country family skiing
3. Program services	**Husky safaris **Reindeer sleigh rides		**Fireside coffees	**Sunset snowmobiling *Horse riding *Nighttime photoshoots
4. Leisure & wellness	*Specialty accommodation *Wide selection of restaurants		**Igloo hotel views	
5. Passive nature experiences			**Sunset on fell **Northern Lights **Snowy sceneries **Frozen cottages **Pink and golden moments **Reindeers	*Aerial pictures of people on the fells **Couple hiking in waist-deep snow **Wedding couple under the Northern Lights
6. Culture & events	*Spring After ski parties with famous artists **Santa Claus		**Traditional wooden cabins **Sàmi culture	

Appendix 13. Ylläs content analysis

Image / Video content	Entertainment Realm	Educational Realm	Esthetic Realm	Escapist Realm
1. Skiing & snowboarding		*Ski school *Ski patrol	**Gondolas and chairlifts	*Off-piste skiing and snowboarding *Snow park **Skiing under Northern Lights
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				*Cross-country skiing *Sunset ski touring
3. Program services	*Husky safaris *Reindeer safari			*Winter hiking *Snowmobiling **Winter biking **Winter camping **Horse riding **Paragliding *Looping video of activities
4. Leisure & wellness				**Ice swimming *Sauna gondola above clouds **Hot tub
5. Passive nature experiences			*Reindeers *Snowy sunset *Northern Lights *Stars and fells	**Feeding birds
6. Culture & events	**Santa Claus			**Snow village **Reindeer racing

The table header spans: Ylläs *https://www.yllas.fi/en/ **visityllas

Appendix 14. Ruka content analysis

Ruka *https://www.ruka.fi/en **rukakuusamo & rukaskiresort				
Image / Video content	**Entertainment Realm**	**Educational Realm**	**Esthetic Realm**	**Escapist Realm**
1. Skiing & snowboarding	*Ski animal mascots	*Ski school	*Chair lifts	**Park riding playground **Pro skiers and snowboarders **Spring skiing
2. Ski touring & cross-country skiing				*Dogs on cross-country ski trails
3. Program services	*Husky safari *Husky puppy petting for kids **Reindeer feeding		**fireside coffees	*Children sledging *Northern Lights Expedition *River floating **Horse riding
4. Leisure & wellness				*Ice swimming *Reindeer yoga *Spa *Ice sauna
5. Passive nature experiences			**Pink and golden moments **Starlit skies	
6. Culture & events	*Spring break *Snow festival *Wappulounas **Santa Claus			*Night skiing **Stiga racing *Slalom contest for kids