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# The role of social media marketing in the promotion of mass tourism

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## Abstract

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This thesis aims to understand the influence of social media marketing and its effects on the mass tourism sector.

Today, social media occupies a leading place in our daily lives at different levels, especially in our desire to travel and experience new feelings and emotions.

In recent years, people have been traveling more and more and the tourism sector has become a victim of this influx. Consequently, we are talking about mass tourism.

The study will also tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the tourism sector.

The author conducted a questionnaire aimed at collecting precise data on the French market. France was chosen because of its largest number of visitors in the world.

As a result, precise data on French people's opinions on this topic was collected and analyzed. Therefore, through this analysis, the study helps understand the functioning of social networks and their power. The influence of social media on travel decisions from searching for information to posting photos on travellers' accounts is examined.

The study also looks at whether people leave a review after their experience. For our final main point, we will delve into the limits of mass tourism but also focus on the potential solutions to enroll this phenomenon including the ability to be implemented in today' society.

keywords: Social media, Marketing, Mass tourism, Sustainable

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## **Glossary**

COP            Climate Change Conference

GPD            Gross Domestic Product

# 1 Introduction

Since the 20th century, the tourism sector has boomed. This sector is the driver of economic growth, business development, and job creation around the world. The growth in tourism is due to several factors and in particular because of the decrease in travel costs. The development of air networks leads to a reduction in the cost of plane tickets. International travel is now accessible for more people. This rapid expansion of tourism has also created major challenges, such as overcrowded destinations, environmental degradations and social tensions in local communities. At the end of the 20th century, a digital revolution showed up with the appearance of the internet and social networks. Indeed, the opportunities for accessing information and communications have exponentially multiplied thanks to this new global network. The possibilities for creating and sharing content are now limitless thanks to a variety of available tools. We can note that 67% of the world's population is connected to the internet (Le devoir 2023). Over the years we have witnessed a change in digital practices, linked to the evolution of the internet and the development of social media.

Now, every traveler has access to a multitude of information about their destinations before leaving. Online booking platforms, traveler reviews, and social media have made travel planning and promotion easier for everyone. It involves all parts such as tourists and travel agencies, that is to say, all actors are included. Thanks to the internet, people have access to a variety of information about different cultures and places. Thus, it has sparked a boom in interest in travel. People feel more concerned and understand it as more reachable for them. Traveling does not seem like a boundary, a hurdle anymore. Social media have significantly changed the way to discover and choose vacation destinations, especially when it tackles mass tourism. In this context, social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for tourism industry players to promote their destinations and offerings to a global audience.

Through the media, travelers share their experiences, post attractive pictures, and recommend places to visit. Influencers, whether professionals or enthusiasts,

become virtual guides, inspiring thousands of people to explore new places. The quick popularity of destinations can lead to tourism problems, strained local resources, and cultural preservation. Therefore, it becomes essential to find a balance between effective promotion via social media.

Consequently, it leads us to delve into the main topic: The role of social media marketing in the promotion of mass tourism.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Social media marketing**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

Social media marketing is a promotional strategy that uses social media platforms to reach and engage a targeted audience. It involves creating and distributing content on platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and others, intending to boost brand awareness, and attracting visitors to a website. It generates, leads and encourages direct sales. Approximately 4.2 billion people use at least one social network, which represents around 53% of the global population (Kemp 2021). These numbers highlight the evolution of social media as an essential marketing asset. By cleverly using social media, businesses can reach a large audience, design specific campaigns, and check the effect of their actions. This transformation in the use of social media has changed the way brands communicate with their audiences. It opens new possibilities to build relationships, increase awareness, and spark consumer interest on a global scale. In the context of tourism, it means that destinations and tourism services can use these platforms to reach and inspire travelers. It also values their efficiency in the promotion of their campaigns.

A close link can be established between the 7Ps of marketing and social media. Indeed, the 7Ps of marketing are a set of marketing variables for describing and defining a company's marketing strategy.

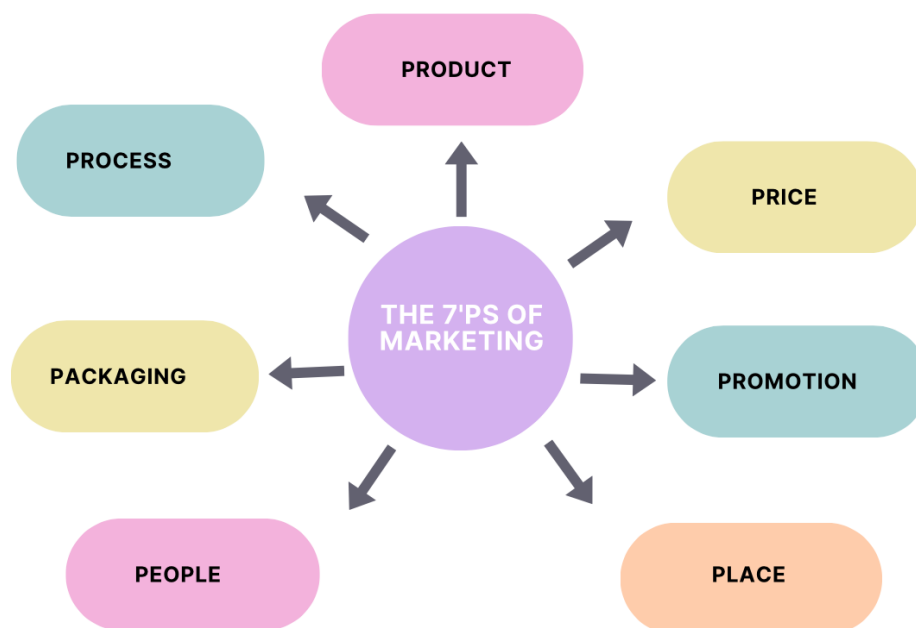


Figure 1. The diagram illustrates the 7Ps of marketing (Autors' interpretation of Mc Carthy model, 2022)

The study will focus on the promotion point because this latest uses online marketing communication with useful tools. Indeed, behind that, there is a real aim of engaging users and targeting a market. This point is part of the online marketing mix. Indeed, "To engage and influence an audience, promotion involves the use of digital ads, media relations, direct engagement, and sales promotions." (Hub digital 2022). This marketing technique aims to optimize the reach of the message and to interact more easily with potential customers online competitions, games, responses to comments, messages, etc.

As a result, platforms play a vital role in product promotion, geographic expansion, value communication, direct customer interaction, process automation, and creating an immersive user experience. This connection between social media and the 7Ps paves the way for companies to design comprehensive marketing and to focus on commitment. By strategically using social media, businesses can not only achieve their marketing goals, but they can also build an impactful social presence. At the same time, they effectively respond to the changing consumer needs.

### 2.1.2 Evolution of social media

The first social network Facebook created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg has been very successful since its launch. It was initially made for university students, and afterwards it opened to the general public in 2006. It offers its users the possibility of maintaining links with their friends, families and acquaintances by engaging in interactions through publications, comments and likes. Additionally, users can participate in groups based on their interests. (Hansell 2006)

In 2023, Facebook had 3 billion monthly active users (Statista 2023). “A technological platform that has an unprecedented influence on our lives” and is also understood as a “new form of communication” (Kirkpatrick 2010) . This social network has been built on a simple idea as explained in the book: “people want to share and stay connected with their friends and the people around them”. From MZ’s point of view, the connection between people opens up and has to go through another dimension “if people share more, the world will become more open and more connected. And a world that is more open and more connected is a better world.” (Kirkpatrick 2010)

A few years after the launch of Facebook, the Instagram platform paid its way in 2010. Its creators Kevin Systrom and Michel Mike Krieger wanted this social network to be a photo distributor. Its filter function will rendered this platform successful. It definitely meant that users were able eventually, regardless of their devices, to publish pictures of good quality. In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram, which allowed the platform to continue to develop. In France, in 2024, the Instagram usage rate among people under 34 years old was 94% compared to 54% for the 35-44 years old (Ricard 2024). It highlights that Instagram is considered as the favorite platform for younger generations and appears less appealing to older people, illustrating a clear generational disparity. However, in the year 2024 in France, Facebook brought together 59% of the French population each month, while Instagram reached 48%, thus generating a difference of 11 points between the two platforms (Ricard 2024). It enlightens that, despite the emergence of new platforms, Facebook maintains its leading

position for the moment although its appeal among the younger generation is declining.

Finally, the brand new app which has been very prosperous in recent years: Tik Tok, founded by Zhang Yiming in September 2016. In 2017, before being called Tik Tok, the platform was called Bytedance and through an international version, it has become Tik Tok. In 2018, Zhang Yiming bought Musical.ly, a major competing company, and merged it with TikTok. This merger-acquisition gives the ByteDance group a head start on the American market. Tik Tok is a platform for creating and sharing super creative and fun short videos, such as challenges, dances or talents. You have the possibility to film, edit and add special effects and sounds. Just like on other social networks, likes, comments and shares are salient.

### 2.1.3 Influence of social media on consumer behaviour and travel decisions

Social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, are efficient and play their roles in the decision of holiday makers' destinations. These platforms influence our behavior by showing us images and videos of dream destinations, which creates specific desires and expectations. On Instagram, engaging photos allow users to discover beautiful places, unique experiences, and recommendations in a visually pleasing way. Famous people and regular users share travel moments that inspire envy in their followers' minds. Then, the "Instagrammable" dimension of a destination influences travel booking for 42% of French people (Edreams 2019). This quotation sheds light on the power of Instagram over people's vacation, it directly impacts their choices and their minds.

This trend is even more marked among the youth (aged from 25 to 34 years-old), where more than half of them (59%) take it into account when making their travel choices. When it comes to TikTok, short, creative videos offer a quick and entertaining way to share travel moments, tips, and recommendations. Viral

trends on TikTok can also make certain destinations or experiences particularly popular, influencing travel choices. (Edreams 2019)

“On TikTok, several hashtags are popular in the tourism sector. For instance, the hashtag #travel generated 6.7 billion views, #tourism reached 410.5 million views, and #TravelTok accumulated an impressive 9.9 billion views, becoming one of the industry's iconic hashtags tourist on the platform. In addition to this, there are specific hashtags to define the type of trip you are looking for, such as #FamilyTravel for family trips, #SoloTravel for solo excursions, and #AdventureTravel for stays full of emotions and feelings” (Morelli 2023). This excerpt depicts the significance of hashtags on TikTok. Indeed, a video will be viewed and shared more if it has a hashtag. The hashtags must be chosen well depending on the content of the video. So users who wish to view this type of video will come across the video more easily.

Interestingly, 77% of TikTok users indicate that the platform has played a role in inspiring them and helping to discover new destinations. Additionally, 50% have booked a vacation after seeing posted content, with 74% of these bookings which were not pre-planned. Thus, Instagram and TikTok play a major role in the process of choosing travel destinations. Attractive images on Instagram arouse desires, particularly among young people 25-34 year olds, and the notion of “Instagrammable” influences bookings. TikTok, thanks to its viral videos, also exerts a notable influence on travel preferences. (Morelli 2023)

## 2.2 Tourism industry

### 2.2.1 Definition

First of all, by defining the concept of tourism "Tourism includes the activities carried out by people during their travels and stays in places located outside their usual environment for a consecutive period not exceeding one year, for leisure purposes, for business and other reasons not links to the exercise of a paid activity in the place visited." (Insee 2019).

The tourism industry includes a wide range of services and infrastructure, such as transports, accommodations, dining, entertainments, and attractions. This field plays a significant role in the global economy, contributing significantly to GDP, job creation, and cultural exchange. Between 1951 and 1989, the percentage of French people who go on vacation considerably increased, from 31% (10 million French people) to 60.7% (33 million French people) (Cousin & Réau 2011). This rise is explained by economic prosperity, the reduction of working hours and the democratization of access to the car. Indeed, it facilitates access to holidays and helps the holidaymakers to discover this area.

### 2.2.2 Evolution of tourism and development of mass tourism

At the same time, the budget allocated to leisure and vacation is still increasing. From the end of the 1960s, we observed a generalization of major summer migrations across Europe, with a salient movement from northern countries towards new seaside resorts located in the south, (Cousin & Réau 2011). More and more people were able to take a vacation and to afford luxuries that were once kept for a specific category of the population. The development of seaside resorts in the south has opened this opportunity to a considerable number of people. By illustration, the seaside resort "La Grande Motte" in the south of France is a typical representation of this mass tourism. It is defined as block buildings built by the sea for purely tourist purposes. In addition, the attractive prices offered by civil aviation and travel agencies, by offering a range of "cost"

products or stays, have contributed to this tourism boom. Towns transformed into seaside resorts have adapted to this tourist influx and have rethought their local economy. Indeed, mass tourism has allowed a city to earn a living from tourist revenues. Thus, the area saw the arrival of souvenir shops, the opening of new restaurants, and activities.

In France, the tourism sector has recently experienced a strong growth, which has had a positive impact on the country's economy. There was an escalation of 1.2 billion euros compared to 2019, which represents a total revenue of 58 billion euros in 2022 (République Française official website 2022). This significant expansion is explained by the resumption of tourism activities after a peculiar period due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Easing travel restrictions and creating a new confidence in traveler's minds have contributed to this growth.

### 2.2.3 The effect of Covid 19 on the tourism sector

At the end of 2019, the first patient infected by Covid 19 was identified in Wuhan, a Chinese province. A few months later, COVID-19 appeared all over the world and became a global pandemic. Millions of deaths, lockdowns for some countries, the closure of borders, and the shutdown of the economy led to serious financial consequences. In France, all sectors deemed non-essential were required to stop their activities for several months.

The results of a survey seek to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the preference of travelers for crowded versus non-crowded options demonstrated that uncertainty and perceived risk can influence travel preferences. Indeed, tourists would have a preference for less popular destinations when the threat or the fear of contamination is significant. For tourism stakeholders, managing this drop and this rise in tourism is not always easy, they must constantly adapt themselves. (Park, Kim, J, Kim, S, Lee, & Giroux 2021)

The tourism sector has been greatly impacted by this pandemic and the economic consequences have been difficult. In 2020, tourism GDP represented 3% of France's GDP in 2021 compared to 4.1% before the Covid-19 health crisis. In addition, a very significant absence of foreign tourists can be observed in France in 2021. The foreign tourists living in uncertainty linked to the pandemic context had preferred to stay in their country in 2020 (Chassard M 2023). "Spending by non-residents only represents 29% of domestic tourist consumption in 2020, compared to 37% in 2019". (Chassard Mélanie and Mainguené Alice 2022)

#### 2.2.4 Consequence of Covid 19 on the tourism industry

As everyone knows, when a disaster happens, every decision-making or travel behavior is called into question and the tourism industry is therefore affected. The industry has witnessed a series of disasters ranging from natural disasters to terrorist attacks in many countries, and regions around the world in recent decades. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was a global crisis affecting almost all regions and sectors.

The first lockdown began in Wuhan province in China and gradually spread across the world. Many people were confined for several months, which led to an unprecedented economic recession. The almost total lockdown imposed in response to the pandemic led to a 98% drop in the number of international tourists in May 2020 compared to 2019. There was a drop of 56 % of tourist attendance compared to the previous year. It translates into a drop of 300 million tourists and 320 billion USD have been lost in international tourism revenue. These figures are significantly higher and are even tripled compared to the financial loss experienced in the tourism sector during the global economic crisis in 2009. (ONU 2020)

Indeed, it's important to take a closer look at the decision-making process of foreigners when they book holidays. During the dissimilar peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic, online travel booking fell sharply but as soon as the cases of the

COVID-19 lowered, everyone started booking flights again. It is very important to emphasize the fact that the crisis context slowed down tourists from buying their tickets a few days before. It is definitely possible to establish a link between the promotion from the marketing business and the decisions of travelers according to the context of their countries. It helps us to understand which strategy could be profitable and efficient during a context of crisis. (Gallego, Font, & González-Rodríguez 2022)

The crisis of the COVID-19 has deeply changed the way we used to communicate, according to the survey of Facebook users. The results put the emphasis on 3 main points:

1. It has changed the use of social media in terms of linguistic text features (i.e there are more expressions meaning uncertainty, confidence, emotionality, the use of the first-person story-tellers, a greater text length but also texts with less specificity)
2. It also concerns the consumer's social media engagement such as the increasing likes, shares and comments.
3. Therefore, it explains that social media are a reflection of the society's changes. It shows off that there is a before covid 19 and an after. It surely requires versatility and changes which have to be taken into account such as new users' preferences and the different types of contents that consumers enjoy now.

(Pachucki, Grohs, & Scholl-Grissemann 2022)

This pandemic has left a profound change in the way we travel. First of all, when it comes to the financial level, the tourism sector has been very impacted, many trips have been canceled or postponed, and many companies have gone bankrupt. Furthermore, in the months following the pandemic, tourists prioritized their travels in their own countries. Not only that the pandemic has aroused fear but also the choice towards less touristy or popular destinations in order to avoid crowds and consequently contamination. People have lived at home for several months and have gotten used to not seeing too many people. Therefore, the

seaside resorts do not attract as much as they did before the pandemic. Finally, the pandemic has prompted reflection on the sustainability of tourism. Consequently, a trend among tourists since covid favoring more sustainable and eco-friendly travel experiences.

## 2.3 Social media marketing as applied to tourism

### 2.3.1 Social media as a tourism promotion tool

Instagram appears as the favorite app for most people who look for local activities and the must see locations. Next, Instagram offers to travelers the opportunity to share their vacation memories, such as an online photo album, to inspire other users and encourage them to discover new destinations.

Instagram remains the most popular app for the campaigns of influencers. All tourism stakeholders must be aware of this. Indeed, we notice that today, Instagram thanks to Stories formats creates proximity with the audience and Reels generate more commitment than a classic publication (3.2% compared to 1.8% for a post). Furthermore, some hashtags such as #explore, #travel or #travelgram have more than 300,000 mentions (Caillebotte 2023). The choice of format and hashtags is therefore a very important element to take into account because it increases the visibility and the attractiveness of video.

TikTok heavily relies on the video format to keep the attention of its users. Short video vlogs are particularly popular and are very successful on the platform. These videos transport the users on virtual journeys and spark dreams. A daily viewing of these videos encourages and seduces more and more internet users to go on vacation.

TikTok plays a role distinct from Instagram. In fact, this platform is more often used as a search engine, offering the possibility of finding out about a destination,

collecting feedback or finding activity ideas. TikTok is considered and seen as a potential for the tourism actors to exploit and to delve into. (Caillebotte 2023)

Generation Z brings together people born between 1997 and 2012, we call them “zoomers”, fans of short formats and video content. These young people have been using TikTok for several years and have taken over the platform. Today they represent 40% of TikTok users. (Billon 2023)

Influencers play a strategic role in the sale of tourism products. By leveraging their large social media follower base, they can promote tourism destinations, experiences, and services in an authentic and engaging way. Their ability to create engaging content, through photos and videos, allows tourism brands to reach a targeted audience.

Influencers are the best way to reach your communication targets. Influencers have an effect on people under the age of 40. Thus, brands which have a targeted market (people under 40) must measure the extent of influencers in the promotion of their products today. During a conference which took place at the Salon des bloggers de voyage in Ajaccio, Alex Vizéo recalled that videos represented 60% of web traffic. “Photography inspires, engages, but with video, we are carried away.” (Bouillet 2022) This sentence clearly shows what is happening now. Tourists find inspiration on social media by looking at images, but videos are becoming more and more popular. Nowadays, we must choose this path to go forward through social media.

In recent years, numerous surveys have been carried out to measure this new form of tourism promotion by influencers. From these surveys it has emerged that influencers have a strong impact on tourism. (Magno, & Cassia 2018)

### 2.3.2 Sharing experiences and recommendations

Travelers particularly like sharing their experiences on social networks. First of all, with the aim of showing this good time with their friends, and to give an opinion about their trip. Travelers publish the unusual, the must-see places that they had appreciated, the nice places but also the deceiving ones.

84% of users have consulted the profile of a travel influencer before choosing a destination, and 19% of them do this regularly. This trend is also observed among younger people, where 35% of Gen Z uses social media to plan their vacation. It shows off the significance of social media for the tourism industry. (Caillebotte 2023)

It is crucial to look into the attractions and sights of a vacation destination. Paper tourist guides offer a wide range of interesting activities, but nowadays tourists check places online and give great importance to reviews. Social networks will have the final say on whether they choose to go there or not, it means that social networks will be the turning point for the decision-making for tourists. (Liu, Mehraliyev, Liu, & Schuckert, 2019)

For example, “The airport of Alicante has launched two direct flights with Portugal. Following this, we decided to bring four or five Portuguese influencers to start attracting families and people under 40 from this market. Influencers give you the notoriety you need” (Chief data officer) (Femenia-Serra and Gretzel 2019). This strategy goes beyond simple traditional advertising by offering a more personalized and authentic approach. By involving influencers, the airport was able to reach a qualified audience and it created buzz around the new air route, which could result in a salient expansion in the number of travelers from Portugal.

The tourism industry must therefore pay a close attention to customer experience. Today, a dissatisfied customer will share it on social networks and could lead to a decline for the company’s reputation. Furthermore, a new phenomenon has been developing since the arrival of social media; in fact, sharing pictures of your

vacation may reflect a certain form of tourism ego. This phenomenon consists of going on vacation to a specific place because of its Instagrammable potential. Travelers are increasingly looking for the most Instagrammable photo depending on the charm and the eco-friendly consequences.

### 2.3.3 Virale effect

The viral effect is a content broadcasted on the internet which quickly gains momentum thanks to numerous shares. The image or the video is seen by a large number of people, because several Internet users have shared it within their own circle of contacts. Several factors must be taken into account to take an efficient picture or video.

Firstly, below the post, in the biography, you must identify the hashtags necessary to promote the post and to maximize its audience. Hashtags allow anyone who likes content to find similar content by simply clicking on the hashtag. Thus, a maximum number of Internet users are more likely to come across a post or video. There are 3 categories of hashtags: trending hashtags, branded hashtags, and content hashtags.

- Trending hashtags, they reflect current trends on social media. For example #vacation, # summer, ... if you want to post something about holidays.
- Branded hashtags are created by a company with the aim of promoting its brand through communication campaigns. They can include the company name, a slogan, a specific event, product, or campaign.
- Content hashtags even highlight the content of the message rather than the brand itself. They may concern the type of product or service offered, or the geographical location of the company.

Depending on the content, it is important to pay attention to the type of hashtags used. Hashtags evolve very quickly, so you have to stay connected and up to date with the latest trends. They help increasing the visibility of the post.

Secondly, the viral effect can be very productive for promoting content but also be counterproductive, in fact a post can also have the effect of bad buzz. A disturbing sentence, a photo or a poorly taken video can quickly gain momentum on social networks and thus cause a wave of negative opinions regarding a post. This bad buzz effect must be taken into account, and it is necessary to keep that in mind. It can be criticized anyway, and this bad buzz effect should be avoided at all costs. For example, it could generate a bad reputation for a place and thus reduce its tourist numbers.

Therefore, the viral effect has an impact on mass tourism. Hashtags expand the visibility of some destinations and attract a new big wave of tourists. Tourists place a great importance on photos and videos during their trip. We see that more and more tourists no longer go just to experience an adventure but also to take the so-called "Instagrammable" photos. These photos are intended to show to the others that they have been to this place, that is to say they have been to a well-known place. A new phenomenon has appeared in recent years: ego tourism. It is the act of traveling prioritizing photos and videos rather than enjoying the experience. On the other hand, bad buzz can harm a tourist destination and make it less attractive. Today social media is a very important part of traveling.

#### 2.3.4 Consequences on the environment and local culture

Social networks highlight splendid places but attract too many tourist waves. These places are not able to accommodate so many visitors simultaneously. Mass tourism has repercussions on the environment and local cultures. The massive influx of tourists can cause excessive pressure on fragile ecosystems. Natural sites can be damaged, biodiversity can be threatened, and

overconsumption of local resources, such as water and energy, can worsen environmental problems.

The opening of tourism has all led to numerous abuses and serious consequences for certain destinations which are no longer able to manage this tourist flow. In fact, "the generalization of tourism has been accompanied by a considerable increase in greenhouse gas emissions produced by the sector, mainly linked to the use of highly polluting means of transport such as 'airplane or cruise ships'" (Pelletier 2023). During COP25, it was estimated that emissions from tourism-related transport constituted 22% of total transport emissions globally. The growth of the tourism sector therefore leads to a rise in energy consumption and excessive exploitation of natural resources on a global scale. An escalation of mass tourism in attendance means saturation of places, damage created to natural spaces and biodiversity which does not have time to renew itself, without forgetting pollution and the growth in the use of natural resources. Mass tourism leads to saturation of sites, damage to natural spaces and biodiversity cannot regenerate in time. Pollution deepens and so does the use of natural resources.

Due to its beauty, the creeks of Marseille have seen their attendance explode in recent years. Indeed, every year thousands of people come to admire these rocks and coves. Many tourists have shared their clichés on social networks, and it has attracted many tourists to tour. However, attendance has exploded in recent years and has caused serious degradation of the coastline (erosion, weakening of paths linked to the trampling of thousands of daily visitors). The creeks of Marseille were not able to accommodate so many tourists. The Calanques park has therefore decided to react and set up a quota system in order to regulate attendance. A gauge of 400 tourists per day has been set instead of 2,500 previously. Nowadays, in order to be able to access it, you must book online in advance. This measure, put in place from 2022, works well and has helped avoid the rapid deterioration of the creeks. (Réault 2022)

### 3 Research methodology

#### 3.1 The research question

Through this analysis, some aspects, once put aside, will be inspected deeply. It means that it will be dealt with the effect of preservation of the places, victims of their success and becoming mass tourism places. It leads us to wonder the following question:

To what extent does social media marketing influence the development of mass tourism in places that have until now been preserved?

#### 3.2 The method to use to collect the data

For this study an investigation was conducted. A challenge has been made through investigation to discover new resources and methods of research. It exposes a wide variety of answers, and it enables to collect a large amount of data in a short period of time. Thanks to this technique it will allow me to be more efficient and to collect data on a larger sample. First of all, for the collection, a panel of people aged 20 to 40 who are going on vacation has been chosen. This questionnaire will be composed of targeted questions in order to deepen the understanding of consumer behavior before, during and after their trip. It is also based on measuring the impact of social media marketing on the tourism sector. In a second part, the consequences of covid 19 on consumer's choices of vacations are highlighted. Finally, a deeper analysis will be conducted by going through the limits of this mass tourism with the implementation of solutions to reduce the environmental consequences generated.

- Do social networks affect your choice for your travel?
- Before going on vacation, I usually look at my travel destination on Instagram and TikTok.
- When you are traveling, do you usually share your photos and videos on social networks?

- On a scale of 1 to 5, when I am on vacation, is it important for me to post beautiful photos on social media?
- At the end of my vacation I have a habit of leaving a review on social media to share my experience.
- What types of tourism do you prefer and what do you usually enjoy doing on holidays?
- Since the pandemic I prefer going to less touristy destinations.
- Concerning mass tourism, I find that the establishment of quotas in specific tourist places is a good thing.
- On a scale of 1 to 5, I agree to book a slot to access a protected site. I am rather sensitive to protecting nature during my vacation.

This study focuses on the French market, by favoring the participation of people residing in France to answer my survey. This more specific approach will let me obtaining more detailed and contextualized information, adapted to the characteristics of the French market. Moreover, France is the most famous leading tourist destination in the world. Tourism in France is very developed which will permit me to have concrete and relevant answers.

In addition, it enables to collect specific data such as popular destinations in France, local health concerns, as well as the influence of French culture on holiday choices. This geographical focus should therefore contribute to a more in-depth and precise interpretation of consumer behaviors in the French context.

### 3.3 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

A choice has been made to go through a quantitative analysis by obtaining more precise and concrete information through exact figures.

It delved into the idea of having a clearer analysis with factual results. As a result, this study will use two analytical methods: descriptive and comparative to explore both sides of this survey.

Descriptive analysis is used to calculate averages and percentages, which determines which portion of the population prefers specific types of vacation. The plan is to seek which part of the population uses social media (influenced by attractive advertisements through marketing) to plan their holidays.

Furthermore, comparative analysis complements descriptive analysis by interpreting consumer trends and behaviors. This comparative approach tends to contextualize the results obtained from the descriptive analysis and thus, offering a more in-depth vision of survey's answers.

By combining these two methods, the study gained a comprehensive understanding of the consumer preferences and influences in tourism. Thus, the results should provide detailed information, not only on current trends, but also on the underlying reasons that guide travelers' choices.

### 3.4 Conduct the survey

This survey is composed of 15 questions. It has been made to be quick and easy to answer. Generally speaking, it is easier to obtain a large number of responses if the survey is fast to complete. In order to get answers, the survey was posted on social media such as Instagram, TikTok but also privately to my friends and family. It has been successful, the survey received positive feedback via messages and those around me even shared the link with their acquaintances in order to obtain a large database.

This study managed to obtain 100 responses, this number of responses will allow to conduct a complete and relevant study. The study broadcasted my questionnaire for two weeks to make sure that people had sufficient time to answer.

## 4 Research results and analysis

### 4.1 Analysis of the selected population (20- 40 years)

First, this study will analyze the sample of this questionnaire, then its most common travel companion and finally it will analyze the most common type of tourism in their trip.

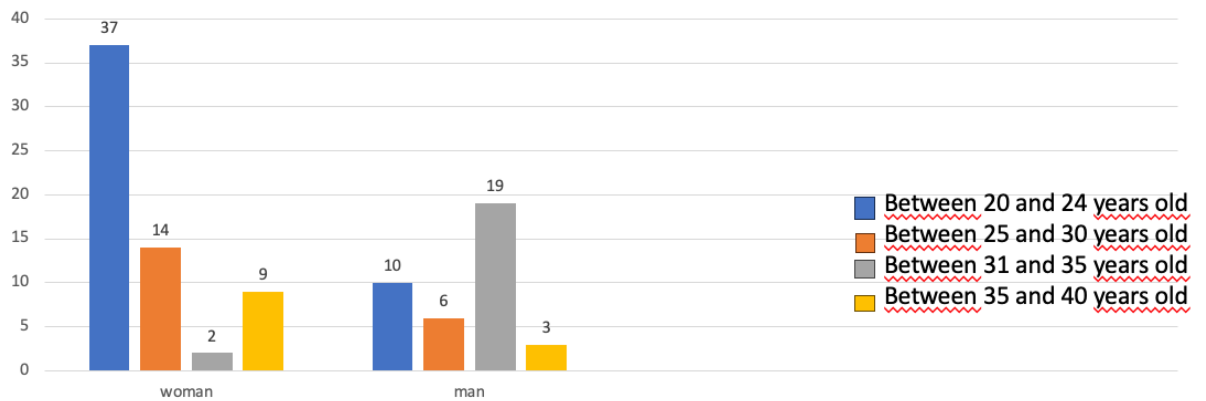


Figure 2. Relation between age and gender (20-40 years)

The analysis of this questionnaire covers the age group of 20 to 40 years. As noted, 62% of respondents are women and 38% are men. The age group that responded the most to my questionnaire is the age group ranging from 20 to 24 years old, with 47% of respondents. Indeed, this age group represents the larger number of social networks users. Social networks work perfectly among young people, this channel is considered as the most efficient and it shows off an impressive activity on the platforms. Moreover, a strong response activity among women is aged 25 to 30 with a participation rate of 14%. Among men, the age group of 31 to 35 has been the most successful with a participation rate of 19%.

This target market ranging from 20 to 40 years old is a population that has both seen the internet appearance and the arrival of social networks. It also engulfs the younger generation who was born and grew up with the internet and social media. Today, social media are considered as predominant in daily lives.

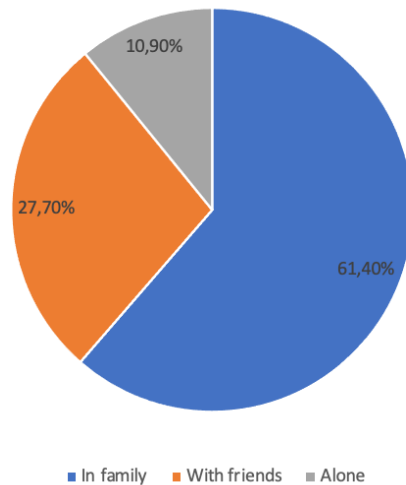


Figure 3. When you travel on holiday, which is most common travel companion.

Through this study, a majority of people aged from 20 to 40 is noted and it represents the biggest sample of this survey. Indeed, this age group mainly favors family destinations, which probably reflects the fact that a large proportion of these young travelers still goes on vacation with their parents. This trend represents 61.40% of responses, highlighting the importance of family travel in this age group. However, it is also interesting to note that almost a third of young travelers choose to go on vacation with their friends, which engulfs 27.70% of responses. For this age category, the desire to travel and to live new experiences is considered as very important.

This diversity of responses will allow to fully understand the choices of tourists and what they are looking for.

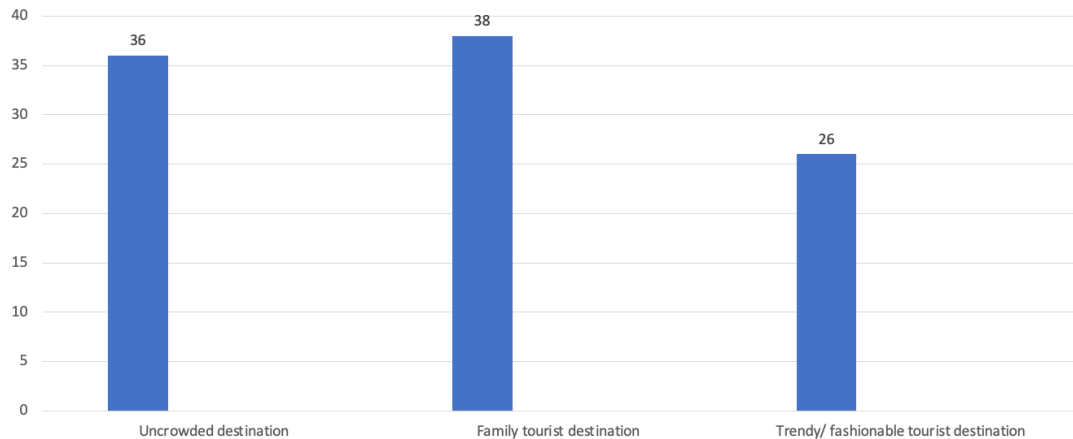


Figure 4. What types of tourism do you prefer and what do you usually enjoy doing on holidays?

Many answers from this study demonstrate that people who go on holidays with their family are regarded as a large number. Therefore, 38% of people choose to go to family destinations, but 36% of people are attracted by less tourist destinations. In the end, only 26% of people are in favor of trendy/fashionable destinations. On one hand this trend reveals a diversification in tourist preferences, with some popular and sometimes well-established family destinations. On the other hand, some others seek more authentic, less crowded experiences. This could be interpreted as a growing desire to get off the beaten track, discovering local cultures and unspoilt landscapes, while avoiding tourist crowds and the usual hustle and bustle. Fashionable tourist destinations will reflect this craze and this impact of social media on the tourism sector.

Thus, it appears that tourists are increasingly seeking unique, personalized travel experiences tailored to their specific interests and family needs. These diverse results about the destination preferences showcase the significance of the tourism industry which provides different options from traditional family destinations to more remote, less crowded locations.

## 4.2 Check Analysis of changes about their travel habits over the years

In recent years, social media has taken an important place in our lives, and we are going to analyze their impact on our travel decisions.

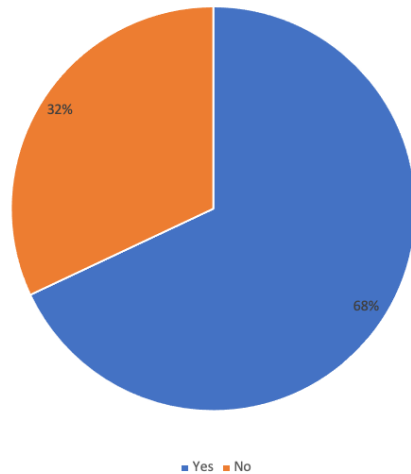


Figure 5. Do social network affect your choice for your travel?

The growing impact of social media on our travel habits is undeniable, as the graph demonstrates. With 68% of respondents saying that social media influences their travel decisions, it is clear that these platforms are increasingly playing a major role in how we plan and experience our trips.

Through these social media interactions, travelers are exposed to a multitude of information and inspiration. Travel decisions are shaped and influenced by social media, providing them with new ideas and travel desires.

This influence of social media on traveler behavior means that the tourism industry must adapt and take into account this new reality. Tourism businesses must recognize the importance of social media in traveler decision-making and adjust their strategies accordingly.

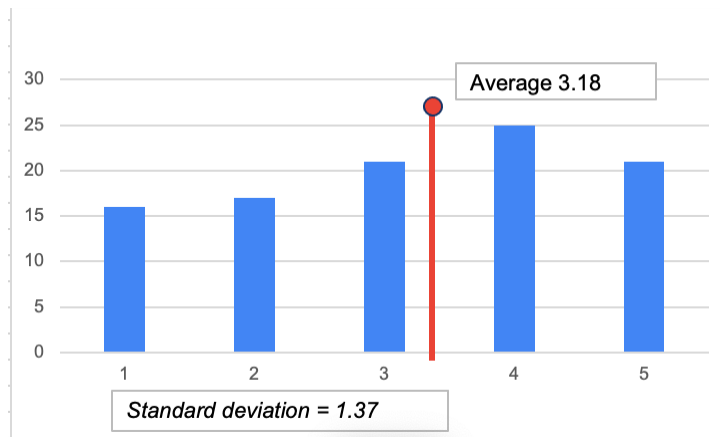


Figure 6. On a scale of 1 to 5, when I'm on vacation is it important for me to post most beautiful photos on social media (1: totally disagree 5: strongly agree)

This graph showcases a very different reality. Indeed, the answers to these questions are diverse. From the tourists' point of view, taking pictures and posting them are quite a habit and are used to do it. Thanks to the graph 3.18 on a scale from 1 to 5 is the number which represents the quantity of people used to posting pictures. Nevertheless, the standard deviation is represented by 1.37 which means heterogeneity in responses.

Regarding the results based on age difference, significant discrepancies emerge. People under 30 tend to place more importance on the act of sharing beautiful photos on social media while being on vacation. For this category, posting stories and photos on social networks has become an established habit.

This trend can be explained by several factors, including the influence of social media culture and the search for social validation. Younger generations share their vacations easier online, they were born with it and it is a habit for them. Furthermore, there is a system of imitation, which consists of copying influencers and having an online notoriety which reflects a certain notoriety in real life for the youngest generations. Sharing on social media has become an integrated part of

their travel experience and a way to create digital memories and to stay connected.

Ultimately, a growing importance of social media is noted about how people perceive and consider their travel experiences, especially for younger generations.

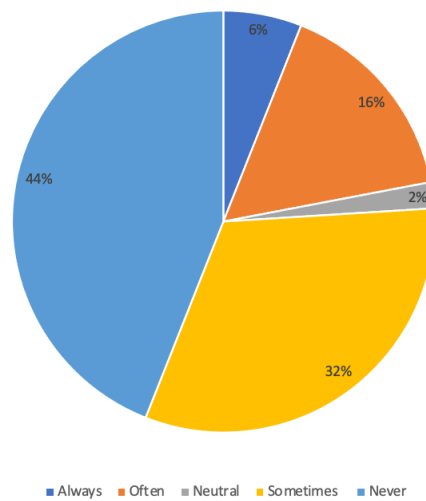


Figure 7. At the end of my vacation I have habit of leaving a review on social media to share my experience.

Travel destinations are constantly checked before booking, this analysis can be seen through this graph. However, they are more reluctant to leave a review on social networks because we note that 44% say they never leave a review and 32% do it sometimes. People like to share their vacation photos and Instagrammable moments, but leaving a review is another process. They like to find out and take into account the opinions of travelers on social networks before leaving, but the majority only look and do not leave an opinion after their visit. But, 6% of the respondents assume of doing it every time. This active minority could play a crucial role by influencing travel decisions, as their regular reviews can have a significant impact on the perception of tourist destinations and experiences.

### 4.3 The significance of social media in the travel decisions

Social media has a crucial role in tourism, an analyse is handled to focus on the preferences between two social media for sharing their vacation moments.

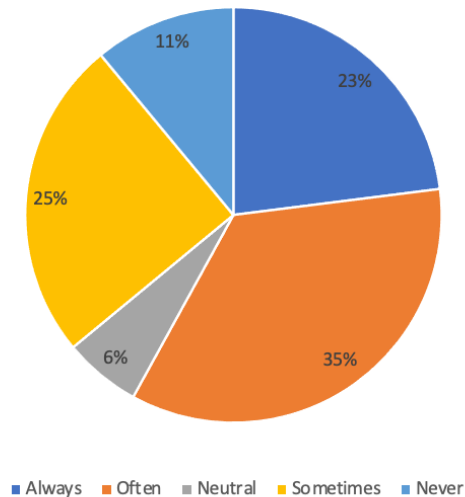


Figure 8. Before going on vacation, I usually look at my travel destination on Instagram and TikTok

Before going on vacation 53% of respondents say they watch their destinations on social media (Instagram and TikTok). Unlike the previous generations, today's tourists don't rely any longer on traditional tour guides when planning their trips. Instead, they are turning to social media to find more dynamic, authentic, and interactive information about the places they want to visit. These platforms offer instant access to a multitude of visual content, created by travelers themselves as well as by influencers and tourism professionals.

Once again, social media are noted as crucial and salient part in people's lives when it comes to travel. People want travel experiences that truly resonate with them, where they can find authentic advice and interesting perspectives from people who have the same interests.

Ultimately, this development underlies the importance for businesses in the tourism sector to develop a strong social media presence and to create engaging and relevant content. It definitely attracts and retains travelers.

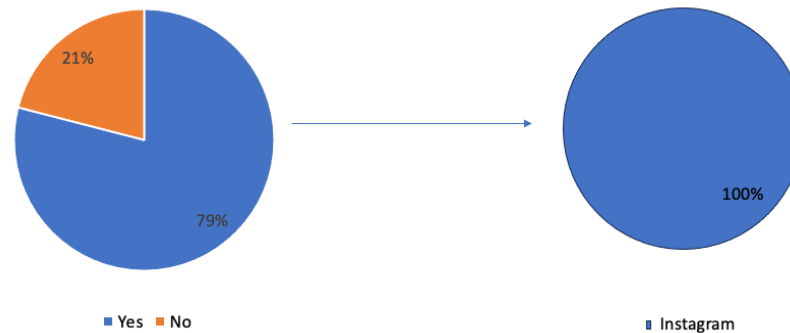


Figure 9. Diagram left: When you are travelling, do you usually share your photos and videos on social networks? Diagram right: If your answer is positive, do you prefer sharing your photos and travel experiences either on Instagram or TikTok?

79% of respondents say they share their vacation photos on social networks. It still demonstrates that tourists consider it consequential to share their vacation photos. In addition, aesthetic is regarded as determining on an Instagram account. People unanimously responded that they preferred using Instagram to share their vacation photos. It means that Instagram is reckoned a photo sharing platform but also a relevant communication hub.

Nevertheless, TikTok seems to be used more as a platform for promoting tourist places rather than as a space for sharing personal travel memories. When it comes to choosing between Instagram and TikTok, tourists mostly opt for Instagram.

Results of that survey can be made, Instagram is still relevant today and despite the dazzling progress of TikTok in recent years, this social media has not yet

become a common practice among 20–40-year-olds in France to share their holiday memories.

#### 4.4 The role of covid 19 in travel decisions

Covid 19 has impacted the entire world and has strongly affected the field of tourism. A review is conducted to evaluate the consequence of the choice of vacation and the importance of that choice today.

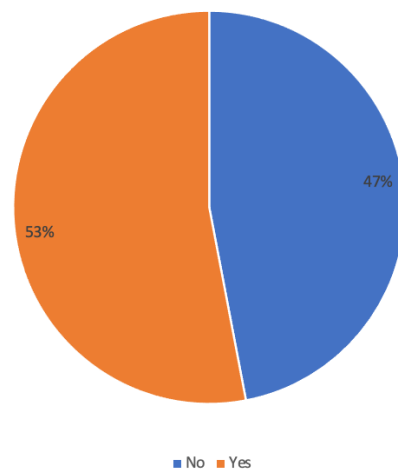


Figure 10. Did the covid 19 pandemic impact your choice about your destinations for your holidays in recent years?

Following a significant drop in tourism in France due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The long term repercussions of this crisis as long as the expected development in the tourism market will be explored in this part.

Indeed, 52.2% of respondents say that covid 19 has had an influence on the choice of their destinations in recent years. Many people have opted for less touristy destinations, closer to home in order to minimize the risk of contamination. Fear is also part of this tourist influence, the fear of being sick and

contaminating those around you has reduced the choice concerning travel destinations.

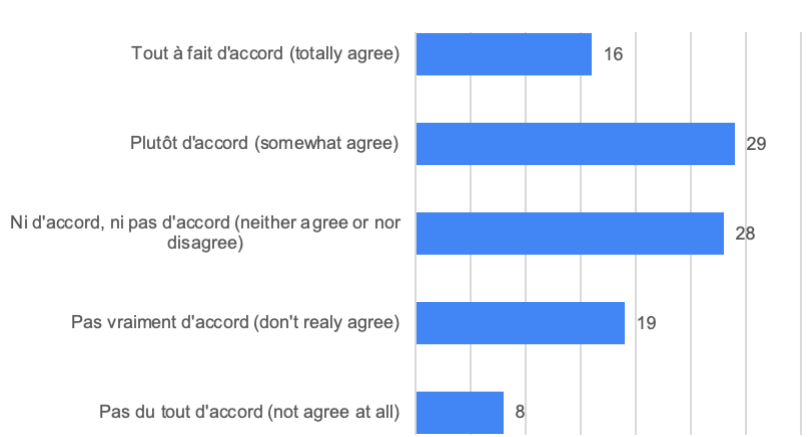


Figure 11. Since the pandemic I prefer for less touristy destinations.

The diverse of tourism has been shaped by the pandemic. In fact, 29 of them said they “agreed” that they would now prefer less touristy destinations. Nevertheless, 28 of them have a neutral opinion, which helps to draw attention to the continuation of this pandemic. This neutrality suggests some uncertainty about travel preferences in the future. It once again stresses the significance of monitoring the situation of covid- 19 which can evolve at any time. While the health crisis now seems to be behind us in many places, it is crucial to remain attentive to new developments and possible resurgences, which could influence travelers' choices in the months and years to come.

#### 4.5 Change in their travel habits in recent years

Mass tourism leads to excesses and overconsumption. The study will also focus on the solutions put in place by popular sites trying to limit access and promote more sustainable tourism.

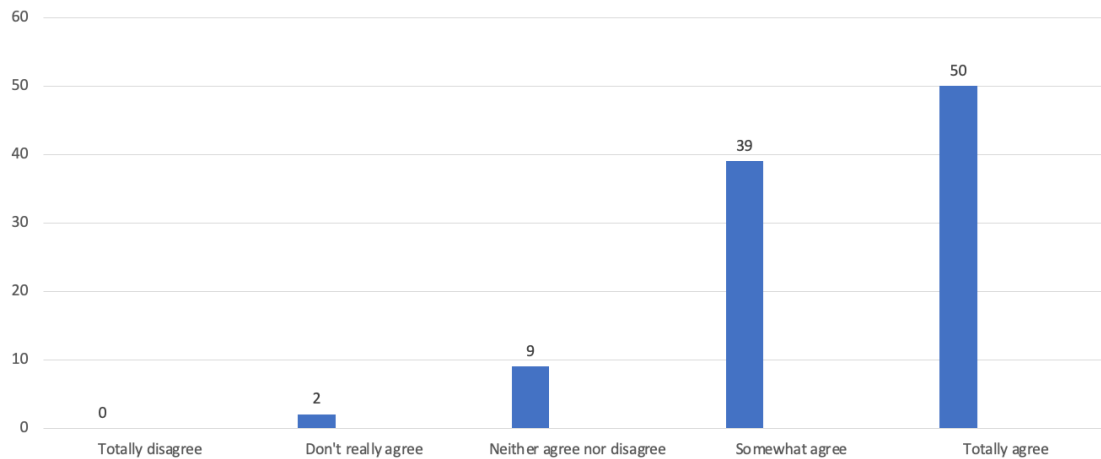


Figure 12 Concerning mass tourism, I find that the establishment of quotas in specific tourist places is a good idea.

Thus, the study is now going to pinpoint the phenomenon of mass tourism and the establishment of quotas to regulate this tourist flow. 50% of respondents say they totally agree with this system of establishing quotas to limit mass tourism and 39% of respondents say they somewhat agree. So, 89% of responses are in favor of this measure.

Most of the tourists support this idea, which shows that it is important to have rules in place to manage tourism. Using quotas could be an answer and a way to help to protect the places that people visit while providing respectful and eco-friendly experiences. It will help maintain the diversity of tourist destinations.

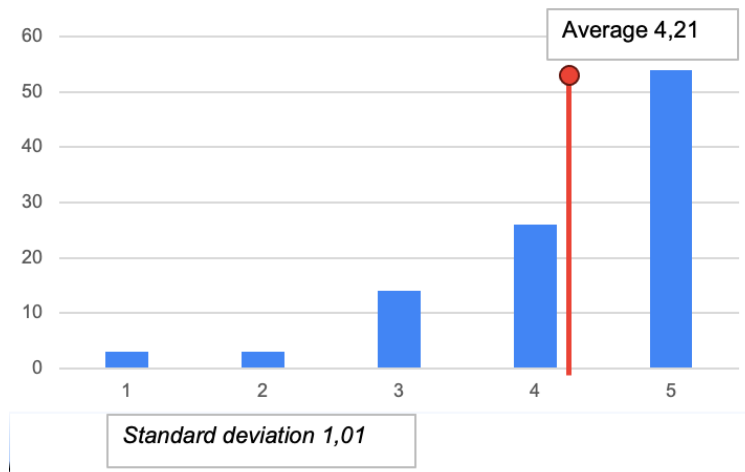


Figure 13. On a scale of 1 to 5, I agree to book a slot to access a protected site (1: totally disagree and 5: strongly agree)

Afterwards, the study delved into the topic of organizing vacations whether the tourist agreed or not to plan their vacations and book a slot in advance to access a protected site. Unsurprisingly, 54% of respondents are totally agreeable to the idea and 26% are just agreeable about it. The average is 4,21 on a scale from 1 to 5 shows that respondents mostly agree. The standard deviation being 1.01 is depicted as a small standard deviation. It means a rather homogeneity once again. As a consequence, an emergence of a lire respectful tourism concerning nature can be noticed. There is a growing awareness about the consequences of this mass tourism on the environment. People wish to act differently with an eco-friendly mind. Tourists are willing to go on tour further away and are ready to change their behaviors during travel by protecting ecosystems and local communities.

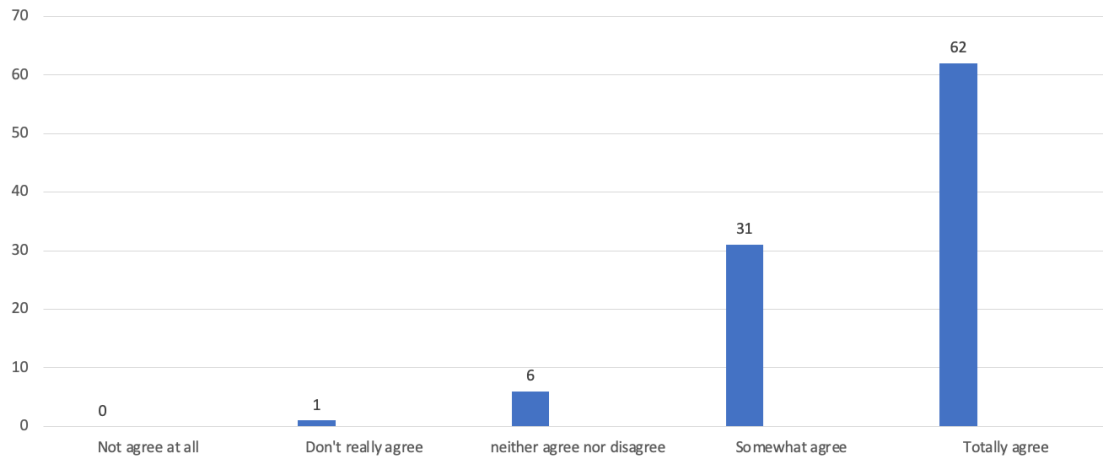


Figure 14. I am rather sensitive to protect the nature during my vacation.

The trend is depicted through the graph, indeed, 62% of respondents say they are totally sensitive to the protection of nature during their vacation. Indeed, a strong desire to respect, and protect nature and the environment has been noted through this survey, and tourists are willing to limit their ecological impact. The tourism industry should be aware of these changes and must adapt to develop with eco-friendly consciousness.

It goes in the right direction, with an eco-friendly mind, it raises awareness about the environment and people's responsibilities during their travels. It will thwart the negative effects of mass tourism which affect everyone.

## 5 Conclusion

As a result, social media marketing and mass tourism are closely linked concepts. The initial issue at stake has to be heralded: The role of social media marketing in the promotion of mass tourism.

This study allowed us to analyze the role of social media marketing and their influence on consumer choices. Easy access to information has made social media a source of variables to take into account. The reviews left by tourists can endanger it or, on the contrary, lead to its success and a very significant tourist flow.

Networks lead to the exponential development of mass tourism with its excesses. The sites overflowing with affluence, the temple of consumption, and the endangerment of the coastline is not sustainable over time. However, the Covid 19 crisis has slowed down this development and led to profound changes in tourism, raising questions about their long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, the analysis of this questionnaire allowed to study consumer behaviors and their expectations for the future in terms of tourism. Before going on vacation, most tourists consult the Internet to learn more about their destinations. This step allows them to discover attractions, activities, recommended restaurants, and advice from other travelers. Moreover, more and more people use social networks and attach great importance to this practice during their vacations. It has become common for many to share their experiences in real time while traveling. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the long-term effects on tourist behavior appear limited. Travelers continue to plan their trips and have no plans to change their travel destinations. However, although tourists appear ready to travel again, it is necessary to note that traveler behaviors and expectations may have evolved.

This survey revealed some surprises by showing that Instagram is the preferred platform of tourists for practicing their photos and TikTok is more for the moment

a platform for promoting tourist places. Tourist sites therefore have every interest in paying attention to their social networks to attract tourists.

Nevertheless, tourists are increasingly sensitive to their ecological footprint and are looking for more sustainable tourism, respectful of nature. The establishment of quotas would seem to be a solution accepted by tourists.

As a matter of fact, and as a very current issue, it leads to wonder about the environmental aspects of tourism. Global warming could be another point to our next study about the impact on tourism in the next few years. If we look deeper into this “green travel” we can find out that 500 tourist municipalities are labeled “tourist resorts”. This label aims to promote eco-friendly tourism. It helps to know and to be aware of the opportunities for tourists in any place. It is certainly for a new way of traveling because each municipality seeks to obtain this label and undertakes developments for being considered a respectful touristy place, rightful for the environment. A link could be established between these new green places and the social media stars: Instagram and TikTok in order to develop a bond between progress and nature. A sponsorship could be implemented in a way to make people aware and have a real consciousness about nature and its stakes when it comes to travel.

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## Appendices

The survey was conducted with a French sample. The questions and answers are translated into French and English.

### **The role of social media marketing in the promotion of mass tourism.**

Ce questionnaire a pour but d'évaluer le rôle que jouent les médias sociaux dans la promotion du tourisme de masse.

Merci pour vos réponses

1- Quel est votre genre ? What is your gender ? \*

- Femme (woman)
- Homme (man)
- Autre (other)

2- Quel âge avez-vous ? How old are you ? \*

- Entre 20 et 24 ans (between 20 and 24 years old)
- Entre 25 et 30 ans (between 25 and 30 years old)
- Entre 31 et 35 ans (between 31 and 35 years old)
- Entre 36 et 40 ans (between 36 and 40 years old)

3- Lorsque vous partez en vacances, quel est votre compagnon de voyage le plus courant ? \*  
When you travel on holiday, which is your most common travel companion ?

- Seul (alone)
- En famille (in family)
- Entre amis (with friends)

:::

4- La pandémie de la COVID 19 a t'elle eu une influence sur votre choix de destination de voyage ces dernières années ? Did the covid 19 pandemic impact your choice about your destinations for your holidays in recent years ? \*

- Oui (yes)
- Non (no)

5- Quels types de tourisme préférez-vous et avez-vous l'habitude de pratiquer ? What types of tourism do you prefer and what do you usually enjoy doing in holidays ? \*

- Destination peu fréquentée ( Uncrowded destination)
- Destination touristique familiale ( Family tourist destination)
- Destination touristique tendance / à la mode (Trendy/fashionable tourist destination)

6- Depuis la pandémie je préfère les destinations moins touristiques. Since the pandemic I prefer for less touristy travel destinations. \*

- Tout à fait d'accord (totally agree)
- Plutôt d'accord (somewhat agree)
- Ni d'accord, ni pas d'accord (neither agree or nor disagree)
- Pas vraiment d'accord (don't really agree)
- Pas du tout d'accord (not agree at all)

⋮

7- Avant de partir en vacances, j'ai pour habitude de regarder ma destination de voyage sur instagram et TikTok. Before going on vacation, I usually look at my travel destination on Instagram and TikTok. \*

- Toujours (always)
- Souvent (often)
- Neutre (neutral)
- Parfois (sometimes)
- Jamais (never)

8- Est ce que les réseaux sociaux impactent votre choix de destination ? Do social network affect your choice for your travel ? \*

Oui (yes)

Non (no)

9- Lorsque vous êtes en voyage, est-ce que vous avez pour habitude de partager vos photos, vidéos sur les réseaux sociaux ? When you are traveling, do you usually share your photos and videos on social networks? \*

Oui (yes)

Non (no)

10- Si oui, préférez-vous partager vos photos et expériences de voyages sur instagram ou TikTok: If your answer is positive, do you prefer sharing your photos and travel experiences either on Instagram or TikTok:

Instagram

TikTok

11- Sur une échelle de 1 à 5, lorsque je suis en vacances il est important pour moi de poster de belles photos sur les réseaux sociaux. On a scale of 1 to 5, when I'm on vacation is it important for me to post beautiful photos on social media. \*

1: pas du tout d'accord 5: Tout à fait d'accord ( 1: totally disagree 5: strongly agree)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

...

12- A la fin de mes vacances j'ai pour habitude de laisser un avis sur les réseaux sociaux pour partager mon expérience. At the end of my vacation I have an habit of leaving a review on social media to share my experience. \*

- Toujours (always)
- Souvent (often)
- Neutre (neutral)
- Parfois (sometimes)
- Jamais (never)

13- Concernant le tourisme de masse, je trouve que la mise en place de quotas dans certains lieux touristiques est une bonne chose. Concerning mass tourism, I find that the establishment of quotas in specific tourist places is a good thing \*

- Tout à fait d'accord (totally agree)
- Plutôt d'accord (somewhat agree)
- Ni d'accord, ni pas d'accord (neither agree or nor disagree)
- Pas vraiment d'accord ( don't really agree)
- Pas du tout d'accord (not agree at all)

...

14- Sur une échelle de 1 a 5, je suis d'accord pour réserver un créneau horaire afin d' accéder à un site protégé. On a scale of 1 to 5, I agree to book a slot to access a protected site 1: pas du tout d'accord 5: tout à fait d'accord (1: totally disagree and 5 strongly agree) \*

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

15- Je suis plutôt sensible à la protection de la nature pendant mes vacances. I am rather sensitive to protect the nature during my vacation. \*

- Tout à fait d'accord (totally agree)
- Plutôt d'accord (somewhat agree)
- Ni d'accord, ni pas d'accord (neither agree nor disagree)
- Pas vraiment d'accord (don't really agree)
- Pas du tout d'accord (not agree at all)