

Marketing of Finland in German travel agencies and the main distribution channels used by German inbound tourists

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| <p>The objective of this thesis is to study the German tourism market for Porvoo City Tourist Office. The paper consists therefore of two research parts, both of the quantitative approach. The first focuses on German travel agencies and their experiences selling Finland. The second focuses on the preferred distribution channels for booking holidays, of German tourists. The goal was to provide the base for creating a marketing strategy.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of the paper introduces touristic distribution channels and German tourists. Further current trends of both fields are presented.</p> <p>The results of the questionnaire for German travel agents shows that a great amount of them are already offering package tours for Southern Finland which are likely to include the Porvoo region. Further, more than half of the asked retailers would like to include special offers about Porvoo region into their portfolio. If they are not depending on the decision of a head company, they require additional information to do so. They stated that they prefer to be informed about new regions via E-mail or an on-site visit. They recommend advertising the region more via traditional media channels.</p> <p>The majority of tourists answering this questionnaire preferred to 80% booking their holidays on their own. They state that for information gathering the travel agency plays still a big role, but social media platforms as Tripadvisor and HolidayCheck are used increasingly. Print media and traditional channels as radio and TV advertisement on the other hand give them ideas and make them want to search for information.</p> <p>The recommendation for the commissioner is therefore to create a marketing strategy, including traditional channels as print media, TV or radio. Existing information should be offered in German language. Possible collaboration partners as individual travel agencies and purchase departments of concerns should be informed via E-mail and invited to a study tour of the region. Additionally a second marketing strategy should be established, including touristic social media channels as Tripadvisor and Holiday-Check.</p> | |
| <p>Keywords</p> <p>Distribution channels, market research, German tourism market</p> | |

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1 Introduction

Commissioned by Porvoo City Tourist Office, this thesis will give an insight into the main channels used by German tourists for choosing a holiday destination. Porvoo City Tourist Office will use this information in order to create an effective marketing strategy. The organisation wants to attract more German tourists to Porvoo and needs therefore more information about the market structure and the main distribution channels.

Porvoo is a historic small city, located at about 40 minutes from Helsinki in Finland. With its beauty and charm the former fisherman city is attracting every year a great amount of tourists. Its sights and attractions are offering something for everybody. It is mainly a destination for leisure travel, business travellers are not focused on. The marketing activities are meant to attract families and groups. Therefore Porvoo is advertised as a city, full of history, tradition and surrounded by nature. Porvoo is referred to as ideal place to spend the holidays with family and children. (VisitPorvoo 2013.)

According to VisitPorvoo Germans are after Russian, Estonian and Swedish tourists, the main incoming visitors. The Tourist Information Porvoo wants to increase the number of German tourists which ideally may lead to a higher ranking. (VisitPorvoo 2013.)

According to the Border Interview Survey Finland hosted 2013 3,6 million Russian, 758,000 Estonian, 702,000 Swedish and 342,000 German tourists annually. Germany on the other hand has one of the biggest outbound tourism in the world. Combining these information can lead to the conclusion that the number of German tourists in Finland could easily be increased. (Statistics Finland 2013.)

In order to sell the services, customers have to be reached. Tourism NT is a leading organisation in tourism and defines the way of reaching customers as distribution channels. They define distribution channel as following:

“A distribution channel is a set of organizations (intermediaries) involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer or business owner.” (Tourism NT, 2013.)

A distribution channel is in conclusion a way to bring a product towards a customer. They furthermore state that the distribution channel can also be seen as a way, to bring the customer towards the product. Both ways, the objective of distribution is to make products available in the right place at the right time in the right quantities. (Tourism NT 2013.)

According to the Tourism NT the tourism industry nowadays has many distribution channels. Therefore it is of significant importance to know the customer. More exact, to know what distribution channels the customer prefers. (Tourism NT 2013.)

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper will include theory about distribution channels and the German tourism market, in order to give the commissioner additional information about the subject. Here, existing theory will be studied and analysed, a brief trend forecast will be given as well.

The Tourist Information Porvoo does not yet have all needed data to create an effective marketing strategy concerning the German market. Therefore this thesis will provide them with data about the preferred distribution channels by German tourists. It will furthermore provide general information about expectations and experiences of possible future partners.

All results will be gathered via a quantitative attempt. Here, data will be collected from two groups, German tourists and German travel agencies. Used methods and tools for this research will be discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter will cover the questionnaires, as well as the theory about validity and reliability in empirical research. Afterwards the results of the study will be presented, discussed and summarised.

In the conclusion data from both research parts will be combined and

recommendations for the commissioner will be drawn. This way the commissioner can expect to gather the needed information to establish a marketing strategy focused on the German market. The conclusion will also shortly reflect on the thesis writing process and show attempts for further research and theses.

Research about distribution channels, the image of Finland and preferences of German clients or travel agencies were conducted before. The research of this thesis still will be needed as it fits the needs of the Tourist Information Porvoo. Not only the future clients will be addressed, but also the possible partners. This will give the Tourist Information Porvoo the advantage of exactly reacting to the wishes and needs of their partners and clients.

For this thesis two research questions could be formed: First, which distribution channels do German tourists prefer for booking holidays, and second, how German travel agencies see the current situation of Finland as a holiday destination in the German market.

2 Distribution channels in tourism

This chapter provides the theory about distribution channels in tourism. It gives an overview about different ways of distribution. Furthermore, this part shows the importance of the channels and how different channels can correlate nowadays. It will highlight the fact that there are distribution channels which can also be used for information gathering. It therefore provides an overview about specific current trends.

In the introduction, touristic distribution channels were defined as a way for a customer to reach a touristic product. The chain of touristic distribution usually involves different participants. Furthermore, according to Tourism Connect, touristic distribution can be divided on a national and an international level. Figure 1 below shows the distribution chain in tourism on a national level. The customer in this chain is the domestic client. This way, the chain focuses on the customer which purchases a touristic product with the intention to stay in the own country. The beginning of the chain is the tourism operator that produces the product; the end of the chain is the client that purchases along the chain. The customers can be individual or business clients. (Tourism Connect 2011.)

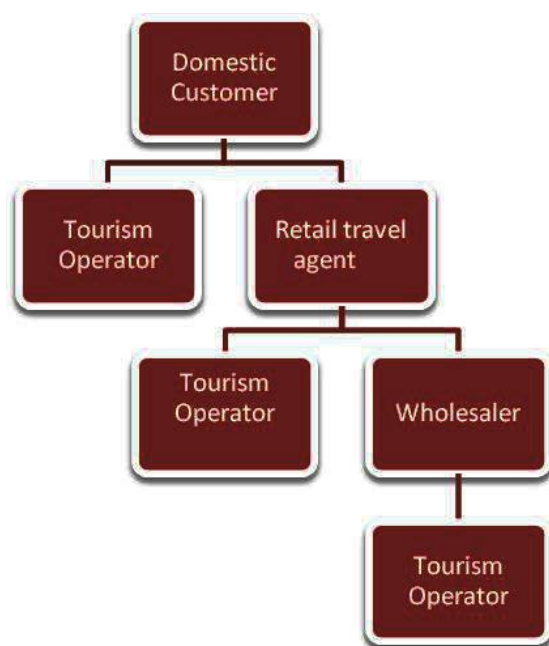


Figure 1 Touristic distribution chain national level (El Fassi according to Tourism Connect 2011.)

While Figure 1 above is focusing on the national client, Figure 2 below is focusing on the international client. The international touristic distribution chain includes more participants. The touristic product in this chain is sold to a client outside the country. Here the customer will buy touristic products with the intention to leave the country he or she is based in. Beginning of the chain is again the tourism operator, the end of the chain the client, which purchases along this chain. (tourism connect 2011.)

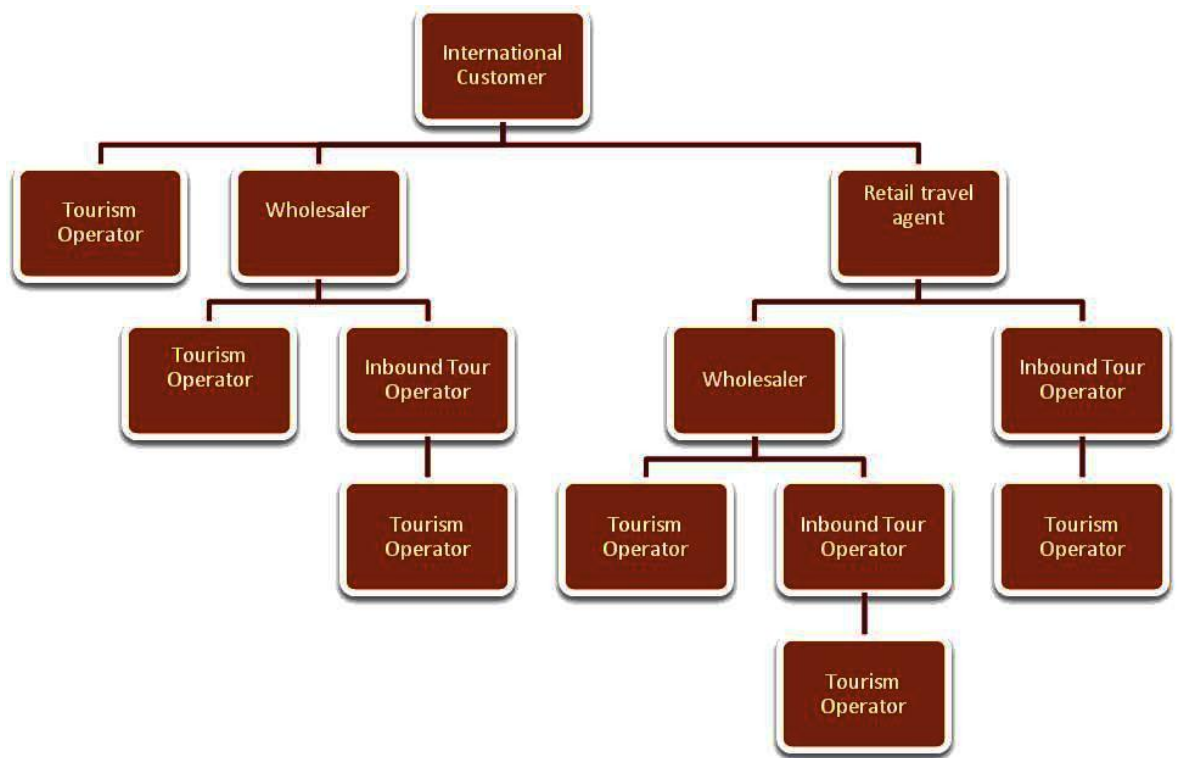


Figure 2 Touristic distribution chain international level (El Fassi according to tourism connect 2011.)

Buhalis and Laws on the other hand see touristic distribution in a different way. Their concept relates more to a two sided scale than a chain. The tourism operator which produces the product is placed in the centre of that scale and operates into two directions: sales towards the customer, purchase form the destination. Their concept of the tourism distribution mechanism can be seen in Figure 3 below.

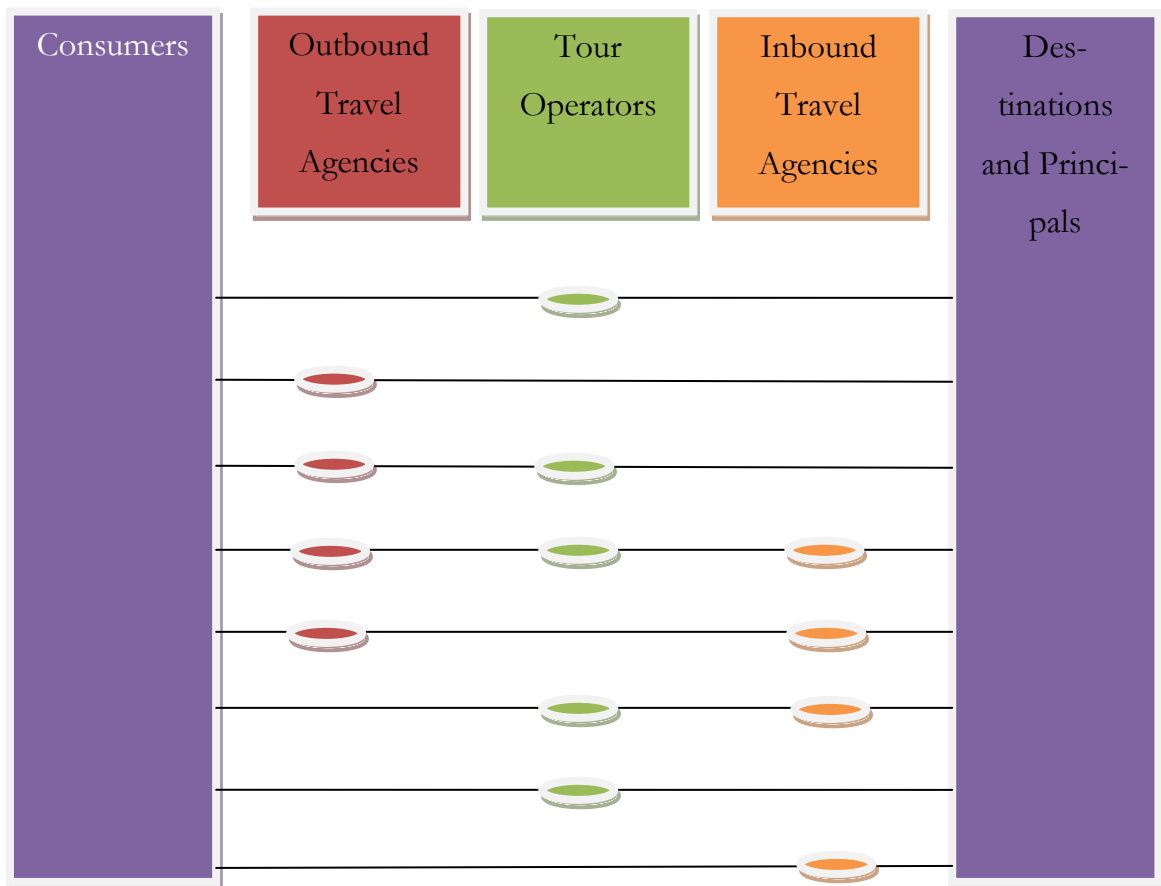


Figure 3 Tourism distribution mechanism (El Fassi according to Buhalis & Laws 2001, 11.)

This concept also shows the way of the touristic product towards the customer. In this model different terms than in the model of tourism connect are used. The inbound tour operators are called inbound travel agencies. They further explain that the outgoing travel agencies are similar to the retailers. Tour operators are the wholesalers of this concept. It is furthermore including the destination into the touristic distribution process. They assume that the touristic product is produced in a destination, while tourism connect states that the tourism operator is producing touristic services. In Buhalis and Laws model the customer is able to purchase a touristic product via none up to three intermediaries. (Buhalis & Laws 2001, 8-32.)

The chapter introduced so far the concept of touristic distribution. The following sub chapter will present the different participants in more detail and give clarity about direct as well as indirect purchase.

2.1 The participants of distribution channels in Tourism

According to Tourism NT, the objective of distribution is to make products for customers available in the right place, at the right time and in the right quantity. It can be seen as the way customers reach to the product via different participants (Tourism NT 2013.). Two concepts have been introduced so far. Figure 1 to 3 above gave an overview about the possible involved participants. Below the participants are introduced in detail.

According to Tourism NT, a tourism operator is producing touristic products for the market (Tourism NT 2013.). In the model of tourism connect this is always the beginning of the touristic distribution chain. (tourism connect 2011.). Kupa adds, that a tourism operator can also combine own and external services to create a new product. Those products will be offered on the market afterwards. Meant are single products or package tours (e.g. flight, accommodation, packages, etc.) (Kupa 2013.).

As mentioned earlier the client can be domestic or international. In any way the client is purchasing the final product. Next to the producer and the purchaser there are up to three intermediaries in the touristic distribution chain: the retail travel agency, the wholesaler and the inbound tour operator.

Kupa states that retail travel agents mainly sell package tours or single touristic products from a tour operator to the customer. In this way they are intermediaries in the touristic distribution. (Kupa 2013.)

Tourism NT specifies further that retail travel agents sell prepared touristic products. They only provide a place to book and enquire about travel products. They can do so in the traditional shop model as well as online. They can belong to a bigger chain of agencies or work independently on the market. Both ways they do not produce, but book and purchase different products on behalf of customers. They further state that retail travel agents are based in the consumer's country. (Tourism NT, 2013)

Wholesalers are also located in the consumer's country of origin. They operate in a

comparable way to wholesalers in other industries. Similar to them, they are able to achieve lower prices by using the principle of economies of scale. They basically sell touristic options such as transport, accommodation, tours and attractions in best fitting market. On those markets they do not only sell single products but package products themselves, to fit the market better. Tourism NT further states that wholesalers are the link between inbound tour operators and retailers as they might turn to both, to purchase and sell specific options. (Tourism NT 2013.)

Wholesalers can operate online or offline. An online example is Expedia, whereas one of the traditional wholesalers in the German market is the TUI AG. Both companies offer the customer the possibility to book package tours or single touristic products via them. Whereas Expedia is only operating online, the TUI AG is offering their clients the chance to purchase online or from the traditional shop model. This will be explained later on more specific. (Expedia 2014, TUI AG 2014a.)

Inbound tour operators are unlike the others, based in the country of the destination. Therefore they are often referred to as destination management company. Those companies are according to Tourism NT, specializing in developing programs and itineraries of one destination for distribution elsewhere. An itinerary they define as a packaged product, including components such as accommodation, tours, transport and meals. Inbound tour operators are this way the link between the local product and the foreign buyer (e.g. wholesalers, direct sellers, travel agents, direct customer etc.). Furthermore inbound tour operators provide consultation on itinerary planning, product selection, reservation coordination, confirmation and payment of travel arrangements on behalf of their clients. They, same as the others, do not produce touristic products but sell them. (Tourism NT 2013.) A good example out of the German market is the Frankfurt Tourism + Congress GmbH. Companies and individual customers that use their service are able to purchase different services or whole packages for the destination Frankfurt, all from one source. (Frankfurt Tourism + Congress GmbH 2013.)

Buhalis and Laws agree with that and clarify additionally that customers from northern Europe are likely to use all three intermediaries while purchasing a single trip. The

tourists “visit an outgoing travel agency and purchase a package put together by a tour operator which is handled by an incoming agency” (Buhalis & Laws 2001, 9).

They mention that their term ‘outgoing travel agency’ is similar to the term ‘retailer’ of the first concept. They operate from the country of the customers’ origin towards or outbound to other destinations. They further clarify the role of the wholesaler and its function as link in the market. They highlight that the wholesaler is often the one packaging concrete offers but not producing any services on its own. Last they mention that the booked services are finally handled by the incoming agency, which is supporting the argument of seeing them as a destination management company. (Buhalis & Laws 2001, 13-27.)

It can be concluded that there are up to three intermediaries in the touristic distribution chain. If the customer is purchasing the product without any, it is called direct sales. If there are intermediaries involved, the consumer is purchasing indirectly, via third parties. (Tourism NT 2013.)

2.2 E-business

Changes as globalisation and constant improvement in technique, are leading nowadays to new forms of doing business. The advantages of the internet make sure that businesses are seeking including it into the business strategy. This leads to more companies using the online world as additional marketing and distribution channel, or new company forms that are only using these new channels. According to Bryant, including the internet in the business plan brings several advantages. The biggest ones are cost effectiveness of the strategy, reaching a broad audience and reaching new markets which would otherwise not be reachable. (Bryant 2013.)

According to Beynon-Davies, the term E-Business describes all activities of a company focused on the electronic world. The term E-commerce is often used in this context, but describes technically only sales and product distribution activities of a company online. E-Business on the other hand includes more components and reaches through all company areas. An intense strategy might even include all activities such as distribu-

tion, marketing, human recourse, communication and customer care. (Beynon-Davies 2004, 1-24.)

The online world becomes also more important for touristic businesses. According to Tourism NT, many distribution channels are known and used.

Companies can include an online strategy as additional channel into their company concept or work exclusively online, seen in examples as Expedia before. For being efficient it is important to know the customer and their preferences well. More exact, to know what distribution channels the customer prefers to reach to them efficiently. (Tourism NT 2013.)

2.3 Correlation of channels

Participants and distribution models as discussed before represent the usual way of distribution in tourism. As mentioned earlier the customer is purchasing along the chain, via up to three intermediaries or directly. Nowadays changes are emerging and getting clearer over the years. Experts recognize a shift of usage in touristic distribution channels and the discussion about the future usage of certain channels is on-going. Mostly focused on in this discussion is the future of the retail travel agent, as experts see the market turning more and more in direction of E-Business.

While most experts see the traditional retail model in tourism as not up to date, Wenzel sees big opportunities upcoming. He is convinced that touristic distribution is changing, but especially the retail travel agent is in the future playing a big role. According to him, retailers can use the advantages of selling via more than one channel. He is calling this approach multi-channel management. According to him, this is a good way for retailers to generate more customers. Therefore they could for example provide their customers with online booking tools. What would still be setting them apart from online sales would be the possibility to care intensively about their customers; also online. He states that many customers are also nowadays not ready for online booking, individual packaging and so on. Providing them with special and individual customer

care, also online would open up new channels and possibilities for customers, also the ones that are not used to online booking yet. (Wenzel 2011.)

Niemeyer is agreeing with that and sees similar chances for the traditional travel retailer if they adapt to change and take according steps in time. He advises strongly for any touristic business to spread the ways of distribution, as the customers are more demanding and prefer to take advantage of certain possibilities. (Niemeyer 2012.)

A good business example which spreads the ways of distribution is again the TUI AG. They are a traditional wholesaler, that is packaging own and foreign products for the market and rank under the top wholesalers in the German tourism market. According to the company profile, they are one of bigger touristic businesses that managed in time to change the ways of distribution to fit changing customer demands. Their packaged products and produced services are available for other distribution intermediaries, next to that they sell directly to the customer. Therefore the TUI AG owns own travel agencies, but switched also to online sales. This way the company is covering direct and indirect sales of products. Direct sales, is further covering the online and offline world, a good example for multi-channel management. (TUI AG 2014b.)

Next to multi-channel management, social media is initialising great changes in tourism business. Nowadays new in touristic distribution are channels as for example Tripadvisor. This is a webpage that allows customers to rate hotels, vacation rentals, restaurants, flights and even destinations according to different aspects. The tourists can review their holidays and share impressions and experiences about touristic products with other travellers. The platform is referring to itself as providing future travellers with behind the scene insight and experiences of real travellers. This is possible as they are the biggest social media travel website of the world, with monthly 50 million people using the website. (Tripadvisor 2014.)

Tripadvisor emerged from being a website providing travel related content only, to a portal via which touristic businesses can also sell their offers. According to Petersen, President of Tripadvisor for business, they took steps to work better together with

hotel and vacation rental owners. The website worked selective on improving the relation and usability for business owners, which was intentionally not the main customer segment. The main customer was according to Petersen the traveller. Due to changes in distribution and the impact of social media on customers, business owners can use Tripadvisor easily as an additional distribution channel to reach their customers. Using the portal could this way spread the businesses way of distribution. As real customers are able to leave ratings, and the word of mouth knowingly spreads best, the channel might be one of the most efficient ones nowadays for additional sales. It gives the property owner also the chance to actively get in contact and maintain the relation with their customers. (Petersen 2011.)

It can be concluded that distribution in tourism mainly switched from the classic distribution channels to a wider spread field of distribution. So called multi-channel management is playing nowadays an important role in selling the touristic product. Additionally social media and user created content on platforms as for example Tripadvisor are increasingly important. They should be considered from touristic businesses as additional option to advertise and sell.

2.4 Current trends

A brief search on the internet revealed two further trends in touristic distribution, which are again related to the online world. The first are search engines focusing on finding the cheapest offer for the client and the second is the opaque travel inventory. Below both are introduced shortly.

There are several search engines on the internet, which are dedicated to finding the cheapest option of requested products. They actively calculate the cheapest price for the customer, whereas others only list the products and prices. Here the customer needs to sort them via price, classification, etc. The customer is not forced to sort the results anymore when using the mentioned search engines for the cheapest option.

Those mentioned search engines are searching the whole internet and also other search engines. They are called meta-search engines and can be found for all categories of

products. One is momondo which is offering the possibility to search for flight, hotels and car rentals. By entering destination and travel dates the website is going through the different offers of tour operators, wholesalers and retailers that can be found on the internet. The tool presents afterwards the cheapest option and a price calendar. The different offers are furthermore compared and analysed according to cost-benefit-perspective. In conclusion is momondo a search engine that is searching the web for the customer to find the cheapest offered solution. A search engine as this is not producing or packaging, nor selling any touristic offer. It is only providing a list of solutions and linking the customer with the best suiting one. Using these tools is quite convenient for a customer that is why a future trend can be seen in this area. (momondo 2014.)

Another trend that could be found is the so called blind-booking model. Blind booking means that the customer is booking a touristic product without knowing what company is producing it. On special platforms like Hotwire.com and Priceline.com, the customer is choosing only destination and travel dates. If the customer searches for a hotel, he or she enters destination and travel dates. For the destination New York City the customer can choose for example a hotel in New Jersey, Brooklyn or areas of Manhattan. The rates are calculated and the customer can save up to 55% on the normal price. If he or she proceeds with the booking, payment details are requested and the confirmation is sent. Only after the booking process is completed the hotel name is revealed. Hotwire sells only accommodation; Priceline operates according to the same principle but offers flights, hotels, accommodation, holiday packages and even cruises. Priceline additionally offers a bidding option, where customers can choose their own price and bid for holidays same as in an auction. (Hotwire 2014, Priceline 2014.)

Nowadays not only special platforms are taking part of this trend, also Expedia or the airline company Germanwings are offering opaque booking. Expedia has an opaque section on the website and Germanwings a section where flight destinations are assigned randomly (Expedia 2014, Germanwings 2014.). This is in general a new form of concrete Yield management. This way empty rooms or empty seats can be sold in an efficient manner. The biggest advantage of this process for the supplier is that the

company remains hidden until after the process has been completed. This helps to protect the normal prices from exploitation. However the technique behind those solutions is not failure proof yet and problems for the user can still occur. (Ogonowska & Torre 2010.)

Since March 2013 there is a new online platform that allows more or less the same options. GetGoing.com is, different than the others, offering a so called coin flip option (Sellin 2013.). The traveller will pick two destinations out of a list of possibilities and the program randomly picks one of them. This is similar to the option offered by Germanwings, where the customer agrees to travel to one out of five options and the program picks the one where seats towards have to be sold. (Germanwings 2014.)

3 German tourism market

In order to create an efficient marketing strategy, detailed information about the target customers is needed. Therefore this chapter provides definitions and theory about the German tourism market. It focuses on the touristic background of Germany to give a short introduction to the matter. Afterwards, German tourists and German tourists in Finland are on focus. Here the chapter presents details to the travel behaviour of Germans, reasons for Germans to travel, expectations and preferences of German tourists, as well as statistical data about the current situation. The chapter provides as well a short trend forecast.

3.1 Germany and tourism

Due to war history, the touristic movement in Germany is younger than in other countries. After the Second World War it was difficult for the people to travel. This mainly due to the low social and welfare standard as the citizens lost everything during the war, but also due to movement restrictions in-between the four occupation zones. It only started to change in the middle of the 50'er, when technical and social development led to an improvement of the living standard. (MDR 2010.)

Later on it was still difficult to travel for the people of the soviet occupation zone, which became the DDR. Traveling in the DDR was only legal with allowance of the state for recreational use. In this case the trips could be taken into other communist states as for example the USSR, the Balkan states or in special cases Cuba. However, traveling outside the country was seldom and people mostly stayed inside the DDR, on East-German islands and the coastal region. This changed with the opening of the DDR to the rest of the world on 9th November 1989. (MDR 2010.)

Tourism was increasing in the western part of Germany since the middle of the 50'er, and after the German reunion also in the Eastern part. Since 1970 this increasing amount of tourism is recorded in a yearly analysis, the 'Reiseanalyse (RA)'. This analysis is collected each year by the German tourism association F.U.R. e.V. (Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e.V.). Every year they analyse the travel be-

haviour of Germans that are between 14-70 years old. Each January they collect therefore around 8000 interviews face-to-face and since 2007 some additionally online. The analysis focuses on holiday and recreational trips of five and more days, as well as on short breaks from two to five days. Business travel is not considered in this analysis. According to the head organisation of tourism in Germany, DTV e.V. (Deutscher Tourismusverband e.V.) this is the most important analysis, providing information about the German tourism market. (DTV 2013.)

The detailed study gives in depth information about travel destinations, durations, motivations, activities on-site, expenses, experiences, mobility, as well as future trends and interest for future trips. Next to that they focus on details to information collection for trips and booking sources. (DTV 2013.)

Some findings of the RA 2014 have been used in the following sub-chapter to provide a clear picture about German tourists.

3.2 German tourists

According to the RA 2014, 78% of the Germans travelled in the year 2013. 55 million Germans took in total 71 million trips during that year. This is the highest traveling situation since the RA is measuring tourism. Together with the amount of trips, the travel expenses of in total 64 million reached in this year the highest level ever. (FUR 2014.)

The organisation also measured that Germans travel more often than ever, their trips on the other hand get shorter in duration. Over the years the average trip duration dropped to nowadays 12.5 days per holiday. The prognosis for 2014 is similar most of the Germans see themselves, according to the RA 2014, in the same or a better economic situation during the year 2014. This will, according to the study, lead to the same or higher travel behaviour as traveling is a luxury product which will only be purchased in good economic situations. (FUR 2014.)

Further, the Germans take most of their trips with their partner, an total amount of 47%. The top destinations for German tourists to travel to are Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Austria, in the same order. According to the RA 2/3 of all taken trips are leading to these destinations. Destinations as France, Croatia, Greece, Poland, the Netherlands and Denmark are also famous among them. The last is representing the only Scandinavian country underneath the most famous destinations for Germans, on the 10th place. (FUR 2014.)

The amount and duration of short breaks is according to the organisation since years staying almost the same. Considering the future, the RA showed that 43% of the Germans consider a city break as the most preferred solution for short breaks. 25% of them have experiences with that already. The interest in city breaks, as short trips doubled since the year 2000. Most important cities outside the country are London, Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona and Vienna. (FUR 2014.)

In general the RA is referring to a stable destination situation over the past years. They however assume that the average German tourist is curious and ready to try new destinations which he or she considers worthy to try. This is highly individual and connected to personal travel wishes and experiences. (FUR 2014.)

What can be predicted is that most of the Germans take their trips with car or caravan. Taking flights ranks on the second position. During their holidays they prefer to stay in hotels, rather than in self-serviced apartments and houses or cottages. (FUR 2014.)

In general most Germans still prefer to book ready packaged tours with the retail travel agency, although since 2005 a significant amount of them is booking online. Next to that the percentage of single booked products is increasing. Where 2005 only 11% of the trips were booked in the internet, nowadays 31% of all travels are booked online. The RA is predicting a further increase in the usage of this distribution channels and a continuous regress in booking via intermediaries, especially the retail travel agency. This is shown in Figure 4 below. An interesting side fact is that 34% of all travellers are

nowadays using mobile internet to collect information beforehand and 14% even book the whole trips via a smartphone, tablet or similar. (FUR 2014.)

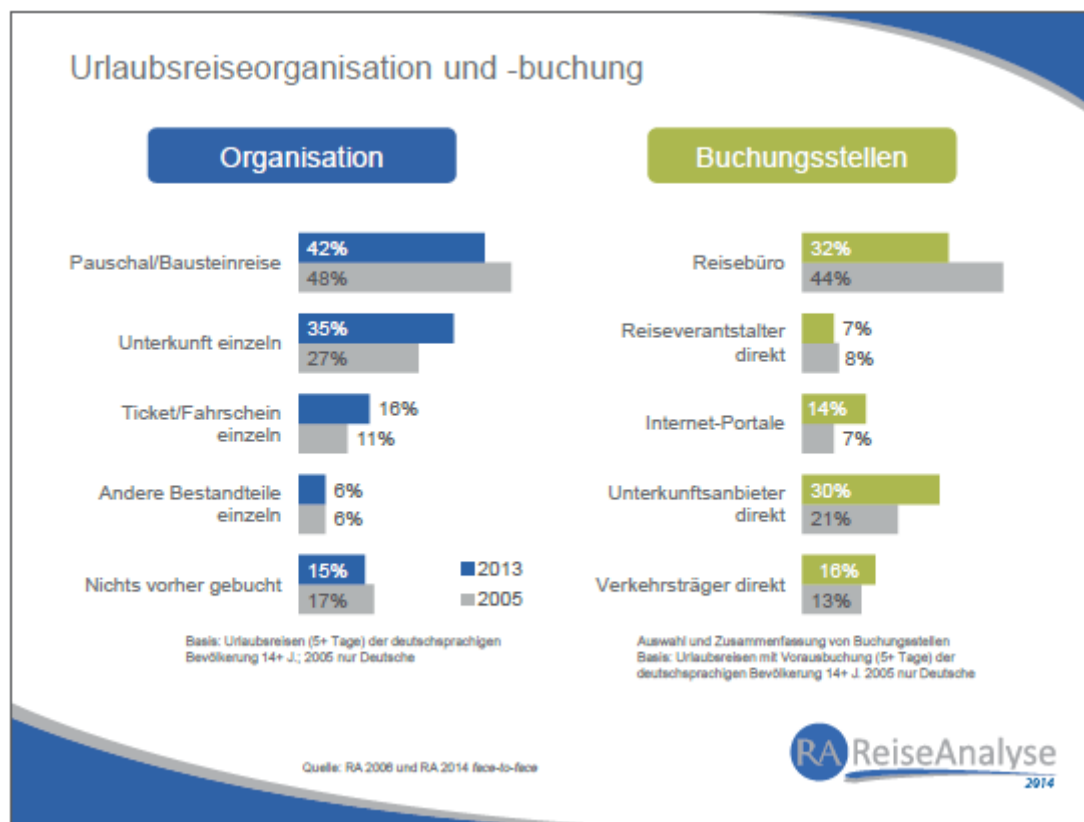


Figure 4 Preferred booking channels and form of travel organisation (FUR 2014.)

Further the Germans like to use mobile network and social media during the trip. Actively sharing experiences and opinions during a trip is important for them, state 36% of the asked travellers. This can be considered as an important fact for destinations and touristic producers, concerning the word of mouth and alternative marketing concepts. (FUR 2014.)

It can be concluded, that the German tourist is traveling often and frequent but short. That they tend to keep the same expenses also the trip duration is decreasing. The typical German tourist is furthermore mostly traveling in the own country and main Europe, this in the most cases together with the partner. Germans still prefer packed tours and booking with the retail travel agents, although online booking is increasing. In general Germans are not referred to as individual bookers and tourists, as package

tours are still leading the market. Further it can be stated, that most trips are taken with car, caravan or plane. As well as that on those trips Germans prefer to stay in hotels. According to the pre-selected answers of the RA 2014 neither Scandinavia, nor Finland is one of the main destinations for Germans to travel to. In general the RA is referring to Germans as curious tourists that are ready to try new destinations, although the most preferred destinations stay the same over the years.

Another important study is conducted by the BAT-Stiftung. Annually they conduct different surveys concerning future studies. In July 2013 they released a special issue concerning the holiday activities of German tourists, in which around 4000 Germans were asked about their preferences when it comes to holiday activities. (BATS 2013.)

According to this study it is important for 80% of all German travellers to eat out during their vacation. Further around 70% of them look forward to take day trips and excursions, as well as to go swimming and lay on the beach. This is followed by a still high percentage wanting to go for walks and sleep in or relax and be able to do nothing specific. (BATS 2013.)

Following this study it gets clear that Germans prefer recreational activities during their holidays, which enable them to relax. The Stiftung states that on the other hand, a lot of German tourists also want to get new impressions, collect new experiences and meet new people. (BATS 2013.)

They conclude that the most important issue for the German tourists is to have a big variety of opportunities, no matter if advantage of it is taken or not. This due to the fact that 57% of all asked German travellers state, that the most important for them is to be able to be spontaneous about activities. This is an explanation why it is important for the average German tourist to have the possibilities to do things he or she cannot do in daily life. As most of them are unsure in advance what to do during their vacations a great variety of possibilities is welcome to give them ideas. (BATS 2013.)

Due to this second study German tourists prefer recreation and plenty of possible activities in their holidays.

The last study used as source of information for this thesis part is the social trends analysis taken by Tomorrow Focus Media. This empirical study provides each month details about consume behaviour and customer wishes to a changing subject. In December 2013 the topic was German travellers. This study was used to provide additional information, as the insight into the RA is restricted. (Tomorrow Focus Media 2013.)

Tomorrow Focus Media states for example that most of the travel expenses are taken for food and drinks, which corresponds to the main travel activity, eating out. They name relaxing and wellness, followed by the second best option swimming and enjoying the sun, as the main travel reasons for Germans. Here they add that if the Germans do sport in their holidays, they prefer trekking, jogging and biking. (Tomorrow Focus Media 2013.)

Their findings follow the argument, that most of the Germans take their holiday together with the partner, but also add that holidays with the wide family are common and welcome. This is considered the third main reason to take holidays at all. Those holidays will lead them to family friendly destinations rather than destination they would chose when traveling with the partner. (Tomorrow Focus Media 2013.)

Another interesting point for the destination Finland could be that most Germans prefer mainly the car and the plane for reaching destinations, but half of the asked travellers would consider a cruise. (Tomorrow Focus Media 2013.)

They add that most of the German travellers prefer summer holidays, instead of traveling during other seasons. Additionally the study adds that the age group 55+ spends the most for their trips among all other groups. This further leads to the expectations German travellers have, as the expectations of this age group are the highest. In general most Germans prefer the standard class, followed by a high class level for holidays.

This raises the general expectations to a high level when traveling. The luxury class, as well as the low budget class, are not common according to this study. A general conclusion can be that the higher the age, the higher amount of money they spend, coming together with this, are increased expectations. (Tomorrow Focus Media 2013.)

This last study added to the existing picture of the German traveller that most of them prefer taking summer holidays. If they do sports in their vacations, they like trekking, jogging and biking. Additionally they stated that the average German traveller likes food and spending the holidays with the family. They also state that most of them would consider booking a cruise. It further can be concluded that the average German tourist is happy in an average to high class accommodation, with similar treatment.

3.3 Trend forecast

The previous mentioned RA 2014 was introduced on the tourism fair ITB 2014. The ITB Academy extracts each year a short term prognosis for the coming touristic season out of it. Here they state that the Germans are quite in average when it comes to the traveling industry of Europe. For 2014 they predict a growth in German tourism, which will pay part of the growth of European tourism of around 4-5%. The growth in German tourism will further be paying part of 2% of the increase in worldwide tourism. As mentioned earlier, they state that the Germans are in-between the European average of all analysed fields. However, the Germans are still using the internet for information gathering and booking, well below the European average. According to the trend prognosis, online booking and usage of online information channels will increase to 65% usage worldwide. Next to that the traditional retail travel agencies will only have a market share of 24% left. On the other hand, those remain the main information and booking channel for the German tourism market. This shows the still traditional German tourists. (ITB Academy 2014, 3-11.)

The magazine Focus gives a valid long term trend forecast for the German travel and tourism industry. In a special issue they announced different influencing factors to play a role in future changes.

The demographic change and the fact that Germans have fewer children will for example lead to tourists that grow older, but keep their traveling behaviour. This will confront the tourism industry of the future with elderly but more fit seniors and less young travellers. In this context accessibility will play a leading role. Being in a family will due to this fact be a decreasing situation, it will therefore be ascribed an increasing value. This will lead to higher customer expectations for family holidays. (Focus 2009, 37-44.)

Globalisation will open up new destinations, but on the other hand confront the tourism industry with problems of these destinations. The increase in technical development will also change the travel industry of the future significant. All parts of the industry will be presumably affected. Changes will happen in mobility, availability and the price level. (Focus 2009, 37-44.)

Lohmann, agrees on that and adds migration as another long term factor. According to his estimations, an increasing migration situation will lead to an increase in the traveling industry; this due to the fact that migrants will travel more often into their country of origin, especially in holidays. (Lohmann 2012.)

Social and welfare situation of the world, globalisation, climate change and scarcity of resources are influencing tourism. Tourism on the other hand is influencing those factors. The social and welfare situation of the world can profit from increasing tourism, as tourism brings money and will increase the life standard of the population of a destination. Increase in mobility and long-haul travels with the plane on the other hand, have a negative influence on the climate and are jointly responsible for climate change. Lohmann predicts that due to these mentioned changes, positive and negative, sustainability will further become more important, especially for the German tourists. (Lohmann 2012.)

Further Lohmann sees changes in the behaviour of German tourists. He is identifying two trends regarding this.

The first trend he sees is multi-optionality, which means that the German customers have increasing options to book and inform themselves about traveling. Further it describes the situation, that there is an increasing amount of individual travel solutions. For touristic producers this comes together with bigger competition, as well as high fluctuation of costumers, as they will have the variety to choose from. The customers will so tend to book highly individual options, which will lead to rising expectations towards their holidays. This does not automatically imply high expectations when it comes to quality: Lohmann highlights more the fact, that the expectations will become highly individual as well. He is mostly talking about individual values as for example 'price worthiness of offers' or 'getting the most out of it'. He additionally mentions that the German customers will try to satisfy individual needs which could mean 'relaxation without being bored' or 'adventure without being overwhelmed'. Lohmann follows with his statement close the argument of the BAT-Stiftung, which stated that the German tourists nowadays already demand a great variety of possibilities, no matter if they take advantage of it or not. The trend leads into the direction of 'getting it all', which will be a challenge for producers in the future. (Lohmann 2012.)

The second trend he identifies is the changing information and decision making strategy of German customers. Here Lohmann refers to the overwhelmed and confused customer, due to the fact that more companies try to reach the customer via more channels. In his opinion, the companies are too aggressive and loud. This is resulting in the fact that the customer is paying less attention to actively searching information. For Lohmann this oversaturation of the customer leads to a future in which they are scanning through multiple offers and channels but only paying minor attention doing so. He sees this very critical as the market predictability will decrease and the companies have to approach the client. (Lohmann 2012.)

Lohmann mentions further, that the issues he brings up cannot be regarded separately. The major facts lead to a change in the behaviour of the tourists and vice versa. All mentioned facts produce effects which will change the touristic demand in Germany over the years. Further he is convinced that the general demand for holidays will nei-

ther rise nor decrease; he is rather convinced that the structure of touristic demand will change completely over the next few years. (Lohmann 2012.)

3.4 German tourists and Finland

As mentioned earlier, German tourists are after Russian, Estonian and Swedish tourists, the main incoming visitors for Finland (VisitPorvoo 2013.). Finland as destination is on the other hand not as important to the Germans as vice versa. Regardless of this fact there is an increasing percentage of Germans traveling to Finland every year. In 2013 Finland hosted for example 342,000 German tourists (Statistics Finland 2013.).

Package tours for Finland and Scandinavia are usually available with every tourism wholesaler, but there are some small to medium sized retail travel agents on the German market focusing on them. Some are well known and long established in the market as for example fintouring GmbH with over 40 years of experience, or Hummel Reiseideen which is specialising in group travels. Others are covering different niche markets as for example Rucksack Reisen, organising individual trips or DIAMIR Erlebnisreisen GmbH specialised in small group tours. Other different agencies are specialised in outdoor activities as for example Arktis Reisen Schehle or huskeytreck. (VistiFinland 2014.)

Together with the different travel agencies the possible ways to reach Finland differ. While fintouring is offering ferry transport for Germans, others specialise in airfares. Both ways are ideal for the German customer, which according to statistics prefers to travel with car, caravan or plane. Nowadays airfares are cheap and traveling is conveniently possible from all major airports with different companies. Air Berlin, SAS, Lufthansa and others are flying to the Helsinki airport from which further transport up north is possible. Cheaper airlines are reaching Tampere, as for example Ryanair. Traveling by ferry on the other hand brings the major advantage that the tourist can take their cars and pets with them, which is according to statistics also important for them. (fintouring 2013, HMH 2013.)



Figure 5 Porvoo as one of the main sights in Southern Finland (VisitPorvoo 2014.)

The main reasons for German tourists to travel to Finland can be seen in the fact that Finland is still possessing space and nature, which are seldom to be found nowadays and highly attractive to tourists. This fact is also highlighted by the incoming agencies and authorial institutions of Finland that advert it as the main place where nature still exists. Finland is by them often referred to, to be a country with impressive natural sights (Botschaft von Finnland 2011.). Mostly mentioned are here Lake Finland, coastal areas and Lapland (Elchburger 2014.).

Next to the nature and the capital city Helsinki, websites name Turku, Hämeenlinna, Savonlinna and Porvoo, Naantali or Rauma as impressive and worth to visit. Porvoo with its ancient bright fishing cottages is always listed as one of the main sights already. (Botschaft von Finnland 2011, Elchburger 2014.)

It can be concluded, with help of all the above mentioned surveys that the typical German leisure traveller interested in Finland is mainly departing from northern Germany. This fact will later on additionally be highlighted by the profile the interviewed German travel agencies provide about their customers.

The main two travel motives that can be ascribed to Finland trips are spending time with the family and being in the nature. Being with the family is mentioned above in the customer profile provided about German tourists as increasing motive for taking

holidays. Additionally being in the nature is one of the main motives for Germans to travel to Finland. This later motive will also be highlighted by the responding German travel agencies in the empirical part. According to those two motives it can be assumed that the typical German tourists traveling to Finland are small families consistent of parents and children. On the other hand Finland is attractive to active travellers with a strong bound to nature. The later kind is expected to spend time in the nature, preferring an active lifestyle.

Regardless form their income situation the Germans are at the moment confident about their personal economic situation. This fact is mentioned above by the different surveys. It is further on highlighted that independent from the economic situation, they try to get the most out of their holidays. Due to these facts it can be assumed that the typical German tourist, interested in traveling to Finland will follow this attitude and will try to get the most out of their trips. They will according to their profile travel to Finland to realise highly individual wishes, as for example spending unique family holidays or discovering the incredible nature which is still existing in Finland.

This chapter focused on German tourists in order to provide the necessary information to fully understand the subject. The following chapter presents used research methods and tools of this thesis.

4 Research design

The commissioner of this thesis is Porvoo City Tourist Office. To help them to create a marketing strategy for the German market a research was conducted. It was conducted as a quantitative survey, split into two research parts. The first part was addressing German tourists and was meant to give information about the preferred distribution channels of certain tourist groups. The second part was addressing German travel agencies and was meant to provide data about the current sales situation and their awareness of Porvoo.

After providing information about empirical research, this chapter presents both questionnaires with additional information to questions, structure and conduction. Furthermore it provides the theory to validity and reliability of empirical research.

4.1 Survey as tool for data collection

Empirical research can be a qualitative or a quantitative approach. The quantitative research is the approach to measure. According to Finn, Elliot-White and Walton, it is mostly used for reaching large numbers of people. The collected data in quantitative research, is mainly numeric and can be used for developing new theories and hypotheses. (Finn, Elliot-White & Walton 2000, 8.)

Next to that, quantitative research is according to Punch also used to describing the correlation between variables. This is especially important for business research which aims to describe a market. This numeric data can be used with ease to create statistical analyses, which allow statements about consumer behaviour, knowledge, opinions or attitudes. The gathered information is also usable to describe, explain and predict that behaviour. (Punch 2003, 11.)

In this thesis a survey was the chosen data collection method. According to both authors there are several ways to collect data with a survey, for example through questionnaires, mail, email and personal or telephone interviews. The survey was chosen as used method, as data from a big amount of people could be gathered. Also the dis-

tance to the German market was a factor that led to the decision to conduct a survey. In this survey, two subjects were researched: First, which distribution channels German tourists prefer for booking touristic products and second, the awareness of Porvoo among German travel agencies specialised in Scandinavia and Finland. Therefore two different questionnaires were created. The questionnaires can be found as Appendix 1 and 2.

So far this chapter introduced empirical research, and the methods used in this thesis. The following subchapters introduce both questionnaires more detailed.

4.2 Data collection

The questionnaires were created in Google docs which is an online tool. It provides a way for making documents, as for example forms, available for people on the internet. When creating a Google doc, a link will be generated. This link leads to a webpage where people can fill in the form. The advantage of this method is that a big amount of people can be reached anonymously. The tool also helps to generate statistical reports and makes it easy to create charts and diagrams. (Google docs 2014.)

The questionnaire for German tourists aimed to see preferences in distribution channels when booking touristic products. It was created in Google docs and the link to it was distributed via social media, as well as email. For email distribution a personal network of Germans was asked to forward the link to other Germans. Next to that the social media platform Facebook was an important tool for distributions. There German users of different University and Language related groups were addressed to help filling the form. Due to this form of distribution, it cannot be said with clearance how many invitations to fill the questionnaire have been sent. In conclusion, the distribution can be seen as successful as in total 94 answers could be gathered.

The questions have been formed in an uncomplicated way, to allow answering them fast and self-administrated. Mainly closed questions with multiple choice answer possibilities were used, to simplify the analysis. Open ended question were only used when absolutely necessary (e.g. exact State, clarification etc.).

The participants were asked for gender and age group. A filter question was asking for nationality, as only answers from German travellers should be considered. The participants should specify the exact state or city they live in. They were further asked for their marital status and if they have children. Participants should provide information about the amount of trips to foreign countries they take per year and the time they need for information gathering per trip. Furthermore they were asked if they book themselves or via travel agencies and which channels they use for information gathering. It was also of interest, what internet pages they use for price comparison. Last they should rate different distribution channels according to the quality and ability to gather information via them. Here the participants had the chance to explain in an open ended question, why they see those channels as the most useful ones. The questionnaire for German tourists can be found as Appendix 1.

The second research was addressing German travel agencies specialised in selling Scandinavia and Finland. The email addresses can be found from the homepage of VisitFinland. They have been picked as the best possible sample to provide information about the awareness about the Porvoo region, as all 32 of them are including Finland in their portfolio. The structure of the companies is quite different to each other, but all of them are small to medium sized companies. Some are well known and long established in the market as for example Fintouring GmbH with over 40 years of experience, or Hummel Reiseideen specialising in group travels. Others are covering different niche markets as for example Rucksack Reisen, organising individual trips or DIAMIR Erlebnisreisen GmbH specialised in small group tours. Underneath the sample were also different agencies specialised in outdoor activities as for example Arktis Reisen Schehle or huskeytreck. (VisitFinland 2014.)

This questionnaire has additionally been sent to 20 travel agencies in the area of Munich and Frankfurt am Main. It was distributed only via email and a total amount of 14 answers have been received.

The questions have been formed in an uncomplicated way, to allow answering them fast and self-administrated. Mainly open ended questions with free answer possibilities have been used to get detailed insight into the different aspects.

First the travel agencies were asked to describe the customers' knowledge about Finland to get an overview about the Image of Finland, among German tourist. They were furthermore asked if they offer packages which include Southern Finland and the Porvoo region already. The agencies were further asked if they would be interested in including it. Therefore they were asked to specify which information they would need for selling it successfully. They also should specify how they would like to work together with the Porvoo incoming agencies and what problems they see in including the region into the portfolio. Afterwards they could express how they would like to be informed about the offers of the region and other suggestions for a long term partnership. Last they should give a professional statement about the image of Finland as tourist destination. The questionnaire for travel agencies can be found as Appendix 2.

4.3 Data analysis

Usually data analysis contains information such as tabulations of the data, statistical ratings, rankings or comparisons. Google docs has efficient reporting tools with which the user is able to create this information. It is also possible to compare the collected results immediately. After the link was closed, the report function was used to create a summary of all results of the questionnaire for tourists. The data report showed each question with a summary of the answer and a related chart. Additionally the information was exported into Excel to give further the opportunity to create meaningful charts and a better overview. The questions for travel agencies were analysed individually and compared to each other. For a better overview also this data was exported to Excel. The results of both surveys are presented in Chapter 5.

4.4 Validity and reliability of research

In order for empirical research to be scientific it needs to be valid and reliable. Validity and reliability have been defined by Finn, Elliot-White & Walton. They state that a re-

search is reliable if a measurement reaches the same results under different circumstances. That means that if the outer circumstances change, the same result would be reached with the used measurement. They further define that validity indicates if this measurement indicates what it was supposed to measure. This means that the validity of a survey shows if the data that was collected is important for the research or not. (Finn, Elliot-White & Walton 2000, 28.)

It can be concluded that in order to reach the same results, a survey has to use standardised data collection tools. Therefore it can be assumed that the results are reliable. The above mentioned facts are fulfilled. For collecting data, a questionnaire was used. The process of collection was consistent for all respondents. No changes to the questionnaire were made after the collection started. Further it can be expected that the respondents would give the same answers if they would be asked again, as they were answering independently and according to their preferences. As the personal opinion from a certain groups was asked, the respondents can be seen as the best possible sample. The research gives this way valid information. However, a broader audience would have led to a better market overview and possibly to more deferring answers.

The limitations of the study were the possibility of a too low response rate with diverse and unclear answers. The possibility to fill in the questionnaire online may make participation easier and likely increases the number of participants. The aim was to collect a total amount of around 100 questionnaires to get a valid sample.

This chapter presented the methodology of both research sections. The following Chapter 5 shows the results of the quantitative research.

5 Presentation of results

This chapter presents the results of both research parts. The answers of the travel agencies are introduced separately from the answers of the tourists.

5.1 Travel agencies

In this section the answers to the questionnaire for travel agencies are analysed. The questionnaire aimed to give an overview about the existing market situation in Germany, expert opinions towards the situation and suggestions for collaboration between Finland and Germany.

First all travel agencies were asked to provide an overview about their customers' knowledge about Finland. Here they state that common stereotypes are still dominating. Finland is mainly known as wide country, for cold weather, its quiet inhabitants and expensive living costs. About half of the asked agencies stated further that customers know it as the land of thousand lakes, home to Sami, reindeers and the midnight sun. Some mentioned the northern lights and Lapland together with Santa Claus and Nokia.

They further state that the capital Helsinki was referred to as home of Nordic design and interesting as a cruise destination. The landscape is referred to as beautiful and the country is mentioned as creative choice for holiday destinations and ideal for nature-lovers. They agreed that in general the customer have little information when it comes to Finland as holiday destination. Half of the agencies further agreed that the inquiry rate for holidays in Finland is very low. If customers are inquiring, they mostly gathered information about it beforehand. If a customer is directly asking for the Porvoo region, they state that he or she has experience and is definitely informed about the Nordics.

Further 70% of the asked agencies are already offering package tours for Southern Finland which include the Porvoo region as shown in Figure 6.

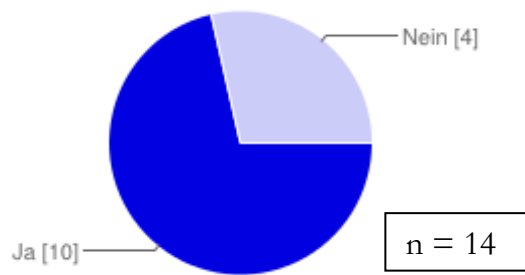


Figure 6 Travel agencies offering package tours including Southern Finland, Porvoo

More than half of the asked travel agencies would like to include special offers about the Porvoo region into their portfolio. They state that to include it in the offers, they lack information or are not able to do so, as they depend on the head concern to purchase offers. The ones not showing interest in offering Porvoo specials argue that the demand for these offers will be too low.

However, for including the Porvoo region the travel agencies require additional information. Most of them would find it sufficient to be informed about the homepage of the region, whereas others would like the region to join marketing projects with other touristic service providers to gain a broad insight into the region. Others would prefer to establish contact with the income agency directly.

Figure 7 below gives an overview about the agents' preferences for being informed about destinations. Half of the agencies state that they prefer to be informed about new regions via E-mail. This is directly followed by a great amount that would welcome the opportunity to visit the region and get insight, on-site on invitation. For passing on information about a region, social media as for example blogs, Tripadvisor and others are still not common and not a good choice according to the asked travel agencies.

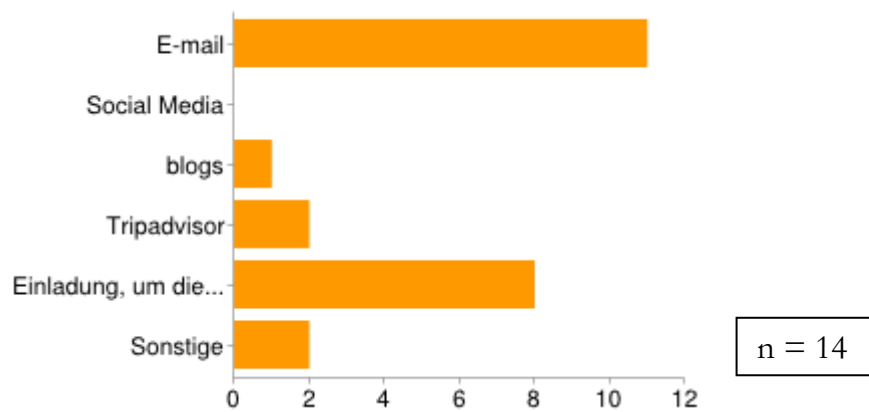


Figure 7 Preferences of travel agencies to be informed about a region

Some of the asked travel agencies are obviously depending from bigger touristic concerns. They state that they cannot give any valid information about their preferences for cooperation. This is according to them part of the head concerns business and they are not able to purchase or collaborate.

The ones able to cooperate, state that they would rather prefer to work directly with the service providers of the Porvoo region. Working directly together with service providers, as for example outdoor-agencies, dockyards, restaurants and hotels would bring them in their opinion more advantages, than working together with incoming agencies.

For working together they recommend a collaboration of purchase department, incoming agencies and regional touristic producers. They suggest as the ideal way a study trip throughout the region with different meetings.

However, for working together they see only small obstacles. Some mention the language barrier as main challenge, as most webpages are only available in Finnish. Some see an already existing language barrier for their target clients with information in English as they mostly speak only German. Also if there is a sufficient amount of information in English, they would prefer it in German language, as this would make it easier to sell offers. Additionally the agents located in southern Germany see a lack in demand due to the distance to Scandinavia.

The travel agencies were also asked to estimate the image of Finland as a tourist destination. Here the opinions differ strongly. Where some see good potential even for unknown region, others have never had experiences with any customer demand. Some state that Finland among the Scandinavian countries Norway or Sweden is less popular. Most of the asked travel agencies agree, that Finland as touristic destination is not advertised enough in traditional marketing channels as for example television, magazines and newspapers. This is in their opinion the media reaching to the main target group, German 50+. They recognise marketing effort taken online and in social media, which is in their opinion not reaching the target audience. Most of them state that more advertisement into this direction would help to raise awareness of the country with its different regions. They strongly believe that the region can sell better with frequent special targeted advertisement.

5.2 Customer preferences

In this section the answers to the questionnaire for German tourists are analysed. The questionnaire aimed to give an overview about the preferred distribution and information channels of German tourists for booking holidays. Therefore is firstly the structure of the respondents presented.

The respondents of the questionnaire are a bit less than 70% female and about 30% male. Further $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tourists who answered are younger than 30. 19% are 22 or younger, the majority of 59% of the respondents are 23 to 30 years old and the combined minority of 8% are over 40 years old. The respondents are all German citizens, of which 94% are Germans and 6% have another citizenship but are permanent inhabitants of Germany. 44% of the tourists are living in the geographic area of Frankfurt am Main, 14% are living in and around Munich and the rest of 43% is broadly spread over the country. The majority of respondents are single, 12% are married or live in common-law marriage. Further 10% of them have children; the majority of 90% does not have any.

It can be combined that the majority that answered this questionnaire is under 30 year's old, single and without children from mainly Frankfurt am Main or elsewhere.

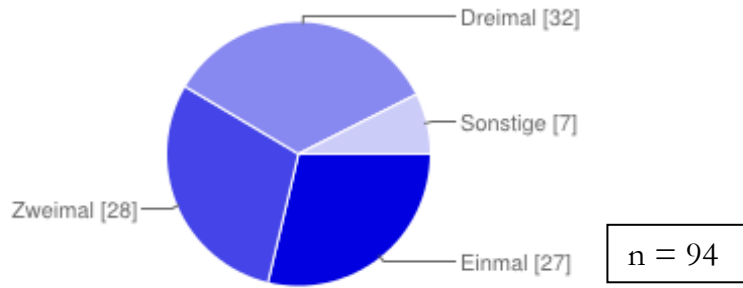


Figure 8 Amount of trips to foreign countries per year

The travellers were also asked to name the amount of trips to foreign countries they book approximately per year. Figure 8 shows that around 30% each stated that they travel one, two or three times per year to other countries for holidays. The remaining 7% travel less or more. Further the majority of around 80% needs less than 3 month to make decisions and gather information prior to booking for each trip. The remaining combined minority of 18% needs longer as shown in Figure 9 below.

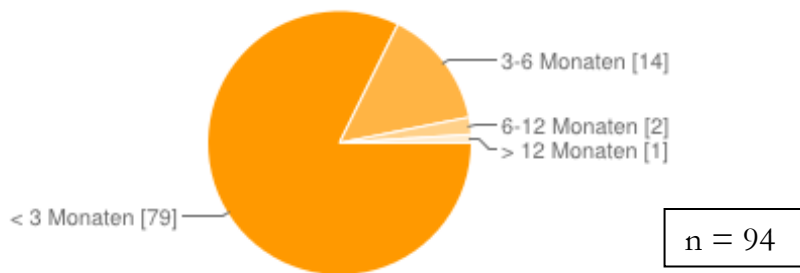


Figure 9 Time needed for decisions and information gathering prior to booking

Therefore it can be assumed, that the under 30 years old German tourists, which represent the majority in this questionnaire make one, two or three trips per year and need less than 3 month for decision making and information prior to booking for each of the trips.

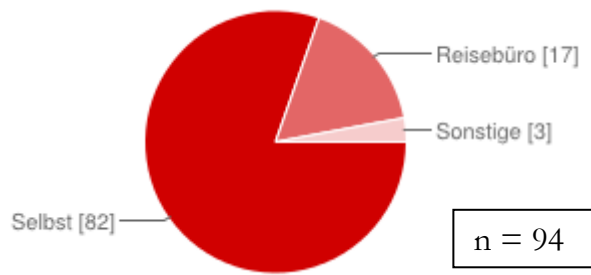


Figure 10 Booking preferences of German clients

Further 80% of them state that they prefer to book all holidays themselves and try to not involve intermediaries. Only 17% state that they book via the traditional retail travel agency as shown in Figure 10.

For information gathering for their last trip, most of the respondents used already Tripadvisor followed by Holiday. The traditional retail travel agents, as well as print media played still a big role. In Figure 11 below it is shown that the main channels in social media as Facebook and Twitter on the other hand were not used.

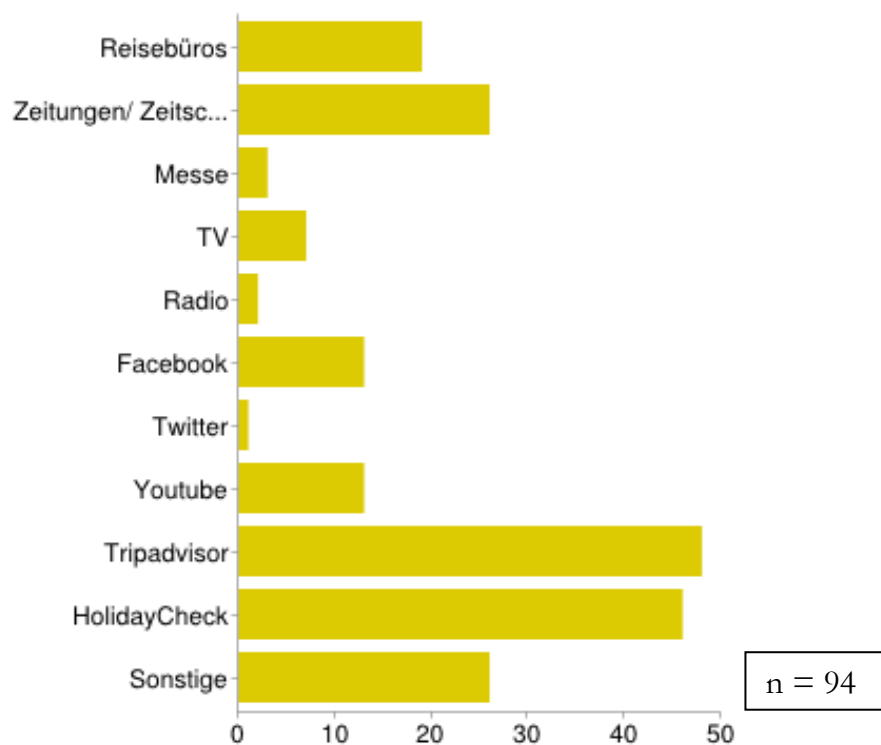


Figure 11 Used information channels prior to booking for the last taken trip

Last the respondents were asked to compare different distribution channels according to their usefulness for information gathering. Here portals as HolidayCheck are the clear winner. 41% name it as very useful and a total amount of 86% rate it medium useful to very useful. Tripadvisor, another platform on which customer ratings can be found, is as well rated by the majority of respondents with a usefulness higher than medium. 30% rate it as very useful and 41% as useful for information gathering. Compared, the traditional travel agents are still rate from 52% of the travellers as very useful or useful.

Print media as for example newspapers and magazines are on the other hand rated as less useful by most respondents. Fairs are rated as useless or maximum as medium useful. TV and radio even gain fewer points than fairs. New media channels as Facebook seems to leave customers unsure. The majority is rating them as providing medium benefit. This changes when it comes to the second most used social media platform Twitter, this assumingly due to the fact that it only provides very short information.

Most of the asked travellers further agree on reasons why to use the mentioned channels for information gathering and booking. The internet is for example commonly used and appreciated as the user is here able to compare different offers, independent from opening hours and producers. It is mentioned to be a convenient solution, giving the most opportunities. Information gathering and booking can this way be handled fast and simple.

Social media sites as Facebook and Twitter on the other hand are regarded as highly subjective and unreliable due to this subjectivity. This changes for tourism related webpages working with user produced content. Tripadvisor and HolidayCheck are regarded as reliable due to the amount of ratings and real travel experience reports.

The traditional retail travel agent on the other hand is remaining the most used distribution channel for long-distance trips, trips consuming a bigger amount of planning and group travels. Here they achieve due to individuality of offers, reliability and expe-

rience. The personal contact is here appreciated as well, although it is otherwise seen as too time consuming and long-winded.

The asked tourists further agree that magazines to a greater amount, but also TV and radio are appreciated as information channels, as they provide new ideas. They state, that a clever advertisement via this channels makes the user want to search for further information, no matter on what other channels.

Chapter 5 presented the results of the empirical research. In the following Conclusion the results will be summarised to draw depending form them, possible recommendations for the commissioner.

6 Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the results of both research sections and combines them to provide recommendations for the commissioner. The last chapter also reflects on the thesis writing process.

6.1 Recommendations for the commissioner

Around 70% of the answering agencies are already offering package tours for Southern Finland which include the Porvoo region. Further more than half of the asked travel agencies would like to include special offers about the Porvoo region into their portfolio. Most of them are unfortunately depending on head concerns and are not free in purchase decisions. However they stated that for being able to include the region, they would require additional information. They stated that they prefer to be informed about new regions via E-mail. Further they appreciate the opportunity to visit the region and gain insight and experiences, assumingly due to the fact that they have a concrete image which makes it easier to sell. For future collaboration on the other hand they would mostly prefer to work directly with the service providers of the Porvoo region. Some of them additionally stated that they could imagine cooperating with the incoming agency as second best way. For collaboration they see only minor obstacles, but would prefer sufficient information in German language. They further recommend increasing the awareness about the region with more presence in traditional media as print media, TV or radio. According to them the main target group interested in Finland is German 50+ and reachable through these channels.

The Tourist Information Porvoo should therefore establish a marketing strategy including these traditional channels. They should focus on creating awareness among the main target group. A suiting marketing strategy could easily be conducted in another Thesis, which uses the data of this report as bases.

Further it is recommended to the commissioner to keep the existing information available in German language. This way the customers can be reached with more ease, additionally this would be helpful to and appreciated by possible future partners in Germa-

ny. Further possible partners should be invited to a study tour with collaboration meetings throughout the Porvoo region. These meetings could be used to bring together purchase and producers. Here the commissioner could try to reach out to the purchase departments of the head concerns, as it is stated that most travel agencies are depending from them in purchase decisions. Additionally representatives of individual companies could be invited. Another thesis could focus on finding fitting partners, bigger concerns as well as smaller travel agencies, and establish a programme for this study tour.

It can be combined that the majority of German tourists, that answered this questionnaire is under 30 year's old, single and without children from mainly Frankfurt am Main or broadly spread over the country.

Therefore it can be assumed, that this group of tourist representing the majority in this questionnaire goes on one, two or three trips per year and needs less than 3 month for decision making and information gathering prior to each of the trips. Further 80% of them stated that they prefer to book all holidays themselves and try to not involve intermediaries. For information gathering on the other hand, the traditional retail travel agency plays still a big role, but tourism related social media as for example Tripadvisor and HolidayCheck are the main sources nowadays. The internet is so the main source for information gathering and also booking holidays for this group of tourists. However they agreed that print media as magazines and newspapers, as well as other traditional channels as for example TV and radio play an important role for them. These channels are according to them important to provide new ideas and make them want to travel. This way they start to search for information, no matter what other channels are involved.

The first recommendation, to create a marketing strategy for the traditional channels would in this way also benefit for gathering younger clients. Additionally the commissioner should create a marketing strategy to enter the market in the touristic social media sector. This strategy should include new channels as for example Tripadvisor and HolidayCheck and could easily be established in another thesis.

6.2 Reflection

In general the writing process was smooth and only minor challenges occurred. The biggest one probably came up during the empirical research as the respondent rate for both questionnaires are low and provided from a small market field.

The low respondent rate to the questionnaire for travel agencies led to only 14 results although the questionnaire was distributed to around 50 retailers. The main problem was that no reward could be offered for taking the questionnaire. Regardless of all efforts and several reminders the respondent rate could only be increased a little. The answers at least showed a clear direction. That is why no further step was taken. In reflection this fact should have been changed and in cooperation with the commissioner a reward should have been offered. An invitation to visit the region or else could have led to an increased amount of answers.

The questionnaire for tourists on the other hand could due to a lack of cooperation from the travel agencies only be distributed online. Also this fact should have been changed and the agencies should have been included in distribution. This way a broader audience could have been reached and a better overview over the market could have been gained. Due to this fact, it was hard to draw meaningful conclusion for the commissioner. However, the results are fitting and logical, they reflect the opinions of the agencies. Therefore the recommendations for the commissioner can be seen as valid.

I see this thesis as a great success for myself. During the writing process I developed a lot in the academic English language. I achieved success by developing a research project all on my own and conducting it individually. Writing this thesis has challenged me and the way I approached the work. It gave me the opportunity to recognise failure and improve myself to become better.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Welche Kanäle suchen sich deutsche Touristen zur Wahl ihres Urlaubszieles aus?

Seite 1 von 1

Welche Kanäle suchen sich deutsche Touristen zur Wahl ihres Url

Allgemeine Informationen

Geschlecht*

- Männlich
- Weiblich

Alter*

- 22 oder jünger
- 23~30
- 31~40
- 41~60
- 61 oder älter

Nationalität*

- Deutsch
- Sonstiges:

Stadt/ Bundesland*

- Frankfurt am Main
- München
- Sonstiges:

Familienstand*

- Ledig
- Verheiratet
- Sonstiges:

Kinder*

- Ja
- Nein

1. Wieviele Reisen ins Ausland buchen Sie pro Jahr? *

- Einmal
- Zweimal
- Dreimal
- Sonstiges:

2. Wie viel Zeit benötigen für die Informationsgewinnung pro Reise*

- < 3 Monaten
- 3-6 Monaten
- 6-12 Monaten
- > 12 Monaten

3. Buchen Sie Ihre Reisen selbst oder über ein Reisebüro?*

- Selbst
- Reisebüro
- Sonstiges:

4. Wodurch haben Sie Informationen für Ihre letzte Reise gewonnen? *

- Reisebüros
- Zeitungen/ Zeitschriften
- Messe
- TV
- Radio
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube
- Tripadvisor
- HolidayCheck
- Sonstiges:

5. Welche Internetseiten benutzen Sie um die Preise zu vergleichen?*

- Günstiger.de
- Preisvergleich.de
- Billiger.de
- Sonstiges:

6. Welcher Vertriebsweg ist Ihrer Meinung nach der nützlichste, um Informationen für Ihren Urlaub zu gewinnen?

1 : Sinnvoll und 5 : Sinnlos

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Reisebüros | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Zeitungen/ Zeitschriften | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Messe | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| TV | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Radio | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Facebook | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Twitter | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Youtube | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Tripadvisor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| HolidayCheck | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. Warum nutzen Sie diesen Vertriebsweg? Vorlieben, Verbesserungen, Aufmachung?

Fragebogen für Reisebüros

Seite 1 von 1

Ferienregion Porvoo, Finnland

Formularbeschreibung

1. Was wissen Ihre Kunden über Finnland?

2. Bieten Sie Pakete an, in denen der süden Finnlands und die Region Porvoo beinhalten? *

- Ja
 Nein

3. Wären Sie daran interessiert der Porvoo Region in Ihrem Produktportfolio einzuschliessen?

4. Wenn Sie die Region Porvoo in Ihrem Produktportfolio einplanen würden, welche zusätzlichen Informationen wären für Sie hilfreich?

5. Wie stellen Sie sich die Zusammenarbeit mit den lokalen Reisebüros in Porvoo vor?

6. Welche sind die größten Hindernisse der Einplanung der Region Porvoo in Ihrem Angebot?

7. Wie würden Sie gerne über das Angebot der Region informiert werden?

- E-mail
 Social Media
 blogs
 Tripadvisor
 Einladung, um die Region zu besuchen
 Sonstiges:

8. Haben Sie andere Vorschläge für eine langfristige Zusammenarbeit mit der Region Porvoo?

9. Wie bewerten Sie als Reisebüro das Image von Finnland als Touristendestination?