

# The influence of Instagram on consumers' travel planning and destination choice

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<p>Picture is worth a thousand words, as the old saying goes. Photos convey emotions, feelings, thoughts and reality; things that can't be truly described by words. Visual aspects are a big part of travelling and are incorporated in almost all social media platforms, especially the photo sharing application, Instagram. Instagram is one of the biggest and most active social media platforms concentrated on visual communication.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis was to find out the possible influences of Instagram in travel planning and destination choice, and the potentials of Instagram marketing in travel industry. The aim was also to find out about consumer travel planning behaviour and to come up with suggestions to how destination marketing organizations and tourism marketing managers could develop their marketing strategies.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consists of consumer behaviour, visual communication and Instagram in the context of tourism and travelling. The theory is based on literature review and analysing Instagram accounts.</p> <p>The research conducted was based on quantitative methods in form of an online survey. Few open-ended questions were added to the survey in order to get more personal responses. The survey was done with Webropol software and was targeted to young adults living in Finland, mainly to those who are active Instagram users. The survey included questions about people's travel habits, travel planning behaviour, Instagram usage and attitudes towards user-generated content. The results from the survey were analysed using SPSS statistics and Webropol's own tools for analytics.</p> <p>According to the results, people value visual aspects in travel planning and especially women use Instagram as a source for travel inspiration and information. 82% of the respondents indicated Instagram having had at least some influence in their travel planning. However Instagram is not the only source used, as people tend to use various sources to get information when planning their travels. The results revealed some differences within gender and age groups in people's information search behaviour and Instagram usage. The study also found that people trust more on user-generated content than information coming from service providers. Photos shared by real travellers are considered important when planning travels. People are independent in their travel planning and do most of the information search online. Recommendations from family and friends are the most valued and trusted source.</p> <p>The outcome of the research suggests that marketing managers should incorporate user-generated content into their social networking sites and websites, and should be present in Instagram and consider using it as a marketing tool.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Consumer behaviour, destination marketing, Instagram, social media, visual communication, tourism, travel	

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# 1 Introduction

Travelling increases our knowledge and widens our perspective, but how do people choose their travel destination and what affects their travel plans? Working at the airport and watching people depart on holidays and arrive from different destinations have raised the interest of the author in wanting to know their travel motives. Also as a big Instagram user, the author browses through various incredible photos from around the world every day, which awakens the travel bug within her. This has raised the question if Instagram has any effect on people's choice of destinations and travel planning. There are a lot of articles and blog posts online about how to use Instagram for travel planning, but do people actually use it for the given purpose and does it have influence on their choices? According to articles and blogs, Instagram is becoming a popular tool for planning their travels. (Follow me away 2016; McMahon 2016; Yore 2016.)

There has been research on how social media, user generated content and electronic word-of-mouth affects on consumer behaviour and travel planning, but Instagram is rather new social network and there has not been much research on how Instagram influences consumers' behaviour when planning their travels. Cox, Burgess, Sellitto and Buultjens (2009) did a research on what kind of role user-generated content, UGC, has in travel planning processes. Their study revealed that sites containing UGC are popular sources in travel planning and information search process, but they are not considered to be as credible and trustworthy as for example government-sponsored tourism websites (Cox & al. 2009). Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan (2007) conducted a research on the effects of word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), explained later in the thesis, on hospitality and tourism management. According to their study, it seems that eWOM plays an important role in the consumer decision-making process and marketers need to learn how to control this phenomena and learn to utilize the emerging technologies (Litvin & al. 2007). A lot has happened since these researches, and the popularity and importance of social media, especially in the travel section, has grown remarkably and the attitudes towards UGC and eWOM have evolved and become more trusted (Crowdtap 2017; Rezdy 2017; Xiang & Gretzel 2010).

Travel planning process has changed a lot during recent years. Aforetime consumers went to see a travel agent to book their holidays but nowadays it is more common to do the travel booking through the Internet, and consumers themselves do the information searching and travel planning processes previously done by travel agents (Rezdy 2017). The Internet has also widened their knowledge on different destinations and thus expanded their travel options.

The number of Internet users continues to grow and people spend more and more time online, sharing and seeking information. According to Internet live stats, the amount of Internet users worldwide was over 3,7 billion in March 2017 (Internet World Stats 2017). In Finland the amount of Internet users was 5,1 million in 2016, which is over 90% of the population (Internet live stats 2017).

Along with other social media sites, Instagram has grown enormously in recent years and gained popularity especially amongst young people. 90% of Instagram users are under the age 35 (ScienceDaily 2015). The amount of monthly active Instagram users reached incredible 700 million in April 2017 (Instagram press 2017). Instagram has become a popular platform for its users to share their photos of daily lives and activities as well as their travel explorations. There is a huge supply of travel photos and videos waiting for the destination marketers and tourism providers to incorporate into their websites and take advantage of the user generated content and develop their online strategy.

The data for the thesis is collected through literature review, study of Instagram accounts and conducting an online survey. The research for the purpose of the thesis focuses on young adults living in Finland and the relationship between their travel planning process and Instagram usage. The author hopes the research results will help travel companies and destinations to develop their online marketing strategies, broaden their visibility in social media, and take advantage of user generated content on Instagram.

## **1.1 Objectives of the thesis and research questions**

The objective of the thesis is to find out the potentials of Instagram marketing in the concept of tourism and travelling, and to investigate what kind of effects Instagram has on consumers' travel behaviour. The aim is also to help destination marketing organizations, DMOs, and other tourism service providers to develop their online marketing strategies, find out if it would be beneficial to take advantage of Instagram and user generated content, and thus reach potential customers.

Below are the main research questions that the author is seeking to get answers to as an outcome of the conducted research:

- What channels people use when looking for travel inspiration and information online?
- How reliable people think user generated content is?
- Do people seek inspiration for travelling from Instagram?
- What kind of content is important in their travel planning?
- Does Instagram have influence on destination choice/travel planning?

- How big role do visual aspects have on decision-making?

The idea for the research came from the author's interest in social media and travelling, and the author hopes to find out what is the role of Instagram in the decision-making process of consumers when choosing travel destinations and in travel planning in general. The focus is on individual Instagram users aged between 18 and 35 who are Finnish residents, as this age group falls in the majority of Instagram users.

## **1.2 Report structure**

The thesis is structured the traditional way. The introduction is followed by the theoretical part of the thesis. In this part the concepts of consumer behaviour and Instagram along with visual communication in the context of travelling and tourism are introduced. A brief overview to tourism industry is also added in to the theory part.

The theoretical framework is followed by the empirical part where the research process is described. This includes description of the methods used, introducing the target group of the survey, creating and distributing the survey and the analysis methods. Then the research results are introduced and analysed using graphs. In the last discussion and conclusions -section the results are summarized and suggestions for DMOs are given. In the end the validity and reliability of the results will be evaluated, as well as the whole thesis process. The author also gives a self-evaluation of the thesis process and will add development suggestions for further research.

## **1.3 Key definitions**

The main concepts of the thesis are consumer behaviour, visual communication and Instagram. To give a better understanding of the upcoming theoretical part, the author wants to introduce the following concepts; social media and destination marketing. Instagram and visual communication are strongly related to social media, thus the concept of social media is necessary to explain. As one of the aims of the thesis is to help DMOs develop their online strategies, the concept of destination marketing is defined.

### **1.3.1 Social media**

Social media has become a natural part of everyday life. It has made communicating with friends, family and companies easier than before as it is accessible almost everywhere through Internet connection with the help of different devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. Social media can be hard to define, as it can be confusing to separate from related concepts of Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. Kaplan and Haenlain (2010,

61) define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of WEB 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".

The term Web 2.0 describes a way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web, using more advance technology than the earlier Web 1.0. Kaplan and Haenlain (2010, 60-61) describe Web 2.0 being a platform where content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but is continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative manner. Web 2.0 could be described as a platform for the evolution of social media and a web in which people can interact and participate rather than just read content from a site strictly controlled by the Internet page provider. User-generated content, or sometimes referred to as consumer-generated media, can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users. (Kaplan & Haenlain, 2010, 60-61.) User-generated content can refer to pictures, videos, testimonials, tweets and blog posts in different virtual communities and websites, and is the act of users promoting a brand rather than the brand promoting itself.

Social media platforms use web-based technologies, desktop computers and mobile technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which people can share, co-create, communicate and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online (Wikipedia 2017a). The term social media is usually used to describe social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn. Many originally Internet based social media platforms are made possible to use via applications made for mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones, which makes the usage of social media even easier, efficient and more accessible.

### **1.3.2 Destination marketing**

Most of tourism activities take place in destinations. A destination can be described as a location that a person travels to and that differs from the person's usual place of residence (Wang & Pizam 2011, 3). It is a place with some form of actual or perceived boundary, such as the physical boundary of an island, political boundaries or even market-created boundaries (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2017, 511). Travellers have a variety of choices of travel destinations around the world to choose from. From the supply side, destination-marketing organizations at different levels are competing for travellers' attention from a highly competitive marketplace. Destination marketing organisations, DMOs, are government agencies, convention and visitor bureaus, travel associations and other bodies that



are responsible for long-term strategy development, marketing and promotion of their respective destination areas (Hudson 2008, 398-399; Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2017, 511-512). The marketing and management strategies need to be effective and integrative for destination to stand out from the competition. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 1.) "Destination marketing is systematically linking supply (destination features and benefits) with demand (needs and wants of travellers) and enhancing competitiveness of a destination in a sustainable manner" (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2017, 511). In other words, it is promoting a destination with a purpose to increase the number of visitors to the particular destination. Destination marketing is also about building and maintaining destination image that meets the travellers' view of the destination but also meets the desired image of the destination (Wang & Pizam 2011, 130-146).

## **2 Consumer behaviour in tourism**

In this chapter the concept of consumer behaviour will be explained in the context of travel and tourism. Understanding customer characteristics and behaviour is central to marketing managers, and thus for the destination marketing organizations as well. The main focus is on consumer behaviour: what factors influence their behaviour and how do they make their decisions. The traditional concepts will be explained but the focus is in the consumer behaviour in the concept of tourism and online behaviour. First, an overview of tourism industry is briefly introduced.

### **2.1 Tourism industry overview**

Tourism industry has experienced continued growth over the decades and is becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO 2016a). The number of international tourist arrivals worldwide was over 1.18 billion in 2015 and the figure is forecasted to exceed 1.8 billion by 2030 (Statista 2015; UNWTO 2016b). The term tourism can be defined as short-term movement of people from their origin to destination to indulge in different pleasurable activities. Tourism is seen as a service, not a product. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, 4.) According to Statista (2015) countries such as France and United States are consistently being popular tourism destinations, and Europe receives the most international tourist arrivals. However other less known countries are emerging and gaining more and more popularity among travellers. As the visual web continues to grow and the amount of user-generated content, introduced earlier in the thesis, arises, more hidden gems become hot spots.

### **2.2 Consumer behaviour**

Consumer behaviour is one of the key factors to take into account in the concept of marketing. It is crucial part in understanding why people choose a certain destination and product. In order to use marketing strategies effectively, it is essential for marketing managers to understand how consumers make their decisions and what factors influence them. Consumer preferences change continuously and are affected by numerous internal and external factors along their decision-making processes. This fact makes it difficult to analyse consumer behaviour and whilst there have been many theories and models to explain this complex phenomena, there has been little empirical research to test these models and theories against actual behavioural patterns. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007.)

Booking a holiday is very different to for example purchasing a clothing apparel or buying food at local supermarket. It requires more time, more consideration and more resources.

Consumers also have lot of expectations towards the service. Figure 2.1 shows key factors influencing consumers' behaviour. Individual's cultural background, age and gender, social and personal attributes along with motivation have an important effect on one's behaviour and decision-making. (Hudson 2008, 41.)

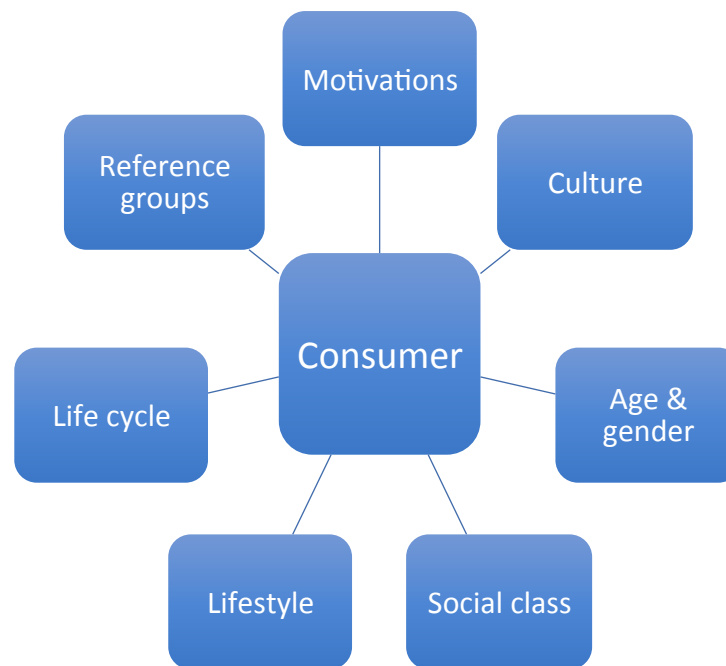


Figure 2.1 Factors influencing consumer behaviour (Hudson 2008, 41)

Cultural factors have profound influence on people. Culture is the most basic cause of a person's wants and behaviour. A person learns basic values, perceptions, wants and behavioural patterns from family, society and other important institutions. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 161.)

Social factors such as family, reference groups, person's role and status also affect our behaviour. Reference groups are all the groups that have influence on individual's attitudes or behaviour. These include for example family, friends, co-workers, and religious groups. They expose a person to new behaviours and lifestyles, influence the person's attitudes, opinions and self-concept. People are also influenced by groups they don't belong to. These are for example aspirational groups, which are groups that a person wishes to belong to. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 181; Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 164-165.)

Personal characteristics that influence consumers' behaviour include age, gender, their stage in their life cycle, their occupation and economic circumstances. Also one's personality, self-concept, lifestyle and values are important characteristics that influence behaviour. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 183.)

Motivation is seen as a major determinant of consumer behaviour and a big determinant to why people travel, which is why a more in depth look into the matter is needed. Also the concept of push and pull factors, which are commonly used by many researchers in the context of motivation, will be explained. The motivation influencing consumer behaviour is followed by examination of consumers' information search and decision-making process.

### **2.2.1 Motivation**

Motivation in tourism sector is relatively new field of study and tourism motivation theories have mostly been conceptual rather than empirical. Consumer motivation in general is not fully understood but it is regarded as one of the most important variables in explaining consumer and tourist behaviour (Baloglu & Uysal 1996; Crompton 1979). All individuals are different and in such manner are the factors that motivate them. Their personality, lifestyle, past experiences, demographic characteristics and perceptions determine their motivations. Individual's travel preferences and behaviour are not settled and can change during their lifetime. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007.)

Motivation is the desire to do things. It gives the reason for people's actions and how they behave. A person's needs are seen as the forces that stimulate motivated behaviour (Hudson 2008, 41). There are a lot of different factors that motivate consumers to travel. According to Swarbrook and Horner (2007), those factors can be split into two groups: those that motivate to take a holiday, and those, which motivate to take a particular holiday to a specific destination at a particular time. These can also be seen as push and pull factors (Baloglu & Uysal 1996; Crompton 1979; Dann 1977).

A review of the literature on consumer behaviour and motivation indicates that it has been generally accepted that motivation concept can be classified into these previously mentioned forces, push and pull factors. People travel because they are pushed into making travel decisions by their own internal forces and pulled by the external forces of the destination characteristics and peculiarities. (Baloglu & Uysal 1996; Crompton 1979; Dann 1977.) Push factors are considered to be useful when explaining the desire for travel, whereas the pull factors have been seen useful for explaining the actual destination choice (Crompton 1979). Push factors are socio-psychological motives, most of which are intangible or intrinsic desires of the individual such as rest and relaxation, health and fit-

ness, adventure and social interaction and the desire to escape from everyday life. Pull factors are those that attract the traveller to a specific destination, they include tangible resources of the destination such as beaches, facilities, historical and cultural resources as well as marketed image of the destination. (Baloglu & Uysal 1996.) Crompton (1979) classifies the motives that influence the selection of a destination as following: escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction, novelty and education. The latter two are seen as cultural motives whereas the first seven as socio-psychological motives.

Travelling is a way to satisfy one's wants and needs. Usually the holiday taken represents a compromise between the consumers' multiple motives. Either one motivation becomes dominant or the holiday is purchased so that all of the motives are partly satisfied (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, 56).

The understanding of travel behaviour and knowledge of travel motivation play an important role in tourism marketing, in order to attract tourists and guide them in their decision-making process.

### **2.3 Information search process**

Information search is necessary for travellers to be able to select a destination for their holiday and plan their trip. There is a large variety of alternatives and it could be a difficult task to choose the most suitable and attractive option. The search process generally involves lots of effort and various different information sources. Before, the holidays were booked solely by visiting a local travel agent and the destination was chosen on the recommendation of the travel agent. With the emerge of the Internet era, travellers can now use the Internet to evaluate the alternatives and to compare and contrast different destinations. Online, the consumers are able to conduct broad research on different services and destinations and social media sites have enabled online social connections between travellers in a way that was not possible before. Nowadays is more common to use the Internet and social media in order to search for information on travel destinations, and recommendations from acquaintances are affecting the decision-making (Rezdy 2017; Xiang & Gretzel 2010).

Information search can be either internal or external. Internal search involves identifying and retrieving knowledge from one's own memory and external search means collecting and searching information from elsewhere, i.e. from the Internet or consulting with friends or relatives. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 68.) Wang and Pizam (2011, 70) claimed that accord-

ing to some studies conducted on the information search process, travellers tend to use four broad external sources when planning their trips: family and friends, destination specific literature, the media and travel consultants. Studies also suggested that travellers consider friends and relatives more useful than other sources for information on the choice of destination (Wang & Pizam 2011, 70). They tend to trust more on this type of information, regarded as word-of-mouth information, than information coming from commercial sources such as travel agents or other service providers, as information is coming from people they know or trust (Litvin & al. 2007; Tegmeier-Pedersen, Razmerita & Coleoni 2014).

Word-of-mouth, WOM, is one of the most influential information sources consumers can turn to (Litvin & al. 2008). Word-of-mouth can be described as "Person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a perceiver concerning a brand, product, or a service" (Dahl 2015). In other words, WOM occurs when a person has an opinion about a product or service and shares his or hers beliefs, attitudes and experiences about the product or service with other people (Ahuja, Michels, Walker & Weissbuch 2007, 151). People often rely on advice from friends, family and other peers when planning a holiday. The significance of word-of-mouth lies in the fact that the information and recommendations come from the consumers themselves. The Internet has enabled consumers to engage in electronic word of mouth communication (eWOM) and unlike the traditional WOM, eWOM typically occurs in an online environment where the sources of information are individuals who have little or no prior relationship with the consumer seeking information (Lin, Lu & Wu 2012, 7-9). EWOM can be described as a specific type of user-generated content about products, services or companies (Wang & Rodgers 2011, 212). Given the characteristics of Internet and anonymity of eWOM communication, the credibility and trustworthiness of the information provided can be difficult to determine (Cox & al. 2009).

In addition to verbal information, consumers seek visual information on destinations. With fast evolving technology and sites and applications like Instagram, introduced in the next chapter, users are able to post photos and videos on Internet. They are able to share their own experiences with people around the world. The eWOM and visual information of travel destinations in these kinds of platforms are valuable and might play crucial role influencing consumer perception on the destination and decision-making. These days an increasing number of bloggers and Internet users share their experiences by posting visual information online. According to a research conducted by Lin and Huang (2006), photographs on a website could raise people's attention and interest on a specific destination and inspire them to travel. The results from a survey conducted by AMP and BLITZ mar-

keting agencies (2016) on U.S. travellers between the ages of 18-55 support the importance of UGC and WOM in information search process and decision-making. According to their study, 84% of the millennials (and 73% of non-millennials) are likely or very likely to plan a trip based on UGC (photos or social media updates) and WOM.

Internet as an external information search tool has been receiving increasing attention in the recent years. It has become a powerful means of delivering and sharing messages and reviews between hundreds of millions of travellers worldwide. The Internet has made it possible for travellers around the world to share their experiences with other travellers through various different platforms. These developments are pushing businesses and destination marketers to develop new types of information platforms and applications to keep up with the travellers and to gain their attention. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 78.)

The accessibility and convenience of the advanced communication technologies today, such as smartphones, makes the information search fast and easy, but the extensive amount of information online can be overwhelming for consumers as was also proven in the AMP and BLITZ's survey (2016) where 72% indicated feeling overwhelmed when planning a trip.

## 2.4 Decision-making

Choosing the holiday destination and planning the trip is a high-risk and complex decision making process due to the intangible nature of the service offering. The process has multiple phases and aspects to include. Travellers commit large sums of money on a product they cannot see which causes them to be highly interested and involved in the decision-making process. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 45.) In recent years user generated media has become important tool travellers use to try and reduce the risks in buying an intangible product (Swarbrooke & Horner 2016, 111).

Most studies on consumer behaviour refer to five stages in the decision-making process illustrated in the figure 2.1: problem recognition or identification of needs, information gathering, evaluation of alternatives, process of choice and decision, and post purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller 2016, 195).

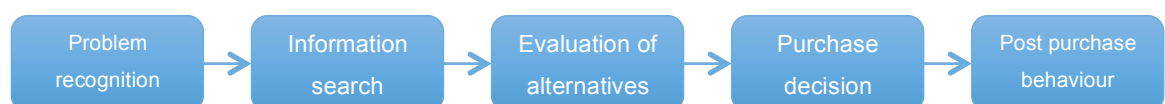


Figure 2.1. Five-Stage Model of the Consumer Buying Process (Kotler & Keller 2016, 195)

In general, the travel decision-making process begins from the need or a desire to travel. This is followed by multiple decisions that have to be reached such as decision concerning the destination, time of travel, transport, accommodation and other services. Hudson (2008, 56-57) viewed the decision making process involving six stages, awareness stage, information search, attitude development, evaluations, purchase and post-purchase behaviour. After the individual has identified the need of a holiday, information search process described above can start. When the search is finished, it is time to look into the alternatives and compare them. The consumer forms preferences on destinations and products. The decisions are strongly affected by same factors that affect our behaviour: personality, motivation, family, reference groups, social class and cultures and also the nature of the holiday. The information search might continue in situ and decision-making continues while on holiday when travellers need to for example decide on activities and where to eat. After the holiday the consumer evaluates the trip and this affects the first phases of the next travel planning process and determines whether or not the consumer will come back or recommend the destination to others. Literature research reveals that there are several travel decision-making models but the author doesn't see them very relevant as they are over decades old. However they all use the same base for the model as the five stages process model mentioned earlier (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016, 46-54; Wang & Pizam 2011, 53-64.)

Visual practises play an important role in decision-making as well, and are an important aspect of tourism experiences. Through videos and photographs travellers are provided with a sense of authenticity about the real sight and help provide an image of the product to be purchased. As noted earlier due to the intangible nature of travel services, imagining the destination can be hard, but with the help of photos and videos, consumers are provided visual knowledge of the destination and service offerings. According to statistics photos have a powerful influence generating travel engagement and also generating booking inquiries (Gonzalo 2014). Photos and videos have great impact on consumer's purchasing behaviour due to the fact that they provide a way for consumers to visualize the product before they make a purchase decision (Tuckman 2012).

Next chapter comprises a more in depth look into the subject of visual communication and the most engaging visual social media platform, Instagram (Leone 2016; Parker 2017; O'Reilly 2014).



### **3 Visual communication and Instagram**

This chapter focuses on visual communication and Instagram, along with its marketing possibilities in relation to travelling. Visual communication is incorporated in almost all social media platforms and has grown along with the growth of the usage of smartphones. There were over 3 billion photos shared on social media per day in 2015 (2 billion of these were Facebook owned properties including Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook Messenger) and it is reasonable to believe that the number is a lot higher for 2017 (Meeker 2016, 90).

Major players in visual social media include Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Snapchat. YouTube is a popular free video hosting website where registered users can upload and share videos with anyone able to access the site (Wikipedia 2017b). Pinterest is a web and mobile application that allows users to organize and share images and videos from around the Internet (Techopedia 2017). Snapchat is a messaging mobile application that was created in 2011. It allows the user to create short multimedia messages containing photos or short videos. The unique feature of the application is that messages are only displayed for a very short time before they become inaccessible. (Wikipedia 2017c.)

#### **3.1 Instagram**

Instagram is a social networking application, which allows its users to share photos and videos from a smartphone. It is a first social media site built specifically to work on mobile device. A mobile device refers to any type of mobile phone or similar device such as iPod touch, iPad or other tablet that uses cellular technology. (Miles 2014, 4.) Part of the beauty of Instagram being designed for to work on a mobile device is that the choices are simple and the navigation is clear and easy to understand. The app is open to everybody and is available in all countries. Instagram was initially released in October 2010 as a free mobile application. It was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. (Wikipedia 2017d.) It recently reached 700 million users and they share an average of 95 million photos and videos each day (Instagram press 2017; Parker 2016). The number of photos shared to date is over 40 billion (Parker 2016). The user profile is quite young as 90 percent of the Instagram users are under the age 35 (Bagadiya 2017; Smith 2016). In Finland there are over 1,2 million Instagram users of which 70% are using the application daily (Valtari 2016). Instagram was bought by Facebook in 2012 (Wikipedia 2017d.)

Instagram has become a popular way for consumers to share their lives with others and for brands to share their products with consumers. Instagram leverages smartphone's camera and photo library, allowing the user to choose a picture or video and apply filters

and effects to it. Photos and videos are displayed on user's profile and they can be shared privately or publicly depending if the profile is private or public. The content posted on Instagram can also be shared easily via other social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. The posted photo appears in the feed of the users who follow the poster, in the order Instagram believes that the user will care about the most. In other words, the feed contains photos and videos uploaded by the user or the people the user follows, and the order of photos and videos will be based on the likelihood the user will be interested in the content, the relationship with the user and the person posting, and the timeliness of the post (Instagram blog 2016). The feed will also show advertisements marked with the word "sponsored" next to the brand name in between the posts.

When sharing a photo on Instagram, a description can be added to the photo including hashtags. A hashtag is an easy way to categorize images and photos and allows the user to expand the reach of the photo. Hashtags allow people to find content they are interested in and from marketing point of view, provide marketers a means to get more exposure and brand/destination recognition. When a hashtag is added to the caption, anyone looking at that particular hashtag will see the image and vice versa; if a user is looking the particular hashtag, i.e. #maui, he or she will see all the posts that have #maui tagged with it. This is illustrated below in figure 3.1 with the author's post on her Instagram account containing hashtag #waianapanapa. The hashtag concept was initially created in Twitter and many of the social media platforms and websites have adapted the hashtag, including Pinterest, Google+, Facebook and Instagram. (Miles 2014, 27.)

The sharer can also tag other users in the photos and tag the place where the photo is taken. This way when clicking the location the user can see photos taken from the location by various users. The user is able to browse through a collection of photos and get a visual introduction to the location. Other key features Instagram has are liking and commenting other user's content: users can like other user's images and leave comments on a picture or video to join a conversation, make a statement or tag other users in the comments so they will see the picture. Users can add captions to the photos and videos and share or "regram" other users' content. The nature of the application allows pictures to be taken and shared anywhere and anytime and enabling users to connect with each other on the go.

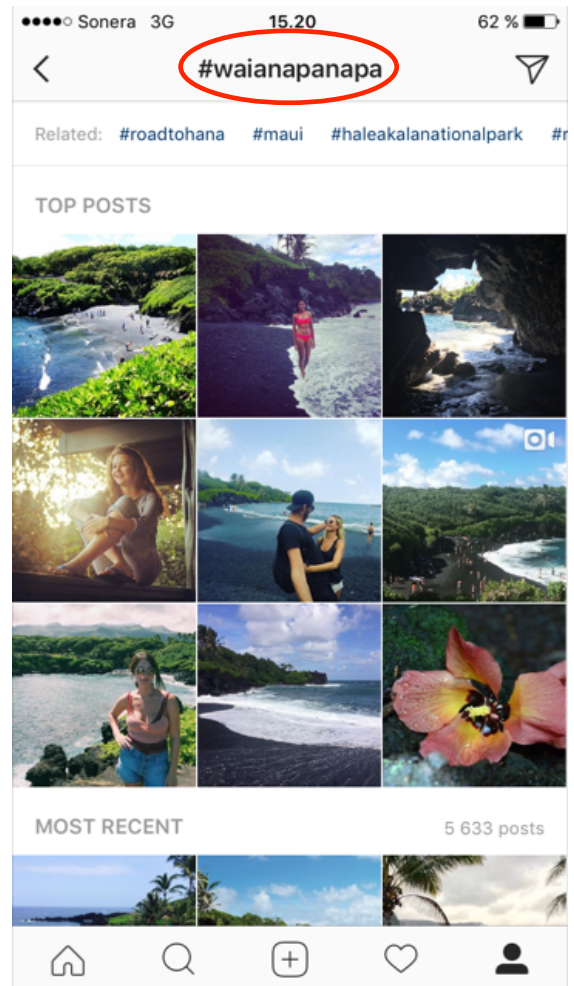


Figure 3.1. Screenshot of a post on the author's Instagram account and posts under the hashtag #waianapanapa

Instagram is continuously updating its functions and new features are introduced to Instagram users frequently. Last year, in 2016, Instagram introduced for example the story, which imitates Snapchats' posts that are displayed only for a short time. The story feature lets users to add photos to their story with the content disappearing after 24 hours. Later Instagram added live video functionality and the possibility to add different stickers to the story. In November 2016 it introduced Instagram Direct, where users can send direct messages to other users. Latest updates to the app include an option to save posts into private collections and a function to Instagram Direct, where user can send a disappearing photo or video to a friend, like in Snapchat. (Instagram Press.)

### 3.2 Instagram and travelling

Travel is a big deal in Instagram. There are over 179 million posts with the hashtag #travel on Instagram, and the amount is continuously increasing (Instagram App 2017). Accord-

ing to Social Media Today, 48% of Instagram users rely on Instagram to find new destination, 35% use it to discover a new place (Baker 2015). In like manner the author includes in her holiday planning process looking up different destinations and places on Instagram, and later searching about the chosen destination.

When for example entering the hashtag #srilanka in the search function of the app, the feed of images appearing with the hashtag shows people on holiday, drinks, food, beaches and other places of interest. This is illustrated in figure 3.2 below. One can get an idea what the destination is like and get tips on things to do, where to visit and even see what the weather is like at that moment as people are uploading photos by minute.

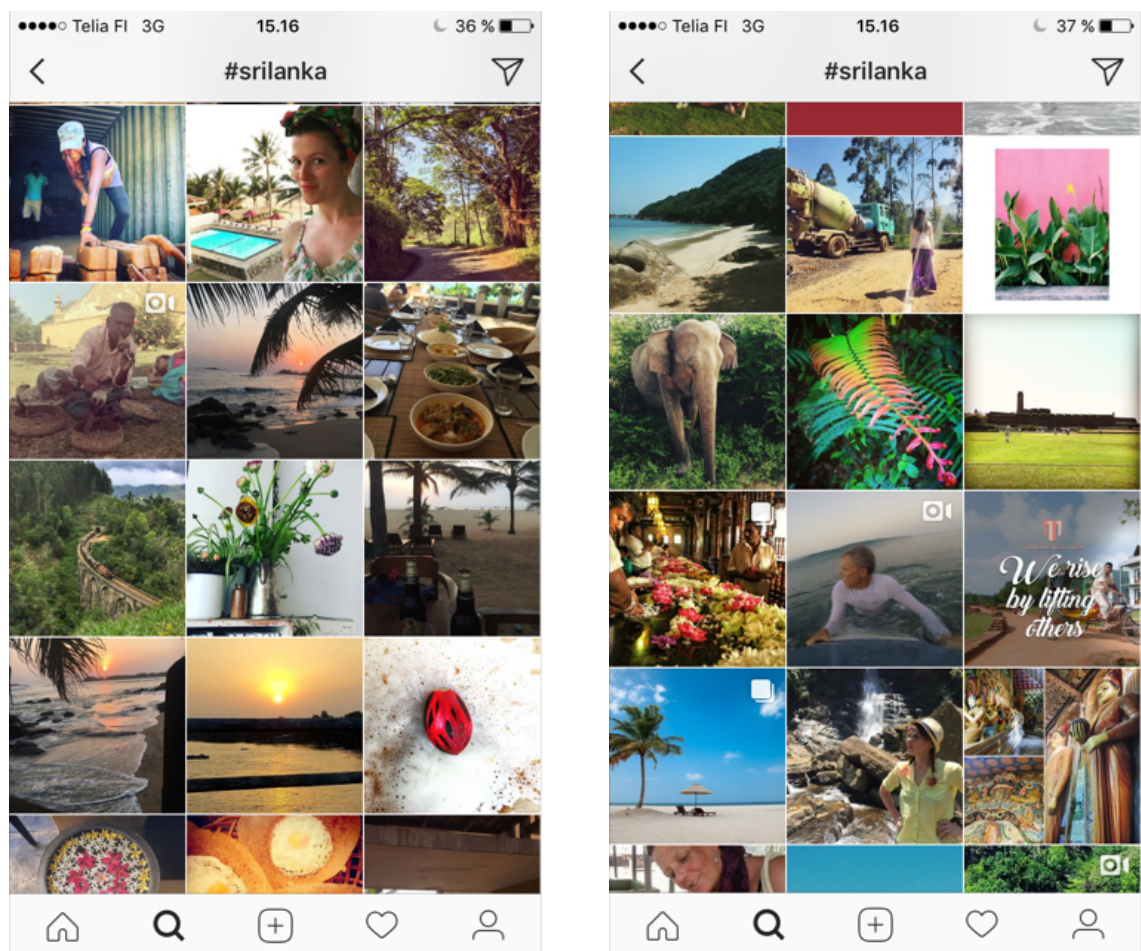


Figure 3.2. Screenshots taken from Instagram hashtag search with #srilanka

One can also search images with the location tag and discover photos taken by travellers and locals from that particular place. Clicking the tab called “places” and entering a location one wants to search, the screen fills up with a feed of posts that users have uploaded with the particular location tag, illustrated in figure 3.3 below.

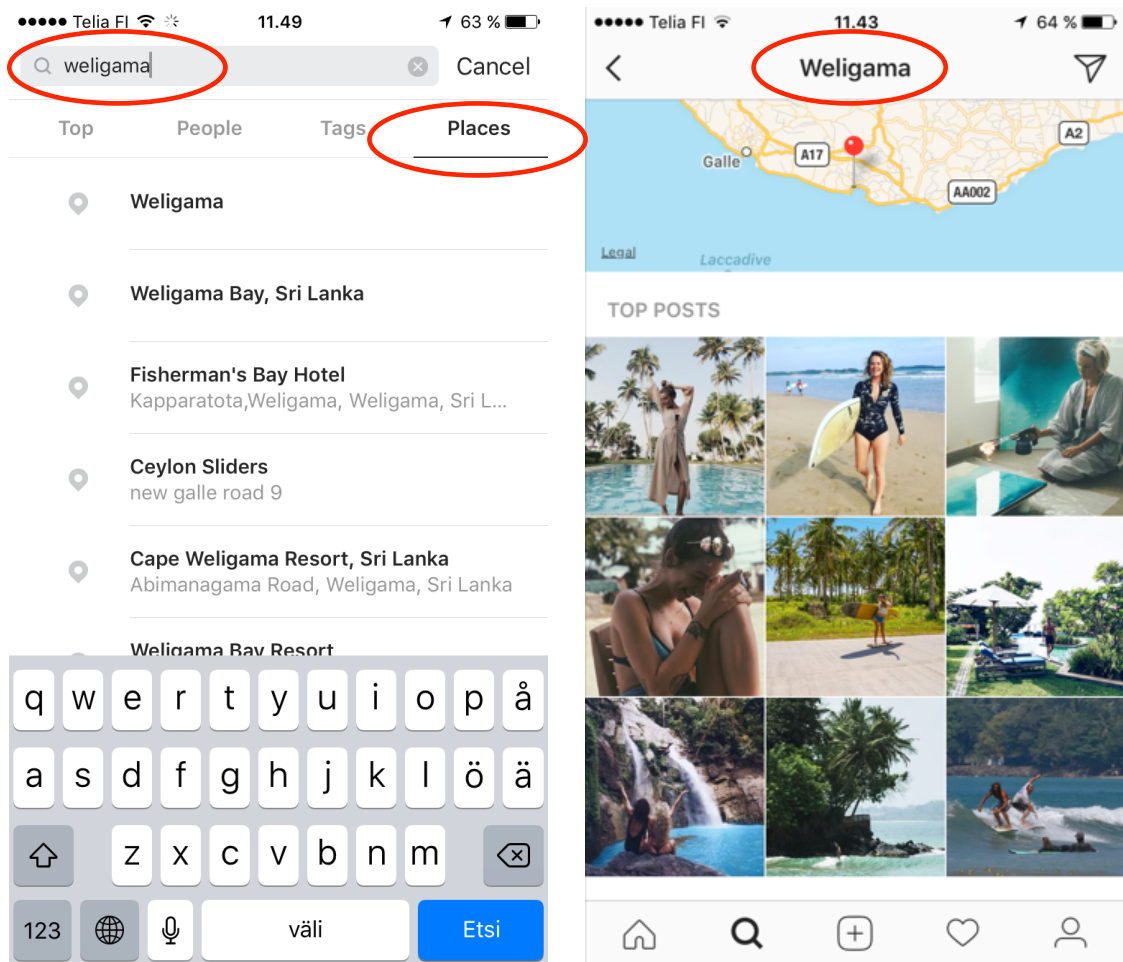


Figure 3.3. Screenshots from Instagram search with location search Weligama

By browsing through these photos of people on holiday, the user will get a truer representation of what the destination will be like, in contrast to the edited photos of travel magazines and websites. Professional photography may look attractive but it is uncertain if the perception in the actual location will match the image gotten from the professional photograph. The authentic photos taken by travellers are more likely to match one's own experience when visiting the place in question.

There is a lot of valuable information and tips coming from travellers or locals who have found something cool and want to share it with others. They aren't usually paid to promote a destination or service but genuinely like the location or product. The hashtag and location search are a great way to discover what attractions there are, places worth to visit and things to do.

Many travel bloggers have an Instagram account in addition to their website. A blog is a discussion or informational website often consisting of diary-style entries or posts about a

chosen subject (Wikipedia 2017e). Blogs allow people to interact with each other thus blogging can be seen as social networking service. In the travel blogs, consumers are sharing travel experiences with others, or a blogger is writing travel tips to readers. Instagram is full of users who have gained thousands of followers with their stunning travel photos. Popular bloggers or influencers have also Instagram accounts where they share travel photos in addition to other lifestyle posts. Influencer is an individual who has a power to affect purchase decisions of others because of their authority, knowledge, position or relationship. In addition to bloggers, they might be members of peer groups, or reference groups, photographers, celebrities, personal trainers, moderators of specific content profiles (communities and feature accounts, explained in chapter 3.3.2) etc. Previously tourism marketers have focused on bloggers as opinion leaders that can effectively spread content to big audience, but they should focus also on influencers on Instagram (Gretzel 2016).

Travel photographer and influencer from England, Jack Morris, with username @doyoutravel, has over 2,2 million followers on Instagram. Morris's girlfriend, Lauren Bullen, whom he met whilst on a job together in Fiji, also has an Instagram account, with username @gypsea\_just, with 1,5 million followers and has a blog of her own. They claim they get most of their travel inspiration and destination ideas from Instagram, Pinterest and via word-of-mouth. (House 2017.) Morris's and Bullen's Instagram accounts are represented in figure 3.4. The couple travels together around the world full time and shares their experiences through photographs on Instagram and on their travel blogs. Another popular travelling couple on Instagram is Hildegrunn, @hilvees, and Samuel Taipale, @eljackson. They both have around 300 000 followers on Instagram and share incredible photos of their travels and experiences on their Instagram accounts. Travel blogger Brooke Seward with username @worldwanderlust has over 621 000 followers. She shares pictures of amazing places from her travels around the world.

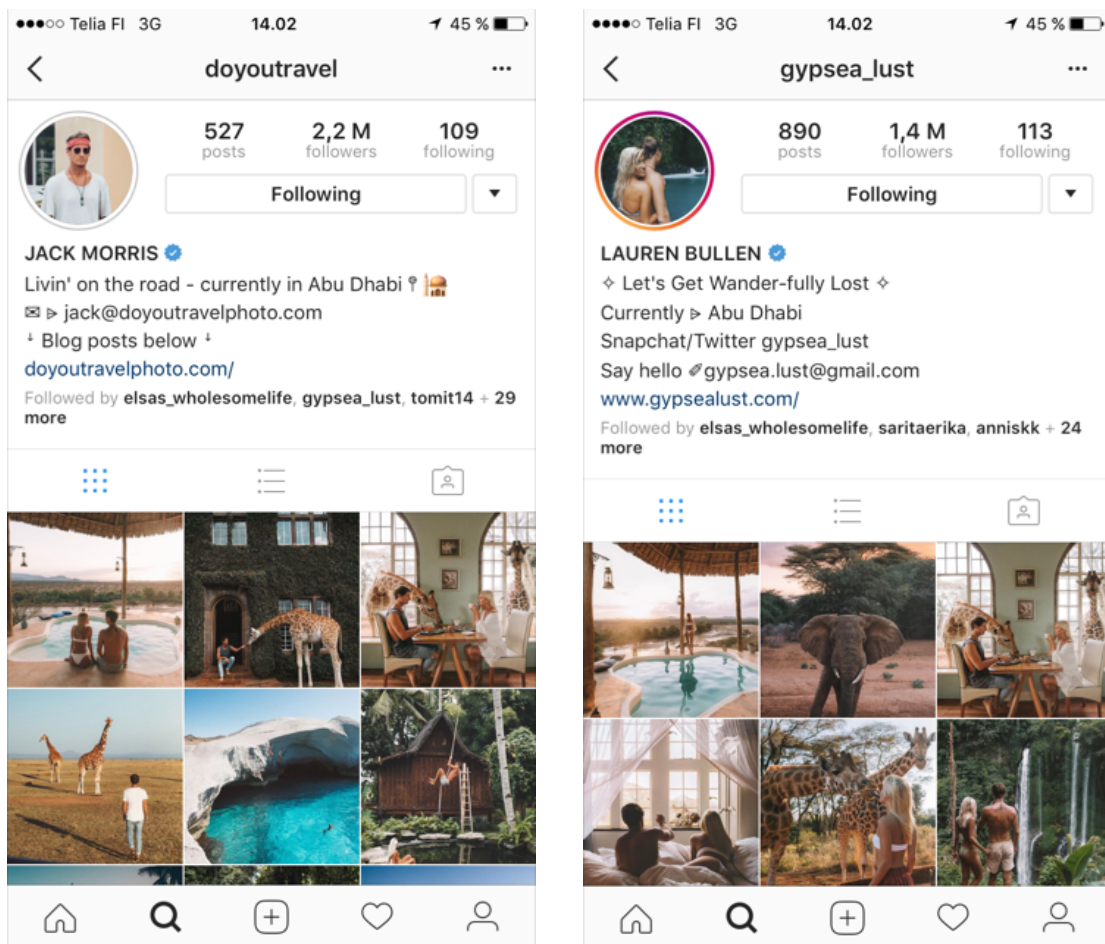


Figure 3.4. Screenshots of @doyoutravel and @gypsea\_lust Instagram accounts

### 3.3 Instagram as a tool for marketing

Photos are a big part of travel marketing and visual aspects are taking a central role in marketing communications which is why Instagram should be part of DMOs' marketing plans (Gretzel 2016). Images have an immense impact on consumers' purchasing behaviour because they provide a way for consumers to make a visual connection with a product before they buy (Tuckman 2012). Video content offers another unique method through which brands and destinations can communicate and reach users in Instagram. Video content is increasing on Instagram and with the introduction of the story function, sharing videos has gained more popularity within the users.

#### 3.3.1 Advertising on Instagram

Instagram is one of the biggest social media platforms concentrated on visual communication and it is also one of the most active one (Chaffey 2017; Smith 2016; Bagadiya 2017). As Instagram has gained a lot of popularity, it has raised the interest of marketers in this

visually rich and creative platform and has become a powerful tool for content marketing. Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as being “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience –and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute).

Visual marketing is a powerful asset to the company’s or destination’s social media marketing due to its ability to showcase the service or destination and connect with the community. Instagram is a great platform for this purpose. Content on Instagram has higher engagement than other platforms (Leone 2016, Parker 2017, O’Reilly 2014). There is no selective timeline or distracting banners like on Facebook and it’s free.

Instagram provides information and guides online for businesses how to advertise on Instagram. The application released the option for paid advertising in 2013 in United States and later in 2014 elsewhere. These advertisements appear as posts featuring the text “sponsored” in the Instagram feed and have calls-to-action buttons available. (Wikipedia 2017d.) Although advertising on Instagram is relatively new, there is a wide range of formats available such as the regular photo and video ads, carousel ads that allow businesses to include multiple images within an ad, stories ads. Instagram allows businesses to target their ads based on different features such as location, demographics, interests and behaviours. This is made possible as the sponsored ads are run through Facebook. (Business Instagram 2017; Mason Gray 2015.) In May 2016 Instagram introduced the launch of new tools for business accounts including new business profiles, insight analytics and the ability to turn posts into ads directly from the Instagram app itself. The business tools were introduced to make advertising more accessible for smaller businesses that are not ready to invest in the sponsored ads. To be able to use these tools, the business would have to have a Facebook page. (Wikipedia 2017d.)

### **3.3.2 Instagram and influencers**

Companies have realised that photos of an Instagram user with over 100,000 followers are reaching more people directly than any traditional advertising campaign. (Karobka 2015.) The photos and videos that users are sharing on Instagram not only provide great authentic promotion, but also create opportunities to interact with the members of a community. Brands and organizations have started to invest in and work with influencers and Instagram users with lots of followers in the pursuit of a broader audience.

Instagram is full of niche communities and feature accounts, which are galleries that are dedicated to highlighting a specific topic, such as travelling. These kinds of communities



include for example @passionpassport, @igworldclub, @roamtheplanet, @sheisnotlost and @ourplanetdaily (Figure 3.5). These accounts source their Instagram feed through a specific hashtag and then feature the posts they favour on their own accounts. Partnering with influencers and bloggers who are plugged into these communities could further amplify the reach of the posts.

Working with influencers is an effective form of Instagram marketing. Instagram influencer marketing is when a business or a brand utilises the audience of an online influencer that matches the brand and the message it wants to spread. It is “targeting an audience of likeminded people that follow an influencer because they trust their opinion, share similar interests and often are inspired by their posts”. (Whalar.) By getting an influencer from respective niche, meaning a specific market segment, share a post; the business or destination can get thousands of targeted people viewing the post overnight. Influencer marketing is a great way to build a larger follower base in a short period of time. The success of influencer marketing is based on the fundamental basis of peer-to-peer recommendation (Whalar).

According to a study conducted in Finland by Annalect, 73% of Finnish Instagram users follow Instagram influencers, and generally consider the product tips they give or experiences they share useful. According to the study especially women and people under age 34 consider influencer marketing positive. They think marketing through Instagram users is less irritating than marketing through other channels (i.e. television and radio). The results from the survey indicate influencer marketing being effective, especially among younger age groups. One third of those who have been affected by influencer marketing have made a purchase decision based on influencer marketing. The most popular categories for these purchases were clothing, cosmetics and sport equipment. As the researchers of this study suggest, there is a lot of potential in influencer marketing to other categories such as travelling. (Somppi 2017.)

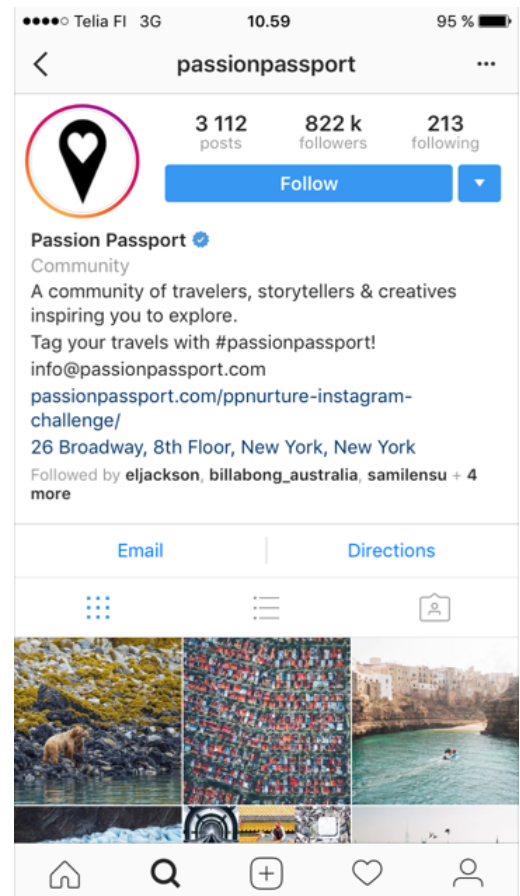
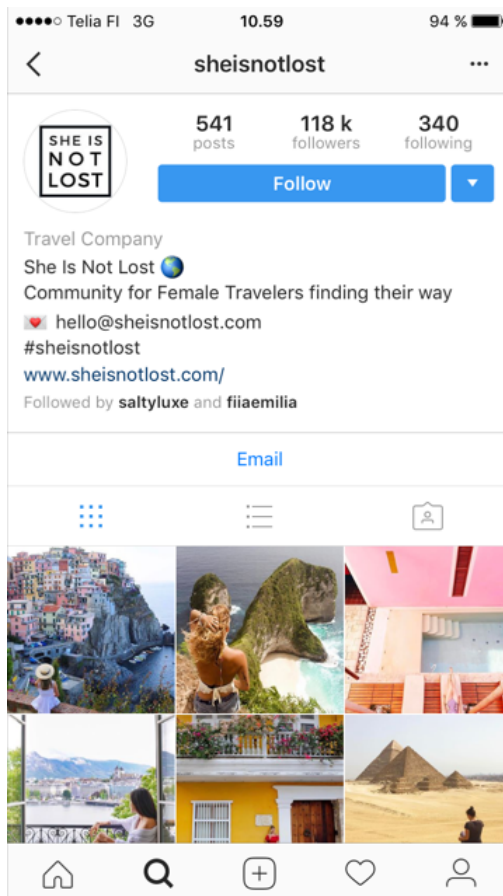
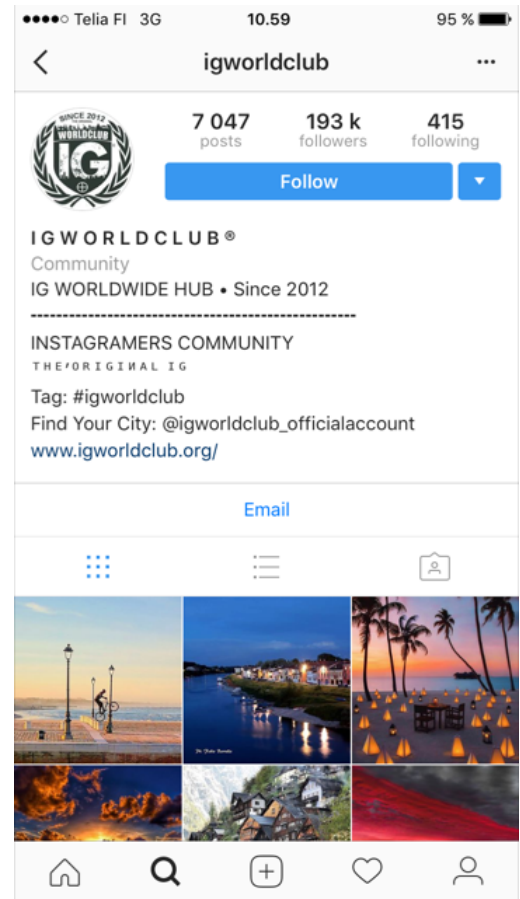
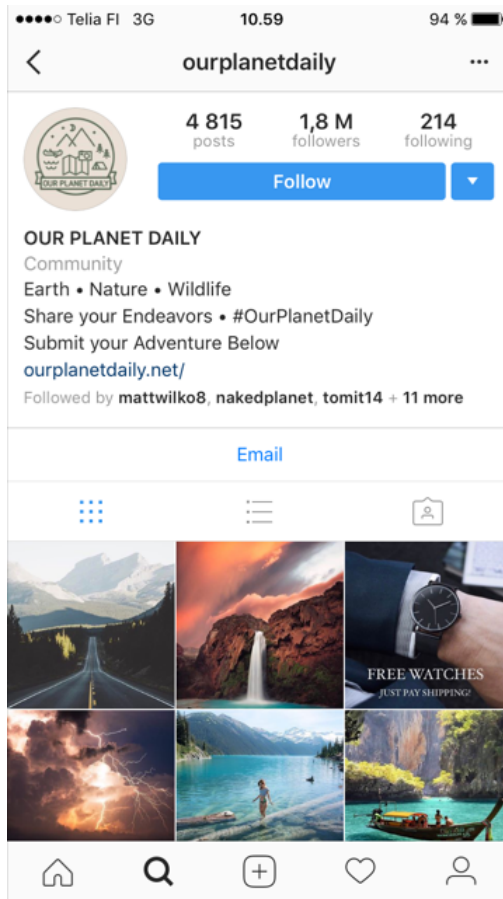


Figure 3.5. Screenshots of @ourplanetdaily, @igworldclub, @sheisnotlost and @passionpassport Instagram accounts

For example Morris and Bullen, introduced earlier in chapter 3.2, are few examples of influencers in the travel industry. They are both earning six figure salaries for their stunning photographs and Instagram feeds. Brands such as Royal Caribbean Cruises, Disney, Air NZ and AirBnB have all approached the travelling couple and offered them opportunities in exchange for few posts on Instagram. (House 2017, Young 2017). Due to their extensive follower base, collaborating with them would gain a huge targeted audience for travel related businesses or destinations.

Finnair recently collaborated with Brooke Saward, an Australian travel blogger and influencer. She writes a blog called World of Wanderlust and keeps an Instagram account with the name @worldwanderlust. She has 637 thousand followers and 1475 posts on her Instagram account. Finnair flew her to Helsinki in business class with Finnair's new Airbus 350 and she shared a post of her trip on Instagram. The post has gotten over 8000 likes and many comments, and with her follower base has certainly reached a lot of potential customers. (Figure 3.6.)

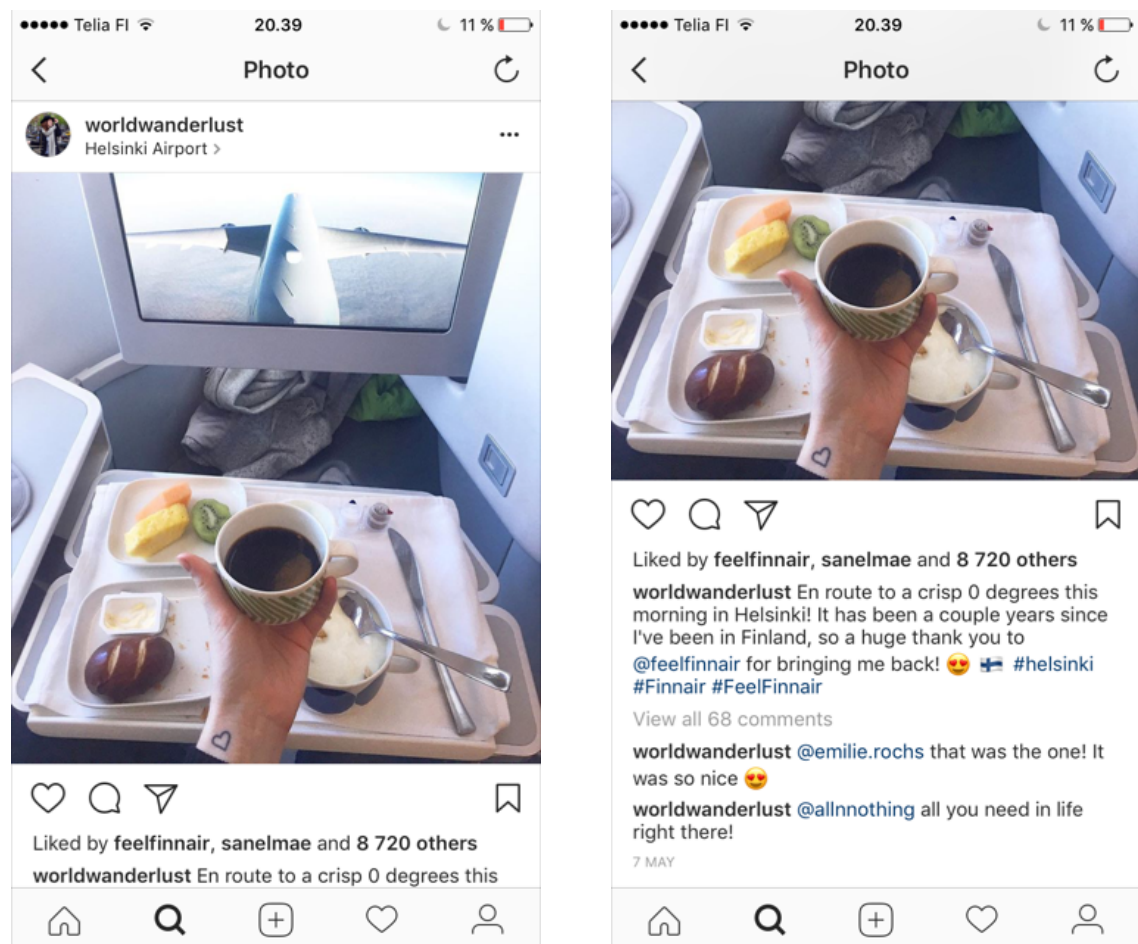


Figure 3.6. Screenshots of Brooke Saward's, @worldwanderlust, Instagram post

### **3.3.3 Hashtags and explore and search tabs**

Hashtags are an important tool for marketers. They are the only way for the content to show up in search results and get visibility for the company or destination. The right hashtag or a combination of hashtags will expose the brand or destination to a large and targeted audience and gives a good chance of attracting potential customers. (Aynsley 2016.) Hashtags help Instagram users discover content and accounts to follow. Aynsley gives great tips in his blog post on Hootsuite on how to choose the right hashtags to a post. According to him one should check out what hashtags one's competitors are using and get ideas from them. Also using hashtags that influential people or bloggers in the travel industry are using is a great idea, as they are already followed by the target audience. By browsing through some hashtags that are already in use on posts or using Instagram's search function with a keyword relevant to the post the user wants to share, the user might find some common hashtags that he or she could add to the post. Aynsley also highlights that one should only use hashtags that are relevant to one's brand, industry or target audience. Hashtags should be short, simple and easy to spell so that people could easily remember them. (Aynsley 2016.) Top used hashtags for a particular niche can also be discovered using a tool like Webstagram or Iconosquare. Webstagram is a web-based interface for Instagram, giving users a way to access and repost images without the use of mobile device and gives various different statistics. Iconosquare is a tool for Instagram analytics.

Other great marketing tools Instagram has are the 'explore' and 'search' tabs. Through the explore page brands and destinations can build more awareness, get new customers and visitors and get more likes and comments on their posts. The explore page is different for every user and is made up of posts the user has liked and posts liked by people the user is following or by people whose photos the user has liked. Due to the fact that the algorithm on the explore page is based on individual interests, the company or destination will be exposed to a targeted audience instead of a random one. (Loren 2016.)

### **3.3.4 Tourism companies' and destinations' accounts**

Tourism Australia's Instagram account is a great example on how the use of Instagram should be incorporated in social media marketing strategy. Tourism Australia's Instagram account, @australia, is the most followed account among travel and tourism brands globally with over 2,6 million followers (Figure 3.7). It mostly shares travellers' and Instagram users' photos and posts about Australia, making the account more authentic and realistic. Tourism Australia is encouraging people to share their photos with hashtags #SeeAustralia, #RestaurantAustralia and @australia tagged in the post. It then reposts the best shots

each day, with credits to the original photographer. (Karnikowski 2014.) The account is very active, sharing 1-3 posts per day. The accounts' posts are engaging and each post has gained thousands of likes and hundreds of comments. Tourism Australia is also responding the users comments making them feel genuine and more tangible.

Visit Finland, the official travel site of Finland has 190 thousand followers on its Instagram account @ourfinland (Figure 3.7). It has also established hashtag #VisitFinland and is encouraging people to tag that on their posts along with @ourfinland. They are not very active however, compared to Tourism Australia for example, uploading only 1-2 post per week.

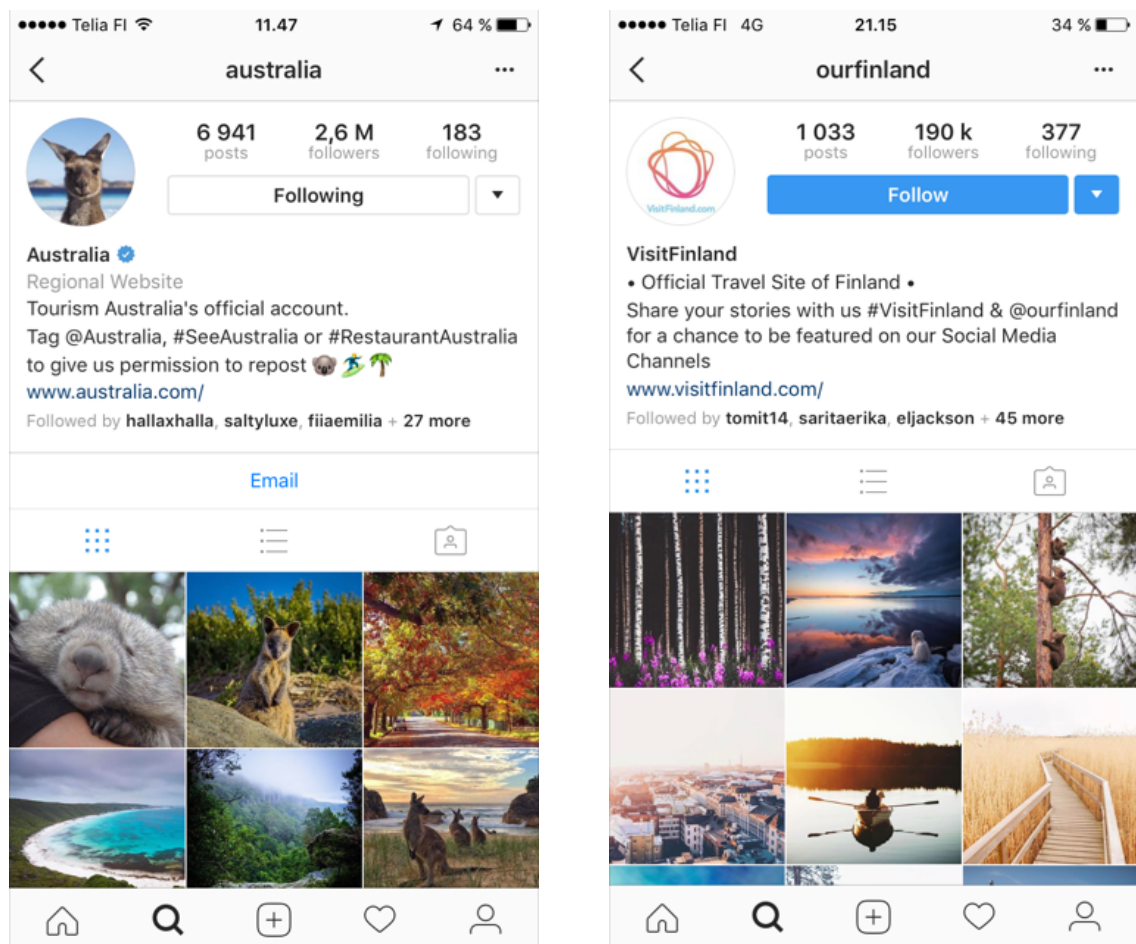


Figure 3.7. Screenshots of Tourism Australia's (@australia) and Visit Finland's (@ourfinland) Instagram accounts

Travel + Leisure, a travel magazine, is a role model in using user generated content in their Instagram account @travelandleisure. The account has more than 2,7 million followers and has shared 3696 posts. (Figure 3.8.) They share up to 3 photos per day that are taken by other users, giving credit to the original photographer. They encourage people to

use hashtag #TLPicks on their posts to be featured in Travel + Leisure’s Instagram account. The posts shared on the account have gained thousands of likes and hundreds of comments.

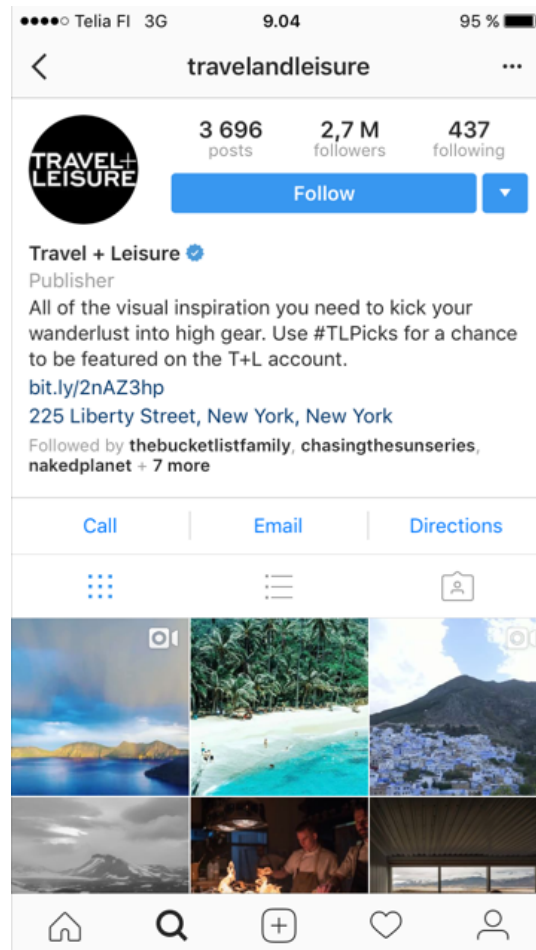


Figure 3.8. Screenshot of Travel + Leisure’s Instagram account @travelandleisure

## **4 Research methodology**

The focus of this chapter is to explain the process of conducting the research and survey for the purpose of the thesis. Research methods, target group, creating and distributing the survey and analysis methods are explained. Research methods are a range of tools that are used to explain a certain phenomena and are often divided into two main types: quantitative and qualitative methods. The nature and objectives of the research problem will indicate the appropriate type of research method to be used. (Walliman 2011, 1-14.) The two types of research methods are explained briefly, followed by methods used in this thesis research.

### **4.1.1 Quantitative research method**

Quantitative research method is about collecting numerical data and analysing the result mathematically. This method is often used in order to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviours or characteristics of a large group of people, and when findings need to be generalised to a population. (Creswell 2005, 52; Muijs 2004, 1-7.) The populations in quantitative research are usually rather big, therefore a sample representing the population needs to be drawn, as it would be quite impossible to study all the members of the population. Usually a big sample is needed to be able to generalize the findings to a population. Conclusions reached from the study of a large sample are more convincing than those from a small one. The preference for a large sample must be however balanced against the practicalities of the research resources i.e. time and effort. (Walliman 2011, 95.) Undertaking any research, it is essential to obtain data from people who are as representative as possible of the population being studied, so that the sample wouldn't be unbiased (Muijs 2004, 38). In order to be able to generalize the findings and to minimize the selection bias, the sample should be selected randomly (Walliman 2011, 96).

Quantitative research is usually done as a survey research. In this type of research the data is collected by using questionnaires. (Muijs 2004, 34; Walliman 2011,97.) They are effective in collecting information from a large group of people. The questions should be short, simple and easy to follow. There are various different types of questions that can be included in the survey. They can be classified into closed, open-ended, open response-option and rating/scale questions. Closed questions provide alternatives to respondents from which they can select the choice closest to their thinking. These questions enable the researcher to compare the responses. Open-ended questions allow the respondent to formulate their own answer and enable the researcher get more detailed data. However these types of questions need more effort in analysing, as they need to be coded and quantified using some form of content analysis. (Creswell 2005, 363-364; Muijs 2004, 45-

47.) Rating scale questions allow the respondent to choose one of several options indicating their level of agreement or opinion on an item or subject. Common rating scales are for example rank order scale, likert scale and Osgood scale. Likert scale is a five or seven point scale, which allows the individual to express how much they agree or disagree to a particular statement. Osgood scale is a scale where the respondent is asked to choose where his or hers position lies on a scale between two polar adjectives (i.e. important-not important). (Heikkilä 2014, 51-53.) A rank order scale gives the respondent a set of items and asks them to place them in some order (i.e. order of importance, liking and preference).

The questionnaire should be tested before it is used for the research. This piloting gives the opportunity to identify possible weaknesses that need improvement. (Altinay, Paraskevas & Jang 2016, 155-163; Muijs 2004, 41-51.)

Quantitative data is commonly analysed using descriptive statistics, usually with the help of computer packages such as Excel and SPSS Statistics. Statistical test measures include for example frequency distribution, measure of central tendency and cross-tabulation. Frequency distribution shows the values for each variable as numbers or percentages of the total of cases. Measure of central tendency gives the measurement of location, the mean, median and mode of a data set, working out the average value in the data. Cross tabulation is a way to display the relationship between different variables that have only few categories. (Walliman 2011, 116-122.)

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative research method**

Qualitative research is a multifaceted approach that investigates culture, society and behaviour through analysis and synthesis of people's words and actions. It tries to get into the heart of decision-making and getting an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. (Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2011, 8-10.) It tends to focus on small samples and comprises a wide range of methods such as interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observations, case studies, ethnographic research and discourse analysis as well as open-ended questions in questionnaires (Muijs 2004, 4-5; Wellington & Szczerbinski 2007, 22).

The results collected are presented verbally as thoughts and opinions rather than transferring participants' words into numbers and statistics (Hogan & al. 2011, 9). Qualitative data rely on human interpretation and evaluation and cannot be accurately measured and counted like quantitative data (Walliman 2011, 73). The sample size in qualitative research is typically small.



Qualitative data tends to be more challenging to analyse than quantitative data. Most commonly used techniques to analyse qualitative data are content analysis and semiotics. Content analysis consists of counting or enumerating key words, phrases, images and so on to produce frequencies and quantitative data, which enables an objective evaluation of the content, and can then be compared to existing conceptual framework. Semiotics focuses on audible or visible cues intending to reveal their underlying meanings. (Brotherton 2015, 267-277.)

#### **4.1.3 Selected research methods for the thesis**

The author chose to use quantitative research method for the given research. The objective was to measure Instagram usage, opinions and views of UGC and to generalize these findings to a population, so quantitative method was seen the best option for this purpose. Qualitative research method is however incorporated as well into the research as open format questions in the survey, to be able to get more personal responses from the respondents, and in observing Instagram user profiles.

Main tool was chosen to be an online survey, which was conducted via Facebook and Instagram as well as via some travel sites. The survey was seen to be the best and easiest option for the given research. It allowed getting enough data in a more efficient and convenient manner, without any geographical limitations when compared to for example using interviews. The author chose Facebook and Instagram as main distribution methods to reach the desired target group. The research involves social media, so it was seen natural to distribute the survey directly among the users.

#### **4.2 Target group**

A certain population needed to be studied for the purpose of obtaining relevant data. The main target group for the research in question was young adults age between 18 and 35, also referred as generation Y or the millennials, living in Finland and who are active Internet users, particularly people who use Instagram. The author chose the generation Y as a target group as 90 percent of Instagram users are younger than 35 (Bagadiya 2017; Smith 2016). People in between this age group are also the ones likely to be travelling alone or with friends and thus able to make their own travel decision in contrary to parents making most likely the final travel decisions for people under the age 18. The author chose to include age group 36 and above in the survey results to get a general representation of people's behaviour and attitudes in order to provide suggestions for marketers. Another reason was also to compare the target group's responses to general population regard-

less of age. The age group 18 and under was left out of the analysis as there were only 2 respondents from that age group, so their responses could not be considered valid.

The author chose to not limit the survey only to people using Instagram, as answers from non-Instagram users would also be valuable when it comes to investigating people's travel and information search behaviour and attitudes towards Instagram and other user-generated content.

### **4.3 Creating and distributing the survey**

The survey was created with Webropol platform and was distributed via author's personal Facebook account, on few Facebook groups, on author's Instagram account (Figure 4.1), on pallontallaajat –Internet forum and matkafoorumi.fi –Internet forum. The permission to share the survey on pallontallaajat.fi and matkafoorumi.fi was obtained by asking the administrators of the webpages. The survey was released on 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2017 after few test runs and was kept open until 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2017. The goal was to get minimum 150 responses to get enough data and the target was met within the two weeks time period with 152 responses. The minimum number of respondents was chosen due to author's limited timeframe of having 6 weeks to the process of creating, collecting and analysing the research results.

The survey was made in English and was quite broad with 38 questions and one optional open-ended question. 24 of the survey questions were mandatory to answer in order to get more valid answers. The questions that were not mandatory were questions 21 to 33 and question 39. These questions concerned Instagram usage, and since some respondents were expected to not use Instagram, it was necessary to leave them optional.

The survey contained closed questions that included multiple choice and single choice questions, rank order scaling as well as rating scale (likert scale and Osgood scale) questions and couple open-ended questions. A few demographic questions concerning residence, age and gender were included in the beginning of the survey. Residence question was set first with options Finland and abroad as answer options. If the respondent were to choose abroad, the survey would end there, as the target group was people living in Finland. The demographic questions were followed by questions about respondents' recent travels. The next section consisted of questions regarding information search, visual aspects and decision-making. The following page had questions concerning Instagram and last section contained questions regarding attitudes towards user-generated content, Instagram and other social media. One of the questions contains screenshots of travel re-

lated posts on Instagram, shared by users followed by the author. The permission to use these photos in the survey was obtained from the users.

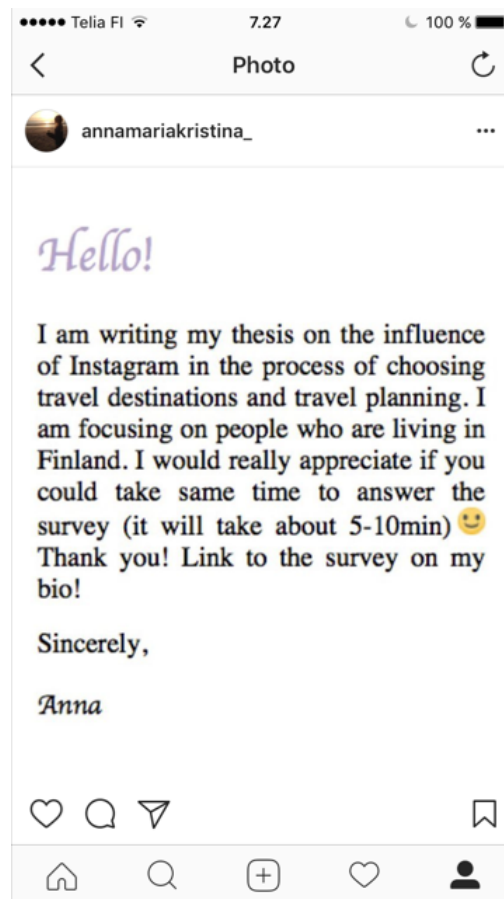


Figure 4.1. Screenshot of the author's Instagram post

The online survey questions (Appendix 1) and the answers to open ended questions (Appendix 2-4) are found in the appendices part of this thesis.

#### 4.4 The analysis method

The analysis of the results of the survey was done using descriptive statistics with the help of Webropol, Microsoft Office Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS Statistics software. The data was obtained from the Webropol survey report and transferred to an Excel file. Few modifications were made to the excel file to make it more compatible with SPSS software. After this the data was transferred to an SPSS file. The variables and values in SPSS file needed to be re-defined, as they did not correlate correctly when transferred from excel. After all the data and definitions were verified and modified, the analysis process could start. The results were converted into frequency and percent distribution. The results are mainly presented in percentages in order to make comprehension of the large data collected easier. In the text the percentages are rounded,

but graphs show decimals. The numbers were visualised by creating different types of graphs in SPSS and using Webropol's tools. In addition to basic data analysis, the author used cross tabulating in SPSS to analyse possible differences between genders and age groups. The author also compared the responses between people who use Instagram and who don't. In addition to SPSS analysis, the author took advantage of Webropol's own tools for analysing the survey data.

The author used content analysis for the qualitative part of the data, meaning the open-ended questions and multiple choice questions with the choice "other". The longer answers from the last optional open-ended question were interpreted to draw conclusions.

## 5 Research results and findings

This chapter concentrates on presenting and analysing the results of the survey conducted. There were 152 responses to the online survey. Due to the broadness of the questionnaire, the author will raise the most important questions and answers concerning the topic the thesis and the ones that are relevant to get answers to the main research questions.

### 5.1 Gender and age distribution of the respondents

Of the respondents (N=152) 74% were females. The age of the respondents was expected to be rather young, since the distribution was done in social media and travel forums. Therefore the results were no surprise. 49 respondents were in the age group 24 to 27, which equalled 32%. Second largest age group was age group 28 to 31 with 41 respondents (27%). The smaller age groups were under the age 18 and the two categories over 32 (32-35 and over 36). Most of the respondents (129) fell in the target group range: age between 18-35, majority (90) being 24 to 31 years old. Of the target group, 78% were female and 22% male. The age distribution is demonstrated in the diagram below separating female and male respondents (figure 5.1). The percentage is out of the total number of respondents of the respective gender.

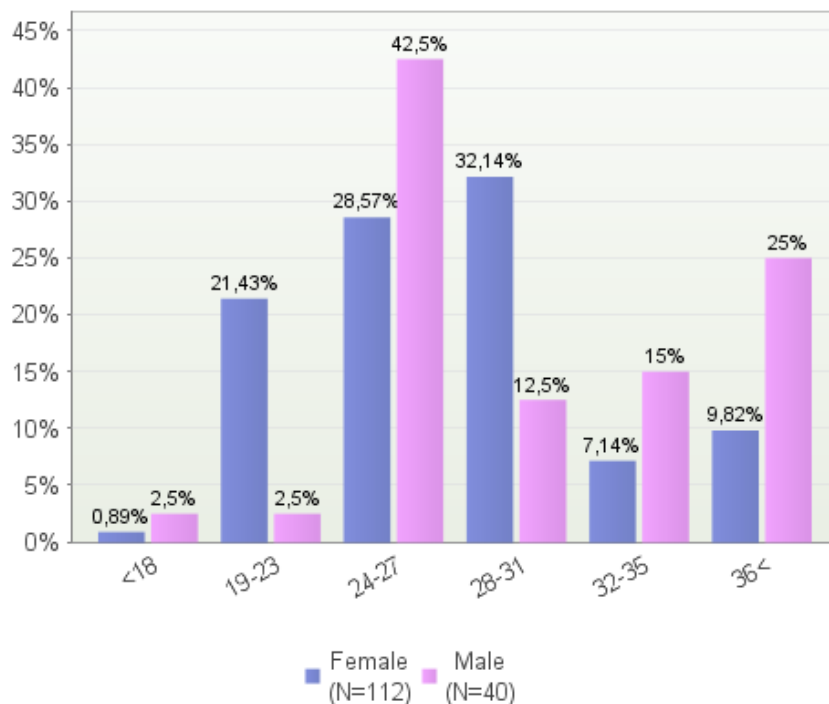


Figure 5.1. Age distribution (N=152)

By asking these two general questions, gender and age, the author wished it to help to identify whether there is differences based on these segmentations. When cross analysing the results it turns out there are some quite significant differences between the female and male respondents, and also between younger age groups and older age groups. As there were only 2 responses in the age group 18 and under, the author chose to leave these responses out of the analysis. Rest of the analysis was done with 150 responses.

## 5.2 Recent travels and travel habits of the respondents

The respondents were asked questions about their recent travels and how many times a year they travel, to be able to get an idea of their travel habits. In the figure 5.2 below is illustrated the travel frequency of the respondents. 38% answered that they travel 3-5 times a year, 29% said they travel twice a year, 15% said they travel once a year, 12% said they travel more than 6 times a year or monthly and only 5% said they travel less than once a year. This means 79% of the respondents take at least 2 trips abroad within a year. People between ages 28 to 35 travel most within a year. 50% of the respondents had travelled the last time very recently, in March 2017.

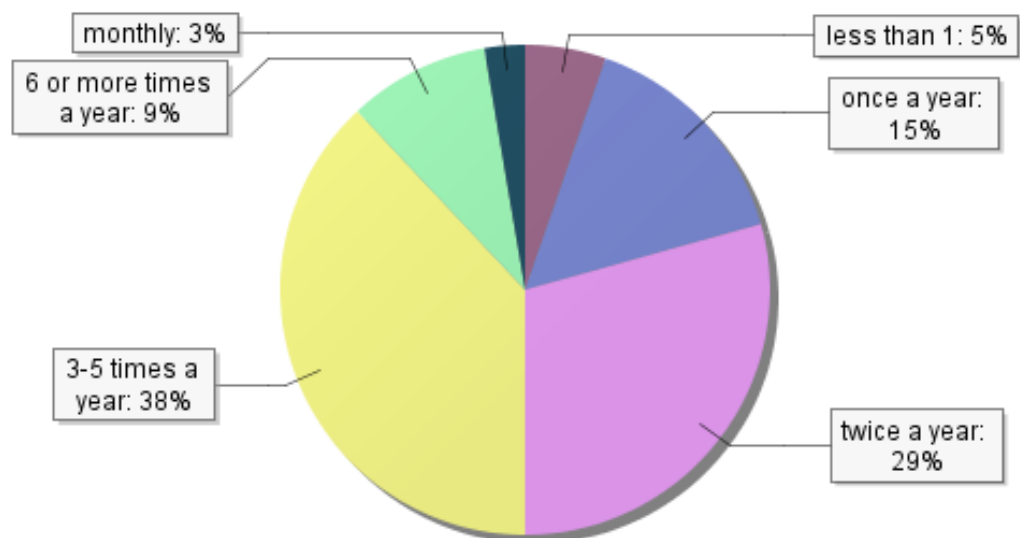


Figure 5.2 Travel frequencies

The respondents were asked where they went last time they travelled and also the reason for their travels and how they chose the specific destination. 62% had been to Europe. 75% of the respondents said the main reason for their last trip was holiday and 17% went on a business trip. 8% of the respondents visited friends or relatives. The respondents were asked about the reasons how the respondents had chosen the destination. The question included other –option and if the respondents chose it, they were asked to speci-

fy. These open-ended answers are attached in the appendices (Appendix 2). The main reasons were friends' or family's recommendation (33%), other reasons were visiting friends or family (26%), always wanted to go, familiarity of the place and cheap flights. 3% said they chose the destination based on photos on Instagram.

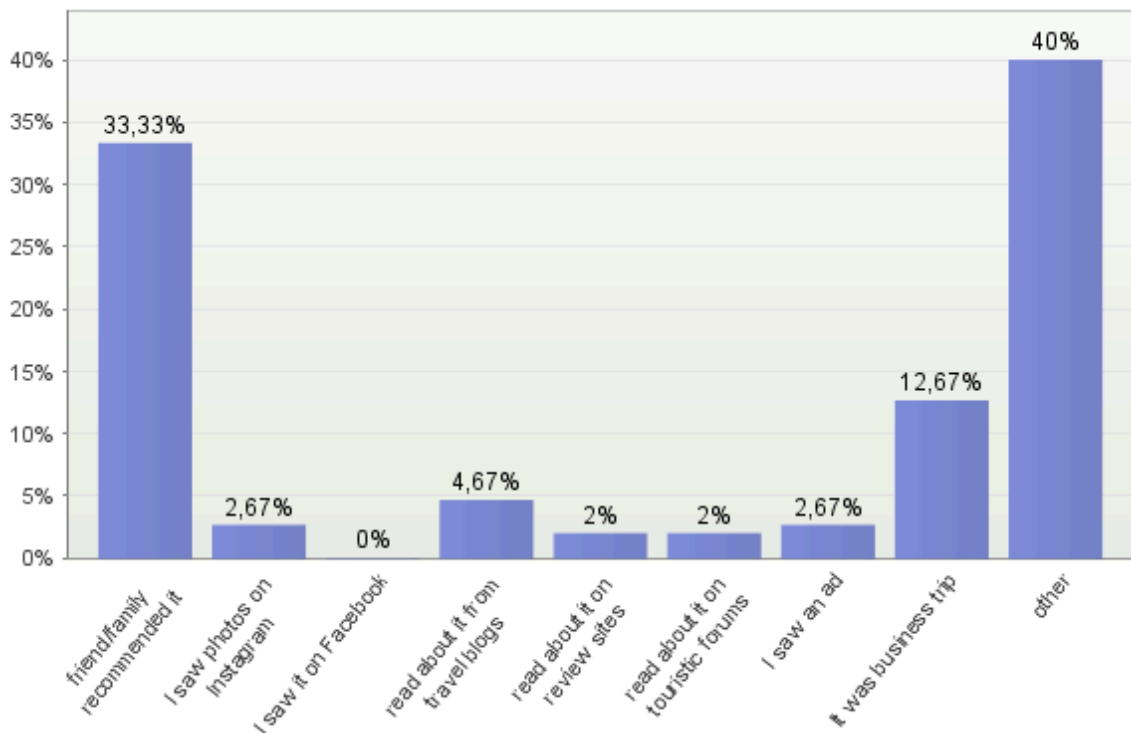


Figure 5.3. Reasons behind the destination choice

Most respondents usually travel with their friends or their boyfriend/husband or girlfriend/wife. People between the ages 19 to 27 were more likely to travel alone than people from the other age groups.

The respondents were asked an open ended question if they had searched about their most recent travel destination before or during their trip, and were asked to specify the used sources. The responses are attached in the appendices (Appendix 3). Respondents had used various different sources, mostly online sources, to search information for their last trip. 71% had used TripAdvisor, 55% had googled about the destination, 29% had used blogs and 32% of the respondents had used Instagram. Majority had gotten word-of-mouth information as well. Only few had used travel guidebooks.

### 5.3 Information search habits of respondents

As discussed earlier in the theory part of the thesis, information search is very important in decision making, which is why respondents were asked what sources they usually use to

get information on travel destinations and when planning their travels. The question was multiple choice, as it was assumed people use multiple sources to get information. By far the most used source was word-of-mouth (84%). TripAdvisor was the next popular source followed by travel blogs. 45% of the respondents noted using Instagram as a source for information. There were not many differences in answers between the genders except that females used blogs for sources and male respondents used official travel websites more than female respondents. Instagram was also more popular amongst female respondents. (Figure 5.4.) The responses between different age groups didn't differ from each other much, except for people over 36 used less social media (including Facebook, Instagram, travel blogs etc.) as information source and more official websites and guide-books than the rest. They did however use TripAdvisor like the others. Instagram as a source of information was most popular amongst people between the ages 19 to 23, with 64% of them using it as a source.

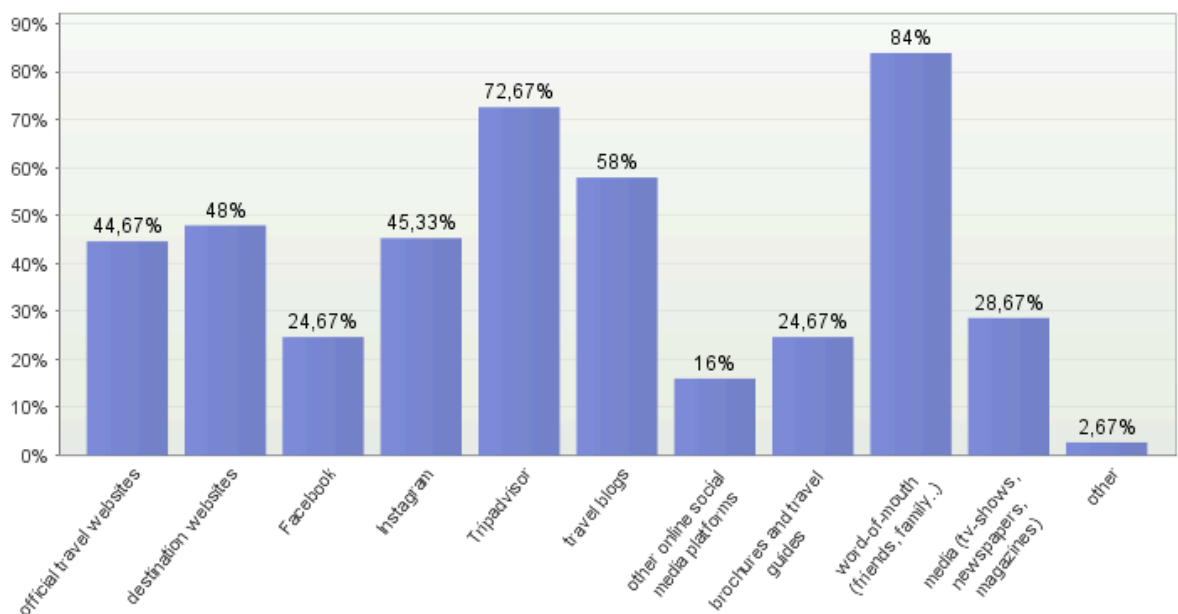


Figure 5.4 Sources of travel planning

#### 5.4 Role of photos and videos in respondents' travel planning

According to the survey results, photos and videos play an important role in travel planning. One question in the survey was a ranking scale where respondents were asked to rate how important are photos and videos in selecting destination on a scale 1-5, where 1 represented not important and 5 very important. The median was 4.22, meaning most respondents want to see photos and videos when choosing destination where to travel. (Figure 5.5.) 45% answered 5, and 39% rated 4. No one considered photos and videos not important. Visual platforms considered most important were Instagram (71%) and blogs (69%).





Figure 5.5. Importance of photos and videos when selecting destination

61% of the respondents considered photos and videos more important in the information search than text and comments (Figure 5.6). 31% chose the visual aspects to be the most important factor affecting the decision concerning destination choice in comparison to user reviews and comments, informational text and recommendation from friends and family.

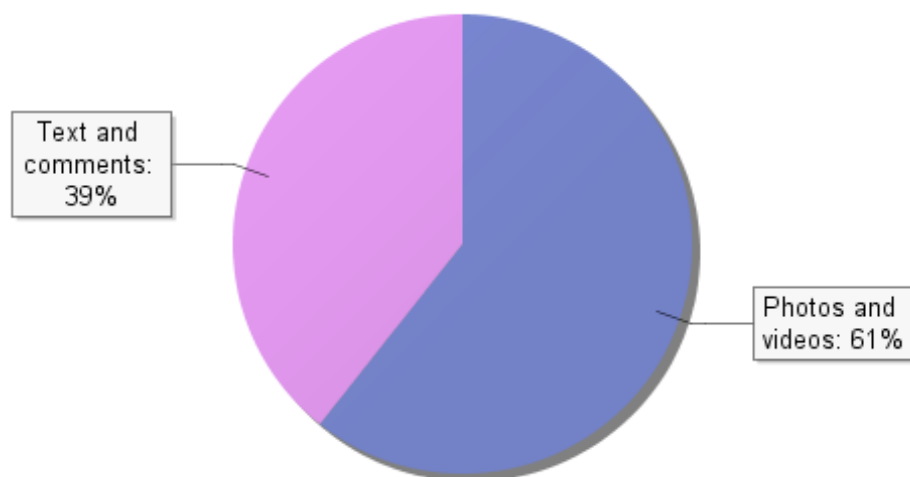


Figure 5.6. Visual vs. text

The results also show that respondents consider user-generated content, this being photos taken by real travellers and independent travellers' comments and reviews, more important than information provided by tourism websites and tourism providers. 79% consider photos taken by real travellers important and 71% consider travel reviews important. Only 15% consider information coming from tourism providers important and 35% consider information on tourism websites important when planning their travels. Travel blogs and Instagram along with other social networking sites were also considered rather important, especially amongst female respondents. This distribution is presented in figure 5.7 below. There were not many differences between the age groups. People between ages 32 and 35, and 36 and above didn't consider social networking sites as important as other age groups did, but otherwise the results were quite similar. Within genders the responses were quite similar, except photos posted by real travellers were more important for female respondents than male respondents.

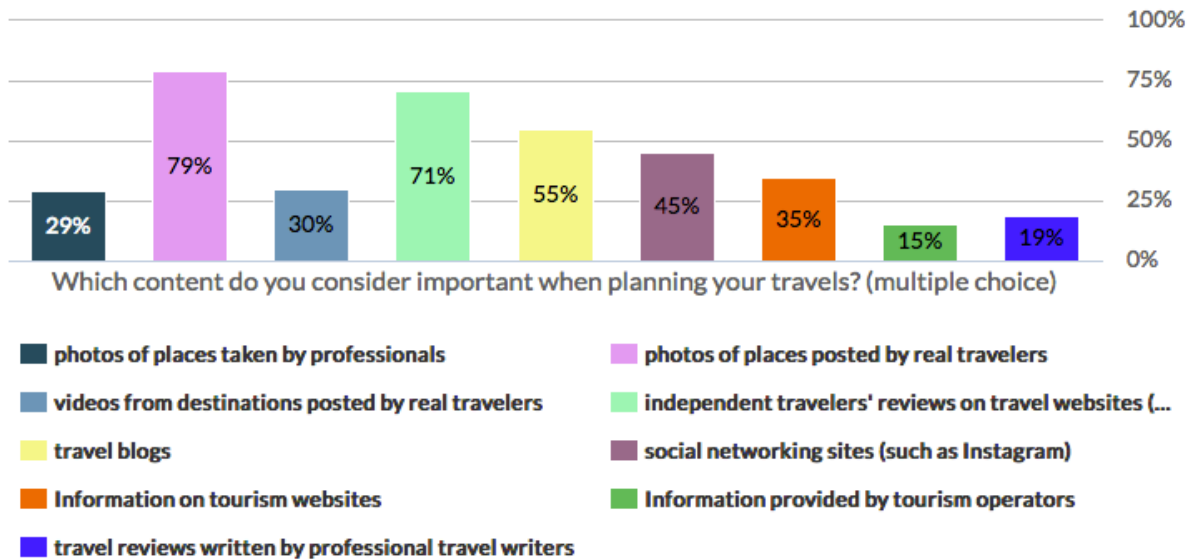


Figure 5.7. Content considered important

A question about what types of photos people consider important in relation to travel planning was included in the survey as well. This was done to identify people's interests in photo content to help marketing managers in their social media content planning. Respondents were asked to put the option in ranking order, 1 being the most important and 6 least important. Most important was photos of hotel/accommodation followed by interesting places to visit and sights and things to do.

### 5.5 Instagram usage of the respondents

Out of the 150 respondents, 129 (86%) use Instagram. From the Instagram users 89% are age 19 to 35. This supports the data from statistics mentioned earlier that 90% of the Instagram users are under the age 35. 93% of the female respondents and 67% of the male respondents use Instagram. Figure 5.9 demonstrates the respondents' age distribution on Instagram usage. The percentages in the figure are taken from the total amount of respondents (N=150). Majority of the respondents who use Instagram are 24 to 31 year olds (52%). From the age group 19 to 23, all use Instagram, from the age group 24-27, 88% use Instagram and from 28 to 31, 90% use the application. Most of the respondents use Instagram for multiple purposes. They use it mostly to share pictures and experiences with others, memorizing and reliving experiences, finding inspiration and keeping family and friends up to date. Most respondents check their account more than couple of times a day (81% of the Instagram users) (Figure 5.10) and they all use Instagram mainly on mobile phone, with couple of them using it also with tablets (7%) and computers (4%).

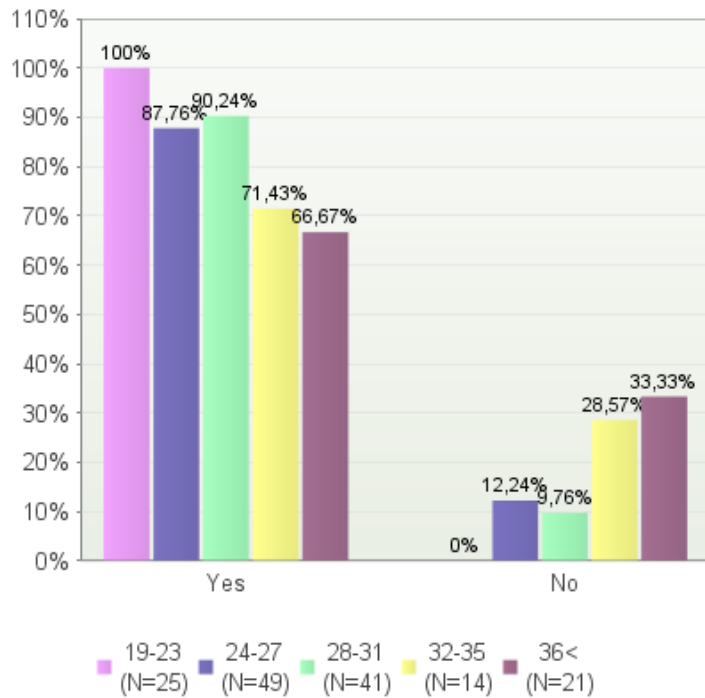


Figure 5.9. Instagram usage (N=150)

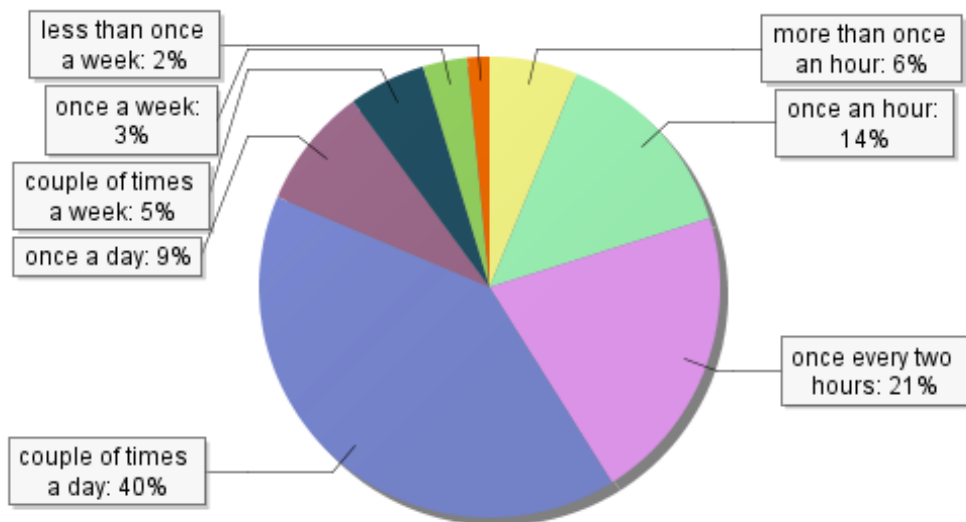


Figure 5.10. The frequency of checking Instagram account (N=129)

When asked about the accounts people follow, there were some noticeable differences between genders and age groups. Female respondents followed more varied selection of accounts, including bloggers and influencers, than the male respondents. Male respondents in turn followed businesses more than female respondents. Most popular accounts followed by male respondents were friends and family, 100%, celebrities, 54% and businesses 46%. Amongst female respondents 97% followed their friends and families, 67% followed bloggers and influencers and 59% followed travel related accounts. (Figure 5.11.)

From the total number, friends and family's accounts were the most followed one, as 98% of the respondents who use Instagram followed their friends and families. Next most popular accounts followed were travel related accounts, as 56% of the respondents followed accounts that had something to do with travelling. Also 56% of the respondents followed bloggers' or influencers' accounts. (Figure 5.12.) People between ages 24-27 were most active on following various different accounts than other age groups, with age groups 19-23 and 28-31 coming closely behind.

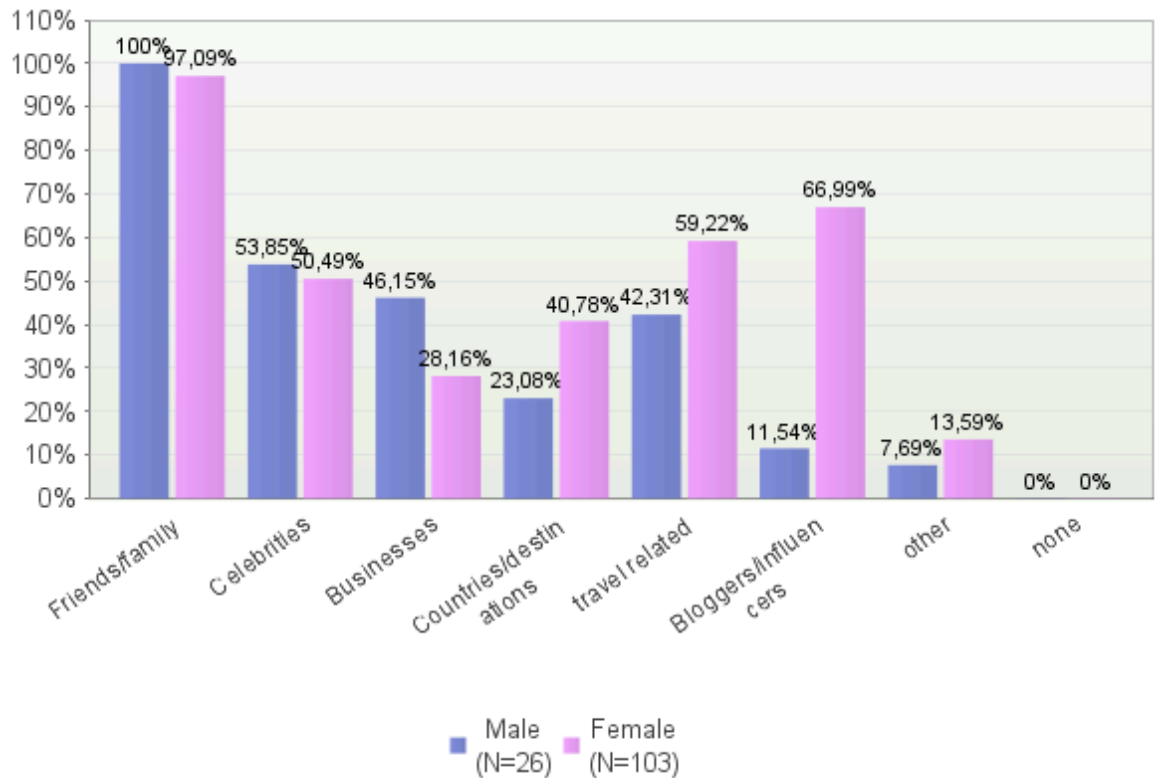


Figure 5.11. Instagram accounts followed by gender

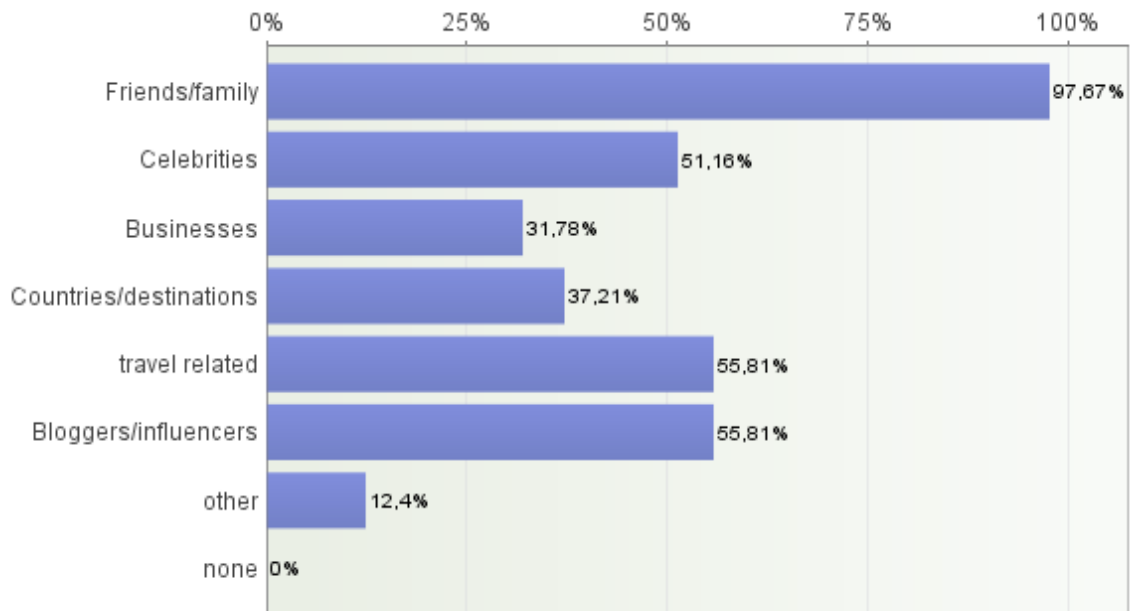


Figure 5.12. Instagram accounts followed (total)

78% of the Instagram users indicated seeing often travel related posts when using Instagram and only 1,5% said they never see any travel related posts. This might be associated with the facts that the users follow travel related accounts on Instagram and also their friends might share photos about their travels.

The survey included a likert scale question that contained statements about the influences of travel related posts. Respondents were asked to express how much they agree or disagree to the statements. In the question number 1 corresponded strongly disagree and number 7 strongly agree. According to majority of the users, seeing travel related posts makes them want to travel (average score 6,2) and most agree that a post of a specific destination triggers a will to travel to that specific location (average score 5,8). Many of the respondents also agree that seeing travel experiences on Instagram can impact their opinions on travel brands and destinations (average score 5,4). Only a few disagreed to the statements and indicated not being influenced by travel related content on Instagram. (Figure 5.13.)

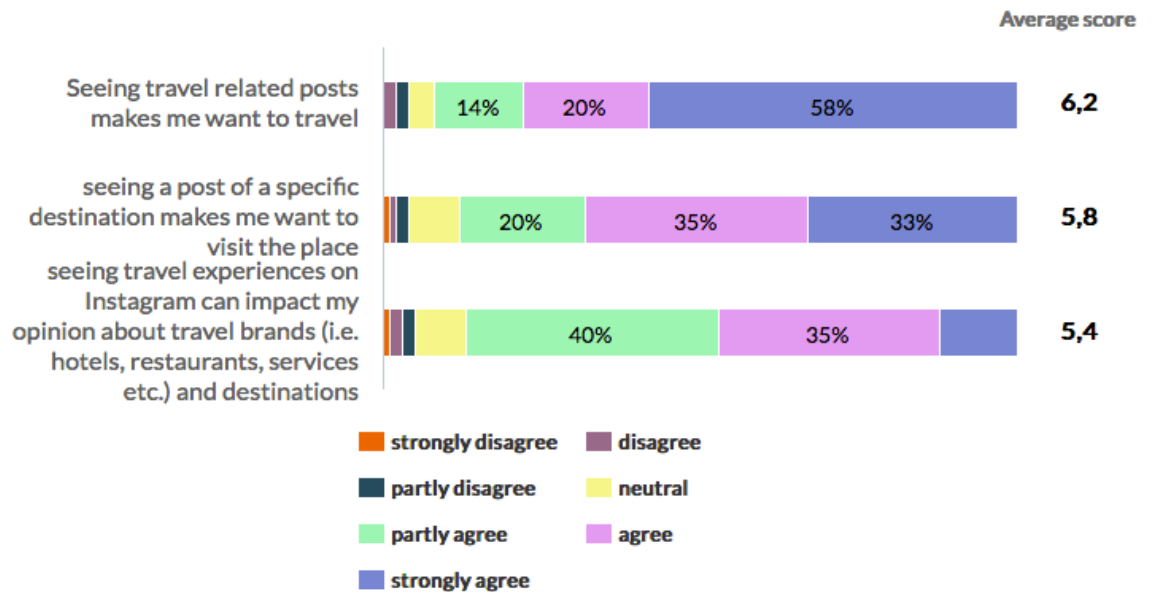


Figure 5.13. Influence of travel posts on Instagram (N=129)

41% of the users post regularly about their travels and 47% post often. Only 4% said they never share a post from their travels. (Figure 5.14.) The respondents pointed out that they post mostly during their travels but also right after taking the trip. Some also post so called throwback photos after some time from their travels.

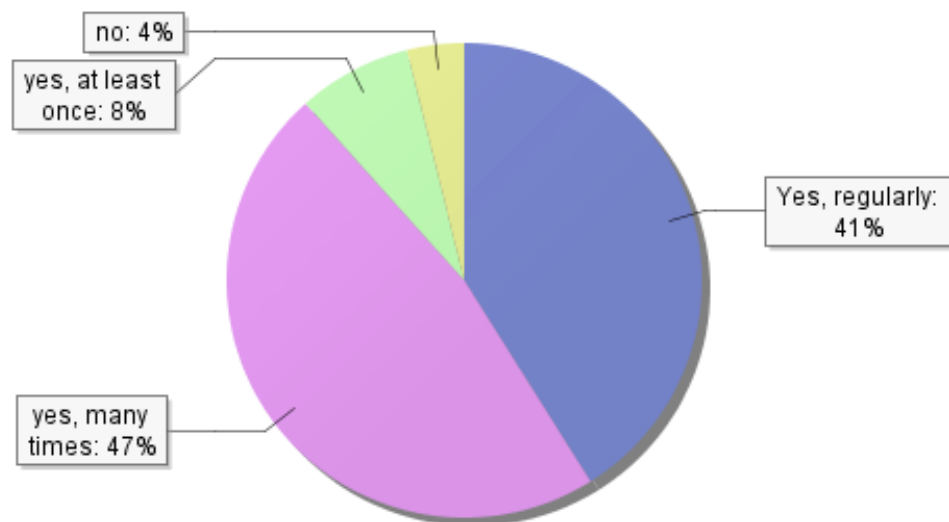


Figure 5.14. Frequency of posting about travels (N=129)

The respondents were asked questions about their use of hashtags and whether or not they use the location search on Instagram. Of the 129 Instagram users, 23% say they always use hashtags on their posts, 31% say they often use hashtags and only 6% don't use hashtags on their posts. The location search was more used than searching

hashtags. 80% indicated using the location search more or less. 32% said they sometimes search for travel related hashtags, 16% said they search hashtags more often, and 25% said they only search them when they intend to travel. Female respondents turned out to use hashtags on their posts and search hashtags more often than male respondents, this can be seen in figure 5.15 below.

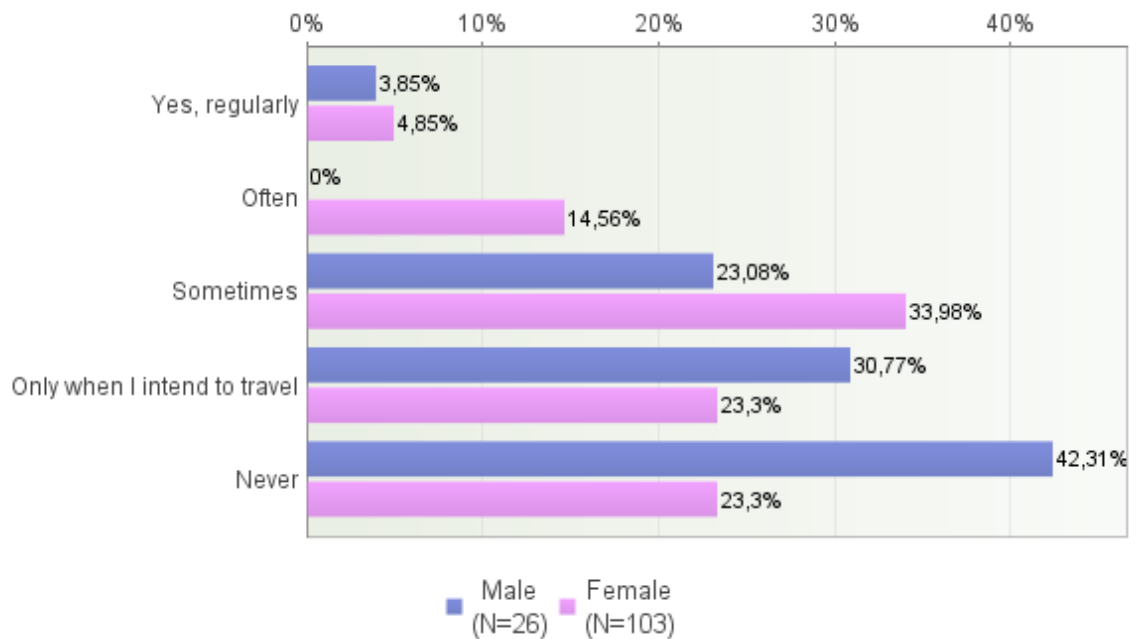


Figure 5.15. Searching travel related hashtags on Instagram by gender (N=129)

As mentioned earlier, the respondents were asked about what kind of photos they considered important when planning their travels. A similar question was asked again in the Instagram section about what kind of photos they would wish to see, when searching travel related content on Instagram. With this question the author wanted to know specifically what type of photos people would be interested in seeing explicitly on Instagram. The results were slightly different to the other question. In Instagram, photos of the location and scenery play the most important role with photos of sights and interesting places coming second. Only 34% chose hotel/accommodation facilities and 41% considered photos of hotel/accommodation rooms important. (Figure 5.16.) There were some differences in the responses between the age groups. People over 36 were more interested to see photos of hotel rooms and facilities than other age groups. The younger age groups were more interested in photos concerning food and drink than hotel and accommodation. Also responses between the genders vary. Male respondents were not that interested in photos of food, restaurants and hotel rooms than female respondents.

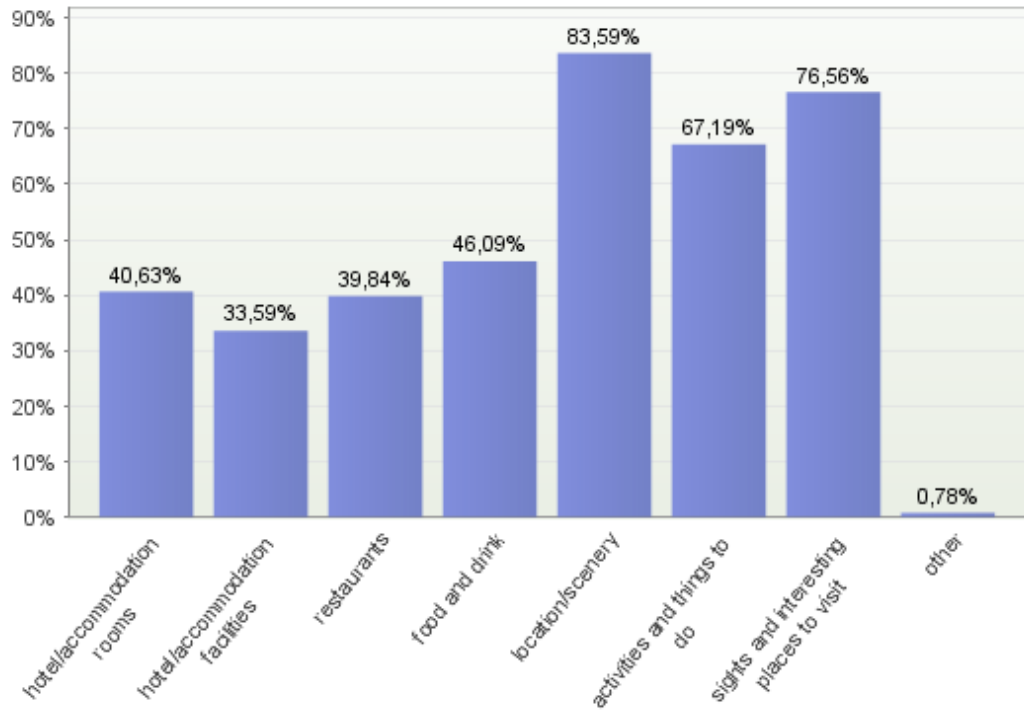


Figure 5.16. Types of photos considered important

To further find out about the influences of Instagram in people's travel planning, the respondents were asked if they think Instagram has had any effects on their travel planning on a scale 1-5, with 1 being no influence at all and 5 big influence. 5% thought Instagram has had big influence on their travel plans, 24% answered 4, 34% answered 3 and 18% suggested not being influenced by Instagram (Figure 5.17). Instagram has had more influence on female respondents than male respondents. What was interesting to see when cross-analysing the responses from Instagram users and non-users, some people who indicated not using the application, revealed Instagram having had at least some influence on their travel plans (figure 5.18).

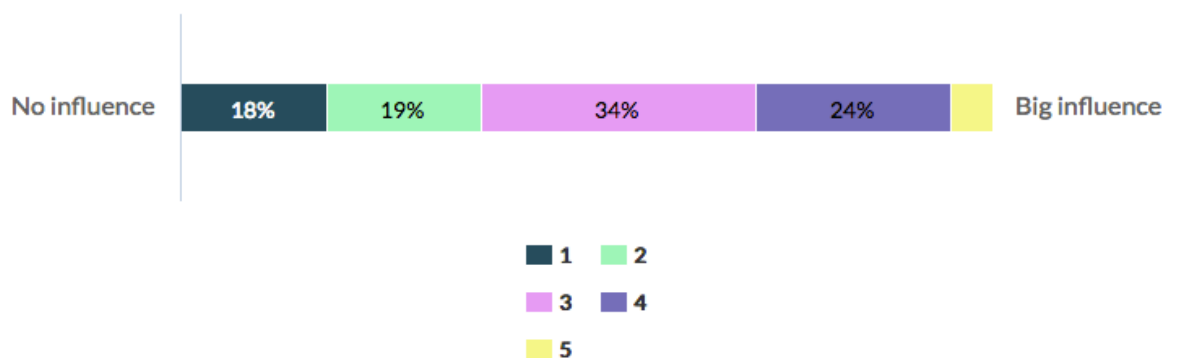


Figure 5.17. Influence of Instagram in travel planning (N=150)



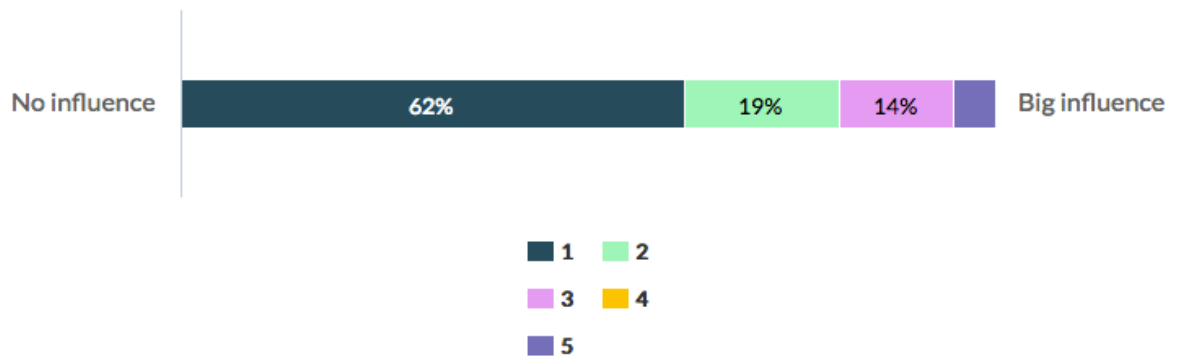


Figure 5.18. Influence of Instagram in travel planning among non-Instagrammers (N=21)

The respondents were asked when would they use or consider using Instagram. This question was directed to all respondents even if they didn't use the application. The aim was to find out if people use Instagram for travel planning and if non-Instagram users would consider using it for this purpose. The results reveal that most people would consider using Instagram at some point of their travel planning. Figure 5.19 displays the distribution of the respondents' answers. 56% said they would use Instagram when they have already chosen the destination but would be seeking for information on accommodation options and other services. 52% said they would use Instagram during their travels to find out specific attractions and things to do. Only 1% said they wouldn't use Instagram at all.

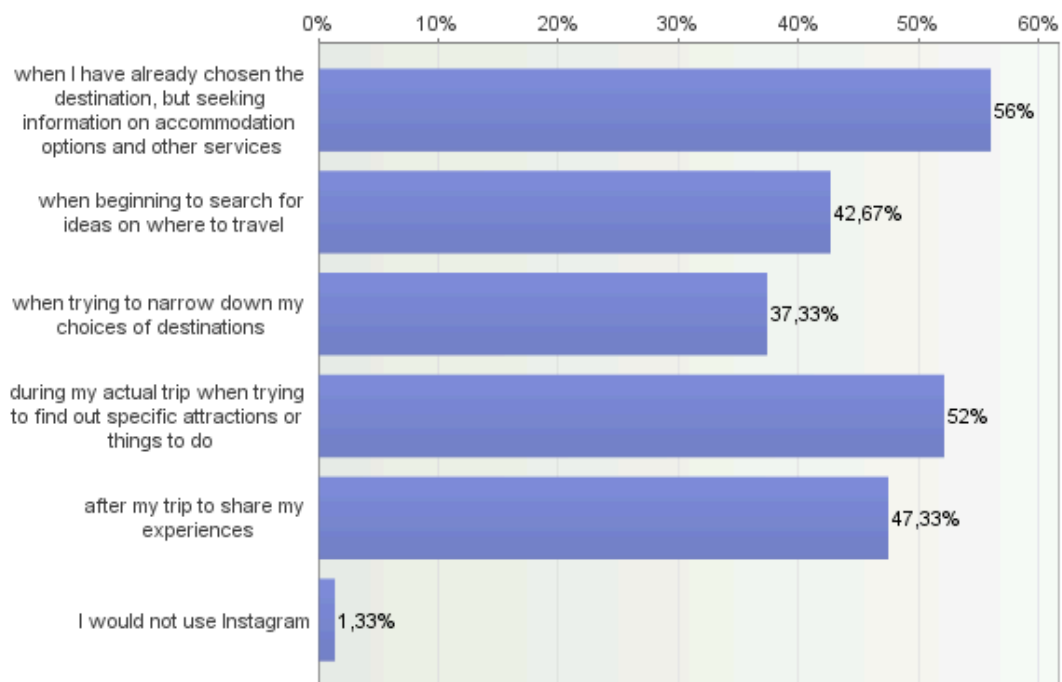


Figure 5.19. When considered using Instagram (N=150)

The survey also enclosed a question that included screenshot of different Instagram posts. The respondents were asked if they raised any interest in travelling to the destinations. 51% said they would definitely want to visit the place/places. 29% said they got interested in the place/places, 17% said the photos made them want to travel and only 3% said the photos didn't have any effect on them.

## 5.6 Respondents attitudes towards user-generated content

The last two questions of the survey consisted of statements related to people's attitudes on user-generated content. The questions were likert scale -rating questions. According to the results, people value user-generated content and think reviews and comments along with photos shared by other travellers are useful. Majority agrees that tourism operators and destinations should incorporate travellers' photos and comments into their websites and social networking accounts. 67% agreed preferring consumer reviews over tourism providers' description of themselves and 71% agreed with the statement that they trust more on photos shared by individual users than photos uploaded by service providers. Only 1% thinks ordinary travellers' reviews of destinations cannot be relied on. (Table 1.) There were no significant differences between the genders and within the different age groups. Although female respondents thought Instagram was useful for them when they plan their travels and male respondents not so much.

Table 1. Question 37 results.

	Strongly disagree	disagree	partly disagree	not sure	partly agree	agree	strongly agree	Total	Average
I prefer consumer reviews over tourism providers' description of themselves	0 0%	2 1,33%	5 3,33%	12 8%	30 20%	57 38%	44 29,34%	150	5,78
I trust more on photos shared by individual users than photos uploaded by service providers	1 0,66%	1 0,67%	4 2,67%	7 4,67%	30 20%	51 34%	56 37,33%	150	5,94
I think travel recommendations provided by unknown people are not useful	12 8%	73 48,67%	34 22,67%	14 9,33%	14 9,33%	2 1,33%	1 0,67%	150	2,7
Ordinary travelers' reviews of destinations cannot be relied on	21 14%	59 39,33%	44 29,34%	12 8%	12 8%	2 1,33%	0 0%	150	2,61
Countries' websites/social networking accounts would be better if travelers could contribute	0 0%	1 0,67%	11 7,33%	37 24,67%	35 23,33%	57 38%	9 6%	150	5,09
I don't think Instagram is useful for me when I plan my travels	24 16%	41 27,33%	32 21,34%	19 12,67%	14 9,33%	11 7,33%	9 6%	150	3,18
Tourism operators and destinations should incorporate travelers' photos and comments into their websites	2 1,33%	2 1,33%	5 3,33%	16 10,67%	49 32,67%	53 35,34%	23 15,33%	150	5,39
Total	60	179	135	117	184	233	142	1050	4,38

Female respondents were more trusting on travel blogs and posts and comments made by travellers on Instagram than the male respondents. Information coming from friends and family was the most trusted source.

In the end of the survey there was optional box left for comments. Out of the 152 respondents, only six left comments concerning Instagram and travelling. Some commented that Instagram is a great place for getting inspiration for travelling, and to get ideas of places to visit whilst on holiday. Couple respondents brought out few points about the trustworthiness of Instagram and other social media. The respondents thought that photos seen in social media and especially in Instagram are too perfect, and don't necessarily show the reality, as nobody wants to share the bad things. They think posts show only the good and positive things in the destination and travelling, and don't show the negative sides such as bad weather, dirty parts of the beach, pickpockets etc., thus are not a true representation of the place. The open comments are attached in the appendices part of the thesis (Appendix 4).

## **6 Discussion and conclusions**

This chapter focuses on the conclusions that can be done from the research results and analysis, and will be the base for suggestions for DMOs and tourism marketing managers. The conclusions are followed by a discussion on validity and reliability of the research. An evaluation of the thesis process is added to the end.

The objective of the thesis was to get an idea of the potentials of Instagram marketing in tourism industry and whether the photo sharing application has any effects on consumers' travel planning behaviour.

In general the limited timing might have affected the research and the results, but the responses received gives answers to the main research questions and give an idea of how young adults living in Finland use Instagram, about their travel planning behaviour and what are their attitudes towards user-generated content in travel information search.

### **6.1 Conclusions and summary of the results**

The results of the survey were somewhat easy to analyse as most were made multiple choice. The process took time however as the author was not familiar with any analysis platforms so she had to learn how to utilize SPSS and Webropol's own analytics. Although the main target group was chosen to be people aged 18-35, the author included people 36 and above into the results. As 66% of the people aged 36 and above use Instagram, the author thought it was relevant to include their responses in the analysis. As mentioned earlier, the respondents aged 18 and under were left out of the analysis, therefore the focus of the analysis and summary of the results is in 19 to 35 year olds. The word "people" in this context is used to describe the 19 to 35 year olds, being the target group of the research.

People travel quite a lot these days, as can be seen from the survey results. Most people travel abroad on a holiday at least twice a year, many travel 3 to 5 times a year. Travel has been made very easy and there are many flights daily to multiple interesting destinations worldwide. Booking process is a piece of cake done via different online platforms and one only needs a credit card.

As mentioned in the theory part of the thesis, there are a lot of different factors that affect human behaviour and it can be difficult to determine a sole reason behind people's choices. Various aspects such as people's motives, background, culture, age, gender, to name

a few, are all affecting when making decisions. According to the survey results, big factor affecting people's choices are visual aspects. Photos and videos, especially those taken by real travellers, play an important role in people's decision making and the majority thinks they are more important in the information search than text and comments. People also consider photos and videos very important when choosing destination. However majority points out that recommendation from someone they know affects their decision the most. As indicated in the theory, reference groups play an important role in consumer behaviour and decision-making.

From the results of the survey one can draw conclusions that people don't rely on one source when searching information on destinations and doing their travel planning, but use various different sources. People want to use various other sources to back up information gotten from one source. Although photos play more important role on people's decision-making, they want to see whether the photos seen correspond to the reviews written of the product or destination. Word-of-mouth information is the most used source and people also tend to trust that information the most, as was also proven by Litvin & al. (2007) and Tegtmeier-Pedersen, Razmerita and Colleoni (2014). TripAdvisor was the next most popular source followed by travel blogs and social media. It didn't come as a surprise that social media platforms as a source were most popular amongst the younger age groups. One surprise element for the author was that as many as 36% of the 19-23 year olds use brochures and travel guides as source for information, more than the other age groups.

The results of the survey support the studies mentioned earlier in the thesis that people are very independent on doing their travel planning and do almost all of the travel information search and booking online (Rezdy 2017; Wang & Pizam 2011; Xiang & Grezel 2010). Only one respondent had used a travel agent previously when booking a holiday, and even that was an online travel agent. In the theory part it was discussed how people are able to conduct a broader research online and use various online platforms and this can be seen from the survey results as many had used numerous different online sources last time they travelled.

Like the results from the research conducted by Cox et al. (2009), also this study reveals that sites containing user-generated content are popular sources of information in travel planning, but unlike the results of the research done in 2009, people seem to trust more on UGC nowadays than before. The author expected that there would be bigger differences between the trust levels of information provided by commercial providers, tourism operators and user reviews. People trust most on word-of-mouth information coming from

their friends and family. Information provided by travel agents, tourism websites, travel bloggers and user reviews and comments were trusted quite evenly. There was a slight difference to information provided by commercial operators. One might say there is some hesitation towards this type information, but it is still quite trusted. The results, from the survey conducted for this thesis, concerning UGC and WOM, correspond to survey carried out by AMP and BLITZ (2016) introduced in chapter 2.3.

Although visual aspects are considered most important, people do read reviews and comments made by other travellers. Social networking sites are considered somewhat important and especially men do read information provided on tourism websites. Women value travel blogs and follow bloggers on Instagram.

Majority of the respondents have an Instagram account and they use it on a daily basis. Using it for travel planning is not, at least not yet in Finland, as popular as it could be; 45% use Instagram as a source for travel information or inspiration. 90% of the Instagram users (82% of total) however indicated Instagram having had at least some influence in their travel planning. These numbers along with 56% of the users following travel related accounts on Instagram support the assumption that people who use Instagram love travelling and are interested in seeing travel related content. They also eagerly share content of their travels on their own Instagram accounts and use hashtags on their posts. Although searching travel related hashtags is not that common, the location search proved to be quite popular tool. These results show that travel is a big deal within Instagram users, as acknowledged in chapter 3.2, Instagram and travelling.

Instagram posts can be a trigger for wanderlust. Pike (2008, 209) describes wanderlust as a need to temporarily leave familiar surroundings to travel and experience different cultures and places. The most appealing content people wish to see are photos of locations and scenery. Also sights and places to visit came before restaurants and hotel facilities. It can be generalized from the results that seeing beautiful travel related photos online make people want to travel, anywhere if not to those exact locations, as Lin and Huang (2006) also found out from their research.

As mention earlier, the cross tabulation of the responses revealed that there were some differences between respondents from different age groups or from different gender. The author also compared the responses from Instagram users to people who don't use Instagram. There were no significant differences in the responses between this segmentation. However the number of non-Instagram users was so small as the majority of the re-

spondents uses Instagram, so their responses couldn't really be generalized to people not using Instagram.

## **6.2 Suggestions for DMOs and tourism marketing managers -Instagram marketing**

Millennials are one of the largest generations in history and based on the results of the survey, they travel quite a lot, which is why tourism marketers should turn their focus on them (Goldman Sachs).

According to a media research done by marketing company Crowdtap and global research company Ipsos, 50% of the millennials, also known as generation Y, trust more on user generated content than other media. This research also reveals that UGC is 20% more influential when it comes to purchasing and is 35% more memorable than other types of media. 40% of the millennials say they use UGC to inform their purchase decisions about travel plans. (Crowdtap 2017.) The results from the survey done for this thesis also correspond to the research done by Crowdtap and Ipsos. According to the media research, millennials are spending 30% of their media time, this being 5 hours daily, engaged with user-generated content (Crowdtap 2017). It can be seen from these results and from the results of the survey conducted for the thesis, that incorporating user-generated content to the marketing strategy is very important. Instagram is a great platform for this as it has provided tools how to repost users' posts without violating user rights. To repost someone's post one must use these repost -applications, ask permission from the poster and mention the source/user on the repost. Instagram users share lots of interesting and visually beautiful content, and reposting or sharing a post is usually taken as a compliment. This gives businesses and destination marketers a big opportunity to take advantage of this content. They should feature their followers' posts on Instagram, as majority wants to see photos taken by real travellers rather than photos taken by professionals. Users' photos gives a genuine and real feel and are seen more credible source of content. Marketers should let the users to share the story of the brand or destination. It is also vital that they encourage customers to share content on Instagram, like @australia and @ourfinland are doing.

The results reveal that many female Instagram users follow bloggers and influencers on Instagram. This gives a reason for the marketers to consider collaborating with influencers and bloggers, to gain more audience and reach as described in chapter 3.3.2, Instagram and influencers. According to the survey, people trust the opinions of bloggers and influencers. Having influencers visit a place or destination, and sharing photos on their Instagram accounts, would gain bigger visibility and reach more potential visitors.

People are interested mainly on photos of locations and scenery and also sights and places, so these are the type of photos DMOs should be sharing. Adding the location tag to the Instagram posts should be a vital part of the uploading procedure. 80% of the Instagram users indicated using the location search, thus having photos appear in the search results would expand the visibility of the destination or business and also increase the reach of potential customers or visitors. Instagram users like to tag themselves into locations when travelling and use hashtags on their posts, so it would be a good idea for the DMOs and marketers to establish a hashtag and ask users to use it when posting something related to the destination or business, like Tourism Australia, @australia and Visit Finland, @ourfinland, have done.

Travel companies and destinations should recognize the importance Instagram and its value in becoming more and more influential platform that can impact consumer behaviour. As 45% of the Instagram users use the application to get inspiration for travelling and 90% have been influenced by Instagram in their travel planning, this photo sharing application is the right place to be for travel companies. The key is also to keep the account active and genuine. The priority is to inspire and not to push advertisements or directly sell to people. With over 179 million posts under hashtag #travel as a social proof, people love to share their travel posts and experiences with others. Taking advantage of this user generated content shared on Instagram would be beneficial for tourism companies and destinations.

### **6.3 Trustworthiness of the research**

Key concepts in good and trustworthy research are validity and reliability. Reliability means that the results from a survey are stable and consistent. Reliable research could be implemented multiple times, at different times, in different circumstances, regardless of the researcher, and the scores should be nearly the same. Validity refers to the credibility or believability of the research. It means that the results from a survey make sense, are meaningful and enable the researcher to generalize conclusions from the sample to the population. It describes whether the measurement tool (i.e. questionnaire) is measuring what is meant to be measured. (Creswell 2005, 162-166; Muijs 2004, 64-70.)

The amount of respondents of the research carried out is relatively small when considering the amount of people living in Finland. The sample size could have been bigger to get even more convincing and reliable results, but given the time limit the 152 responses were considered reliable enough. The 152 responses give a general idea of the targeted group. Respondents represented well the different age groups, except for one, people aged 18 or under, from where there were only two respondents. Responses from that age group can-



not be generalized to that particular age group, and were not considered countable and valid when analysing people in general regardless of their age, so they were left out. Therefore the amount of valid responses was 150. It is considerable that this research would be reinitialized to test the reliability of the work and see if the results are similar.

The topic ended up being quite wide although the author tried to delimit it before starting the research. If the topic was more specified and better delimited, the responses and results could have been more accurate, and a more precise delimitation would have also helped to delimit the survey questions. The questionnaire is designed in a manner that it can be repeated regardless of the researcher making it reliable in that way. Albeit the results from the survey might vary if distributed during different seasons, or having a bigger sample.

The sample could be biased, as in there was no control over who can respond to the survey as it was distributed online. This could have caused the fact that there were more female respondents than male respondents and only 2 responses from age group 18 and under. Getting more male respondents would have been good, as their responses are equally important to female's responses, and would there have been more male respondents, the differences between genders could have been bigger. Also the amount of male respondents being small, generalizing their responses to the whole amount of male residents in Finland is not very valid. This has impact on the reliability and validity of the research. However as the survey was distributed online, it enabled random selection of respondents and they represent various age groups. Furthermore, due to the distribution channels being mainly social networking sites and Instagram itself, the respondents were most likely to be from the target group, making their responses valid for the purpose of the research.

As for the aforementioned reasons the reliability of the research cannot be considered very high, but is directional and gives an overall picture. The results of the research provided answers to the research questions, therefore it can be said that the research is valid in this sense. However as stated above, the sample size in the survey along with the amount of male respondents were rather small thus generalizing these results to the population cannot be very credibly done.

#### **6.4 Evaluation of the thesis process and self evaluation**

The thesis process proved to be a lot more time consuming than expected. It also turned out to be the biggest and most difficult task during the studies as was predicted, and time management was hard given the fact that the author was working full time during the the-

sis process. The author had no previous experience on conducting a research thus this may have had a huge effect on the outcome of the study, and many parts could have been done differently with better knowledge on carrying out a research. The topic was familiar and interesting to the author, but she had not studied much on consumer behaviour. There was a lot to learn from the topic and it was the most time consuming part of the process. The author had studied social media marketing, thus visual communication and Instagram part were more familiar to the author. Although the author knows Instagram quite well as she uses it daily, the author learned a lot of Instagram's functionalities and it's potentials when analysing the application and researching about it online.

Designing the survey for the research of this thesis proved to be quite time consuming as well, and rather difficult. The questions in the survey are important and need to be well considered to get valid results. They needed to be carefully chosen to get answers to the research questions and not to make the questionnaire too long. Even though the survey was quite broad, the survey design ended up being quite successful. Although if the author were to conduct a similar type of survey again, she wouldn't implement so many multiple choice questions with multiple answer options in it. Multiple answers gives the respondent too many options and it could be hard to determine the most valid and most important ones.

Analysing research results would have required expertise on the analytics tools and methods, which the author didn't have. The author had never used SPSS tool, nor any other analytics methods, before so she had to study the concept in order to use it as an analytic tool for the research survey. It would have required a lot more studying on the SPSS and research analytics topics to give a more in depth analysis of the results. This was not possible due to the lack of time to self-study or to attend a course on the subject.

It would be useful and interesting to have a case company as a commissioner for the research. The results could help the company to improve their marketing strategies and see where they are doing right.

The results of the research meet the objectives quite well and the author hopes they are useful for the development of online marketing strategies for tourism marketers and DMOs.

## **6.5 Development ideas and suggestions for further research**

Considering the limited practicalities of the research resources, theories related to the thesis subject were covered in a rather general overall perspective to give a rough under-

standing of the topic to the readers. Therefore a more in-depth and delimited survey could be carried out to further achieve the objective of the research. This research could also be continued by conducting a qualitative research, to get a deeper understanding of people's travel planning processes and their Instagram usage. Interviewing for example people from different age groups and from different gender could further increase knowledge on their behaviour, attitudes and bring out possible differences in the responses of males and females and of people from different age groups. Delimiting the research only to people who use Instagram would also enable getting more accurate information on Instagrammers' travel planning behaviour.

A similar survey, like the one carried out for this thesis, could also be distributed different times of the year to see if there are differences in people's travel planning behaviour between the seasons. Also conducting the survey in Finnish could be implemented to reach people who don't speak English that well, who might have not responded the survey due to lack of understanding. The English survey could be distributed again to get more responses, which would lead in getting more accurate and reliable results from the population. This would also reveal whether there is any change in the popularity of using Instagram as a tool for travel planning or change in attitudes towards UGC. Furthermore, expanding the research worldwide would be useful for marketers in the travel industry. It would also be interesting to interview people in different destinations on how they had chosen to visit that particular place.

Other suggestions would be researching about the negative impacts Instagram and Instagram marketing may have for the destinations and places. One negative side effects of Instagram could be overcrowding of places.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Survey Questions

### Instagram and travelling

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland and I am writing a final thesis about the influence of Instagram in the process of choosing travel destinations and travel planning. I am focusing on people living in Finland.

The objective of the thesis is to find out the potentials of Instagram marketing in the concept of tourism and travelling, and to investigate what kind of effects Instagram has on consumer behaviour. The aim is also to help destination marketing organizations and travel service providers to develop their online marketing strategies.

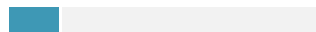
This survey is a part of my thesis research. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your answers will form part of statistical study and therefore will not identify you as an individual. Your answer is much appreciated and I hope you will take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Sincerely,  
Anna Terttunen

#### 1. Residence \*

Finland

16% completed



## Instagram and travelling

### 3. Gender \*

- Male
- Female

### 4. Age \*

- <18
- 19-23
- 24-27
- 28-31
- 32-35
- 36<

### 5. When was the last time you travelled abroad? \*

- March 2017
- February 2017
- January 2017
- December 2016
- 3 months ago
- More than 3 months ago
- 1 year ago
- 2 years ago
- 3 years ago
- More than 3 years ago

### 6. How many times a year do you travel abroad on holiday? \*

- less than 1
- once a year
- twice a year
- 3-5 times a year
- 6 or more times a year
- monthly

**7. With who do you usually travel with? (multiple choice) \***

- with a friend/friends
- with boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife
- with family
- alone

**8. The purpose of your last trip? \***

- Business
- Holiday
- visiting relatives

**9. Where did you travel? \***

**10. How did you choose the destination? \***

- friend/family recommended it
- I saw photos on Instagram
- I saw it on Facebook
- read about it from travel blogs
- read about it on review sites
- read about it on touristic forums
- I saw an ad
- It was business trip
- other

**11. Was it the first time visiting the place? \***

- yes
- no

**12. Did you search about the destination before going on the trip/during the trip? Please specify what channels/sources did you use? (e.g. TripAdvisor, google, friends, blogs, Instagram, guide books etc.) \***

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## Instagram and travelling

**13.** What sources do you usually use to get information on travel destinations? *(multiple choice)* \*

- official travel websites
- destination websites
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Tripadvisor
- travel blogs
- other online social media platforms
- brochures and travel guides
- word-of-mouth (friends, family..)
- media (tv-shows, newspapers, magazines)
- other

**14.** Which content do you consider important when planning your travels? *(multiple choice)* \*

- photos of places taken by professionals
- photos of places posted by real travelers
- videos from destinations posted by real travelers
- independent travelers' reviews on travel websites (such as TripAdvisor)
- travel blogs
- social networking sites (such as Instagram)
- Information on tourism websites
- Information provided by tourism operators
- travel reviews written by professional travel writers

**15.** On a scale 1-5, how important is seeing photos and videos when selecting destination? \*

- 1      2      3      4      5
- not important                  very important

**16.** What kind of photos or videos do you consider important when searching about destinations and planning your travels? Place the following options in order, 1 being the most important and 6 the least important

1      2      3      4      5      6

Hotels, accommodations *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restaurants, food and drinks *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People doing activities *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sights and things to do *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting places to visit *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other	<input type="text"/>					<input type="radio"/>

**17. Which visual platforms do you consider important in related to travelling? (multiple choice)**  
\*

Blogs

Facebook

Instagram

YouTube

Snapchat

other, what?

**18. When choosing a destination, which of the features affect your decision the most? Place them in order on a scale 1-4, 1 being the most important and 4 least important \***

	1	2	3	4
Photos and videos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
informational text/description of destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
user reviews and comments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
recommendations from family or friends or someone you know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Which one of the options below do you consider more important in the information search?**  
\*

Photos and videos  Text and comments

66% completed



## Instagram and travelling

**20.** do you use Instagram? (if no, you can skip to question 34 on next page) \*

- Yes  No

**21.** What are the primary reasons for you to have an Instagram account? (*multiple choice*)

- share my pictures and experiences with others
- keep my friends and family up to date
- get followers
- I use it to memorize and relive my experiences through the photos and videos I share
- meet other people
- I use it as source of information and inspiration
- I like to look at the photos
- other

**22.** How often do you check your Instagram account?

- more than once an hour
- once an hour
- once every two hours
- couple of times a day
- once a day
- couple of times a week
- once a week
- less than once a week

**23.** How do you check your Instagram? (*multiple choice*)

- Mobile phone
- Tablet
- Computer
- Something else

**24.** What type of accounts do you follow on Instagram? (*multiple choice*)



- Friends/family
- Celebrities
- Businesses
- Countries/destinations
- travel related
- Bloggers/influencers
- other
- none

**25. Do you ever see Instagram posts related to travel/vacationing?**

- Yes, often
- Yes, sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**26. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	strongly disagree	disagree	partly disagree	neutral	partly agree	agree	strongly agree
Seeing travel related posts makes me want to travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seeing a post of a specific destination makes me want to visit the place	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seeing travel experiences on Instagram can impact my opinion about travel brands (i.e. hotels, restaurants, services etc.) and destinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**27. Have you ever posted about your vacations/traveling? (if not, you can skip to question 29)**

- Yes, regularly
- yes, many times
- yes, at least once
- no

**28. When do you post about your trip? (multiple choice)**

- During the trip
- Right after taking the trip
- I post "throwback" photos later

**29.** Do you use hashtags on your posts?

- Yes, always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**30.** Do you search travel related hashtags on Instagram?

- Yes, regularly
- Often
- Sometimes
- Only when I intend to travel
- Never

**31.** Do you use the location search on Instagram?

- Yes, often
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

**32.** What kind of photos would you wish to see if searching travel related content on Instagram?

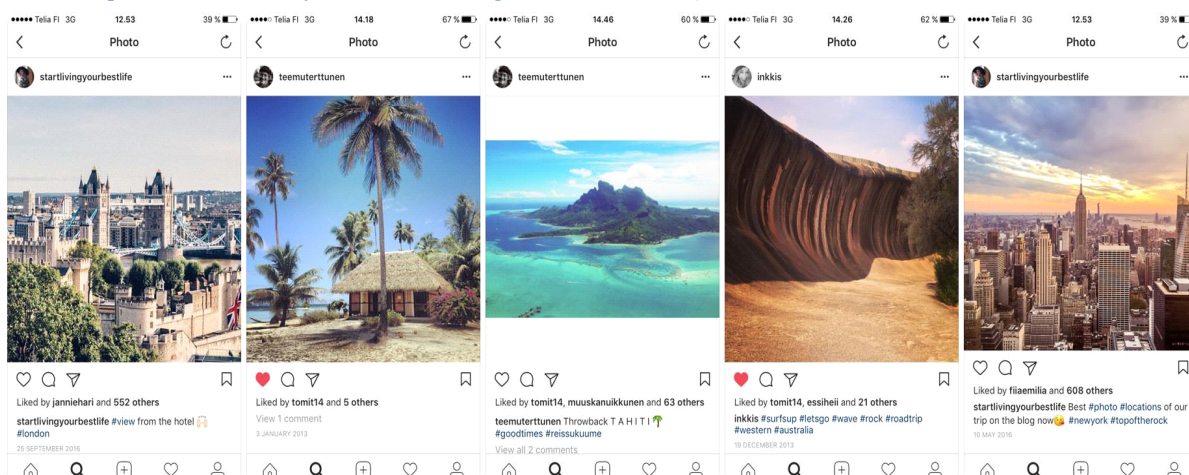
- hotel/accommodation rooms
- hotel/accommodation facilities
- restaurants
- food and drink
- location/scenery
- activities and things to do
- sights and interesting places to visit
- other

**33.** Have you discovered new destinations/places when using Instagram app?

- Yes, I often discover new places
- Yes, I have discovered some
- yes, once
- no, I haven't discovered any new places

## Instagram and travelling

### 34. Do the photos below raise any interest in travelling to these destinations/one of the destination? \*



- Yes, definitely! I want to visit the place/places!
- I got interested in the place/places
- They certainly make me want to travel
- they don't have any effect on me

### 35. How likely do you think Instagram has had influence in your travel plans on a scale 1-5 (1=no influence at all, 5=big influence) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
No influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Big influence

### 36. When would you use/consider using Instagram? (multiple choice) \*

- when I have already chosen the destination, but seeking information on accommodation options and other services
- when beginning to search for ideas on where to travel
- when trying to narrow down my choices of destinations
- during my actual trip when trying to find out specific attractions or things to do
- after my trip to share my experiences
- I would not use Instagram

### 37. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? \*

	Strongly disagree	disagree	partly disagree	not sure	partly agree	agree	strongly agree
I prefer consumer reviews over tourism providers' description of themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust more on photos shared by individual users than photos uploaded by service providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think travel recommendations provided by unknown people are not useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ordinary travelers' reviews of destinations cannot be relied on	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Countries' websites/social networking accounts would be better if travelers could contribute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't think Instagram is useful for me when I plan my travels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism operators and destinations should incorporate travelers' photos and comments into their websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**38. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? \***

	Strongly disagree	disagree	partly disagree	not sure	partly agree	agree	strongly agree
I trust information provided on tourism websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust information provided by travel agents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust information coming from my friends and family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust information from commercial operators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust comments made by other travelers on third party websites (e.g. TripAdvisor)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust information provided by travel bloggers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust comments and posts made by travelers on Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust comments and posts made by travelers on other social networking sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**39. Comments related to Instagram and travelling (optional)**

▲
▼

100% completed



## Appendix 2. Open responses to question 10.

### Other

- Familiar place, friends living there
- Due to Finnish guys in Minnesota wild
- dont know, just wanted to see the beautiful city
- My boyfriend had always wanted to go there
- visited family
- a random idea to go on a cruise
- friends live there
- A common destination for tourists, had an idea what to expect
- Because it's New York
- Used to live there
- Warm weather
- for a wedding
- I always wanted to go
- My friend is moving there and we went to look for apartments
- Visiting family
- i travelled to attend an event in Sveden
- It is on the way home
- Sister lives there
- Hadn't traveled to Asia before, we just kind of planned by timing- and distance-wise. My friend looked at travel blogs and guidebooks.
- Wanted to visit the country without any push from sites etc
- It was a surprise gift for me
- Birth country
- See my friends and family
- search options on OTA's website
- It was my boyfriend's business trip
- cheap flights (we wanted to go asia and other destinations were much more expensive)
- I was visiting my friends
- Got a good deal on flights
- always wanted to go and got a cheap deal
- Always wanted to go
- I have been there before and i visited a friend
- Friend lives there
- Always wanted to go
- It was cheap
- took my friend there in order for her to see the place
- Noticed cheap flights'offer to Berlin
- Been there before
- Destination familiar to me
- I visited friends
- Husband's business trip
- It was a tradition.
- Had visited quickly there once before
- Been to Thailand before
- I knew the place
- Visited a friend
- Trough negotiations with my traveling company
- Wedding
- Business & pleasure

- Annual trip
- A friend lives there
- Just googled
- Miami: allways wanted to visit and Tulum: read about it on touristic forums
- Cheap flights
- halpaa olutta ja tissibaareja
- Visiting a friend
- Tailored golf trip
- Have been there before
- Working holiday
- chose it from the selection offered by a package travel company
- I searched for cheap flights to nice places in Europe on a short notice.
- It's just a general "must see" destination

### Appendix 3. Open-ended question 12.

#### Kaikki

- Trip advisor & google
- Google -> blogs/travel sites, Travel Agency websites, Friends and family, TripAdvisor, Instagram
- Friends, instagram, google
- No
- Google, friends
- Google, blogs, tripadvisor
- Lots of googling: all kinds of blogs, TripAdvisor kind of sites about hostels and sightseeing etc
- Kysyin kavereilta vinkkejä, googletin kuvia netistä, googletin vinkkejä mitä tehdä kohteessa. Käytin mm. TripAdvisor, matkatoimistojen info pläjäyksiä ja opaskirjoja
- Trip Advisor, google ,Instagram
- Yes. Instagram, google and blogs.
- yes: google, tripadvisor
- Tripadvisor, google
- No because it was my 6th time in Berlin. If it had been the first time then I would have searched some travel tips or went to a library for a destination guide book
- TripAdvisor and friends' recommendations, online travel guides
- i looked up what events were happening in Woodstock, the town I was visiting on Woodstock's web page
- No, been to Stockholm so many times that it doesn't need researching.
- Google, instagram, friends, family
- TripAdvisor, google and guide books
- TripAdvisor, google, friends, blogs
- TripAdvisor, instagram, friends, google
- No because I've been there before.
- TripAdvisor for sights and things to do.
- WikiTravel for tips on transportation and local customs.
- -
- Instagram, blogs, Mondo guide
- Yes, I used Google, Tripadvisor, Lonely Planet, Napsu and many other websites. Most common source was my friends who had visited the place.
- Google Aurinkomatkat Friends trip advisor
- Yes, I used all of the mentioned options
- I searched information by using google
- Instagram, blogs
- No
- Instagram, google, blogs,.
- No
- I did some research online. I googled for example what to see and how to get to places in NY and so on.
- Yes, I used Instagram and read reviews
- Not really, I like to go places and discover things while I'm there. Although, I did check hotels on hotels.com before making my decision where to stay.
- Google, facebook, travel fair in helsinki
- No
- I used tripadvisor for choosing the hotel and restaurants
- TripAdvisor, Google
- Yes, a little bit. Google and friends helped
- Google and also the webpage and the Facebook page of the event
- Kyllä

- Tripadvisor, google, instagram
- All the mentioned in the question
- Instagram, Google and Google maps
- Had been before, didn't do any research.
- Friends, TripAdvisor , blogs
- Yes, especially with accommodation, we used a lot of Hostelworld. My friend was much more active with the planning, I didn't check up much of info until in the destination. We mainly asked fellow travelers for tips and looked up brochures at the hostels. My friend also followed some blogs and instagram posts who were or had gone to same places.
- yes, I used Instagram
- family friends, as they have been there before
- the official tourism website of the place (visithvar.com)
- Facebook page of Hvar
- TripAdvisor
- Friends and tripadvisor rather quickly
- No
- No
- Facebook
- No.
- TripAdvisor, google
- Not this time
- Secret london facebook pahe
- Google & Instagram mostly, friends' recommendations as well
- Google, friends
- OTA
- Thailand guide
- I googled some museums before my trip.
- google, ig, food blogs..
- Google, travel books
- Friends, facebook, instagram, tripadvisor
- friends, blogs, facebook travel community for finnish female travelers, google, instagram
- Friends
- Blogs, instagramm, web page for local people about what is going on in the city
- Yes. Tripadvisor, Instagram, blogs, lonely planet
- Google, tripadvisor, friends, blogs
- Friends, blog, Instagram ads
- Read Lonely Planet guide book and used booking.com app
- Friends, IG, FB, tripadvisor, google
- No
- Yes! Tripadvisor, hostels.com, google, facebook, instagram
- No
- Friends, insta, fb, blog, google
- Google, tripadvisor. Instagram
- Google, instagram, friends
- Google, tripadvisor, foursquare, friends
- I did not.
- No
- No, used the knowledge I had from my previous trip
- Tripadvisor, google, lonely planet guide book
- Google, tripadvisor, blogs, colleagues, magazines



- Google and some OTA's
- Google, tripadvisor, citysightseeing.com, viator.com
- Trip advisor, Google, Instagram, friends
- Google
- Booking.com, Amsterdam webpages
- Yes. Travel agency websites, TripAdvisor, Instagram.
- Google, blogs
- Nope. Know the place by heart.
- Tripadvisor, google
- Yes! did. I used Google, TripAdvisor and Instagram.
- Not much
- Friends, Google
- Google, Tripadvisor
- Nope.
- No
- TripAdvisor, Hostelworld, friends
- TripAdvisor
- noup, trip was like "quick travel" as äkkilähtö
- TripAdvisor
- TripAdvisor, Google, Friends, travel fair ITB2017
- About internship place i knew little bit bc my friend was staying there also, also i did little search, for example TripAdvisor, google and YouTube (surfvideos etc). Barcelona; Google, blogs, basic tourist sites about sight destinations. And from both of them i checked some pictures from Instagram
- Yes, on tripadvisor
- Google, friends, guide books
- Wheather channel, web accomodation reservation, company's travel section (flight tickets), business meeting's organisator's website, airline's website, wikipedia.
- no
- Yes I did. Mostly Instagram, Pinterest, WeHeartIt, Google, YouTube and TripAdvisor.
- From basically every place mentioned above except friends and guide books.
- Friends Blogs Travelsites Instagram
- Google
- yes, google ad instagram
- Instagram hashtags to see photos of the places, watched a lot of videos in youtube and vimeo. Also read some blogs.
- Google,Guide book
- Google, instagram
- Yes, friends, trip advisor, google, instagram
- Yes: Google, TripAdvisor, guide books
- TripAdvisor, google, friends
- Did not do much research on the destination, maybe looked up pictures on google/talked to friends
- Booking.com for hotel
- Friends,instagram and tripadvisor
- Friends, blogs
- Yes I did. We googled all information.
- TripAdvisor, travel blogs, google, forums
- Trip advisor, booking.com
- No
- Tripadvisor, Google, Friends, blogs
- Google, Facebook groups, friends

- Tripadvisor, Google
- yes on tripadvisor
- Blogs and travel forums
- sihteeriopisto
- TripAdvisor, Google, blogs.
- Google, blogs
- Golf sites
- TripAdvisor, google, friends, Instagram, guide books
- Not really as it was a business trip
- TripAdvisor, Google and guide books. And friends.
- Tripadvisor, instagram, booking.com
- Google, blogs, instagram
- TripAdvisor, guide books, package travel company website
- Instagram, TripAdvisor, yelp, timeout guide
- During the trip, I looked up interesting places nearby for a daytrip, mostly through Instagram and Pinterest
- Google, Youtube, Pallontallaajat
- Google, blogs, Lonely Planet, Pallontallaajat-forum, friends, Tripadvisor, Instagram
- I did some Googling but I mostly used Tripadvisor.
- Instagram, snapchat, google
- Blogs, Google, Lonely planet guide book, tripadvisor, Facebook, friends

#### Appendix 4. Open comments

-Instagram is a great place for getting inspiration for travelling and I use it a lot when I have a trip coming up and want to find out places to visit or restaurants where to eat etc.

-I think pictures shared in social media are too made up. They don't show the reality of the place. There are too many filters for use and the images are altered. Travel photos should be honest. That is why I don't trust only photos but want to read about experiences as well. Best is to talk to someone who has been to the place.

-Itselläni erityisesti Instagramin ja muun sosiaalisen median luotettavuutta matkailuun (ja myös muiden kohteiden) ja sen arviointiin syö ihmisten tapa käyttää sosiaalista mediaa. Varsinkin Instagrammin ideana tuntuu olevan oman täydellisen elämän pönkittäminen ja niimpä siellä olevista kuvista ja kuvien kuvateksteistä saa helposti kuvan "ikuisesta kesästä täydellisessä paratiisissa", koska ei kukaan laita sinne lomakuviaan räntäsadepäivältä, poliisilaitokselta ilmoittamassa taskuvarkaudesta, hiekkarannan likaiselta osiolta (vaikka rannasta vain 1% olisitäydellistä hiekkaan niin kaikkien Instagram-kuvat ovet juuri siitä)

-I think Instagram is good source to find out restaurants, hotels or places to visit when on holiday

-I love Instagram, such an easy way to find out information on different places

-I think is great that you can search for some place on Instagram and then see what there is to see, what the place is like, what people wear and also local people's photos of the place.