

# **The key travel motivations of Swedish young adult travellers.**

Case study: How to attract this target group to Turku?

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MASTER'S THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	International Business Management
Identification number:	6651
Author:	Lotta Bäck
Title:	The key travel motivations of Swedish young adult travellers. Case study: How to attract this target group to Turku?
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Commissioned by:	
<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The aim of this study was to conduct a market research on Swedish young adults, aged 18-35, and living in the Stockholm region. This limitation was made based on the case company's target areas. The purpose of the market research was to identify the key travel motivations of Swedish young adults. The study also aimed to find answers about the interests that may influence their travel behaviour. Furthermore, the study aimed to get insight about the mediums that this group is utilizing. With the answers to these research questions, the study intended to give the case company valuable insight about the young adult travellers that could be utilized when planning the upcoming marketing activities targeting this specific group. The empirical part of the study was conducted with a qualitative research method. Semi-structured interviews were done with tourism professionals with insight about the Swedish young adult travellers. A snowball sampling method was utilized for choosing the sample. The researcher first selected two persons from her own network to interview and afterwards additionally two more based on the recommendations of the previously interviewed experts. The results show that travelling is a lifestyle for the Swedish young adults and they are adventurous travellers that want to explore new destinations and cultures together with their friends. Their travel behaviour is highly influenced by their friends. They travel non-charter and do the bookings via online channels, increasingly often via mobile devices. Based on their travel behaviour they could be categorized as "the explorers" based on Cohen's typologies and as "allocentrics" based on Plog's typologies. Social media, google and metasearch sites are used for inspiration and information. This cohort wants to stay connected 24/7. Most used some channels are Instagram and Facebook and they are keen followers of bloggers and influencers. Based on the findings, the case company should target the older segment of the young adults, around 28-35 years. This, because they are keener on exploring new destinations and are less price sensitive compared to the younger crowd of the segment. Offer experiences that they can do together with their friends and highlight the food scenery, live like a local products and music festivals. The communication should be done via Instagram and Facebook, supported by close collaboration with suitable Swedish bloggers and influencers.</p>	
Keywords:	travel motivation, travel behavior, young adults, millennials, Swedish travellers, Stockholm region, destination marketing, market research, communication, Visit Turku
Number of pages:	50
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	

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## FOREWORD

First of all I would like to thank my current workplace, Visit Turku, and especially my boss Anne-Marget for allowing and encouraging me to pursue my dreams and start the Master's Degree studies on the side of the work and giving me the opportunity to conduct this research as a case study for Visit Turku. My sincere hope is that this conducted study will give the company valuable and vital insight on the research topic and information that can be utilized for future success stories.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Arcada for giving me this possibility to learn new insights and theories that will for sure be useful and vital for the future. Thank you also to my supervisor Niklas Eriksson for being patient, supporting and giving wise advices. I also want to reach out to my fellow study colleagues; it has been such a pleasure meeting you all and we have had many interesting discussions during these past few years, not to forget about the much needed fun "off study" moments.

Lastly, I would like to thank my partner in crime, Patrick, for always being there for me and supporting me with the studies and this thesis. Moreover, I am also thankful to my family and an extra warm thank you goes to my aunt Pirjo, who let me stay at her place during several of the study days.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Young adults, born between the early 1980s' and 2000, also referred to as the millennials and the Generation Y, are today representing 20% of all international travellers globally. In 2013 this demographic group of travellers made a total of 217 million international trips. This already rather astonishing number is expected to grow even further during the coming years and by 2020 the figure is predicted to be around 320 million international trips. (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014)

The young adults have been brought up in the era of digitalization and smartphones as well as digital platforms as for instance various social media channels and networks are daily necessities among this group of consumers. Furthermore, this demographic group of travellers are connected 24/7 and they also represent a very influential group of travellers that tend to be relatively active review writers. (Besöksnäringens Forsknings- och Utvecklingsfond, 2016).

The young adults vary a lot in terms of behavioural factors, attitudes and values, compared to other generations, as for instance their own parents. This is much due to the fact that the young adults are the kids of the digitalization era or so called digital natives. They are generally speaking much more travelled than the previous generations and are considered to be aware and conscious consumers and group-oriented individuals, but still with a strong identity. These attributes also make the young adults one of the most challenging target groups to attract in terms of marketing. (Valentine, D.B & Powers, T. L., 2013)

The Swedish travellers are the biggest international visitor group in the Finnish tourist destination Turku when looking at the registered overnight statistics in the city. The Swedish tourists spent a total of approximately 25 600 overnights in Turku in 2016 (Visit Turku, 2017). Most of these Swedish travellers have their origin in Stockholm and the metropolitan area. The high volume of Swedish visitors is also one of the main reasons why the Swedish market is considered the most important target market internationally for Visit Turku, which is the tourist board in the region of Southwest Finland.

In Sweden the young adults or millennials represent a group of approximately 2,6 million people. (Leadric.com). But which are the motivators and drivers behind the choice of travel destination among these Swedish young adult travellers? Which interests, values and behavioural characteristics do they have that might influence on the way they travel? And how could Visit Turku get a share of these well-travelled consumers and be able to attract this group of travellers to Turku? These are the main research questions that this study aims to find answers to.

## **1.1 Background and need of the study**

The case company of this study is Visit Turku, which is the regional tourist board in Southwest Finland. One of the main objectives for Visit Turku is to attract international visitors to the destination by various marketing activities and campaigns. Sweden is one of the company's and the tourist destination's main target markets internationally and the Swedish travellers are also the biggest international visitor group in Turku and the surrounding region.

Until today the Swedish travellers visiting Turku have mainly been representing the older generation as well as families travelling with children. Also the marketing activities of Visit Turku have been mostly focusing on these two target groups during the last years and the younger generation has gained significantly less attention. The company itself has realized that these two target groups won't be enough for further growth from Sweden especially in today's competitive world. This is why the company has gotten interested in the Swedish young adults as a potential target group. Hence, the company is in the near future planning to carry out a marketing campaign, which would be targeted towards the young adults in Stockholm region.

However, the main problem today is that Visit Turku has little knowledge about the young adult travellers in Sweden. They don't have the needed know-how about the travel motivations, values and interests of this demographic group of travellers. To be able to carry out a successful marketing campaign the company needs insight about what could attract the Swedish young adults to Turku. By understanding the main moti-

vators and reasons why Swedish young adults are travelling abroad it can also help Visit Turku to understand, which could be the drivers of attracting this target group to travel to Turku.

The millennials are overall a rather frequently studied demographic group and a generation that interests researchers all over the world. However, most of the studies conducted on this specific group of travellers tends rather often to be dealing with the millennial travellers from the United States and young adult travellers in other countries, including Sweden, have been much less studied. We may know what factors motivate millennials to travel on a general and global level, but this study strives to get this vital information on a region specific level, when studying the young adult segment in the Stockholm metropolitan area.

## **1.2 Aim and research questions**

The aim of this study is to conduct a market research on Swedish young adults, aged 18-35, who are living in the Stockholm region. This study is limited to the Stockholm region, since the accessibility from there to Turku is very good thanks to both daily ferry and flight connections. Also studies show that the current Swedish travellers visiting the destination are mostly coming from Stockholm and the metropolitan area. The purpose of the market research is to identify the key motives and motivations of Swedish young adult travellers when choosing their travel destination. It also aims to find answers about the main values and interests that may influence the travel behaviour of this specific target group. Hence, the main research questions of this study are:

- Which are the key travel motivations of Swedish young adults in the Stockholm region?
- Are there specific values and interests that effect on the choice of travel destination and the way this consumer group travels?
- Which are the mediums and channels that this target group are following and utilizing on a regular basis?

With the answers to these research questions, this study aims to give the case company, Visit Turku, valuable information and understanding about the young adult traveller segment in the Stockholm region. Eventually, this vital knowledge can be utilized when planning the company's upcoming marketing activities, both in terms of the content and the choice of media channels, when targeting this specific group of travellers.

### **1.3 Limitations**

This study is limited to research the key travel motivations solely of young adults, in the age group of 18 to 35 years, living in the region of Stockholm metropolitan area. This geographical limitation is made because of the case company, Visit Turku, who sees this specific region as the most potential target area in Sweden, with good accessibility options to Turku. Additionally, the Stockholm metropolitan area is also currently the region from where most of the Swedish travellers visiting Turku are originally coming from. The demographic limitation on the other hand is made due to the fact that this is the group of consumers and potential visitors that Visit Turku has the least knowledge about, but is interested to learn more about. Furthermore, this is also the target group that the tourism organization is planning to target in their upcoming marketing activities and campaigns in the near future.

### **1.4 Visit Turku**

Visit Turku is the regional sales and marketing organisation for Turku and Southwest Finland. One of the core tasks of the tourism organization is to promote Turku and the surrounding region both on a national and an international level. The main goal is to increase the number of domestic and international leisure and business travellers in the region. This is pursued via various marketing activities in the chosen markets. The main international markets for Visit Turku are Sweden, Russia and Germany. Other important ones are Estonia, UK, Italy, Poland, China and Japan. These markets have been chosen mainly based on the existing tourism flows to the destination and the good accessibility

from the target market to Turku. Also the target markets of Visit Finland have been noticed. At the moment most international visitors visiting Turku are coming from Sweden and second most from Germany.

The marketing activities that Visit Turku carries out are a mixture of marketing campaigns, participating in B to B workshops and travel fairs and PR work. Much of these marketing activities are done in co-operation with Visit Finland. Visit Turku also has a strong presence on social media and a growing number of the company's marketing activities are done via them. The company has accounts on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, VKontakte and a recently opened account on Chinese social media channel Weibo. The company also does frequent co-operation with bloggers, vloggers and other social media influencers. These social media professionals and travel bloggers are invited by Visit Turku to the region to experience the city and the surrounding area and after that communicate these experiences to their readers and followers. Visit Turku is responsible for creating the tailor-made programmes for each visit and also functions as local hosts during the visits.

The marketing slogan that Visit Turku is utilizing on all target markets is "City Culture in the Arms of the Archipelago". Also the "Kiss my Turku" brand (see figure 1) is used in all marketing and on all markets. The unique selling points that are highlighted when promoting the city are among others the history of the city; the oldest town of the country and previous capital, the cultural centre of Finland; was the European Capital of Culture in 2011 and nowadays gaining reputation as being the Food Capital of Finland. The city also hosts many interesting events and festivals annually and these are also utilized when talking about the destination to potential travellers. Not to forget about the breathtakingly beautiful Archipelago, which is the biggest in the world when counting the amount of islands. Turku is also seen as being the capital of the Archipelago. The newest products that Visit Turku has developed are related to the live like a local theme, where visitors can experience the ordinary daily things that locals are doing. Overall, the main themes used when communicating Turku to potential visitors are culture, maritime, food and events.



*Figure 1: The Kiss my Turku logo (source: Visit Turku)*

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical part of this thesis will examine the topics that are related to the research questions of this study. The presented theories and previous studies around the related topics will give a good basis and understanding of the research topic for the empirical part of the study. The first section in the theoretical part will introduce topics and theories about consumer behaviour within travel and tourism as well as travel motivation. The second part will cover theory as well as previous studies around the target group of the research; the young adult travellers and Swedish travellers. The third part will consist of theories about destination marketing, brand building and the online context.

### **2.1 Consumer behaviour in travel and tourism**

In order to be able to reach out to the potential customers and travellers in a successful way and to gain competitive advantage in today's heavily competed world, marketers need to have a thorough understanding of the factors that influence the way a consumer or visitor behaves. Based on this vital knowledge managers and marketers can do better and more clever strategic decisions and maybe in today's harshly competed world even

more importantly, it helps them predicting how the future tourist will behave in terms of for instance new products. (Reisinger, Y. 2009:282-283).

Nevertheless, consumer behaviour tends to be something that the tourism organizations don't pay enough attention on and the organizations clearly lack this vital insight about their visitors and especially about the potential visitors. The reason for this can be due to strict or decreased budgets as well as the fact that it tends to require special expertise from the staff and the process is often rather time-consuming. (Hudson, S. 2008:40)

Overall, motivation is considered the factor that most likely has the biggest impact on the behaviour of a consumer. Motivation is also one of the main research topics of this study and will therefore be separately discussed in section 2.1.2. However, altogether a total of seven factors that affect the consumer behaviour have been identified (see figure 2). These factors are: motivation, culture, age & gender, social class, lifestyle, life cycle and reference groups. (Hudson, S. 2008:41)

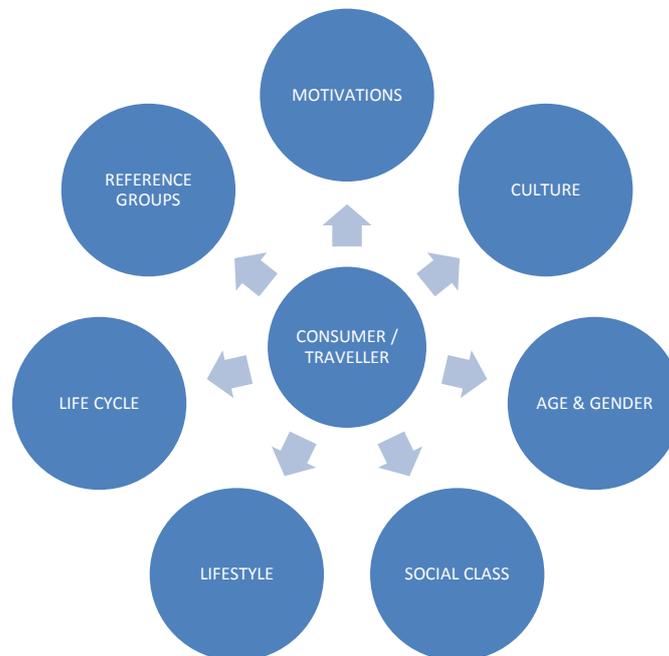


Figure 2. Factors influencing consumer behaviour (own creation from source: Hudson, S. 2008:41)

Hudson (2008:46) explains that culture is something that is personal and unique for each human being. It can for instance be related to tradition, religion, beliefs or values. It is something that the person has been brought up with in the society where he or she is living in. Culture also evolves over time. It is also considered to have a rather strong influence on the behaviour of a consumer. A traveller might for instance value green thinking and this also tends to have an impact when she or he chooses a particular travel destination.

Age and gender are also seen as factors that have an effect on travel behaviour. A senior traveller might have very different needs and values than a traveller representing the younger generation, e.g. the millennials. This has also been recognized by marketers and demographic segmentation by age and gender has been commonly utilized on a global level. However, it is also vital for marketers to understand that there might be a significant difference between the chronological and the cognitive age of a consumer. The cognitive age refers to what a person thinks and how she or he behaves and acts. (Bowie, D. & Buttle, F. 2004:58)

The lifestyle of a traveller comprises vital insights for the marketer. Attitudes, interests and opinions are all linked to the way a person is living and it also influences the way they behave and for instance purchase products and services. (Evans, M. et al, 2006:128). Lifestyles tend to vary significantly between nationalities. This is also why it is vital to understand that a German might not have the same lifestyle as for instance a Swede. Therefore, it is crucial to always investigate each country's lifestyle characteristics separately and especially focus on the markets that the destination is aiming to attract. (Kotler, P. et al, 1999:191)

Every human being goes through a certain life cycle and through different steps or stages along the cycle. The life cycle is also closely linked to the age of a person. The income and interests of a person also tend to change along the way, which also effects the buying behaviour of the person. Marketers can also segment their target audience based on the various life cycle steps that a person is in, for example based on various family life cycle stages as singles, married with kids or divorced without children. (Kotler, P. et al. 1999:186-187)

Some companies and destinations are also doing the segmentation based on the social class of a person. One is born into a certain social class and a person in a specific social class may favour some brands or products as for example in terms of travel or food. This means that the person's social class often has an effect on their buying behaviour as well, which makes it interesting for a company or destination. (Kotler, P. et al, 1999:183)

Lastly, but without a doubt not the factor that has the least impact on the buying behaviour and attitudes of a person, is the reference groups that the customer is surrounded by. Everyone has reference groups that influence the way they behave and think. These groups can be of different kinds and with some groups the person is in interaction with more regularly than with others and some they might not even be in face-to-face interaction with at all. The groups can also be both from personal or professional surroundings. The reference group can consist of for instance family and friends, which would be called primary reference groups or a professional association, which is a secondary group. People also have those reference groups that we want to be associated with. For example if a person wants people to see him or her as a person who loves gourmet food, she or he would most likely visit restaurants of high class. This kind of reference group is called aspirational group. (Bowie, D. & Buttle, F. 2004:56-57)

### **2.1.1 Typologies of tourist behaviour**

Several academic researchers have throughout the years identified and categorized tourists or travellers based on their behavioural aspects. One of the perhaps most well-known typologies is the one created by sociologist Cohen in 1972. Back then he identified a total of four different types of tourists (see figure 3): “the organized mass tourist”, “the individual mass tourist”, “the explorer” and the “drifter. (Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007:83-84)

The organized mass tourist is a traveller that purchases a package holiday and prefers to travel in a group and having a rather fixed schedule during the trip. The individual mass

tourist on the other hand is a bit more flexible than the organized mass tourist. Meaning for instance that they might want to have a bit looser programme during the holiday. The explorer is an independent traveller who doesn't want to travel in groups and makes all his travel arrangements by himself. The explorer is also eager to meet locals during his or her travels. The fourth tourist type, the drifter, really wants to blend in with the local community and they try to avoid contact with other tourists. The drifter also makes the bookings of for instance the accommodation on an ad hoc basis. (Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007:84-85)

<p><b>THE ORGANISED MASS TOURIST</b> Non-adventurous, travel on package tours, fairly no contact with locals</p>
<p><b>THE INDIVIDUAL MASS TOURIST</b> A bit more flexible than the organized mass tourist, but still travels on organized tours</p>
<p><b>THE EXPLORER</b> Independent travel arrangements, off the beaten track experiences included</p>
<p><b>THE DRIFTER</b> Blends into the local culture, no connection to other tourists, no fixed agendas, unexplored and rural destinations</p>

*Figure 3: Cohen's tourist typologies (own creation from source: Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007)*

Cohen (1979) also introduced a typology of tourists based on what kind of experience they were looking for. This classification consisted of five different types of tourists: the recreational tourist, the diversionary tourist, the experiential tourist, the experimental tourist and the existential tourist. The recreational tourist looks for a recreational holiday, when the diversionary tourist travels to forget about his or her life at home and the experiential tourist seeks for authentic experiences in the travel destination. The experimental tourist wants to meet and engage with locals and the existential traveller wants

to adopt and blend in to the local community and culture. (Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007: 86)

Another well-known researcher, Stanley Plog (1977) also developed his own theory of different traveller types and their behavioural factors. He classified the US inhabitants based on their personalities and psychographics and it resulted in a model of three different types: allocentric, mid-centric and pschycocentric (see figure 4). Pschycocentric persons are introvert and tend to seek for less adventurous holidays and therefore prefer organized trips to previously familiar and popular destinations. They also prefer to avoid risks. Allocentrics on the other hand are persons who are more adventurous and extrovert to their behaviour and persons that want to explore new destinations and also travel independently. (Robinson, M. et al, 2000:6)

However, most of the people tend to be the mid-centrics, which is a group of travellers that from the behavioural aspects are somewhere in the middle of the both extreme types of the allocentrics and the pschycocentrics. Since very few persons belong to the two extremes the typology also includes two additional intermediates; near-pschycocentrics and near-allocentrics. Additionally, Plog realized that personalities tend to shift and evolve over time. Hence, after a pschycocentric traveller has gotten more experienced to travel he or she could change to an allocentric traveller. Furthermore, it is also important to understand that the typology is based on the American travellers and it may or may not be applicable in its whole extent on all European travellers. (Holloway, C. J. & Humphreys, C. 2012:83-84)

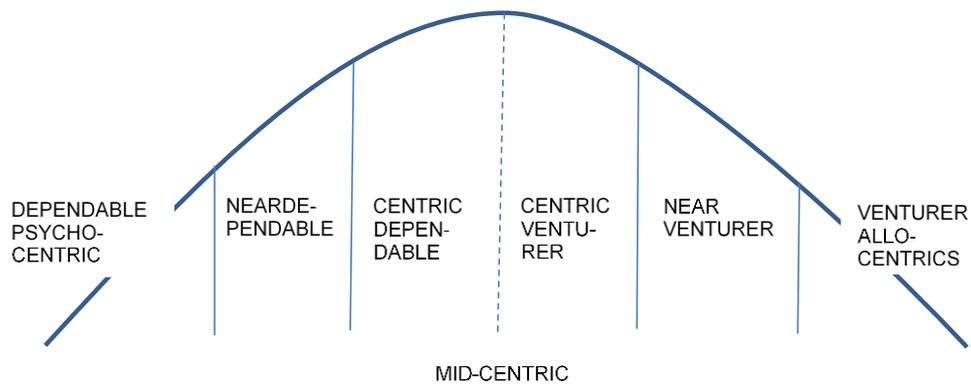
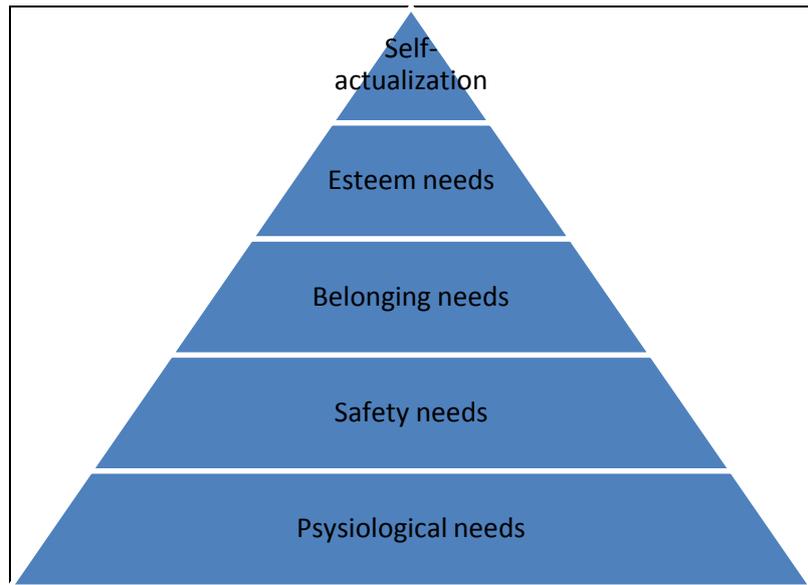


Figure 4: Plog's Psychographic Typology (own creation from source: Hudson, S. 2008)

### 2.1.2 Travel motivation

Researchers all over the world, also within the tourism industry, have agreed that the behaviour and motivation of a consumer or traveller already starts from the basic needs of a human being. These basic needs consist of psychological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs (see figure 5). This hierarchy of needs was first introduced by Abraham Maslow in 1943 and has after that been referred to and cited several times and by several researchers. (Evans, M. et al, 2006:7-8)



*Figure 5. Mashlow's hierarchy of needs (source: Ryan, C. 2002:29)*

The four lower needs in the hierarchy pyramid are considered deficit needs. Deficit needs are needs as for instance food, water, safety, basically needs that a person must have to even survive. These needs are also seen as being instinctive needs. The rather simple idea with the hierarchy of needs model is that a person will full-fill each level of needs, fully or at least partly, before moving forward to the next level. The last level in the pyramid is named self-actualization and could also be described self-realization or self-fulfilment. This level is all about investing in the person's own skills and in activities that have a meaning for the person. This could be via for instance leisure time activities. This is also the level where travelling would come into the picture. (Evans, M. 2006:7-8)

The motivation leading a person can be either positive or negative. Negative motivation is something, which motivates us to avoid or get away from negative or uncomfortable situations in life. A situation like this could be when a person buys a new television he or she decides to buy an extra warranty to be able to avoid possible extra costs if the television would break down. Positive motivation on the other hand is about bringing the person good feelings, pleasure, intellectual satisfaction and goals in life. Entertainment as well as holidays and travel are both associated with positive motivation. (Evans, M. et al, 2006:6)

The motivations of a traveller can be both external and internal and these factors that motivate the traveller are usually divided into push and pull factors. The push factor means that the tourist is “pushed” away from home by for instance economic, social or political forces. The pull factors again refers to factors that “pull” the traveller to a specific destination. This could be factors as for example appealing attractions or events in the destination, the weather or the favourable image of the particular destination. The push factors are also the elements, which the tourism marketing organizations and marketers can partly have an impact on and should at least attempt to influence. (Richardson, J.I. & Fluker, M. 2004:66-67)

The process how a need actually will transform into a motivation to travel to a certain destination is illustrated in figure 6. Firstly the traveller recognizes that she or he has an actual need or want, or even several for that matter, which has to be satisfied. Secondly the traveller realizes that a trip somewhere could be the best solution to satisfy his or her particular need. If the need of the traveller and the perception of a certain destination and its attractions in the end meet, it will result in a concrete motivation to visit the travel destination. It is however also important to remember that each and every person and traveller alike are unique and therefore they also tend to have different solutions to what will in the end satisfy their needs and wants. (Holloway, C. J. & Humphreys, C. 2012:69-70)

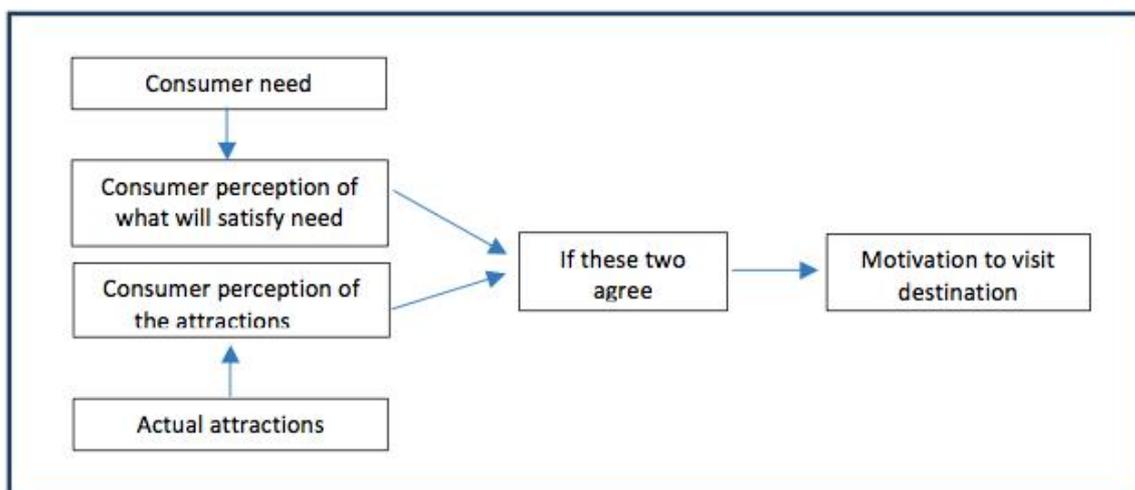


Figure 6: The motivation process (source: Holloway, C. & Humphreys, C. 2012:70)

Also specific tourism motivations have been identified and McIntosh R. W. et al (1995) categorized these into four separate motivators: physical, cultural, interpersonal and status & prestige motivators (see table 1). Physical motivators, means that a person wants to travel for instance for relaxation purposes, reducing stress, working out or purely for having fun (satisfying for the mind). When a person travels because he or she wants to participate in a cultural event or for getting to know the local lifestyle or culture, he or she is driven by cultural motivators. Interpersonal motivators for travelling could be factors like visiting old friends or the urge to make new ones. Status and prestige motivators have to do with the needs and wants to gain status as well as recognition from other people. (Holloway, C. J. & Humphreys, C. 2012:71-72)

<b>TOURISM MOTIVATORS</b>	
<b>Physical motivators</b>	<b>Cultural motivators</b>
* Refreshing the body	* Curiosity about foreign lands and people
* Reducing mental stress	* Developing historical or cultural interests
* Improve physical health	* Attending cultural events
* Exercising	* Exploring local music, folklore, lifestyles, art etc.
* Having fun and enjoyment	
<b>Interpersonal motivators</b>	<b>Status and prestige motivators</b>
* Maintaining and enhancing relationships	* Gaining status and recognition from others
* Making new friends	* Pursuing one's own hobbies
* Escaping own routine environments	* Continuing education and self-development

Table 1: Tourism motivators (source: adapted from McIntosh R. W. et al., 1995)

For a travel destination and its marketers it is crucial to recognize all these various motivators among the potential visitors when trying to create or offer products and services that fulfils the needs, wants and expectations of the traveller. Also of a huge importance is to understand that instead of a single motivator, a traveller is usually influenced by multiple motivators. Some of these the traveller him or herself is fully aware of when some needs are subconscious. (Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007:55-56).

Furthermore, today's traveller is also a highly sophisticated traveller who wants and also expects his or her own specific needs to be satisfied. All this emphasizes that the companies within the tourism industry as well as the destination marketers need to put even more focus and extra effort on understanding their potential customers' needs and behavioural factors. Only by understanding them completely, the tourism actors can create appealing and satisfying products and services for the potential customer. (Moutinho, L. 2011: 83, 93-94)

## **2.2 Young adult travellers**

Generation Y, also referred to as the millennials, are a group of young adults that are born between 1982 and 2002. Each generation also tend to have some similarities in terms of behavioural habits and values. This cohort is overall seen as being a generation that values lifestyle, are confident and focused on friends as well as digital platforms and environments. Generation Y is a team-oriented cohort and their motivations and behaviour are generally speaking seen to be strongly influenced by their friends. (Benckendorff, P. et al, 2011: 4-9)

The Generation Y has also been studied in terms of travelling. Studies show that this generation consider travel as a way of life. In other words, they are travelling on a frequent basis and to multiple destinations. The millennial travellers are also spending more money on travelling compared to other generations and bookings are made via digital channels. All these factors also make this generation an extremely important target group for actors within the tourism industry. (Benckendorff, P. et al, 2011: 4-9)

It is also apparent that the young adults are a rather different group of consumers compared to the previous groups as the Baby Boomers and the Generation X. Possibly the biggest difference, which maybe isn't even so surprising, is the fact that millennials have a very high technological competence, which on the other hand isn't the case among the other generations. This generation is brought up with computers, the internet, social media channels and smartphones and interacting on all these different technological tools and networks come very naturally for the young adults. (Valentine, D.B &

Powers, T. L., 2013). This is also why the young adults think that taking the smartphone with them on the trip is one of the highest priorities. Also bookings made with a mobile phone are clearly on a rise among this group of travellers. (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014)

In 2015 the young adults in Europe made a total of 150 million outbound trips, which represents a third of all European outbound trips made during the same year. (ITB, 2017). This figure is indeed rather astonishing and on top of that the millennials also spend a rather significant amount of money while travelling. According to a study conducted by WYSE Travel Confederation (2014) up to 50% of the millennial tourists spend over 1000 euros during a trip. This is a fairly big amount of money and this is also one of the main reasons why tourist destinations shouldn't ignore this group of travellers. But for being able to attract this specific group of tourists it requires some in-depth examination of the motivations and behaviours of the young adult travellers. The technological competence combined with the strong purchasing power makes this group of travellers a highly important group for marketers. (Valentine, D.B & Powers, T. L., 2013)

The millennials are also considered a rather hard customer group to target when in terms of marketing. This much due to the reason that this specific group of consumers are not as brand loyal as the other generations and furthermore has rather different values and interest than the previous generations. Another thing that makes this target group a bit more challenging to reach and attract is because they are not as actively following and utilizing the so called traditional mediums as for example newspapers. This cohort socializes in the online context and utilizes various social media channels as well as peer to peer platforms. Altogether this means that a marketer needs to have a proper understanding of the special characteristics and the utilized mediums of the young adults when planning to reach out to them. (Valentine, D.B & Powers, T. L., 2013)

Over 50% of the young adult travellers say that their number one motivation for travelling is to interact with locals and 46% of them say that they want to experience the way of living like a local. Hence, local experiences seem to be the factor that motivates the millennials when travelling abroad. (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014). Also the re-

sent travel trends report from ITB Berlin (2017) indicate that the millennials are seeking for authenticity and authentic travel experiences. The same report also shows that millennials have a positive attitude towards personalized travel experiences and are happy to get personalized offers via for instance the mobile phone. Additionally, the millennial travellers are expecting to have a smooth travel experience throughout the journey (ITB, 2017).

The young adult travellers are influenced by travel reviews and they also tend to be frequent review writers themselves. On the other hand the number one source of information in terms of travel are the friends and family of the millennial. Related to the “live like a local” style of travelling that is one of the main reason for travelling, the young adults are also frequently utilizing sharing economy platforms as Uber and Airbnb when travelling. These platforms offer the millennials a possibility to interact with the locals. (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014)

## **2.3 Swedish travellers**

Swedish inhabitants love to travel and they are also experienced travellers that travel abroad quite frequently. Around 58% of the Swedes travel abroad at least once per year and a bit over 30% travel abroad twice or more times annually. The lust for travelling abroad has been increasing each year and it is also expected to grow further in the future. Swedes could easily be called “globetrotters” because over half of them have visited more than 11 countries and over 30% between 11 and 20 countries. (Ticket.se, 2017)

A good number of attractions and activities are things that Swedish travellers value when travelling to a destination and also when choosing where to go. Price and quality should also match in the destination. When choosing a destination for a city break the most important criteria is the food culture and a good selection of restaurants. Swedish travellers also value a vivid offering of cultural activities, as theatre and musicals in the city. When it comes to choosing the accommodation in the destination itself the Swedes think that internet connection at the accommodation place is one of the most important

features. This, because Swedes prefer to be connected 24/7 during their vacation. (Resia, 2016)

The internet and especially review sites, as for example TripAdvisor, are important sources for Swedish travellers when choosing the next destination. Also friends and family as well as official websites of destinations are utilized as information and inspiration sources in the process of choosing the travel destination. TV and Radio are the medium channels that the majority (13%) of the Swedes look for information and inspiration from before the trip. Travel blogs as well as various social media channels are the second most important sources of inspiration and insight before the holiday. (Resia, 2016)

In 2015 the Swedish outbound travel stood for approximately 13,9 million and the share that Finland got from this was 4% when Europe got 84%. Swedes are rather big spenders when travelling and in 2015 the amount of expenditure on outbound travel was around 15 billion. The Swedish travellers were also the second biggest spenders of all travellers in Finland during 2015. When in Finland the Swedish traveller spent around one third of their travel budget on food and shopping and around 22% of their travel budget was spent on services as restaurants and cafés. (Visit Finland, 2016)

### **2.3.1 The image of Finland among Swedes**

Finlandsinstitutet (2017) conducted an interesting study about Swedes and more precisely about their perceptions, image, knowledge and attitudes of and towards Finland. The study was conducted in two separate parts; the first one was carried out as a qualitative study with focus groups as the method and the second part was done as a quantitative study in form of questionnaires. The respondents of the studies represented Swedish inhabitants aged 18-79 years.

Pure nature, lakes, sauna, sisu and Helsinki are things that Swedes associate with Finland. The younger generation living in Stockholm think of among others sports as ice

hockey and skiing, design, sauna and a good school system when mentioning Finland. The results also indicate that Swedes have overall a positive image of Finland. However, it can be seen that rather many of them have a fairly outdated perception of the country and many of the respondents also think that they have too little knowledge about their eastern neighbour. Especially the younger generation (18-29 years) say that they should have more knowledge about Finland. Encouraging is also the fact that one third of the respondents are interested to know more about Finland. History and culture seem to be the topics that Swedes want to learn more about. Among the younger group of Swedes culture appears to be a topic that could awake interest. (Finlandsinstitutet, 2017)

Some of the more negative thoughts and feelings that could be seen among the results were for instance the Finnish language, which is also considered a barrier when it comes to the image of the country. Especially when compared to the other neighbouring countries of Sweden. Swedes also feel that Finland isn't enough visible in the media in Sweden and this is also considered one of the main reasons why they don't have enough and up-to-date knowhow about Finland. An old prejudice is still that the Finns are consuming a rather huge number of alcoholic beverages. The meaning of a Swedish speaking Finn ("finlandssvensk") was surprisingly often unknown among the Swedes. (Finlandsinstitutet, 2017)

When it comes to travelling, a little over one fourth of the Swedes have visited Finland more than five times, when nearly one third have never visited Finland. On the other hand, almost seven out of ten Swedes say that they could possibly or absolutely see themselves travel to Finland within the coming years. The majority (77%) of the ones being interested in travelling to Finland are from Stockholm region. (Finlandsinstitutet, 2017).

## **2.4 Destination marketing**

If simplified, marketing is all about satisfying the needs and wants of the customers and from a company perspective obviously doing it in a profitable way. Hence, in terms of tourism marketing is it crucial to firstly understand and identify the needs and wants of the potential travellers in the target markets of the specific destination and after that try

to successfully meet these demands with various services and product offerings. (Richardson, J.I. & Fluker, M., 2004:210-211)

#### **2.4.1 Brand building and image formation**

Especially today when tourist destinations are faced with harsher competition than ever before, it is crucial to put some extra thought on the brand and image of the destination. Branding is also an effecting tool for differentiation, which is considered a necessity today and especially in the future if the destination is planning to even survive among the fierce competition. (Morgan, N. et al, 2004:60)

It is important to understand that it usually takes a long time to build up brand awareness and especially a positive one. For a tourist destination it is particularly challenging, since the destination itself consists of several other hospitality companies in the same value chain that all together have an effect on the overall image of the destination. This also means that it is actually impossible for a tourism organization to have a total control over the image of the tourist destination. (Bowie, D. & Buttle, F. 2004:108-109, 142-143)

A brand could be defined as following when talking about a tourist destination:

*“A collection of enduring intangible values in the mind of the tourist or user”* (Bowie, D. & Buttle, F. 2004:213). Furthermore, the branding of a destination should be an answer to why a traveller should visit this specific destination. What unique assets can the destination in question offer for the potential travellers, which potentially other competing destinations cannot offer? (Kolb, B. M. 2006:18)

For a tourism organization branding is considered as a very useful tool, since a strong brand actually adds tangibility to an otherwise rather intangible industry. A strong destination brand also comes with many benefits and it communicates quality, which tends to attract consumers. (Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007:164-165). It has also been recognized that a destination image has a significant impact on a traveller’s decision making process, in other words, when the traveller is choosing the destination for his or her

next trip. Furthermore, previous studies show that the image of a destination also has an influence on the tourist's future behavioural aspects and if the image is perceived as positive it increases the probability of a future revisit to the particular destination. (Zhang, H. et al, 2017)

Brand building and especially the image formation process of a destination has changed a lot compared to previous times. Nowadays, with more empowered consumers than ever before and a great number of various digital channels available, the power in terms of image creation has to a bigger extent switched to the tourists themselves. The visitors are uploading images and sharing information on various social media platforms and writing reviews of sights, restaurants, hotels etc. in the destination on online review sites as TripAdvisor. You could call this phenomena tourist generated content (TGC). This is also why tourism destination organisations need to rethink their perception of branding and shouldn't ignore the content that is created in various digital channels by the visitors. It is crucial for the organisations to find the right balance between the brand building that they do themselves and the content that is created online by the tourists. (Munar, A. M., 2011)

Furthermore, trustworthy content creation as part of the brand building process is another challenging topic that also has changed and evolved during the era of digitalization. A recent study (Dagmar, 2018) that was conducted on the Finnish market shows that the consumer has more trust in the content created by people, for instance on social media or on a blog, than in traditional advertisement, which has been made by a company. This is the case still, even though the blogger or influencer has done the content creation in co-operation with the company. This study points out that companies cannot forget about human to human marketing when talking about brand building in today's world.

#### **2.4.2 Internet, social media and mobile**

Today, when a person is thinking about travelling somewhere or planning for his or her next trip, the most popular channel to turn to for information and inspiration is without a

doubt the internet and various online and digital sources and platforms. YouTube and search engines are seen as the most popular places within the online context when looking for travel inspiration and when planning for an upcoming trip. (Google, 2014)

Also a study conducted by Buhalis et al (2013) shows that social media is utilized among consumers when researching and planning for their next trip. Furthermore, the study indicates that trustworthiness on social media is a strong determinant in the traveler's decision making process. All this also highlights the importance for tourism destinations to be present and active on social media. When used wisely, for instance by engaging and communicating with the community, it can bring the destination competitive advantage. (Hays, S. 2012)

Mobile is surely one of the biggest current digital trends within travel and tourism. Hence, according to Digital Tourism Think Thank (2014) it is vital for marketers to pay attention to the fact that an increasing amount of travellers are utilizing their smartphones even more frequently when travelling than during their ordinary day life. Social media is used very frequently through the smartphone and this is also crucial to comprehend for destination marketers. Furthermore, studies show that Swedish young adults aged 16-35 years are spending much more time on internet via the smartphones compared to other generations. A remarkable nine out of ten Swedish young adults use internet via the mobile phone on a daily basis. (Findahl, O. & Davidsson, P., 2015)

Social media has undeniably had a huge impact on the travel and tourism industry and is continuously going to play a big role in the future as well. Studies show that young adults spend a rather big amount of time in various social media channels and these channels are very vital for this demographic group. Therefore social media is a channel that marketers cannot ignore if they want to target the younger generation. For instance two thirds of Swedish young adults are utilizing Facebook on a daily basis and approximately half of them say that they use Instagram every day. (Besöksnäringens forsknings- och utvecklingsfond, 2016)

Various online peer to peer sites are also frequently used by the younger generation when looking for travel inspiration and especially when comparing different options

based on the reviews that their fellow peer have written. Hotels and restaurant options are for instance compared on review sites like TripAdvisor and various online booking sites for hotels are utilized for comparisons and bookings. In other words, it is important for today's traveller to know what other travellers think about certain destinations and services and the exciting sites in the online environment make this information easily accessible. (Besöksnäringens forsknings- och utvecklingsfond, 2016)

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The empirical part of this study was conducted with a qualitative research method. A qualitative research method has an inductive approach and it focuses on the words of the research data instead of the numeral input, which again would be of interest when conducting the other research method; a quantitative research. (Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2015:392).

The qualitative research method was chosen since the main aim with the study is to get crucial knowledge about the Swedish young adults in the Stockholm region through a market research. Market research can be explained as: *“The systematic gathering and analysis of data on a market. It provides an overall picture, at a given point of time, of the market, its segments, or some aspect of buyer behaviour.”* (Richardson, J.I. & Fluker, M., 2004:46). A market research can also be conducted in a qualitative way, then the research will give vital information about the cohort and more precisely about their attitudes and motivation; why the consumers behave in a certain way.

To be able to gather this needed market insight the researcher decided to conduct the qualitative research by interviews with specialists within the field of tourism and experts that particularly had in-depth knowledge about the Swedish young adult traveller segment in the Stockholm region. A semi-structured interview method was chosen and this particular method and the interview process is presented in the following section 3.1.

### 3.1 Semi-structured interview

The researcher utilized the semi-structured interview method, which is the other of the two main qualitative interview types. This type of interview is rather flexible but still has the main topics covered and listed that the interviewer wants to touch upon. The semi-structured interview gives the interviewee more flexibility when answering the questions than for instance during a structured interview. A semi-structured interview also allows the interviewer to ask questions that weren't included in the original interview guide, but may appear or feel appropriate as follow up questions during the interview process. (Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2015:481-483)

An interview guide is normally made when doing a semi-structured interview and this was also the case in this particular study (see appendix 1). The interview guide consisted of a total of four parts:

- PART I: Background information
- PART II: Characteristics and behavioural factors
- PART III: Young adults as travellers
- PART IV: Online behaviour and preferred channels

For achieving a good outcome, in-depth interviews tend to start with a bit softer and easier questions. Therefore, also the first part of this specific interview started by covering the background information of the interviewee and more precisely information about their work experience and how they are involved with the Swedish young adult segment and tourism industry. The second part continues with questions related to Swedish young adults in general and their characteristics and general behaviour. The third part moves onwards to the Swedish young adults as travellers and the last part of the interview guide covers their online behaviour and preferred online channels of the Swedish young adults from the Stockholm region.

## 3.2 Data collection

In terms of choosing the sample of interviewees the researcher decided to proceed with a snowball sampling method. A snowball sampling approach means that the researcher first selects and contacts just a few, in this particular case two, persons to interview and afterwards the researcher asks these interviewed persons for recommendations on other experts that in their opinion would be appropriate and relevant to also interview for the study. (Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2015:434-435)

The researcher first picked a total of two respondents, based on their profession and knowledge on the research topic. The researcher utilized her own professional network for finding these suitable interview candidates. Both of the chosen ones are based in Stockholm, Sweden, and have been working within the tourism industry for several years and have also been working with or towards the young adult segment in the Stockholm area. They were also currently working in a higher managerial position at the companies in question. Hence, they were specialists on the topic of the research and would all be able to provide vital information about the subject.

The researcher also wanted to make sure that the outcome would be as comprehensive as possible even though the sample wasn't huge, therefore the interviewees were also picked from different business sectors: one was working for an advertising agency (Satumaa Family Business), one for a ferry company (Tallink Silja AB), one for an airline (Norwegian) and one for an online travel site (Travel News). After the interviews with the two primarily selected respondents (Satumaa Family Business & Tallink Silja), they furthermore recommended a couple of more persons that they felt could contribute with relevant and useful input to the study. Based on these recommendations additionally two more persons were interviewed; one representing an airline (Norwegian) and the other an online travel site (Travel News).

The empirical part of the study consisted of altogether four in-depth interviews with the following professionals:

- Dimitri Koido, CRM & e-Commerce Manager, Tallink Silja AB
- Mårten Knutsson, Partner & Chief Creative Officer, Satumaa Family Business
- Patrik Furuhausen, Marketing Manager (Sweden & Finland), Norwegian
- Viggo Cavling, Editor in Chief, Travel News

All qualitative interviews were carried out during April and May 2018 and each interview lasted around 45-60 minutes. One of them was conducted onsite in Stockholm (Tallink Silja) at their office in Värtahamnen and the rest of the interviews were done via phone. The researcher's primary plan was to conduct all interviews in person in Stockholm, but finding suitable times for face to face interviews turned out to be a bit more challenging than expected due to both the researcher's and the respondents' tight working schedules and frequent business trips. Also the fact that both parties were situated in different countries made it even more challenging to finding a suitable time for meeting in person. Hence, interviews via phone proved to be the most efficient way of proceeding with the research and with the rest of the interviews.

The researcher sent out an e-mail to all of the selected respondents with background information about the study and its main aims. Also the preliminary and directional interview guide was provided to interviewees in advance. This all, for ensuring that all respondents had full understanding of what the research was about and also to make sure that they had time to prepare for the upcoming interview. Ensuring that everything was noted during the interview process, all of the interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Notes were written down during all of the interviews and furthermore the researcher also did summaries in written form afterwards based on the recordings of each interview. Eventually, after that all the data collection was successfully gathered, the researcher started the analysing part, which is presented in detail within the next chapters.

## **4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The following chapters (4 & 5) will present and discuss the findings of the conducted qualitative research, including conclusions and concrete recommendations of implica-

tions for the case company of this research. The findings will be presented in the following sections, based on the three research questions and in the same order and under the same headings as they appeared in the interview guide:

- II: Characteristics and behavioural factors
- III: Young adults as travellers
- IV: Online behaviour and preferred channels

This was also the order in which the topics were discussed during all of the qualitative interviews together with the professionals. Only the first part of the interview guide (I Background information), which was asking about the respondents' work and professional experience, will not be presented in the following sections. All of the respondents had several of years of experience of working within the tourism industry as well as with the Swedish young adult segment. Hence, all of the respondents could be proven to be experts or specialists within the field of the study and their input would be of relevance and importance for the conducted research.

#### **4.1 Characteristics and behavioural factors**

One of the main characteristics of the Swedish young adults that appeared in all of the interviews was that this cohort is highly friend-oriented. They value the time spent with their friends and they truly want to have fun together with them. This common characteristic of this segment also clearly showed in the studies that were presented in the theoretical part of this research. Based on previous studies the young adults are indeed seen as team-players and that are strongly influenced in terms of behaviour by their friends. (Benckendorff, P. et al, 2011: 4-9).

All respondents agreed that the fact that this cohort is friend-oriented should also be kept in mind when targeting them. "Offer something memorable and experiences that they can do together with their friends" (Patrik Furuhausen, 2018). Furthermore the interviewees also stated that it is important to remember that the young adults also consid-

er their friends the main sources when thinking about a future trip somewhere. Also Mårten Knutsson (2018) stressed that this cohort is very much driven by their friends. In other words, friends are the main reference group when talking about the influence on the Swedish young adults' behavioural factors.

The interviews also showed that the Swedish young adults are seen as strong individuals that aren't as brand loyal as their older peers. This also applies when talking about work. Furuhausen (2018) pointed out that the young adults are switching jobs more frequently and they also tend to want to mix work and leisure. Another interesting characteristic that was mentioned during the discussions was that this cohort is also seen as rather concerned about the environment and how the future will be in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, according to the interviewees the Swedish young adults also highly value education. Knutsson (2018) explained that the young adults also feel rather pressured to get a good education and after that a good position within the working life. These are obviously also characteristics that are good to bear in mind when planning to target the young adults.

Based on all the interviews conducted, it can clearly be seen that even though the millennials or Generation Y are put in the same cohort based on their years of birth, they can be rather big differences within this specific segment, when talking about behaviour, values and interests. Dimitri Koido (2018) explained that the age-timeline is rather broad and the millennials also tend to be in rather different life phases and situations within the cohort. For instance an 18 year old is probably still studying and has less money to spend than for example a 30 something young adult that has been within the working life for many years already. The 30+ young adults might also be young parents, which most certainly has an effect on their behaviour and motivations for travelling. Due to these reasons, for instance Tallink Silja has decided to divide this cohort into two different segments, when talking about their target groups; the younger group of 18-25 years and then the young adults/parents around 30.

As an outcome from the discussions with the professionals it could be concluded that people from different age groups may have the same interests and it is often almost impossible to do strict generalizations only based on age. "In the end, age is not that cen-

tral, rather the interest of the customers” (Koido, 2018). This is for sure something that the researcher also fully agrees on and thinks that should be identified and considered among companies when planning their marketing activities.

## 4.2 Swedish young adults as travellers

The main travel motivators of the Swedish young adults that were identified through the conducted interviews of this study are illustrated below, according to the adapted model by McIntosh et al. 1995 (table 2). These motivators will be presented and discussed more closely in the following chapters.

<p><b>Physical motivators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Escaping everyday hassle</li> <li>- Part of the lifestyle</li> <li>- Having fun together with friends</li> <li>- Sun and beach</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural motivators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeking for adventure &amp; new experiences</li> <li>- Exploring new destinations</li> <li>- Shopping &amp; food</li> <li>- Attending events, e.g. festivals or concerts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interpersonal motivators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spending time together with friends</li> <li>- Meet new friends in the destination</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status and prestige motivators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gaining recognition from friends and fellow peers (bragging on social media)</li> <li>- Increasing knowledge &amp; self-development</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Travel motivators for the Swedish young adults*

*(Adapted according to the model by McIntosh et al. 1995)*

When talking about the main physical motives or motivations why Swedish young adults choose to travel, the answers during the interviews were that travel is seen as important in life and it is a good possibility of getting away from their everyday life and hassle. According to Furuhaugen (2018) the young adults consider travelling a very central part of their life; it is basically today already a lifestyle for them. Travel is also a great way for the young adults to spend time with their friends, which is highly valued

by these young adults that are, as presented in the previous sections, seen as team players and friend oriented individuals. Furthermore, Viggo Cavling (2018) also explained that travelling is also a status issue and a way of bragging for some of the Swedish young adults. This they do for instance by posting pictures from beautiful locations on their social media channels. According to the professionals other Swedish young adults on the other hand again see travelling as a way of improving their knowledge and as a self-development experience.

Coming from the Nordic countries, it isn't that surprising, that also Swedish young adults tend to want to travel to sunny and warm destinations. According to Cavling (2018) the young adults are mostly looking for relaxation when travelling to beach destinations. All interviewees agreed that the Swedish young adults are unquestionably travelling non-charter. Meaning that they prefer to book their flights, accommodation etc. by themselves through online channels. Furthermore, the young adults prefer to travel individually together with their friends and not in a group together with for instance other charter customers. Knutsson (2018) also highlighted that young adults often even travel without any specific arrangements in the destination itself. They only book the flight and look for suitable programme and accommodation on spot. In other words, the Swedish young adults are considered to be a rather adventurous group of travellers.

When talking about the cultural motivators, the experts pointed out that the young adults seek for entertainment in the destinations that they choose to travel to. In terms of entertainment, Furuhaugen (2018) also mentioned that concerts or various festivals can also be a trigger to travel to a specific destination. A couple of the interviewees also highlighted that foodies can also be spotted among the Swedish young adult travellers. Koido (2018) pointed out that this is clearly a trend currently also in Sweden and these are people that are interested in trying local cuisine in the destination. Some are even ready to travel because of food and a specific restaurant or food related event. However, Koido (2018) reminded that this is mostly the case among the Swedish young adults within the higher age group of this cohort. Another trend that has been seen already for a few years but is still very current is health and sports. *“The Swedish young adults value a healthy lifestyle and most of them also want to maintain it during their travels.”* (Furuhaugen, 2018). Some also travel for attending for instance yoga retreats. This is also

good to keep in mind for the destinations, especially regarding suitable offerings within the destination for this niche group of travellers.

Furthermore, Cavling (2018) also mentioned that shopping is a thing that interests and is important for this group when travelling. Additionally, all of the respondents thought that the Swedish young adults also want to experience new cultures and are also interested in getting to know local people and the things that locals do. The importance of interacting with locals when travelling could also clearly be seen in previous studies about the millennial travellers. Hence, up to half of the millennials said that meeting locals was the most important reason for travelling (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014).

As an overall outcome of the interviews and discussions with the experts around the Swedish young adults as travellers, it could be summed up that they are an adventurous group of travellers that prefer to travel together with their friends. Based on these characteristics that were identified through the qualitative research the Swedish young adults could be categorized as “the explorers” based on Cohen’s typologies and as “allocentrics” based on Plog’s typologies.

When asking for particular and popular destinations among this group of travellers, the most common answer was Spain. Furthermore also other bigger European cities such as Barcelona and Paris were mentioned as popular destinations among this cohort. However, among others Furuhaugen (2018), pointed out that after they have been to these “must visit” destinations they are looking for new unexplored destinations and here comes also the opportunity for destinations as Turku in attracting them to visit their city. Also Knutsson (2018) agreed and pointed out that there are clear indications that some of the young adults want to travel to out-of-the-ordinary kinds of destinations and places, which none of their friends have been to yet.

When discussing the time that Swedish young adults are putting on travelling, the common answer among all the interviewees was that the clear trend is that they tend to do shorter holidays but more frequently. Cavling (2018) gave an example that a Swedish young adult from the Stockholm region makes around four international trips annually. In other words, extended weekends and city breaks are something that the young

adults from the metropolitan area are looking for in terms of travelling. This is obviously good news also for Finland as well as Turku, since it is close and extremely suitable for a weekend getaway.

The interviewees agreed that Finland has potential of being a travel destination for the Swedish young adults. Finland is close and the accessibility from Stockholm to Finland as well as to Turku are good. Both flight and ferry connections are available and they are operating on a regular and frequent basis. Moreover, Furuhausen (2018) pointed out that since the Swedish young adults are an overall adventurous group of travellers and they are eager to explore new places, Finland has its chance to become an option. Especially when the young adults have already experienced and discovered the main European cities like Barcelona, Berlin and London.

According to the interviewed experts, Finnish design is already something that the Swedes appreciate and recognize. Koido (2018) continued that it might be clever to also utilize Finnish design when targeting the young adult segment. This needs to be done with a twist of course and maybe combined with some other experiences as well. Moreover, Knutsson (2018) pointed out that except the interesting restaurants, clubs and events in Turku city centre also Turku Archipelago could be of interest for the Swedish young adults from the Stockholm metropolitan region. This because the archipelago outside Stockholm is considered important for this cohort and on the other hand the archipelago outside Turku is rather different in terms of for instance nature compared to the one in Sweden.

However, also barriers and challenges can be seen when talking about attracting the Swedish young adults to Finland or Turku. Hard competition was clearly one of the biggest challenges that came up during the discussions. Furuhausen (2018) highlighted the fact that Stockholm among others has a total of three airports with plenty of various airlines operating flights both to Europe and also various long-haul destinations. This makes the competition obviously harsh and also pushes the prices rather low. Koido (2018) said that for instance ferry companies including Tallink Silja are today facing fierce competition from airlines, especially due to the low prices that they are offering. In fact, the situation could today be that Turku or Helsinki could be competing with des-

tinations such as Paris, London or even New York. This of course makes it even harder to try to convince them to choose the ferries and Finland instead. Additionally, Cavling (2018) pointed out that the Swedish young adults prefer to travel to hip and cool destinations and at the moment Finland isn't exactly seen as one of them. This perception can of course be changed but it requires both efforts in terms of marketing activities as well as time.

Price consciousness among the Swedish young adults was also considered a possible barrier when it comes to travelling to Finland, since Finland isn't seen as the most inexpensive destination, especially when compared to destinations in for instance southern Europe. Especially the younger segment of the Swedish young adults have a bit smaller wallets for travelling. Knutsson (2018) also mentioned that the flight prices from Stockholm to Turku are not the most competitive ones when compared to other destinations in Europe. This is obviously also a challenge for Turku when trying to attract this target group to the destination and needs to be noted.

The price consciousness topic actually had rather mixed feelings and thoughts as some of the experts said that the young adults have smaller wallets for travelling when others again thought that they are happy to put money on travelling since it is considered a self-development experience. Also the previous studies conducted on the travel spending by millennials shows that they are actually rather gracious spenders compared to the other age groups (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014). However, these mixed thoughts might result from that differences may obviously be found among millennials coming from different countries and most likely there are also rather huge differences among the incomes within the Swedish young adult segment. For instance an 18-year old young adult is presumably still studying and doesn't have that much money to put on travelling. On the other hand again a young adult around 30 years could have been working already for several years and due to this might have a totally different economic situation than the studying young adult.

The absence of Finland in mediums in Sweden was also something that came up during the discussions with the experts. This was obviously also seen as a challenge when trying to attract the younger generation to travel to Finland. Koido (2018) pointed out that

the consumer needs to get the trigger from somewhere and if you are not visible anywhere, you are most probably not considered a potential destination to travel to. Furthermore, it can be seen that Finland is rather unknown especially among the Swedish young adult segment. Therefore, it would be even more crucial to increase the visibility in various mediums, especially in online channels, for increasing the awareness of Finland as a potential travel destination and also for changing the general perception of Finland among the Swedish young adults.

### **4.3 Online behaviour and preferred channels**

Koido (2018) pointed out the fact that studies clearly show that the Swedes are actually the forerunners when it comes to digital adaption, also when compared to the other Nordic countries. Utilizing online channels are nowadays already a part of the Swedish young adults' daily habits. All interviewees agreed that bookings are also done online, because it is seen as the most convenient way. This is of course rather self-evident since young adults have been brought up with internet and they are pretty much expecting that everything can be found and done within the online context.

All experts agreed that most of the Swedish young adults tend to utilize mobile devices when being online, both for social media as well as when doing the concrete booking of a trip. Both the interviewees from Tallink Silja (Koido, 2018) as well as Norwegian (Furuhagen, 2018) said that they can see increasing numbers of transactions and bookings made via mobile devices and also their mobile applications are important and frequently used. The interviewees also pointed out that the smartphone is one of the most important travel companions for the Swedish young adults. They want to stay connected during their trips and want to share their experiences via their social media channels. *“A well-functioning Wi-Fi connection in the destination and its sights, restaurants, hotels etc. is a must if you want to attract this specific group of travellers”* (Cavling, 2018).

When talking about from where the Swedish young adults seek for inspiration and information within the online context, the main answer was that search engines, google

being the clear forerunner here, as well as metasearch sites are the most common places. For instance Norwegian (Furuhagen, 2018) can clearly see that the number of bookings via metasearch sites have been growing rapidly over the last years and they are taking over a bigger share of the market. As an example, at the moment 70% of the sales is done through Norwegian's own online site when 30% comes via metasearch sites. This number has actually been growing rapidly and just a few years ago the online bookings via metasearch sites was only 20% of all bookings. Metasearch sites are also a convenient way of comparing various options and the interviewees also mentioned sites as booking.com and hotels.com as being used frequently for comparison as well as bookings. All this highlights the importance of existing easy booking and purchase possibilities within the online environment. Furthermore, it is vital to also utilize and be present on various OTA and metasearch sites.

All four respondents agreed on that the main social media channels used by the young Swedish adults are Instagram and Snapchat. Cavling (2018) highlighted that the younger generation likes to do short videos of their everyday life and also the communication goes via films and not so much via longer written texts. This is probably also why these particular social media channels are the most suitable ones for this group. YouTube was also mentioned as a social media channel that is popular among the younger Swedes. However, Furuhagen (2018) pointed out that YouTube and followers of vloggers are primarily found within the teenager groups. This is also why companies need to be cautious when planning to work with vloggers. *“Remember that you need to check the followers carefully and work with them that have the right age groups as followers as you are planning to reach out to.”* (Furuhagen, 2018)

According to the respondents Facebook isn't as hip among this cohort anymore as it used to be. However, what needs to be remembered is that there most probably are differences within the cohort; the older segment of the young adults (30+) are still seen as rather frequent users of Facebook, when the younger part (18-25) of the segment again aren't. For instance in previous studies conducted on the Swedish market, it could still be seen that Facebook is frequently utilized among the young adults. (Besöksnäringens forsknings- och utvecklingsfond, 2016)

Peer to peer communication on various online sites is a norm today for the Swedish young adults. According to the experts the peer to peer sites are also the sources where the young adults are reading reviews and checking ratings. This opinion is also supported by previous studies that have been made on travellers in Sweden (Resia, 2016). Furthermore, the interviews also showed that the Swedish young adults are keen followers of bloggers and other social media influencers. Furuhausen (2018) explained that bloggers as well as influencers are actually already today considered an own business in Sweden, this shows how big and important these channels have become. The experts also agreed that you cannot ignore these kinds of online channels if you want to reach out to the Swedish young adults. Bloggers and influencers can offer great opportunities for storytelling content creation, which is considered important in today's world. Koido (2018) pointed out that it is however vital to find the right ones to collaborate with and also the right balance with the other marketing activities and content that is created.

## **5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The aim of this study was to conduct a market research for the case company Visit Turku on Swedish young adults, aged 18-35, and living in the Stockholm metropolitan area. This market research aimed to gather vital insight on the key travel motivators for this specific group of travellers. Furthermore, the study also aimed to look into the interests that may have an effect on their travel behaviour and also to get information about the mediums and channels that this specific group is utilizing. All of these vital insights could be utilized for the case company's upcoming marketing activities, both in terms of choosing the right content and media channels, when targeting this specific traveller group.

The conducted market research showed that travelling is a lifestyle for the Swedish young adults living in the Stockholm region. Travelling also offers them the possibility to spend time and have fun with their friends, who are also considered their most preferred travel companions. Their friends can also be seen as the main influencers when talking about their travel behaviour. Furthermore, the young adults are overall an adven-

turous group of travellers that are keen on exploring new destinations, cultures and to meet new people. They travel on city breaks to various European destinations and do their bookings online by themselves. In the destination Swedish young adults look for sun, relaxation and fun experiences. Also young adults travelling for food and cultural events could be spotted among this cohort. In terms of online behaviour the Swedish young adults are digital natives that communicate via social media channels, follow bloggers and influencers, want to stay connected continuously and take their smartphone along on all of their journeys.

Based on the findings of the conducted empirical study, the first recommendation for the case company, Visit Turku, would be to put the focus on the older group of the Swedish young adult segment from the Stockholm region. In other words, target the young adults around 28-35 years. This is the group that has more experience in travelling in general and tend to be interested in exploring new, undiscovered destinations. Generally speaking this group also has more money to spend on travelling than the younger group of the millennial segment. Hence, this older young adult segment is less price sensitive, which is good since Finland and Turku are not perceived as the cheapest destinations.

The findings both from the theoretical part as well as the study also indicate that the case company should choose online channels and especially social media channels for reaching out to the Swedish young adult travellers. For a tourist destination Instagram is an efficient and rather natural medium to utilize, due to the dominance of images. This particular channel is also useful for building and increasing the destination awareness. Instagram is also one of the most frequently used social media channels among the Swedish young adult travellers. Facebook could be chosen as a supporting social media channel, since the young adults especially within the higher age group around their thirties are still frequent users of Facebook. Social media channels also offer brilliant possibilities for targeting a specific group of travellers based on country of origin, age and interests. Hence, social media channels could be a useful tool for the case company for new customer acquisition. Furthermore the travel trends report from ITB Berlin (2017) showed that the millennial travellers have a positive attitude towards personalized offers within the online environment.

Moreover, the study showed that the Swedish young adults are rather eager followers of bloggers and influencers. Trustworthiness was also highlighted as one of the most important factors when reaching out to the potential customer in the study conducted by Dagmar (2018). Furthermore, the same study showcased that trust could be achieved through human to human marketing, for instance through cooperation with bloggers or influencers. Hence, the researcher would advise the case company to strengthen the social media presence by initiating collaboration with suitable Swedish bloggers or influencers when targeting the Swedish young adults in the Stockholm region. It is however important to choose the influencers and bloggers carefully and look into their focus area, readers, fans and followers. The researcher thinks that it cannot be stressed enough how important it is for a successful outcome to choose to collaborate with those bloggers or influencers who have same values as your company or destination has.

As shown both in the theory as well as in the research, it is important to remember that the destination and its service providers, as hotels, restaurants and sites, should have a strong presence in the online context if they want to reach out to the Swedish young adults. First of all, it is recommended to pay attention to search engine optimization as Google tends to be the first place where this group of travellers are looking for information. Moreover, visibility on various online peer-to-peer sites, as for instance TripAdvisor, is vital. This because these are also sites where the young adults are looking for information, checking ratings as well as comparing different options. Also presence on metasearch sites as well as booking.com and similar platforms is seen as crucial if trying to attract this specific group of travellers. Finally, it is vital to pay attention to the fact that the Swedish young adults are surfing online as well as doing increasingly more often bookings via their mobile phones. They also consider their mobile phone one of the most important things to take along on their trips. This also offers the case company opportunities for targeted and personalized offers via mobile devices, which studies showed that millennials had a positive attitude towards. (ITB, 2017).

When trying to attract the Swedish young adults to Turku, it is as crucial as choosing the right channels and mediums as choosing the right message for marketing communi-

cation. As the conducted research showed, Turku has despite the harsh competition potential and suitable offerings that this specific group of travellers could be interested in. Especially the Swedish young adults that have already been to the major cities could be considered possible future visitors of Turku. It is only the matter of communicating the suitable products and experiences in a clever way to this specific target group. The author would recommend the case company to highlight the blooming food scenery of the city as well as the several events, for instance the music festivals that are being arranged in Turku. These could attract the foodies and the festival-goers, which were both recognized among this traveller segment in the empirical study.

Moreover, also the available live like a local products in Turku and the surrounding region should be communicated to the Swedish young adults. This because the empirical study as well as previous studies showed that Swedish young adults are interested in trying local experiences and getting to know the local way of living. As important is also to remember that Swedish young adults are highly friend-oriented and they also tend to travel together with their friends. Hence, it is crucial to offer products that the young adults can experience together with their friends. Even though Turku is the oldest city of Finland it also has a lot of students, which gives the city a younger vibe. The researcher thinks that this would also be useful to communicate to the Swedish young adult audience, especially when trying to change the perception of the destination towards a more hip or cool city.

The final outcome of the whole study is that Turku could be an attractive travel destination for the Swedish young adults from the Stockholm metropolitan area. The awareness of the destination only needs to be increased among this specific group of travellers and the great possibilities for various experiences that can be enjoyed together with friends in the destination needs to be communicated with the right tools, messages and via the right channels. In the best case scenario, this all could result in growing destination awareness and finally in increased numbers of Swedish young adult visitors to the destination.

## 5.1 Limitations and future research

As all researches also this study has its limitations. This study was conducted only around the Swedish young adults (18-35 years) from Stockholm metropolitan area and all qualitative interviews were conducted with companies and representatives based in Stockholm. Therefore the results may not be applicable for the rest of Sweden. Also this study was conducted with a qualitative approach and with in-depth interviews around the topic with specialists. Future research around the same topic could be conducted with a quantitative approach with the respondents being the Swedish young adults. Based on the findings in this study, the future quantitative research could for instance be conducted through social media, where these Swedish young adults can be found and are spending a lot of their time. Furthermore, the geographic limitation could be extended to other regions in Sweden as well. A quantitative study via social media channels would enable this to be done rather effortlessly.

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Koido, Dimitri, CRM & e-Commerce Manager, Tallink Silja AB

## **APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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### **Interview Guide / The key travel motivations of Swedish young adults**

Person interviewed:

Date of interview:

Student conducting the interview: Lotta Bäck

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#### **PART I: Background information**

- Could you please shortly describe your current profession and work, and especially how you are involved with the Swedish young adult or millennial segment?
- How long have you been working with this specific segment and with the tourism industry?

#### **PART II: Characteristics and behavioural factors**

- How would you describe the Swedish young adults (18-35 years old) living in the metropolitan area in general? (E.g. regarding their interests and values).
- Can some common nominators be seen among this cohort? For instance in terms of behaviour?

#### **PART III: Young adults as travellers**

- In your opinion, how are the Swedish young adults from Stockholm region as travellers in general? Who do they prefer to travel with, where do they tend to travel and how often do they travel?

- Based on your experience, which are the most important factors or motivators why Swedish young adults choose to travel?
- What are they generally speaking looking for in a tourist destination? (E.g. culture, food, activities etc.)
- From where does this cohort purchase their trips?
- Are there some specific characteristics among this specific traveller segment that we as a tourist destination marketer should bear in mind when targeting them?
- In your opinion, do you think that Finland/Turku could be an attractive destination for the young adults living in Stockholm region? Any particular challenges or barriers to be seen?

#### **PART IV: Online behaviour and preferred channels**

- In your experience, which online and social media channels are the Swedish young adults utilizing on a regular basis? Why/for which purpose are they utilizing these specific social media and online channels?
- In your opinion, from where within the online context does the young adults seek for travel inspiration and information?
- Are there some new trends to be seen in terms of the online behaviour or preferred online channels among this cohort?

Is there something else that you would like to add, that wasn't discussed in the previous sections, but you feel that may be of importance for the study?

**Thank you for your time and for participating in this Master's Thesis interview!**