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How to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland?

Case: Bitour, A Travel Agency in Vietnam

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<p>The purpose of this study was to assist a Vietnamese tourist company in developing a marketing plan to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland.</p> <p>Quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied. A survey was carried out that received fifty responses.</p> <p>The survey results indicated that most respondents were decision-makers, while the rest of the respondents mainly relied on the recommendations of their friends when searching for, and comparing information. Research also proved that location played an important role in deciding, followed by tour program and price. Regarding Finland, respondents did not visit the country due to limited knowledge about it and a lack of interesting tour programmes. Meanwhile respondents were attracted to the country for its reputation as a hub for education and for being the happiest country in the world.</p> <p>In order to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland, the author suggests that Bitour should focus on the unique elements of the destination through a digital marketing plan that emphasizes the aspect of “back to nature”. Bitour can work with local businesses and Visit Finland to provide attractive tour programme that appeal to customers, especially women.</p>	
Keywords	<i>Vietnamese tourist, Finland, Digital Marketing</i>

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1 Introduction

As per many countries, tourism is an important industry in promoting economic growth and development in Finland. In 2019, international tourist arrivals to Finland increased by 5 percent, reaching a record 7.5 million arrivals, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (UNWTO, 2022).

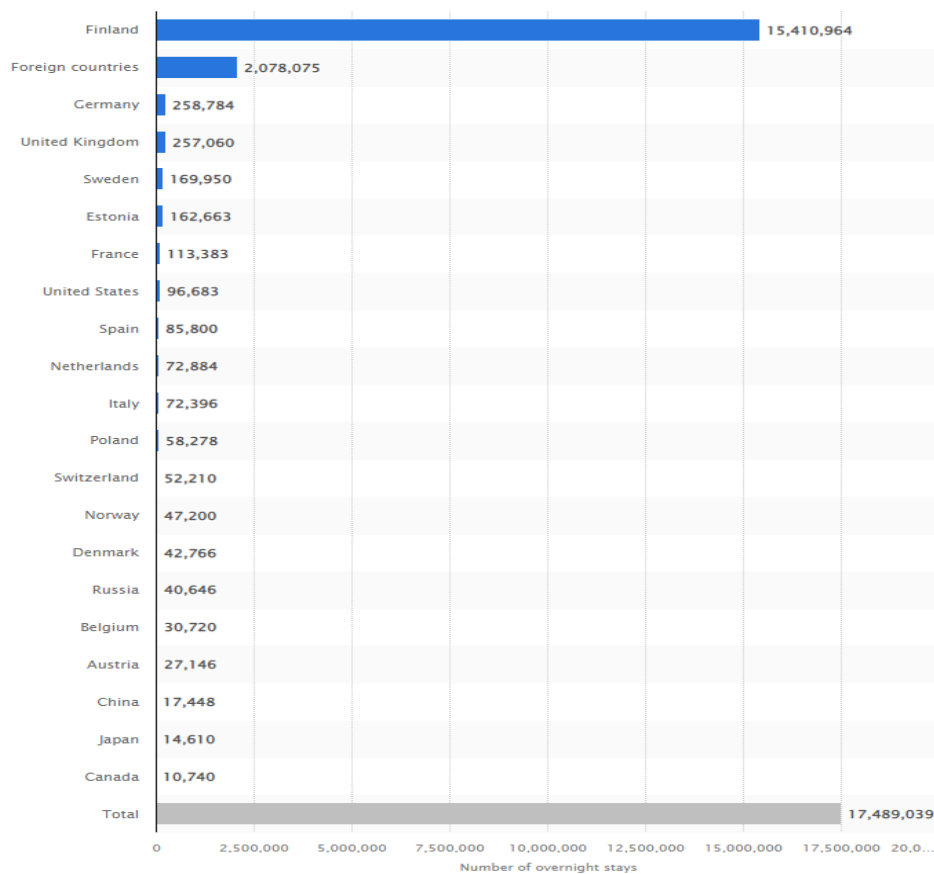


Figure 1. Number of overnight stays in Finland in 2021 by country of origin (by statista.com).

The Asian market is an area where the Finnish tourism industry is trying to attract more visitors because of the great potential of this market. Since 2015, the total number of overnight stays by Asian tourists in Finland has increased by 53 percent. The top three countries on the list are China, Japan and South Korea (Visit Finland, 2022). However, the number of Vietnamese tourists

visiting Finland is still relatively low, accounting for only 0.4 percent of all by foreign visitors in 2020 (Visit Finland, 2022).

As a Vietnamese student studying in Finland and a travel enthusiast, the author has recognized the potential for expanding a Vietnamese travel company's brand to Finland. However, her experience exploring the country as a Vietnamese tourist has led her to notice the lack of Vietnamese visitors to Finland. Despite being interested in exploring the natural beauty and cultural attractions of the country, no other Vietnamese visitors were encountered during the author's travels.

This observation has raised the question of what factors may influence Vietnamese tourists' travel decisions regarding Finland and what marketing strategies a Vietnamese travel company can use to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland. In this particular case, Bitour, is a travel agency that has been operating for ten years with tours back to nature.

This study aims to identify the factors affecting Vietnamese tourists' travel decisions and the marketing strategies a Vietnamese travel company can use to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland. Understanding the preferences and motivations of Vietnamese tourists is critical in developing effective marketing strategies for Finnish tourism targeted toward the Vietnamese market.

In order to achieve this aim, the study will draw on marketing theory, specifically the concept of location marketing, which focuses on promoting the unique characteristics and attractions of a particular destination to potential visitors. Location marketing involves various marketing activities, including advertising, public relations, and promotions, aimed at creating a positive image of the destination. The study will also investigate how consumers make decisions to purchase and utilize services, covering the stages of recognizing needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making purchase decisions, and evaluating their post-purchase experiences (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

2 Literature Review

Understanding the concepts of marketing and consumer behaviour is crucial for attracting more Vietnamese tourists to Finland. By applying marketing concepts and examining consumer behaviour, the study helps to identify effective marketing strategies to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland.

2.1 Marketing Theories

Effective marketing plays a crucial role in the success of any tourism campaign. Fundamentally, marketing involves the creation, communication, delivery, and exchange of value between businesses and their customers.

In 2012, Dr Philip Kotler defined:

Marketing is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential (Kotler, 2012).

In basic marketing, a managerial approach, the Marketing Mix (McCarthy, 1960) is a fundamental framework that outlines the four main elements of marketing. These elements are interconnected and must work together to create a successful marketing campaign.

McCarthy emphasized the need for marketing research as a basis for making these business decisions. This framework emphasizes the paramount importance of the consumer and then reduces the major variables to four including product, place, promotion, and price. It may be helpful to think of the four variables which marketing managers can use as the four "P's." (McCarthy, 1960).



Figure 2. 4Ps model by Jerome McCarthy.

The consumer is at the center of marketing, and effective marketing campaigns are those that are designed with the consumer in mind, taking into account their needs, wants, and behaviours. In the context of tourism, understanding the decision-making process of consumers is particularly essential. Consumer decision-making involves a complex set of factors, including personal, psychological, social, and cultural influences. These factors can influence the choices that tourists make when selecting a destination to visit.

The marketing process consists of several stages, including market research, product development, pricing, promotion, and distribution. Each of these stages plays a role in its own right, but it is the integration of all of them that creates a successful marketing campaign.

In the context of this thesis, place marketing is a particularly relevant concept. Place marketing refers to the promotion of a particular location or destination to potential visitors. This involves identifying the unique selling points of the destination and communicating them to the target audience. In the case of Finland, place marketing could involve promoting the country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and outdoor activities to potential Vietnamese tourists. By

effectively communicating the unique offerings of the destination, it is possible to create a compelling marketing campaign that attracts visitors and promote sustainable tourism.

2.2 Consumer behaviour

Consumer decision-making is a complex process that involves several stages. One of the most commonly used models of consumer decision-making is the five-stage model. The stages are problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, choice, and outcome. It was first introduced by John Dewey in 1910 and further developed by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell in 1968.

The model consists of the following specific stages:

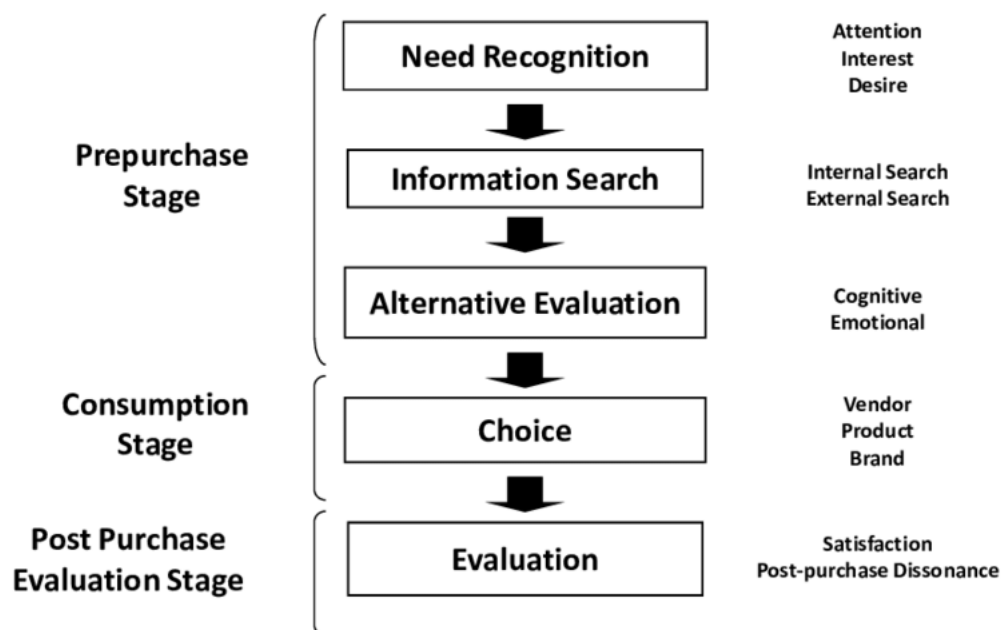


Figure 3. The five-stage consumer decision making process by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, 1968.

- Problem Recognition: The consumer recognizes a need or problem that requires a solution. This need can be triggered by internal or external stimuli.

- Information Search: The consumer gathers information about the available options for solving the problem. This can be done through various sources, such as personal experience, word of mouth, advertising, and online research.
- Evaluation of Alternatives: The consumer considers several criteria, including price, quality, features, and benefits, when evaluating different options.
- Purchase Decision: The consumer makes a decision about which option to purchase based on the evaluation of alternatives.
- Post-purchase Evaluation: After the purchase, the consumer evaluates the satisfaction level and whether the product or service met their expectations. This evaluation can influence future purchase decisions (Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, 1968).

However, more recent models have proposed that the process is not necessarily linear and may involve different stages depending on the situation.

Consumers typically make decisions based on several factors, including personal factors, such as age, income, and lifestyle, and external factors, such as culture, social class, and reference groups. They also consider product-related factors, such as price, quality, and brand reputation.

Psychological factors such as perception, motivation, and learning play a crucial role in shaping the decision-making process.

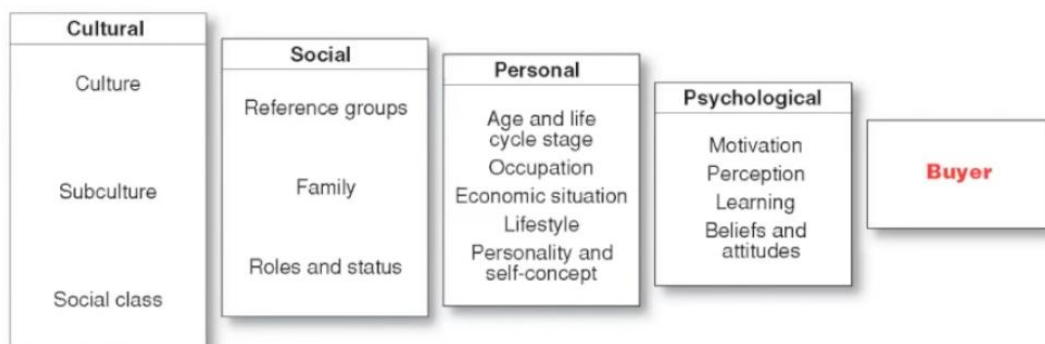


Figure 4. Factors affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

A variety of factors play a role in the decision-making process when it comes to buying a product or service. These include consumer needs and wants, perceived benefits of the product, risks associated with the purchase, and available alternatives. The decision-making process may also be influenced by situational factors, such as time pressure, mood, and the physical environment.

Consumer behaviour research investigates how consumers make decisions and how their behaviour is influenced when purchasing goods or services (Solomon 2004, pp. 6-8). However, it is not easy to understand why consumers buy one product and not another because the answer is locked deep in the consumer's mind (Kardes et al. 2011, p. 8; Kotler & Armstrong 2010, p. 160.)

The decision-making process is influenced by various external factors, such as culture, social class, and reference groups. Every individual has someone around to influence their purchasing decisions. Social factors are reference group, family, role and status (Perreau, 2014).

Buyer behaviour is significantly affected by personal factors, such as economic status, lifestyle, personality, self-concept, personal needs, occupation, age, and life cycle stage. Personality is a key factor that sets individuals apart from one another. Unique personality traits include self-confidence, adaptability, sociability, and dominance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 172).

In the context of the thesis topic, understanding the factors that influence Vietnamese tourists' travel decisions is essential. Strategies to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland can be identified by looking at different factors in consumer behaviour. These factors include the decision-making process, the factors that influence the decision, and the role of marketing. Moreover, comprehending the fundamental principles of consumer behaviour can aid in creating tailored marketing strategies that cater to the particular requirements and inclinations of Vietnamese tourists.

2.3 Tourism Marketing

2.3.1 Definition of tourism marketing

Based on the development, specialization, and deepening of marketing, tourism marketing arose as part of service marketing. It arises from the practice when companies providing services have adopted a differentiated marketing approach (Ban, 2002).

Among the first works on tourism marketing must be mentioned is *Marketing y Turismo* by G. Schellenberg, published in Spain in 1968. This was followed by the publication of *Marketing and Tourism* by J. Krippendorf in Switzerland in 1971.

This is considered the initial foundation of tourism marketing. He approaches the issue at a wide range from local, regional, national to international. Tourism marketing is about achieving steady profits through satisfying user requirements. To do this, groups and organizations must systematically implement and develop business policies suitable for tourists (Krippendorf, 1971).

Iulian Berbecaru defines tourism marketing as a management system that involves planning, directing, and controlling activities through the efficient utilization of resources. It encompasses a range of activities aimed at exploring the market and tailoring tourism services to meet the needs and motivations of tourists (Berbecaru, 1975, p.181).

In addition, Canadian experts Gerard Tocquer and Michel Zins give a more comprehensive definition of tourism marketing. They define tourism marketing as a structured process of satisfying travel needs through anticipation. This process includes product or service design, physical distribution, value establishment based on the market understanding of the tourism organizers. The process not only benefits the company, but it also aligns with the consumer's best interest (Tocquer and Zins, 1987, p.40).

2.3.2 Tourist marketing mix

Factors that influence tourism behaviour via the marketing mix can be further examined.

Product

Stâncioiu Aurelia-Felicia explains that tourism products refer to the benefits that potential customers anticipate. Unlike other types of products, tourism products are developed by taking into account factors such as accessibility, climate, consumer interactions with service systems, consumer interactions with other consumers, and even consumer participation in their creation (Stanciu, 2009, p.119-120).

Similarly, in *Marketing y Turismo*, Schellenberg G. identifies the main components of the national tourism product, including the natural and human heritage of the country. These factors include geographical location, climate, landscape, nature, as well as spiritual factors such as culture, customs, art, history, and many others. In addition, general infrastructure, cultural infrastructure and tourism-specific infrastructure are also important elements of tourism products.

Finally, other factors that also play an important role in shaping tourism products are regulations, political and legal frameworks related to tourism (Schellenberg, 1968, pp. 133-134).

Price

Mariana Sabo-Bucur emphasizes that price as a variable in the marketing mix is neither the only affected variable nor completely unaffected by the other variables in the model (Sabo-Bucur, 2006, p.199).

Providing the right tourism product at the right price and through the right distribution channels to maximize tourism potential is necessary but not sufficient to ensure optimal revenue (Lanquar and Hollier, 2001).

Place

Saarinen (2001) views destinations as dynamic regions that evolve over time and space through specific discourses. The first discourse is regional and involves knowledge and meaning derived from various texts.

Kuusik (2011) suggests that the definition of a destination depends on the reason for the visit. For instance, if someone wishes to visit Paris, the geographic area itself would be the destination.

However, if the purpose of the visit is to go to Disneyland Paris, then the artificial tourist attraction becomes the destination. The same logic applies to natural attractions. Alternatively, if attending a concert or sporting event in Paris is the primary reason for the visit, then the event itself becomes a tourist destination.

While location marketing is a marketing strategy that tries to brand the entire area as a desirable place to live, work and play. Destination marketing is a component of location marketing that focuses on the tourism sector of the local economy.

Destination marketing in the tourism industry aims to raise awareness of an area within an area and attract more tourists to that place.

Tocquer Gerrard and Zins Michel (1987) identified the image of a tourist destination as a fundamental element of tourism in their studies.

Promotion

Various tools are used in tourism promotion, such as advertising, promotions, personal sales programmes, public relations activities, etc...

Tourism products are not tangible, nor can they be experienced or checked before purchase, as is the case with other products. Therefore, the goal of tourism promotion activities is to provide information about products such as travel programmes, selling policies, prices, information about travel, accommodation, meals and other services (Niță and Niță, 2008, p.234).

According to Lewis and Chambers (2000), the most effective communication method in tourism is referral marketing.

To be successful in promoting a local travel agency, advertising needs to be different and innovative, focusing on an important message, repeated often with accompanying illustrations (Nedelea Alexandru 2003). A good tourist image, without adequate physical resources and quality services, is futile and costly (Ban, 2007, p.304).

2.3.3 Location marketing and destination marketing in tourism

Location marketing is a strategic approach to promote a destination to its target audience by identifying and highlighting its unique selling points. Kotler and Gertner (2002) defined location marketing as the application of marketing principles to enhance the attractiveness of a location to its target market.

The goal is to create a positive image, and identity for the destination, developing a brand identity, and implementing marketing tactics to attract and retain target audiences. Location marketing can be used to attract new tourists and retain repeat visitors by emphasizing the destination's strengths and differentiating it from other destinations.

To effectively promote a destination, location marketing strategies should consider the factors that influence the target audience's travel decisions. One such model is the destination image model, introduced by Gunn (1972). This model suggests that a destination's image is made up of functional and psychological attributes, and this image can be influenced by factors such as marketing and media exposure.

To attract visitors, it is important to promote the functional attributes of the destination such as natural beauty, cultural attractions, and outdoor activities. It is also important to highlight the psychological benefits of visiting a destination, such as relaxation, adventure and originality experience.

Another model that can be used in location marketing is the destination life cycle model, introduced by Butler (1980). This model suggests that a destination goes through a series of stages, including exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline.

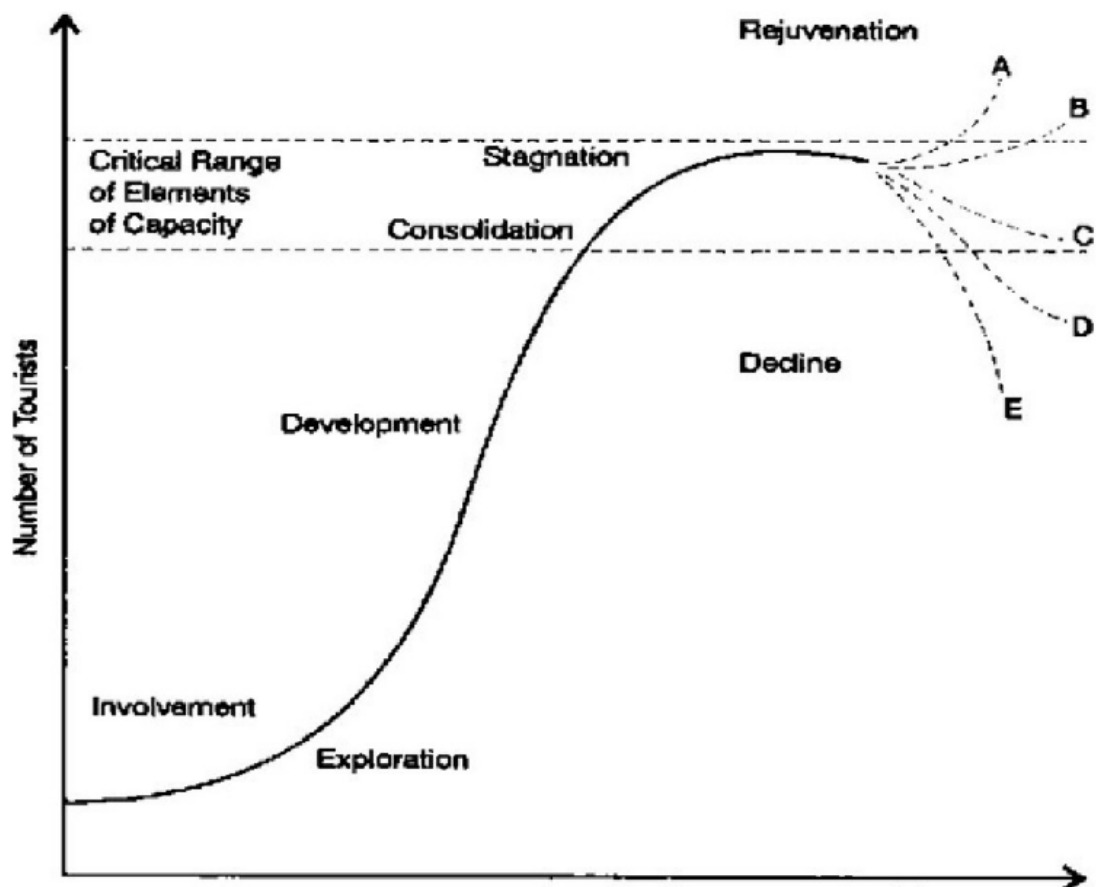


Figure 5. Destination Life Cycle Model (Butler 1980).

Location marketing strategies should be tailored to the stage of the destination's life cycle to increase awareness of the destination, and attract visitors. For example, if the destination is in the exploration stage, it may be necessary to focus on increasing awareness of the destination among potential visitors through targeted marketing campaigns, and media exposure.

On another hand, destination marketing is a strategic approach to promote a destination as a whole, including all its attractions, and services, to a target audience. The goal is to create a positive image of the destination as a whole, encourage visitors to visit, and explore all that the destination has to offer. Destination marketing is broader than location marketing because it includes all the aspects of a destination, such as attractions, accommodations, and transportation.

According to Pike (2008), destination marketing is the management of all the activities involved in delivering a comprehensive, and coordinated destination offer to a target market.

One of the most popular models used in destination marketing is the destination competitiveness model, introduced by Dwyer and Kim (2003). This model emphasizes the importance of destination resources, and attractions, destination management, and destination marketing in determining a destination's competitiveness. The competitiveness of a destination is determined by its ability to provide a unique, and high-quality visitor experience that meets or exceeds the visitor's expectations.

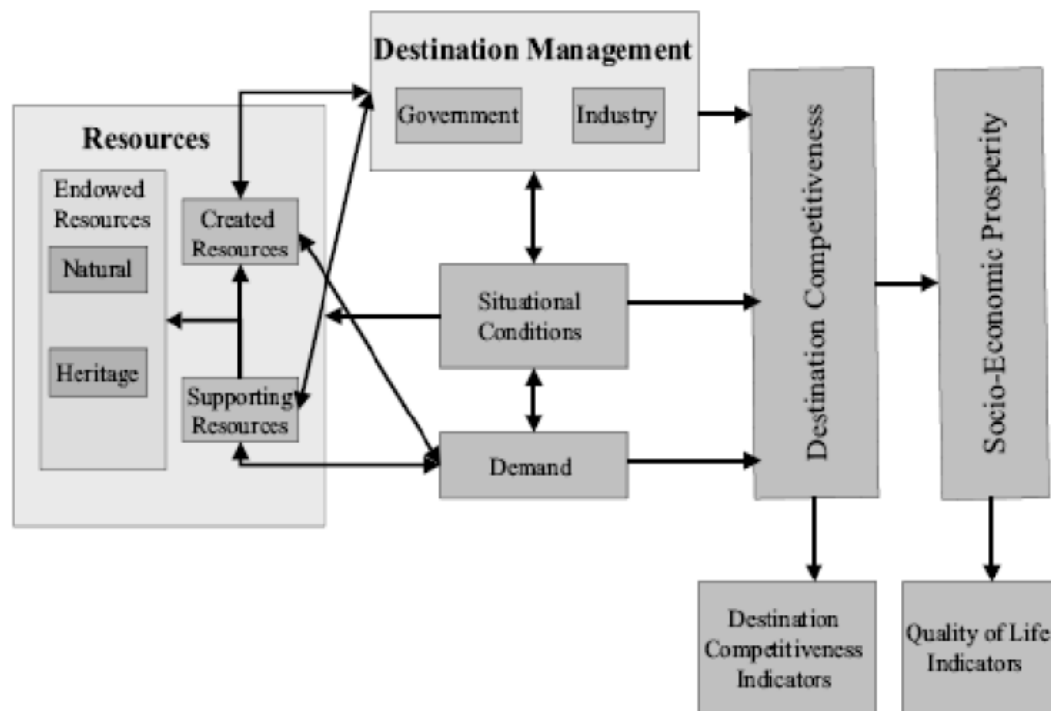


Figure 6. Destination competitiveness model (Dwyer and Kim 2003).

To attract visitors, destination marketing strategies should focus on improving and promoting the destination's resources and attractions, such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique experiences, while also ensuring effective destination management and marketing strategies.

Another important model in destination marketing is the destination management system, introduced by Buhalis (2000). This model suggests that a successful destination marketing strategy requires a comprehensive, and coordinated approach to destination management.

A destination management system includes all the stakeholders involved in the tourism industry, such as government agencies, private businesses, and community groups. By working together, stakeholders can develop and implement strategies to improve the visitor experience and ensure the sustainability of the destination.

In conclusion, both location marketing and destination marketing are essential in promoting tourism destinations. Location marketing is more focused on promoting the unique selling points of a specific location, while destination marketing is focused on promoting the destination as a whole. Both approaches require a comprehensive understanding of the target audience's needs and preferences, as well as effective management and marketing strategies to ensure the sustainability of the destination.

Location marketing and destination marketing provide a framework for understanding how to effectively attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland.

2.4 How to attract more tourists to Finland?

2.4.1 Finland as a tourist destination through the eyes of the Japanese, an interview study on Japanese people living in Finland.

The research report titled "Finland as a tourist destination through the eyes of the Japanese: an interview study on Japanese people living in Finland" (Matilainen and Santalahti, 2018) provides insights into how the Japanese perceive Finland as a tourist destination.

The report employs a qualitative research method and uses interviews as the main data collection technique. The study draws on several theories relevant to tourism and destination marketing, including the concept of destination image, tourist experience, and tourism product development.

Destination image theory posits that a destination's image, or the perceptions held by potential visitors, plays a crucial role in attracting tourists. The report highlights the positive image that Finland enjoys among the Japanese, including its safety, cleanliness, and natural beauty. The report also points out that Finland's image as a peaceful and secure country is a significant draw for Japanese tourists.

Table 2. The things that were considered the most Finnish, before arriving in Finland.

Before you came here, what did you think were the most Finnish things? (Presented in random order.)
Moomin
Santa Claus
Education
Marimekko
Cold climate
Forests
Lakes
The Nordic countries as one entity
The "level of society" at least the same as in Japan

Figure 7. Things that respondents consider to be the best of Finland.

The report also touches on the concept of tourist experience. The Japanese tourists interviewed in the study value unique experiences that they cannot have in Japan, such as seeing the northern lights and enjoying nature activities such as hiking and camping. This suggests that developing unique experiences that differentiate Finland from other tourist destinations can be an effective strategy to attract Japanese tourists.

Finally, the report addresses the importance of tourism product development. The idea of "sauna hotels" is mentioned as a new product or service that could attract Japanese tourists. This concept aligns with the growing trend of wellness tourism, where tourists seek out experiences that promote physical and mental wellbeing. The report also highlights the need for better public transportation and tourist information, which are critical factors in enhancing the overall tourist experience.

Table 3. The things that were considered the most Finnish ones at the moment.

What do you think are the three most Finnish things? (Presented in random order.)
Mentioned more than once:
Moomin
Sauna/sauna culture
Forests, spending time in forests
Nature
Summer cottage
Friendly, shy and honest people
Cold winters
Relaxed/non-hurried way of life
Lakes
Santa Claus
The need for a large personal space
Silence
Alcohol and publicly drunk people

Figure 8. What respondents consider the most Finnish at the moment?

In conclusion, the report highlights the importance of understanding the perceptions and preferences of target markets when developing tourism marketing strategies. By incorporating the perspectives and preferences of Japanese tourists, Finland can enhance its image as a desirable tourist destination and attract more visitors.

The study suggests that improving tourism information and offering guided experiences may help address this challenge.

The insights gained from the study on Japanese tourists could provide some useful guidance for attracting Vietnamese tourists to Finland.

2.4.2 Visit Finland Strategy 2021 - 2025

The "Visit Finland Strategy 2021-2025" report (Visit Finland, 2021) sets out a roadmap for the next five years to enhance Finnish tourism's competitiveness

and attract more international visitors. To achieve this, the report emphasizes the need to focus on sustainable tourism, digitalization, and the creation of new tourism products and services. The collaboration between different stakeholders in the industry, including businesses, local communities, and government agencies, is also crucial. By working together, they can effectively leverage Finland's unique cultural and natural resources to deliver exceptional experiences for tourists.

WHO VISIT FINLAND STRATEGY 2021-2025 21

Meet the Modern Humanists – our guest target group:

The target group for Finland is people whose values match travelling to Finland. This group is known as Modern Humanists.

A Modern Humanist is a person who avoids mass tourism and popular travel destinations. The Modern Humanists are considered experienced travellers who prefer locality over mass tourism and are critical towards advertising.

This type of person likes to explore and go on adventures on their own terms. They want to customise the trip according to their preferences. The characteristics of this group are higher than average education and income levels and interest towards sustainability, new cultures and local people.

Visit Finland's target group for guests is value-based. The main goal of this segmentation is to identify clusters of already existing or potential customers with similar needs, wants, budgets, use of **media channels and other **characteristics**.**

All that information helps us reach the right group of people with the highest potential for unit revenue and create the necessary combination of products and services suitable for the specific target group.

Figure 9. Visit Finland's target group of customers 2021 - 2025 (Visit Finland, 2021).

Overall, the report provides an insightful overview of the current state of Finnish tourism and lays out a clear vision and objectives for future growth and development in the industry.

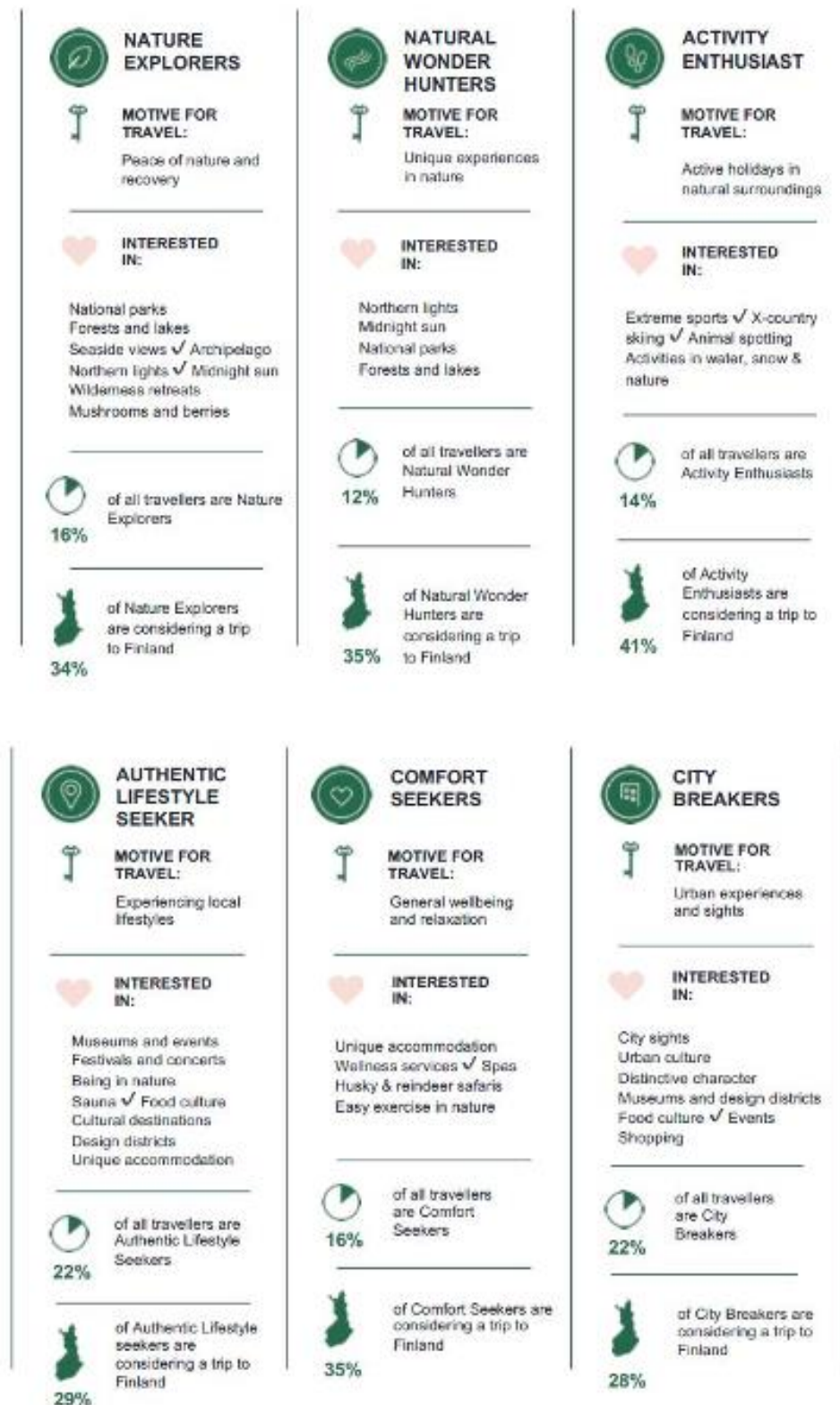


Figure 10. Visit Finland product's segments and its guidance (Visit Finland, 2021).

The report emphasizes the importance of understanding customer needs and preferences in order to create tailored tourism products and experiences. This is consistent with the customer-centric approach of modern marketing, which focuses on delivering value to customers through personalized offerings.

The report also recognizes the role of technology and digital marketing in reaching and engaging with customers, which aligns with the importance of digital channels in modern marketing. Additionally, the report stresses the importance of collaboration and partnerships between different stakeholders in the tourism industry, reflecting the modern marketing concept of building strong relationships with all parties involved in the value chain.

Ultimately, by using the insights provided in the "Visit Finland Strategy 2021 - 2025" report, the author thinks it could be an effective way to build marketing strategies to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland.

3. The Travel Agency: Bitour (www.Bitour.vn)

Bitour is a travel agency based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, that was established in 2012 as a dating tour operator for single travelers. However, over time, the founder recognized the growing demand for adventure trips to natural destinations, which can create real connections and unforgettable experiences.

In 2016, the company decided to shift its focus and transform into an eco-tour agency that offers a range of back-to-nature activities, including trekking, camping, team building, and more, all designed to provide exceptional experiences in the great outdoors.

3.1 Marketing strategy

Customer

Bitour's target customers are office workers residing in Ho Chi Minh City, with over 60 percent being female. These customers experience stress from work, boredom from repetitive daily activities, and traditional crowded travel destinations that fail to meet their need for relaxation and refreshment.

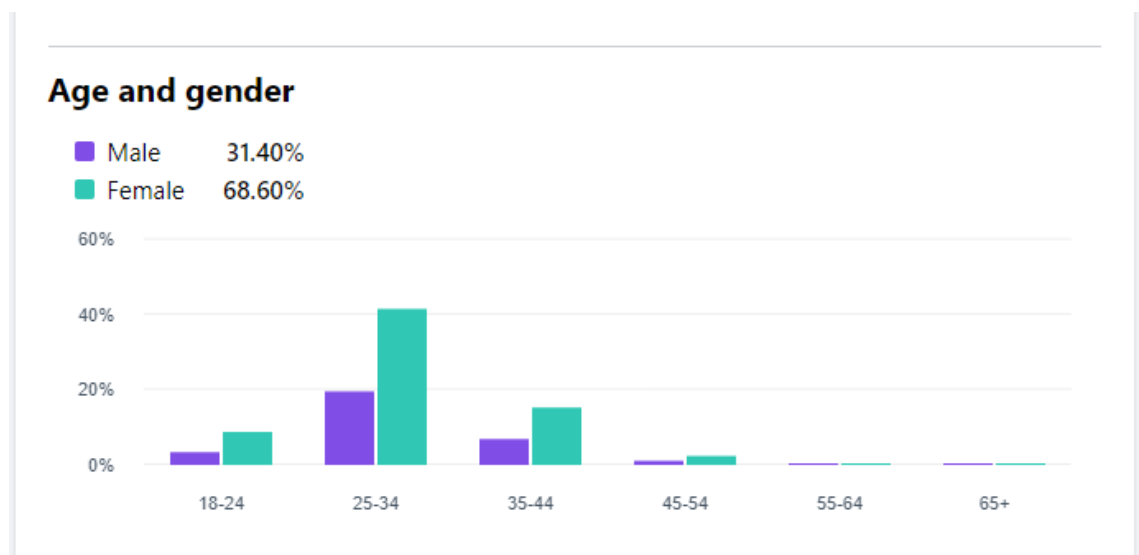


Figure 11. Facebook fan's insight from the fanpage of Bitour (Facebook, 2023).

As per Facebook's fan insight from their fan page in 2023 (Figure 5), Bitour's customers learned about the company through Facebook (40 percent), referrals from friends or family (40 percent), Google search (15 percent), and other sources.

A customer survey conducted in October 2020 with 113 responses revealed that all customers were satisfied with their tour experiences and services, grading them 4-5 points on a scale of 5. The customers chose Bitour because of their inspiring, unique experiences, brand name, safety, and professionalism, as well as good reviews.

After analysis, the company's customers are described as office workers and managers with a salary of about 10-15 million VND (around €400 - €600) per month (three times the average income of Vietnam in 2020, according to Statista.com).

Brand - Main message

Slogan: Nature makes us healthier and happier.

Tagline: Back to nature

Bitour aims to strengthen its brand identity as a symbol of the young and contemporary lifestyle that embraces nature, promoting wellness and happiness.



Figure 12. Bitour logo identity (Bitour, 2023).

Bitour has established itself as a robust brand on social media with high recognition and easy online accessibility. Below is a detailed analysis of each channel.

Facebook

Bitour's Facebook page has 75,000 followers with an average reach of 4,500 per post, providing a solid foundation for brand-customer conversations. Content is posted daily, including reviews, quotes, service information, destination details, and trip photos. Although the content generates trust, it lacks emotional moments.

Instagram

Bitour's Instagram has 3.5k followers with an average reach of 900 per post. The story section is not updated regularly and most of the content is loaded from Facebook. The frequency of posting is one per day, but there are no optimized filters for Instagram images.

Youtube

Bitour's YouTube channel has 664 subscribers and 120,000+ channel views. Main categories include Bi's journeys, customers, and vlog. Most viewed content is professional and inspiring journey videos with music and scenery, but lacks liveliness.

Website

Bitour's website has 20,000 monthly sessions, mainly from organic search, indicating positive growth due to their brand name and blog content.

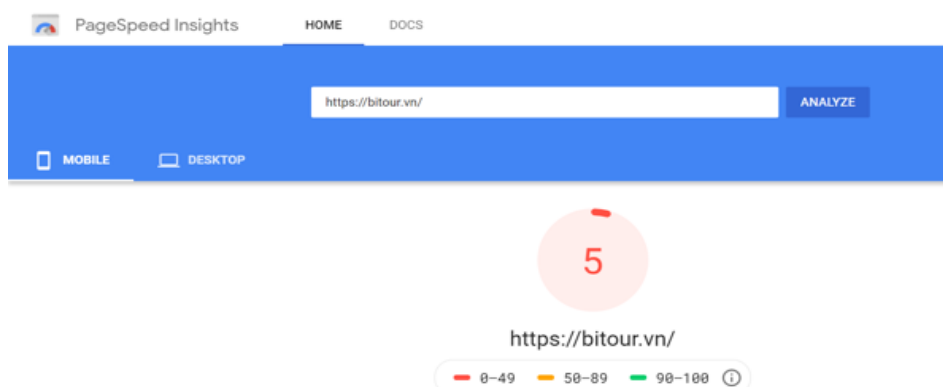


Figure 13. Bitour's website speed score by Google PageSpeed Insights (Google, 2022).

This is a positive sign for Bitour, particularly with the exceptional growth in traffic from organic search thanks to their brand name and blog content.

Email

Bitour uses Convertkit for email campaigns, but can improve in using customer email data for better marketing strategies.

3.2 Case introduction

As a unit specializing in organizing climbing tours, Bitour has been operating for 11 years, serving about 1000 guests per month and earning about 3 billion VND (around €120,000) per month. However, due to the impact of the pandemic, the company had to downsize, reduce the number of tours, staff and revenue dropped significantly.

COVID-19 is both a challenge and an opportunity for Bitour to restructure and find a new market. The trend of nature tourism with a healthy lifestyle is growing in Vietnam after most people have increased health awareness after the pandemic. In addition, there is a group of tourists who also have a need to travel to countries with beautiful natural scenery and high quality of life to learn and experience the lifestyle. This is a demand not only for Bitour customers but in general in the Vietnam market.

The reason Bitour chooses Finland in expanding the market is because of the similarities in customer base and your values. Bitour is aimed at groups of tourists who love nature while Finland stands out for its beautiful and peaceful landscape with enough forests, lakes and seas. Finland is a relatively suitable destination for Bitour customers. Therefore, Bitour wants to understand the motivation of tourists to choose a destination and through that to develop a marketing strategy to attract tourists to Finland.

4. Research methods

4.1 Research design

4.1.1 Research methods

The research method is a systematic, investigative method for gathering knowledge about our social world (Price, 2012).

We are always asking questions and finding out why things happen. Questions are an integral part of the research process (Palys and Atchison, 2014).

4.1.2 The research design decision process

The first step in the research process is to clarify the research purpose with specific questions.

After clarifying the purpose of the research project and the question to be addressed, the next important step is to determine the appropriate research design. The study design will serve as the foundation for selecting the research methodology, sampling procedure, and establishing the structure and flow of the research project.

The implementation of the research design constitutes the final step in the research process, which begins with the creation of a data collection tool such as a questionnaire or discussion guide.

Next is data collection, manipulation and analysis; and is complete with data interpretation as it relates to specific decision alternatives (Stevens, Robert E., et al., 2005).

4.1.3 Exploratory, Descriptive and Causal research

These are three types of research: Exploratory, Descriptive and Causal.

Exploratory

Exploratory research is quite similar to a detective's job to reveal what happened or is currently going on. Exploratory research is needed to identify a problem or opportunity, increase understanding of a problem or develop a hypothesis, generate ideas, etc (Stevens, Robert E., et al, 2005, p.27).

Descriptive

Stevens (2005, p.34) defines descriptive research as a type of research that aims to provide a comprehensive description of a particular phenomenon or situation. Descriptive research is done to achieve specific goals, such as identifying a specific group for future marketing efforts, the relationship between two or more variables, and the relevance of them or making predictions about specific outcomes, etc.

Causal

Causal research helps to determine the extent and nature of a causal relationship between two or more variables. (Stevens, Robert E., et al, 2005, p.41).

4.1.4 Quantitative and qualitative research

Qualitative and quantitative methods are the most familiar methods used by researchers. Although these two approaches are often presented separately and distinctly, in practice they can combine in many different ways.

Quantitative research methods

Quantitative research involves collecting numerical data and using statistical methods to analyze the data (Gravetter and Forzano, 2015). This method is often used when the researcher is interested in measuring or predicting relationships between variables.

There are several types of quantitative research methods, including survey research, experimental research, quasi-experimental research, and correlational research.

Survey research involves collecting data through questionnaires or interviews with a large number of participants (Babbie, 2007). Experimental research involves manipulating one or more independent variables and measuring the effect on one or more dependent variables (Trochim and Donnelly, 2005). Quasi-experimental research is similar to experimental research, but lacks random assignment of participants to groups (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). Correlational research is a method of measuring the relationship between two or more variables using statistical analysis (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1984).

Qualitative Research methods

Qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, or text, and using methods such as content analysis, grounded theory, or discourse analysis to analyze the data (Creswell, 2013). This method is often used when the researcher is interested in exploring the meaning and context of a particular phenomenon or experience.

Qualitative research methods include case study research, ethnographic research, grounded theory research, and content analysis research.

Case study research involves an in-depth investigation of a specific phenomenon, group, or situation (Yin, 2018). Ethnographic research involves immersion in a culture or community to observe and understand social phenomena (Lofland et al., 2006). Grounded theory research involves the

generation of a theory based on data collected through observation and interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Content analysis research involves the analysis of text, images, or other media to identify patterns or themes (Krippendorff, 2013).

Mixed-methods research

Quantitative and qualitative research are two distinct methods that serve different purposes and use different data collection methods, analysis techniques, and generalizability.

Mixed-methods research involves the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. This approach allows researchers to triangulate findings and provide a more complete understanding of a phenomenon. For example, a researcher might use a survey to collect quantitative data and then conduct follow-up interviews with a subset of participants to collect qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In conclusion, understanding the different types of quantitative and qualitative research methods is essential for the author to choose the appropriate method to address their research question. The author will carefully consider research questions to choose the method that best suits the needs.

4.1.5 Research design of project

In the research design of this project, the author has chosen a combination of descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative research methods to address the research questions.

The descriptive research method has been selected as it allows for the exploration of variables and their relationships in a specific situation. This method will help the author to understand the current situation of Vietnamese tourists' travel decisions regarding Finland and identify the factors that may influence their decisions.

In addition, a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research has been chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Surveys will be used to gather quantitative data, uncovering trends and patterns in potential tourists' demographics, travel preferences, and awareness of Finland. In-depth interviews will be used to gather qualitative data, providing detailed insights into tourists' travel experiences and perceptions of Finland.

This mixed-methods approach will enable the author to develop effective marketing strategies catering to the specific needs and preferences of Vietnamese tourists and increase their interest in Finland as a travel destination.

Those methods are applied to further clarify the following points:

1. Examine the influencing factors in the marketing mix

- Does the marketing mix influence the decision to travel?
- If so, how do they affect them?
- What is the most important factor? In this factor, what is really the deciding factor or are the factors all acting equally?
- Why is it important in choosing a destination?

2. Reviewing the customer decision process

Bitour often sends questionnaires after each trip to collect information. From these questionnaires answers, most of the customers go from the stage of reviewing their own needs to finding information, then comparing and deciding to purchase.

The author wants to investigate the factors that influence people's decision-making process when booking a tour, such as destination, travel companions, frequency of travel, and other relevant factors, etc..

3. Review the factors affecting the purchase decision

In travel trips, in addition to the four important factors in the marketing mix, shoppers are also influenced by many factors. For Bitour's current customers, customers traveling in groups of 2 people account for more than 25 percent, which shows that going out with friends or influencing friends' invitations is very important. Women tend to travel more than men. It has been found that in the case of Bitour's customer profile, older customers are willing to pay more for tours. For the occupational group, the customers who mainly work in the office are quite similar, so there is almost no difference.

These factors will also be mentioned to further explore the factors that influence the choice of destination of tourists.

The main objective of this thesis is to assist Bitour, a Vietnamese travel company that specializes in nature-based trips, in expanding its market from domestic to international by attracting more of its current Vietnamese customers to visit Finland. To achieve this, the author has chosen Bitour's existing Vietnamese customers as a representative group of people.

By studying this group, the author aims to identify the factors that may influence their travel decisions regarding Finland and develop effective marketing strategies that address their specific needs and preferences. Ultimately, the author hopes to provide recommendations that will enable Bitour to successfully expand its market and increase its customer base by offering travel packages to Finland.

4.2 Data collection methods

For firsthand information, a quantitative research was carried out using a questionnaire software tool. The questionnaire is used to collect information about the influencing factors and the implementation levels of the decisions. The main scale used is the Likert 5 scale with a 9-question questionnaire with

the main variables being the frequency of tourists' choice and the level of tourism activities.

Sampling study was carried out according to the convenience sampling method with a group of Bitour's customers who were living in Vietnam and had gone abroad. Respondents invited to participate in the study were located in Ho Chi Minh City, the cultural financial center of Vietnam, and the sample survey was conducted online to facilitate interviewers and respondents. The questionnaire was sent to two hundred random customers and fifty responses were received.

Thus, the total number of samples to be surveyed is fifty respondents. For in-depth interviews, the author opted for four face-to-face interviews. This method enables a more engaging and detailed conversation with the participants, allowing for the collection of rich, comprehensive data. The author interviewed one person who has visited Finland and three who have been to Europe but have never visited Finland.

By interviewing someone who has already visited Finland, the author can gain insight into the actual travel experience, as well as any challenges or barriers that the tourist may have encountered during their trip.

On the other hand, interviewing someone who has never been to Finland before can provide valuable information on the perceptions and attitudes of Vietnamese tourists towards Finland as a travel destination. This approach can help the author to develop a more complete understanding of the factors that may influence Vietnamese tourists' travel decisions and to develop marketing strategies that effectively address their needs and preferences.

4.3 Data analysis

Primary data collected from the questionnaire was used to describe and analyze the correlative factors affecting the decision to choose an international

tourist destination of Vietnamese tourists. Data was coded and entered into SPSS BMI 23.0 software to run variables.

The data collected from the in-depth interviews were collected mainly through the question of why and then supplemented with the results from the questionnaire.

Analysis involves identifying the most prominent themes and patterns from the data, interpreting their meanings, and drawing connections between them. The author also considers the context in which the data were collected and how it relates to the research questions and objectives.

4.4 Questionnaire design

The author focused on the following themes: Marketing mix, Consumer Decision making, etc. to develop the questionnaire.

Part 1: Factors affecting tourism choice in general.

The group of questions about customers' travel behaviour includes where to go, frequency, mode of travel, time of travel and accompanying person.

Elements of the marketing mix can influence the choice of destination or trip. These factors include tour program, price, promotion and destination.

The customer's decision-making process and factors influencing each stage include individual needs, age, gender, occupation, opinions of family, friends, or influencers. Because customers are quite homogeneous in terms of culture and level of awareness, these factors are ignored. The decision stages include need formation, information search, comparison, and purchase decision.

Part 2: Factors influencing the choice of specific locations

The questions aimed to understand the factors influencing the respondent's decision to go or not to go to Finland.

4.5. Limitations of study

While descriptive research is useful for capturing respondents' behaviour and choices, it has limitations in exploring the underlying factors and their effects. In addition, the quantitative questions in this study only cover one of the four common marketing factors, without delving deeper into each specific factor.

For instance, when it comes to products in the tourism industry, tour programmes alone may not be sufficient to evaluate their attractiveness to customers, as the quality of services provided should also be considered. Moreover, the study's questions about pricing did not reveal the price range that is most suitable for customers when choosing a tour. As for location, there are many other factors that influence customers' purchasing decisions beyond simply the attractiveness of the destination.

Another limitation of the study is that the selected respondents may not necessarily represent potential customers for the new product. They were included to provide a general understanding of customers' psychology. Furthermore, the study did not include feedback from individuals who had previously traveled to Finland, and the available data on this group was too limited to be conclusive.

To overcome these limitations, the author can carefully consider the variables that influence tourist's choice. It needs to be more closely aligned with the theoretical framework and research objectives. This would enable researchers to provide a more comprehensive proposal for the new destination marketing campaign in the new market.

5 Results

5.1 Consumer behaviour of tourists

A total of 50 respondents who were Bitour customers in the last years answered the survey.

Female respondents make up the majority of 64 percent, while men make up a smaller proportion of 36 percent. This rate also quite coincides with the ratio in Bitour trips. Women tend to travel to experience nature more than men. The age of the respondents is mainly from twenty-five to forty-five years old, of which the three-six- to forty-five-year-old group accounts for the highest proportion, up to 30 percent.

This ratio shows that the age of young customers, under thirty-five years old also accounts for a large proportion of the survey and is also consistent with Bitour's customer profile data.

In terms of occupation, the office group accounted for 36 percent, followed by the management group at 32 percent. Business owners accounted for only 14 percent, while other workers accounted for 18 percent.

The consumption behaviour of respondents in this study includes frequency of travel, places they have visited, accompanying people, type of travel, and when traveling.

Frequency of travel per year.

Respondents travel a lot, with 44 percent traveling more than 3 times a year, including both domestic and international trips. The total number of respondents traveling at least twice a year accounted for 90 percent. This shows more optimism about living standards as well as the enjoyment of the respondents through frequent travel.

Table 1. Consumer behaviour of tourists.

		Count N= 50	Total 100%
Age	Under 25	2	4,0%
	25-30	12	24,0%
	31-35	13	26,0%
	36-45	15	30,0%
	Over 45	8	16,0%
Gender	Male	18	36,0%
	Female	32	64,0%
Career	Owner	7	14,0%
	Manager	16	32,0%
	Officer	18	36,0%
	Others	9	18,0%
How often did you travel each year?	1 time/year	5	10,0%
	2 times/year	13	26,0%
	3 times/year	10	20,0%
	>3 times/year	22	44,0%
Have been to Finland	Yes	5	10,0%
	Not been yet	45	90,0%
Usually travel in domestic or abroad	Domestic	63	63,0%
	Abroad	27	37,0%
Usually travel with	Alone	27	24,1%
	Family	38	25,0%
	Friends	38	33,9%
	Colleague	19	17,0%
Form of travel	Self sufficient	40	40%
	On a tour	40	40%
	Others	10	20%
Occasion to travel	Holidays	21	42,0%
	Events	7	14,0%
	Summer vacation	22	44,0%
	Any free time	41	82,0%
Foreign place have visit	Southeast Asia	38	41,3%
	Asia	32	34,8%
	US	12	13%
	Australia	1	1,1%
	Africa	9	9,8%
	Europe	16	32%

Source: Survey data of the study (2023)

Places they have visited.

Of the respondents who frequently travel, about 37 percent have ever traveled abroad. This rate is also relatively high. Most of the respondents to Southeast Asia and Asian countries accounted for a total of 76.1 percent, to Europe accounted for 32 percent.

Among European countries, the most chosen are France, Germany, and Switzerland. Only 5 out of 50 respondents went to Finland. Although this number is not high, it is surprising compared to the original expectations of the author.

16. If you have been to Europe, which countries have you visited? (can choose more than one answer)

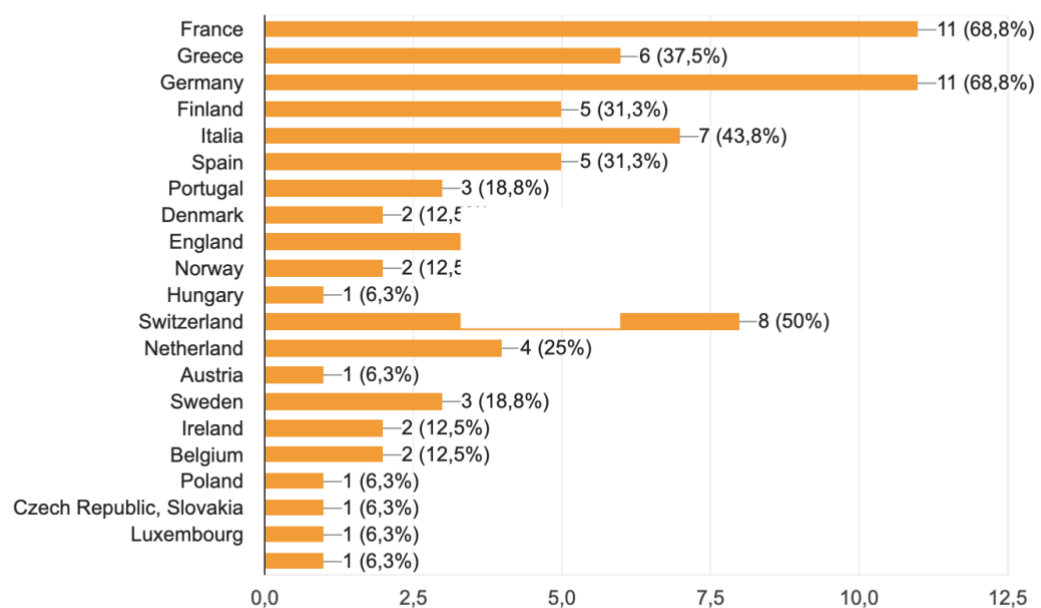


Figure 14. Respondent's European destinations.

Accompanying people

The majority are traveling with friends (33.9 percent), followed by family (25 percent) and traveling alone (24.1 percent). Some people choose to go with colleagues, but not many, only 17 percent.

Going on your own or on a tour.

For the choice of self-sufficient travel or tour, this rate is almost the same (40 percent). Those who go abroad have a higher rate of tour registration. This is understandable because except for Southeast Asian countries, visitors who want to go to Europe, America or Australia must apply for a visa. Particularly for Asian tours, the cost of the tour is also better than going on your own due to the rise of air tickets, accommodation and travel.

Travel time.

Most of the respondents travel when they have free time (accounting for 82 percent). This is followed by summer vacation (44 percent) and public holidays (42 percent). The number of visitors at this time also always spiked compared to usual.

5.2. Factors affecting the decision to choose a tourist destination

Most of the respondents are self-determined to choose the destination and trip, accounting for 62 percent. Meanwhile, the remaining 38% of respondents said they need advice from others when choosing a destination.

When it comes to advice, friends are the group that give the most advice, ranked second as consultants and finally relatives.

Table 2. Rate of self-made decision to choose travel destination.

	Frequency	Percent
By myself	31	62,0%
Get advice from others	19	38,0%
Total	50	100,0%

Source: Survey data of the study (2023).

Respondents who need to be consulted at the information search stage have the most need for advice, accounting for 40.8 percent. The decision-making process didn't seem too difficult as only 11.8 percent needed more advice.

Table 3. Percentage of people giving advice and needing advice.

		N	Percent
Person give advice	Family	17	25,8%
	Friends	28	42,4%
	Consultant	21	31,8%
Stage need advice	Needs generation	20	26,3%
	Information search	31	40,8%
	Comparison	16	21,1%
	Decision	9	11,8%
	Total	76	100,0%

Source: Survey data of the study (2023).

When considering factors related to the marketing mix, destination was considered the most important factor (82 percent). Next is the program and price. The advertising programmes did not influence the respondents' choice too much.

When looking to compare the level of "very important" in a particular factor, the data shows the following. For promotional activities, only 4 percent of respondents consider it "very important". The two factors of price and "very important" tour program are quite similar, accounting for 34 percent and 40 percent respectively. In particular, up to 70 percent of respondents who chose a place thought it was "very important".

Table 4. Factors that influence the importance of choosing a tourist destination.

		Not import ant	Less impo rtant	Import ant	Quite importan t	Very impo rtant	Total
Tour prog ram	Count	13	12	36	31	20	28
	% of Total	26,0%	24,0 %	72,0%	62,0%	40,0 %	56,0 %
Pric es	Count	8	15	31	33	17	26
	% of Total	16,0%	30,0 %	62,0%	66,0%	34,0 %	52,0 %
Pro moti on & Adv ertisi ng	Count	3	7	11	21	2	11
	% of Total	6,0%	14,0 %	22,0%	42,0%	4,0%	22,0 %
Dest inati on	Count	13	25	51	40	35	41
	% of Total	26,0%	50,0 %	102,0 %	80,0%	70,0 %	82,0 %
Tota l	Coun t	19	34	58	50	39	50
	% of Total	38,0%	68,0 %	116,0 %	100,0%	78,0 %	100,0 %

Source: Survey data of the study (2023).

The role of advertising needs to be studied further because the scope of the study and the data are not enough to conclude whether advertising plays a role in the respondent's decision.

However, according to the data table, the majority of respondents choose Finland because of the tour programme, ranked second because they like this country.

Table 5. Percentage of making a decision to choose Finland.

	N
Why choose Finland?	Tour program
	Price
	Advertising
	You like Finland
Factors Finland attracts?	Santa Claus
	Education
	Climate
	Forest
	Lake
	Nordic
	Happiest country

Source: Survey data of the study (2023).

The responders who had been to Finland also mentioned that they were attracted by various factors such as the climate, forests, lakes, Santa Claus, and even the fact that Finland is located in the Nordic countries. However, the two most commonly chosen factors are Finland's education system and its reputation as the happiest country in the world. These are also two prominent features in the advertisements about Finland in Vietnam.

5.3. Factors influencing the choice of travel to Finland

Out of 50 respondents, only 16 had been to Europe, accounting for 31.4 percent. Of the respondents who had been to Finland, only five (three men and two women) had been to Finland. The remaining 11 people have never been to Finland.

For the group of guests who have never been to Finland

Respondents have never been to Finland because of the lack of attractive advertising and high costs.

The respondents feel that Finland is not yet attractive because there is nothing special in Finland, the climate, and being too introverted. With the question open to further exploration, the answer is almost the same and doesn't add much information. There is very little information about Finland available for respondents. They feel there is not enough information for them to evaluate, consult or make decisions.

To further clarify why Finland is not considered a top destination, the author conducted an in-depth interview with the couple Chi Nguyen Hai (Ho Chi Minh, 52 years old) and Hang Nguyen Thi Dieu (Ho Chi Minh, 50 years old). These two respondents both have their own businesses and travel abroad once or twice a year. They have been to Europe and most recently they considered Finland as a destination but then chose to go to England.

There are two questions posed in this in-depth interview. The first is why Finland is not among the priority countries when traveling to Europe. Both husband and wife consider Finland to be foreign at first in their minds. When thinking of foreign tourist places, they think more of France, Switzerland, Italy... Maybe because these places appear in the media quite a lot, such as movies, food and historical elements. Information about these countries is easy to find. Travel companies introduce and offer a lot of incentives for these programmes, so they will prioritize popular destinations first.

The second question is why they chose to come to England considering Finland and England on their second trip to Europe. The answer is because of safety concerns due to the war in Russia and Ukraine. Besides, they are also afraid that the weather in Finland may be too harsh. Finland can be an interesting destination but it ranks behind the popular tourist destinations in their mind. They do not care much about the programme and the price because these are two factors that can be considered and compared between tour companies.

Most respondents believe that if the destination is attractive and the cost is reasonable, they would choose Finland.

Guests who have been to Finland

With only five respondents who have been to Finland, the survey is not comprehensive enough to make any conclusions or statements.

Travelers choose Finland because of their interest in the country and its attractive tour programme. The important factors are education, a happy country, climate, and forests. In general, the respondents think that Finland is a peaceful country.

The author did an in-depth interview with a respondent, Hong Nhung Nguyen (Ho Chi Minh, 48 years old) who traveled to Finland twice in 2020 and 2021. Respondent traveled to the US, Australia, Canada and nearly throughout Europe. Respondents came to Finland because they were interested in the educational environment here. The purpose of the trip is to travel and combine learning about school for two children. After the first trip, with a good impression about Finland in addition to education and nature, peace, the respondents decided to choose Finland as a place to work and invest. Therefore, the second purpose of the trip is tourism combined with learning about business and settlement opportunities. The strong reason for attracting respondents is because Finland ranks first among the happiest countries in the world.

These findings are quite consistent with the general media orientation of the image of Finland in the minds of consumers. In addition, the interview also pointed out the potential of tourism combining study abroad and settlement.

6 Discussion

6.1 Factors affecting the travel decision of Vietnamese tourists

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the consumer behaviour of Vietnamese tourists and the factors that influence their decision to travel to Finland. Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that female travelers make up the majority of Bitour customers, and they tend to travel and wish to experience nature more than men.

The frequency of travel per year shows that the respondents travel frequently, with 44 percent of them traveling more than three times a year, including both domestic and international trips. The majority of respondents have traveled to Southeast Asia and Asian countries, with only a few of them having visited Europe. France, Germany, and Switzerland are the most popular European countries among Vietnamese tourists. Interestingly, only five out of 50 respondents have traveled to Finland, which is lower than expected.

The factors that influence the decision to choose a tourist destination are also examined in this study. Most of the respondents are self-determined to choose the destination and trip, while others need advice from friends and family. Destination is the most important factor when considering the marketing mix, followed by the programme and price. The role of advertising needs to be studied further. Research has not shown how advertising affects respondents' decisions.

When it comes to Finland, the tour programme is the primary reason why Vietnamese tourists choose to visit, followed by their interest in the country itself. The attractions that are most appealing to Vietnamese tourists in Finland are education and happiness, which are also two prominent features in Finland's tourism advertising in Vietnam.

For those who have never been to Finland, the lack of attractive advertising and high costs are the main reasons why they have not chosen Finland as a travel destination. Based on these findings, there are several recommendations to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland.

First, Finland's tourism advertising should be more attractive and engaging to Vietnamese tourists. The advertising campaign should highlight the country's unique attractions and experiences that Vietnamese tourists cannot find elsewhere. The advertising should also emphasize Finland's natural beauty and outdoor activities, which are highly appealing to Vietnamese tourists.

Second, tour programmes to Finland should be designed to meet the specific needs and preferences of Vietnamese tourists. The tour programmes should be tailored to the interests of Vietnamese tourists and include activities and experiences that are highly appealing to Vietnamese tourists.

Third, the cost of travel to Finland should be made more affordable for Vietnamese tourists. Tour operators should work with airlines and hotels to offer competitive pricing for packages that include flights, accommodations, and activities. Promotional deals and discounts can also be offered to attract more Vietnamese tourists.

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the consumer behaviour of Vietnamese tourists and the factors that influence their decision to travel to Finland. By understanding the needs and preferences of Vietnamese tourists, tourism stakeholders in Finland can develop effective strategies to attract more Vietnamese tourists and tap into the potential of this important market.

6.2 Suggested marketing strategies for Bitour to attract Vietnamese tourists to Finland

Base on the result of this research, here are some recommendations from the author:

- Develop a clear value proposition:

Bitour should emphasize the "Back to Nature" aspect of their tours, as well as the educational component. They can differentiate their tours from other travel companies by highlighting how their tours provide a deeper level of immersion and education, as well as a sustainable approach to travel. This message can resonate with the target group that Visit Finland is also targeting.

- Create customized tour packages:

Since Bitour's potential customers are decision makers who want to explore something new and customize their trip, they can create unique and personalized tour packages that highlight Finland's natural beauty, culture, and sustainability efforts. They can also offer educational experiences such as workshops or classes that focus on sustainable living, Finnish cuisine, or cultural immersion.

- Collaborate with local businesses:

To add authenticity to their tours and align with Visit Finland's strategy of adding value to guests, Bitour can collaborate with local Finnish businesses that share their values of sustainability and authenticity. For example, they could work with local eco-friendly hotels, restaurants that serve local cuisine, or organizations that promote sustainable tourism.

- Collaborate with Visit Finland:

To align with Visit Finland's strategy of increasing demand and promoting sustainable travel, Bitour can collaborate with them to gain access to promotional materials such as images, videos, and other resources that showcase Finland as a beautiful and sustainable destination.

Bitour can also take part in their "Finland Travel Master" course to gain valuable knowledge and expertise on Finland as a travel destination. This partnership can also help establish Bitour's brand as a trusted and knowledgeable source for sustainable travel to Finland.

- Focus on digital marketing:

Visit Finland's strategy also emphasizes digital competitiveness, so it's important for Bitour to have a strong online presence. To reach their target audience, they can implement social media marketing, email campaigns, and search engine optimization techniques. In addition, they have the ability to design an aesthetically pleasing and intuitive website that highlights their exclusive tour packages and eco-friendly approach towards traveling.

- Offer incentives:

Since less than 5 percent of Bitour's potential customers have visited Finland before, they can offer incentives such as a discount on their first trip or a referral programme that rewards customers for bringing their friends and family along. They can also offer early bird discounts or other promotions to encourage bookings.

To discover more about digital marketing strategies, Bitour can refer to the customer journey model, which reduces the customer's tour buying action into 5 steps including: Awareness, Research, Consideration and Booking. Here are some recommendations for Bitour in every step:

- Awareness:

In order to create awareness about the beauty and uniqueness of Finland as a travel destination among Vietnamese tourists, Bitour can leverage various digital channels. First and foremost, social media can be used as a powerful tool to showcase Finland's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Bitour can create visually appealing social media posts that highlight the key attractions of Finland, such as the Northern Lights, Lapland, Helsinki, and the archipelago. These posts can be shared on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter targeting Vietnamese audiences.

Another effective way to create awareness is by running social media ads targeted at the Modern Humanist audience. These ads can be designed to showcase Finland's sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices, along with unique experiences that Bitour offers. All of the materials could be collected from Visit Finland.

- Research:

Once Vietnamese tourists become aware of Finland as a travel destination, the next step in the customer journey is research. Bitour can support Vietnamese tourists in their research process by creating high-quality content that showcases Finland's key attractions and unique experiences.

For example, Bitour can create blog posts, travel guides, and videos that provide detailed information about different regions of Finland, accommodation options, local cuisine, and cultural experiences. Bitour also can make a series of content that showcase the travel experiences of Vietnamese who traveled or living in Finland. Content can be shared on Bitour's website and social media channels. Additionally, Bitour. This will make it easier for Vietnamese tourists to find relevant information about Finland and Bitour's offerings.

- Consideration:

After conducting research, Vietnamese tourists will move to the consideration stage, where they will evaluate different options and make a decision on which travel company to book with. Bitour can influence their decision by offering personalized tour packages that cater to the specific needs and interests of Vietnamese tourists. For example, Bitour can create packages that include visits to key attractions in Helsinki, a trip to Lapland to experience the Northern Lights, and cultural workshops on Finnish cuisine or traditional handicrafts.

Another way that Bitour can do this is to collaborate with local guides, who can introduce customers to experience the uniqueness of Finland such as sauna, skiing, lake swimming, etc. Bitour can promote these packages through targeted email marketing campaigns, retargeting ads on social media and search engines, and by collaborating with local Finnish businesses that align with Bitour's values of sustainability and authenticity. By offering unique experiences and a personalized approach, Bitour can increase the likelihood of Vietnamese tourists booking their tours with them.

- Booking:

The final step in the customer journey is the booking stage. To make the booking process as smooth as possible, Bitour can create a user-friendly website that allows Vietnamese tourists to easily browse and book their preferred tour packages. Bitour can also offer incentives such as early registration discounts, loyalty programmes to encourage Vietnamese tourists to book tours. To make payment easy, Bitour offers flexible payment methods such as credit card, bank transfer and mobile payment. Additionally, Bitour can provide customer support through chatbots, email, or phone, to address any queries or concerns that Vietnamese tourists may have during the booking process. By providing a seamless and convenient booking experience, Bitour can ensure customer satisfaction and encourage repeat business.

7 Conclusions

The study aims to attract more Vietnamese tourists to Finland. On this common goal, the two central questions for this study are as follows:

- Determining the factors affecting the decision of Vietnamese tourists to visit Finland.
- Proposing contributions to the marketing strategy of attracting tourists to Finland, specifically the travel agency Bitour.

Based on the quantitative analysis of Bitour's main customer base on their travel behaviour and decisions, it can be concluded that location is the most important factor, followed by programmes and prices. The results also show that the decision to choose a destination is quite independent, and if it is necessary to consult someone, most respondents would ask their friends in the information and comparison stage.

The survey also shows that a group of tourists are more likely to participate in trips and although not correlated enough, it is also a direction to note.

One limitation of the study is that the majority of respondents have not been to Finland, so contributions to the strategy will generalize based on general tourism behaviour. However, this also shows us great tourism potential in the Vietnamese market when most tourists do not know much about Finland. For a new market, it is important to introduce a lot about the destination, raising the awareness of potential customers about Finland, and prompting them to develop a need and desire to learn more.

In the future, Bitour may continue to delve deeper into different customer groups, especially women who are between from 36 and 45 years old. The study should also focus more on destinations to find touch points to attract customers. In addition to the famous spots of Finland, the unique experiences of nature with seasonal diversity are also points that customers can enjoy. Finland is a new and attractive market that can become a new destination as the world tends to live closer to nature more and more.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. Do you usually travel within the country or abroad? (Multiple choice).
 - ☐ Vietnam
 - ☐ Abroad

2. Do you often travel alone, family, friends, company? (Multiple choice).
 - ☐ Alone
 - ☐ With family
 - ☐ With friends
 - ☐ With company
 - ☐ Other

3. The form of tourism that tourists choose when traveling in the country and abroad (Multiple choice).
 - ☐ Go alone
 - ☐ On a tour
 - ☐ Other

4. How often do you travel in a year (both domestic and international)? (Single choice).
 - ☐ 1 time/year
 - ☐ 2 times/year
 - ☐ 3 times/year
 - ☐ >3 times/year

5. When do you usually travel for...(Multiple choice).
 - ☐ Holidays
 - ☐ Events
 - ☐ Summer vacation
 - ☐ Any free time

- Other

6. What factors influence you to choose a destination or a trip? (Multiple choice).

- Tour programme
- Price
- Promotion (Advertising)
- Destination

7. The importance of the factors according to the Likert scale.

Factors	Not important	less important	important	quite important	very important
	1	2	3	4	5
Tour programme					
Price					
Promotion (Advertising)					
Destination					

8. When choosing a tour or destination you usually decide.

- By yourself
- Get advisor of other

9. If you need advice, who is it from? (Family, friends, others..) (Multiple choice).

- Family
- Friends
- Consultants
- Other

10. In what stage does the reference process take place?

- Needs generation
- Information search
- Comparison
- Decision

11. The foreign places you have visited (Multiple options).

- Southeast Asia
- Asia
- Europe
- Americas (America, Canada....)
- Australia
- Africa

12. If you've been to Europe, which countries have you visited? (Multiple options).

Country	Stick	Country	Stick	Country	Stick
France					
Greece		Germany		Italy	
Spain		Portugal		Denmark	
England		Norway		Hungary	
Switzerland		Finland		Netherlands	
Austria		Sweden		Ireland	
Belgium		Poland		Other	

If you have been to Finland, skip to 13

If the you have never been to Finland, skip to section 14

13.1. Why do you choose Finland as a destination?

- Tour programme
- Price
- Advertising

- You like Finland

13.2. If you choose because you like Finland, what factors in the destination attract you?

- Moomin
- Santa claus
- Education
- Climate,
- Forest
- Lake
- Nordic
- Happy country

13.3. What else makes you not want to go to Finland? (Open question)

14.1. Why you've never been to Finland (Tours, prices, advertisements, locations)

- Tour programme
- Price
- Advertising
- You don't like Finland

14.2. If you don't like Finland, why?

- Climate
- Few people (so sad)
- Depression
- Not special...

14.3. What else makes you not want to go to Finland? (Open question)

14.4. Would you choose a tour of Finland in the future if...

- The programme is attractive
- The price is reasonable
- The destination is promoted
- Attractive destination

15. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 25 years old
- ☐ 25-30 years old
- ☐ 31-35 years old
- ☐ 36-45 years old
- ☐ Over 45 years old

16. How about your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

17. How about your career?

- ☐ Owner
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Officer
- ☐ Other