

## **Marketing a Destination: Case of CreateTrips and Mexico**

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<p>This thesis concentrates on Finnish people travelling to Mexico. Firstly, the writers conduct a quantitative research, a questionnaire, that studies Finnish people's thoughts and presumptions about Mexico. Secondly, they create mobile travel guides of four different destinations. The questionnaire concentrates on the people's point of view, asking what people think about Mexico, on what kind of trip would they go if they travel there, how long it would last and so on. The questionnaire also has a question about travel guides: what people expect a travel guide to contain? This question guides the writers into right direction when producing the travel guide.</p> <p>According to statistics, the most important destinations for Finnish people in Mexico are Cancun, Mexico City, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta, and for that reason those destinations were chosen for the mobile travel guide. The majority of the respondents of the questionnaire were female and from 22 to 25 years old. When asking about what comes into their minds when thinking about Mexico, the majority answered food, while some think about indigenous cultures, violence, historical attractions and party. The majority would spend their money to restaurants, some to shopping, nice accommodation, tourist attractions and bars and clubs. The majority of the respondents would prefer a hotel when visiting Mexico. All these results were considered while creating the travel guides.</p>	
<b>Asiasanat</b> CreateTrips, mobile application, travel guide, tourism, Mexico	

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# 1. Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to find out Finnish people's preferences about visiting Mexico when it comes to type and length of the trip, accommodation, and on what would they be willing to spend their money and this as the basis, produce mobile travel guides of four most important destinations in Mexico. Other aims are: to find out Finnish people's thoughts and possible prejudices about Mexico as well as what kind of information do they expect a travel guide to contain.

This thesis is based on a quantitative research; a questionnaire, which looks into Finnish tourists' travel to Mexico. The main research problem of this thesis is to find out what Finnish people think about Mexico as a tourist destination and what should be included in the travel guide applications. The researchers came up with several questions that, when answered, will help them to get a better image of Finnish people's thoughts and prejudices about Mexico. These questions are, for example, what is the first thing that comes into their mind when thinking about Mexico, have they travelled to the country, would they travel to the country, if yes, for how long? Also, what kind of accommodation would they prefer, what kind of trip would it be and on what would they be willing on spending money, as well as, what do they think a travel guide application should include?

The main target group were young people, from 18 to 30, because the majority of the users of CreateTrips are about 20-24 years old.

When it comes to the structure of this report the researchers thought it is important to get to know to the academic literature and statistics before getting into the research. Consequently, this thesis starts with academic background about various subjects – tourism management, international tourism worldwide, Mexico as a tourist destination and Finnish people travelling to Mexico. According to Myers (2009, 7), in order to show that the scholars understand and are "up-to-date with the latest thinking" they are encouraged to write a literature review about the subject.

Therefore, the first section concentrates on tourism management. Firstly, the concept of destination marketing is being explained, then branding, consumer behaviour and marketing resources. The second sections focuses on the tourism industry in general and tourism forecasts. After this the report concentrates on Mexico; the basic information, Mexico as a tourist destination, history of tourism in the country. Into this section the researchers include a SWOT analysis of Mexico's tourism, international tourist arrival numbers and tourism receipts, as well as future forecasts. Also, the statistics about Finnish people travelling to Mexico are in this section as well as, information about Mexican tourism organisations. The following section introduces the four most important tourist destinations for

Finnish people in Mexico, which are also the ones that the researchers include in the travel guide. Those destinations are Cancun, Mexico City, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta.

After the academic background the thesis continues to the research. Firstly, the survey is being explained. The researchers go into the theory behind the questions; why the certain questions are chosen and what is the background of each question. Then, due to the fact that many questions in the survey are multiple choices, the reasons why these specific options were chosen are being explained in this section as well. After this, the report focuses on the research method – the questionnaire. The researchers explain what it is in general and also, what kind of research was conducted for this specific report. The following section concentrates on the results of the research, as well as on the validity and reliability of the research. The next chapter is all about analysing the results of the research. The results of the survey are being compared with statistics. The next section concentrates on the travel application – what it includes and how it was carried out.

At his point, it is important to introduce the company behind the travel application. CreateTrips as a company is dedicated to create “TravelBooks”, which are mobile travel guides designed for smartphones and tablets. The mission of the company is to assure that travellers do not need travel guidebooks anymore because these guidebooks can now be replaced with the modern TravelBooks. Consequently, creating TravelBooks is an important part of CreateTrips’ business but the company is also aiming to distinguish itself from other companies by adding something unique to its function. The uniqueness of the company is about giving an opportunity for travel bloggers, travel related businesses and other travel experts to make money by creating their own mobile travel guides and sharing them to the public via CreateTrips (Kukkonen 2014).

Travellers who are interested in using the company’s services can also plan their own trips by using the company’s mobile application. After creating a travel plan, the plan can be used on the go and it does not require Internet access. It is also possible to use detailed and simple offline maps. The company’s TravelBooks are also available on the application and the current price of a TravelBook is from 3.59 euros (Kukkonen 2014).

Today creating mobile travel guides is generally a growing business. According to the Foundation for Finnish Inventions mobile travel guides can generate up to 2.7B euro businesses per year. CreateTrips is aiming to have the widest range of mobile travel guides in the world by 2016. At present, the company has over 60 000 active users and it attracts up to 15 000 new users each day (Kukkonen 2014).

## **2. Managing tourism**

### **2.1 Destination marketing and branding**

Marketing is an important factor in the operations of any company that strives to succeed. Fyall & Garrod (2005) note, that when marketing a service, it is essential to develop a close and trusting relationship with customers. These relationships are basically fostered by market orientation. According to Levitt (1986) cited in Horner & Swarbrooke (2005), a company that is market-oriented tries to create valuable goods and services taking into consideration customer needs. In order to do this, the company has to identify the customer needs and wants and then, on the strength of the results, create a product or a service that meets the needs. The Chartered Institute of Marketing in the UK backs up this also by saying that marketing is “identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.” (Horner & Swarbrooke 2005, 8) Also Morgan (1996, 13) brought out the importance of customers; “Marketing is about customers. It is about how to find them, how to satisfy them, and how to keep them. Without customers, there will be no money to pay staff, creditors and shareholders. Without customers, there can be no reason for the organisation to exist.” (Fyall & Garrod 2005). This goes for tourism destinations as well – they need tourists so that they thrive and succeed. So, in order to get more tourists they need to market and improve their services all the time. A good way of marketing a destination is to produce a travel guide, of course, on the basis of customer needs and expectations.

Branding is about finding the particular features of a destination based on its attributes and benefits and highlighting them in order to attract customers (Laws 2002). It is seen as one of the most important tools for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in their efforts to differentiate from competitors in today’s challenging globalised marketplace (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010).

According to Kotler (1998) cited in Laws (2002), the purpose of branding is to differentiate the product of one seller from the product of its competitor. Branding provides a so-called emotional link between product and consumer pleading to tourists’ self-image and lifestyle concepts (Laws 2002). Destination branding is also about destination image management, which, on the other hand, is about developing a destination image to fit the needs and wants of the target market (Laws 2002). In order to succeed in promoting the imagery of a destination, it needs to be consistent with the values and self-image of the target customers while not forgetting to be different from the competitors (De Chernatony and McDonald 1992 cited in Laws 2002).

Destination branding obliges a long-term commitment and focus on building a branding strategy, which takes into consideration the agendas of tourism, exporters, investment promotion agencies, policy makers and cultural organisations, too, when building a long-term development strategy. Creating a branding strategy is vital for any destination because it facilitates building a purpose and vision (Morgan et al. 2010).

Strong brands have certain common features, such as a positive reputation, which facilitates competing in the demanding market. Hence, in order to establish a competitive brand, destination managers should always start from creating a strong identity for a destination. In relation to this, another important duty of a destination manager is to ensure that visitors' experiences of a destination are positive. Destinations are completely involved in the experience management because positive experiences encourage customers to visit the destination another time and contribute to building an overall positive reputation of the destination (Morgan et al. 2010).

## **2.2 Consumer behaviour**

During the recent two decades studying people's consumption on travel and tourism products has become an essential part in tourism research because of today's extremely competitive business environment. It has become vital for companies in the travel industry to take into consideration the needs, expectations and desires of tourists' when they plan a product or a service. Consequently, such research, which seeks to find out exclusively why people buy certain products and how they make decisions, is defined as consumer behaviour. From the perspective of tourism, the research on consumer behaviour has mainly concentrated on motivations, typologies, destination choice and the decision process (Pizam & Mansfeld 2000).

Several authors have argued that motivation is a major contributing factor to the tourist's behaviour. Most theories of motivation are based on the concept of need, which was first presented by Maslow in 1943. Human needs are the base of motivated behaviour, thus, to understand human motivation, it is essential to explore what kind of needs people do have and how these needs can be satisfied (Pizam & Mansfeld 2000).

Tourist behaviour has also been explained by typologies of tourist roles (Pizam & Mansfeld 2000). Cohen (1972) was the first to introduce four classifications of tourists: 1) the organised mass tourist who buys all-inclusive tours or package holidays; 2) the individual mass tourist who is more independent and open than the organised mass tourist; 3) the explorer who try to find new places but occasionally stays in the comfortable accommodation, too; 4) the drifter prevents using any "tourist establishments". Cohen also presented



the meanings of “institutionalised” and “non-institutionalised” forms of tourism. He argued that the organised mass tourist and the individual mass tourist belong to the category of institutionalised types of tourists because they both are in interaction with the institutionalised tourist system. In turn, the explorer and the drifter are in the category of non-institutionalised types for the reason that they are not dependent on tourist establishments and their services (Cohen 1972 cited in Pizam & Mansfeld 2000, 11).

The studies of destination choice have focused on examining how consumers’ personal values affect to their choice of a particular destination (Pizam & Mansfeld 2000).

According to Laws (2002), the consumer decision-making starts with need recognition when the consumer realises the need of a product or a service. Then starts the information search, when the customer looks for information about the products available, for example, from a travel guidebook. Then, after evaluating the alternatives, he purchases the product that he finds best and then, after using it, evaluates it again.

According to Dellaert, Ettema and Lindh (1998) cited in Laws (2002), the factors affecting tourists’ decisions vary; they can include cost, availability, but also various physical factors, such as specific types of hotels, modes of transport and activities available. Some people think accommodation plays more important role when choosing a holiday destination while other people prioritize, for example, restaurants and attractions.

### **2.3 Marketing resources for travel; travel applications**

A great way to market services and attractions of a destination is to make a travel guide. Travel guides list services, attractions and other information of the destination. Awareness of tourist destinations is created and emphasized normally, for example, in the media, documentaries as well as guidebooks. An increasingly important source is the Internet (Laws 2002). Tourists’ preferences of source of tourism information have not changed much over the years. According to Muller (1998) cited in Laws (2002), in the late 90s travel guides were in the top five of the most important information sources, Internet being the first, radio and TV features second, acquaintances’ and family’s recommendations third and books and magazines fourth. According to World Travel Market (2013), nowadays peer review sites, such as TripAdvisor, are the leaders with 27%, while personal recommendations cover 18%, tourist board websites and guidebooks 14%, not forgetting travel magazines and travel sections of newspapers (5%). The rest are travel blogs, travel apps and social media.

Travel apps are an emerging industry. They are applications, for example, on phones that include travel guides. According to Siimt (2014) the current economic crisis has increased the use of mobile applications. They are cheap, maybe even free as well as quick and easy to use abroad. According to this particular report people are using more and more Internet and Social Media both when planning, during and after their holiday. Tsai (2010) also notes, that travel planning is made very easy with mobile information services. Before people had to use different types of maps, guides and books which brought many kinds of difficulties, such as, slow updates of information, having to carry several items around and difficulty of organizing them. For example, Taiwan has noticed the potential of mobile guides. According to Tsai (2010), their government will invest NT\$ 11.3 billion in enhancing the lives of the locals. Part of this money will be spent on supporting the development of a certain mobile communications service that will provide information about tourist attractions, shopping and dining facilities, gas stations and parking areas as well as other relevant information.

### 3. Tourism industry overview

Tourism has increased remarkably especially since the establishment of commercial air-line industry and the launch of the jet airplane in the 1950's. By 1992, tourism was already the biggest industry and the biggest employer in the world (Theobald 2005). Today tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing economies that have a key role in driving socio-economic progress through the creation of enterprises and jobs, infrastructure development and export revenues. Roughly 9% of employment in the world is tourism related, either directly or indirectly (Siimt 2014), and it covers 9% of the world's GDP (UNWTO, 2014). According to UNWTO (2014), international tourist arrivals grew by 5 % in 2013 despite the recent situation of the global economy. Demand for international tourism exceeded expectations and reached a record of 1087 million arrivals worldwide, up from 1035 million in 2012. The international tourism receipts also grew by 5 % reaching US\$ 1159 billion.

53% of tourists arrived at their destination by air in 2013, while the remaining part travelled by surface transport, whether by road (40%), water (5%) or rail (2%) (UNWTO 2014). It has been forecasted that the share of air transport is gradually increasing.

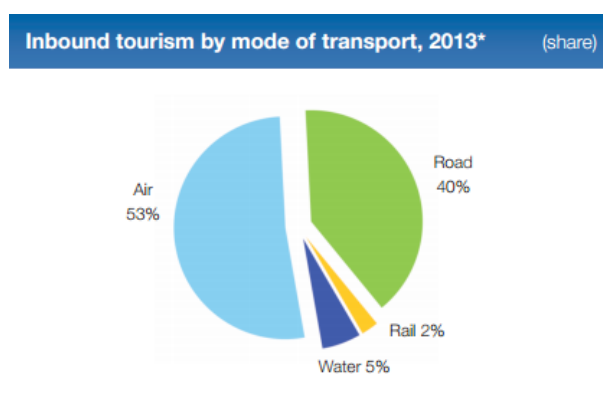


Figure 1. Inbound tourism by mode of transport, 2013. Source: UNWTO (2014)

The majority of the international travel was leisure, recreation and holidays (52%), 27% visited friends and relatives or for other reasons, such as health and religion, 14% travelled for business purposes while 7% was not specified (UNWTO 2014).

**Inbound tourism by purpose of visit, 2013\*** (share)

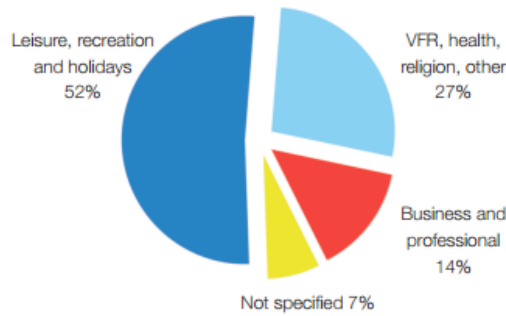


Figure 2. Inbound tourism by purpose of visit, 2013. Source: UNWTO (2014)

According to the UNWTO’s long term forecast “Tourism Towards 2030”, it is expected that international tourist arrivals will increase by 3.3 % a year from 2010 to 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by the end of 2030 (UNWTO 2014). The following figure shows the future forecasts more in detail:

**UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030: Actual trend and forecast 1950-2030**

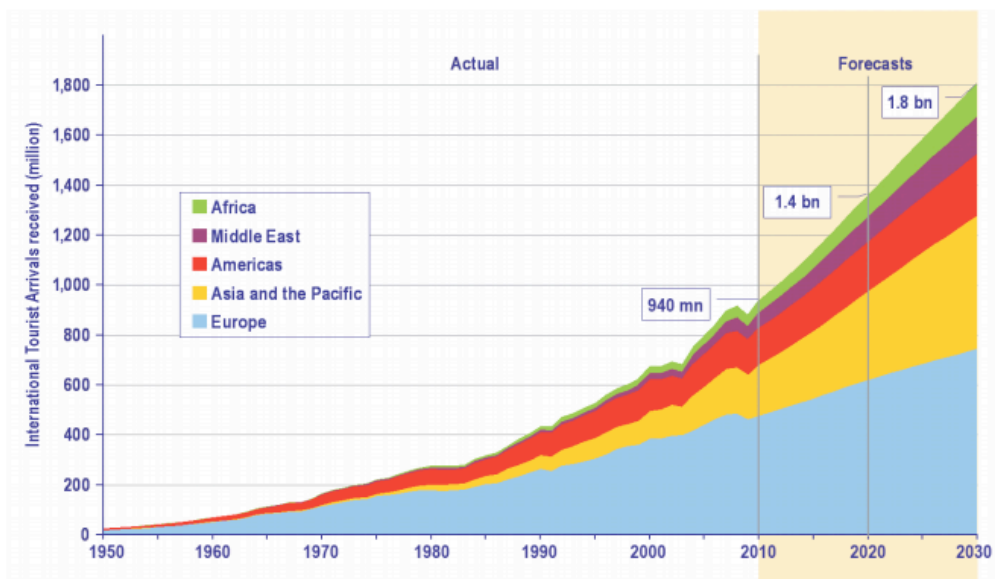


Figure 3. UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030: Actual trend and forecast 1950-2030. Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights (2015)

It is estimated that arrivals in emerging destinations will increase 4,4%, in other words double the rate compared to arrivals in advanced economies (2.2 % a year) resulting that arrivals in emerging economies are expected to exceed those in advanced economies by 2020 (UNWTO 2014). Consequently, it is forecasted that 57% of international tourist arrivals are going to be in emerging economy destinations by 2030 (UNWTO 2014).

## 4. Mexico

Mexico is a North American country between Belize, Guatemala and the United States, bordering the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico and the North Pacific Ocean. It is a large country with almost 2 million km<sup>2</sup> and over 120 million inhabitants (CIA World Fact Book 2015).



Figure 4. Map of Mexico. Source: Visit Mexico 2015

### 4.1 Basic information

Mexico gained its independence in 1810 and today the form of its government is federal republic (Karttakeskus Oy 2013). The Independence Day is celebrated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September and it is a national holiday in the country (Culture Smart 2005).

The currency of Mexico is Mexican Peso (Karttakeskus Oy 2013). Today the value of a Mexican Peso is 0.06 € (Forex 2015).

Mexico is divided into thirty-one states and one Federal District, including the capital city, Mexico City (Culture Smart 2005). Mexico state is the most populated state of the country. The northern states of the country are generally less densely populated than the states in the south (Culture Smart 2005).

Mexico's climate is strongly linked to its geography. The tropics occupy a large area of Mexico, covering two thirds of the country. The tropical climate is typical, for example, on the coasts of the Yucatán peninsula, the Gulf of Mexico and most of the Pacific coastline. However, the heat and humidity does not reach the northwest coast. In the Yucatán pen-

insula the weather is both hot and humid. There is a risk for hurricanes between the period of August and December. The interior of the country is mainly temperate. The climate varies considerably in the central plateau: winters there are cooler and drier where as summers are warmer and wetter. The rainfalls are voluminous in the south of the country (Culture Smart 2005).

The traditions are extremely respected and observed across the country. They play a huge role particularly in more rural areas, as an example in the Yucatán peninsula, where the Maya culture is predominant. In such areas, where the old traditions are still respected, people communicate with the traditional language, eat the traditional food and celebrate the traditional festivals. Young people, however, are often less interested in any kind of traditions but they tend to take part in the celebrations of such traditions that involve an enjoyable party (Culture Smart 2005). It is important to point out, too, that even though the country has its traditional languages, Spanish is still the official language of the country (Karttakeskus Oy 2013).

Today Catholicism's overall impact is remarkable in Mexico and its institutions and traditions are highly influential in the country (Culture Smart 2005). As a whole, 90 % of the total population of the country have Catholicism as their religion (Karttakeskus Oy 2013).

The average life expectancy of women is higher than men's in Mexico. Women live on the average 79 years and men 73 years (Karttakeskus Oy 2013). Still a relatively high percentage (7.6 %) of the total population are illiterate (Karttakeskus Oy 2013).

Even though traveling to Mexico is a worthwhile experience, there are certain discomforts that should be taken into account when travelling to the country, such as heat and humidity, traffic and pollution in large cities and very poorly maintained roads in rural areas. Petty crime and petty officialdom are the problems that the travellers face more often but still, statistically speaking, the chance for either of these is minor (Culture Smart 2005).

In general, Mexico is a very tolerant and hospitable destination in which to travel. Mexican people are religious but they do not judge people for not dressing modestly or behaving in a "different" way (Culture Smart 2005).

## 4.2. Mexico as a tourist destination

Boniface and Cooper (2009) have divided Mexico into three regions: the north and west, central Mexico and Southern Mexico and Yucatán. The north of Mexico, just under the United States is very similar to the areas across the border. One of the most important tourist destinations in the area is Tijuana, which attracts plenty of American tourists that are interested in gambling and sex tourism. The major city of northern Mexico is Monterrey, which is considered as the business centre of the country alongside Mexico City. The peninsula of “Baja”, in other words Lower California and the Mexican Riviera are also located in northern Mexico. Lower California is famous for destinations like Ensenada and La Paz as well as its purpose-built resorts such as Loreto and Los Cabos. Further south in the Mexican Riviera there are destinations as Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlán, which are popular winter-sun resorts and retirement areas.



Figure 5. Los Cabos. Source: Visit Mexico 2015

The central Mexico attracts with its archaeological and colonial cities, such as Tula and Teotihuacán, as well as with cities like Puebla, which is famous for its ceramics and Taxco with its silver mining industry. In this region there is also the capital of Mexico – Mexico City. Mexico City is a large metropolis with over 20 million inhabitants (Boniface & Cooper 2009).

The area of Southern Mexico and Yucatán Peninsula is the centre of the Mayan culture. Tourism in this area is mainly concentrated in the beaches of Yucatán Peninsula facing the Caribbean as well as the Mayan archaeological sites. This part of Mexico is connected to the Western Caribbean cruise circuit (Boniface & Cooper 2009). One of the most important tourist destinations in the Peninsula are the city of Cancun, located in the Caribbean Coast, and Chichén Itzá, which is a giant Maya-Toltec site in the eastern Yucatán (Lonely Planet 2010). Cancun is especially famous for its stunning beaches and turquoise waters but the destination has also a lot more to offer than the natural beauty, for example, cultural resources and a wide range of different tourist activities (Visit Mexico 2015).

Chichén Itzá is a symbol of the Mayan culture and one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The site reveals much about the people's history and therefore, it is a great place to visit for travellers interested in ancient archaeology (Lonely Planet 2010).

According to Mexico Tourism Report (2015), Mexico is considered as a tourist destination that has a lot of potential due to its well-developed tourist infrastructure and growing hotel industry. The tourism industry covers over 8% of Mexico's GDP (Boniface & Cooper, 2009) and contributes more than \$11 billion to the country's economy each year (Ely, 2013). Therefore, it is the second largest industry, after agriculture, and the third biggest foreign exchange earner within the country. According to Berger (2006) tourism also comprises about 10% of total national employment.

The government of Mexico has also noticed the potential of tourism and has been promoting it. For example, at the 39<sup>th</sup> Tourism Fair in Cancun in May 2014, the president Enrique Peña Nieto committed to invest US\$13.8 billion in the tourism industry. According to the president these funds were for three main areas. The first part was to clean beaches and upgrade colonial districts in the main destinations aiming to boost the "Magic Towns" list to 100, from 83 (Mexico Tourism Report 2015). The "Magic Towns" project is about promoting beautiful areas and districts that may branch off the main tourist routes. The second part of the fund was for expanding facilities at historic Meso-American sites as well as for building 20 new convention centres, while the third part was for modernising ports and airports in order to improve passenger capacity (Mexico Tourism Report 2015).

The prime countries that generate tourists for Mexico are United States and Canada. Only 5% of tourists originate from other countries (Boniface & Cooper 2009).

#### **4.2.1 Mexican tourism history**

According to Berger (2006, 4), Mexico started to develop its tourism in the late 1920s as a "route toward internationalism, cosmopolitanism, economic growth and development as well as improved relations with its intended market and neighbour, the United States". Even since then, the Mexican government has been making huge investments in the development of such destinations as Los Cabos, Cancun, Ixtapa and the Maya Riviera as well as building airports, roads and public services (Ely 2013). This led to the increase in tourism at beach resorts, but Mexico wanted to expand tourism even more. In 1989 Mexico created an international joint tourism project called La Ruta Maya together with Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. This project, later renamed the Mundo Maya, was created in order to promote the Mayan archaeological sites and to attract tourists to more remote areas (Ely 2013).



Mexico's tourism destinations have been changing enormously over the years. New destinations have emerged while some destinations have lost their popularity. A few good examples are Tijuana and Acapulco. The popularity of Tijuana began already in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when several bars and brothels were moved to the city. It was called a "pre-Vegas", an entertainment zone that attracted Hollywood celebrities to its casinos and resorts (Maher and Carruthers 2013). According to Maher and Carruthers (2013), the city attracted so much migration that the population tripled from 1980 to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, until drug trafficking and instability invaded the city. Tijuana has been an important destination, especially for Americans, due to being close to the U.S. borderline. The city had long described itself as "the world's most visited city" until recently it has lost the majority of the cross-border visitors (Maher and Carruthers 2013). Acapulco has also lost its popularity. After World War 2 Mexico started promoting its tourism, and one of the primary destinations was Acapulco, with its beautiful beaches and scenery (Cothran and Cothran 1998). Now, Acapulco is a good example of a Mexican city that has been invaded by several drug wars, incidents that have taken more than 60,000 lives in Mexico since 2006 (Kandell 2013). According to Kandell (2013), there were over 1000 slayings in 2012, passing Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, a country with the highest murder rate in Latin America. Later on, this report focuses on violence and insecurity in Mexico more in detail.

#### **4.2.2 SWOT analysis of Mexico's tourism**

Mexico's strengths are its variety of attractions, such as cultural attractions and beautiful beaches. Both, the Mexican government and the private sector have noticed the potential tourism has in improving the whole country and its economy, and therefore, have started investing in the tourism development (Mexico Tourism Report, 2014). According to Mexico Tourism Report (2015), the location of the country is one of the most significant pros when it comes to tourism and attracting tourists. Being next to Mexico, gives the Americans an opportunity to travel to Mexico even for a short holiday. Mexico Country Report (2013) informs that approximately 10 million Americans visit Mexico each year and the fact is that, they cover the majority of the tourism revenue in the country and are vital for it. The majority of the trips Americans make to Mexico are "sun, sea and sand" tourism. However, they have also other options if they want to have a beach holiday. These are, for instance Florida, Hawaii and the Caribbean. This leads to the weaknesses that have to be taken into consideration. What happens to Mexico's economy if the country fails to attract Americans in the future? One of the possible weaknesses of Mexico's tourism is that it is so dependent on tourist arrivals from the US. Another weakness that the country has is its increasing level of violence relating to murders and kidnaps. For example, the issues relating to insecurity have given a negative image of certain destinations of the country

among foreigners (Mexico Tourism Report, 2015). Another weakness is the extreme weather conditions, for example, hurricanes and storms. Along the negative sides there are also opportunities, for example, growth in visitor arrivals, and the possibility to buy a coastal property in the country approved by Congress in April 2013. It has been thought that this would encourage foreigners to move into the country. Another significant factor is the forecast of U.S. economic growth in 2014, which would urge them to travel to Mexico more. A major threat is the high level of violence due to the cartels and whether the federal government can prevent their operations before they expand, for example, to Central America. Another thread could be the economic slowdown in Europe that surely would put pressure on arrival numbers (Mexico Tourism Report 2015).

#### 4.2.3 International tourist arrivals

In 2013 Mexico received 23,7 million tourists with a 1.4% increase from previous year. The growth has sped up since there was no change between the years 2011 and 2012 and between 2010 and 2011 the change was 0.5 per cent. With this number, Mexico is attracting the second most tourists in the Americas, while United States is leading with 69,8 million arrivals (UNWTO 2014). The next table shows the international tourist arrivals in North America:

Destinations	Series <sup>1</sup>	International Tourist Arrivals							International Tourism Receipts					
		(1000)				Change (%)			Share (%)	(US\$ million)				Share (%)
		2010	2011	2012	2013*	11/10	12/11	13*/12	2013*	2010	2011	2012	2013*	2013*
<b>Americas</b>		<b>150,578</b>	<b>155,964</b>	<b>162,721</b>	<b>167,940</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180,865</b>	<b>198,522</b>	<b>212,911</b>	<b>229,179</b>	<b>100</b>
North America		99,517	102,130	106,404	110,091	2.6	4.2	3.5	65.6	131,284	144,255	156,360	171,044	74.6
Canada	TF	16,219	16,016	16,344	16,588	-1.3	2.0	1.5	9.9	15,829	16,834	17,407	17,656	7.7
Mexico	TF	23,290	23,403	23,403	23,734	0.5	0.0	1.4	14.1	11,992	11,869	12,739	13,819	6.0
United States	TF	60,008	62,711	66,657	69,768	4.5	6.3	4.7	41.5	103,463	115,552	126,214	139,569	60.9

Table 1. International Tourist Arrivals and Tourism receipts. Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights (2014)

In 2011, according to UNWTO (2012), Mexico was ranking as the 10<sup>th</sup> in world's major destinations for international tourism. France, United States and China were in the top, all having more than 55 million international tourist arrivals. After this year Mexico's position has been falling and in 2013 the country held the 15<sup>th</sup> place (Siimt 2014). This is mainly due to the fact that other countries', such as Thailand's, tourism has grown.

#### 4.2.4 Tourism receipts

When it comes to international tourism receipts from year 2010 to 2011 there was a slight decrease; from US\$12 million to US\$11,9 million, but after that the amount has been increasing – in 2012 the international tourism receipts were US\$12,7 million while in 2013 they were US\$13,8 million (UNWTO 2014). This particular year Mexico held the 23<sup>rd</sup> place

when it comes to international tourism receipts in the world (Siimt 2014). Tourism is also supporting directly over 2 million jobs in the country (Mexico Tourism Report 2015) and is benefitting especially the rural economies located near archaeological sites (Hoffman, Kwas & Silverman 2002).

#### 4.2.5 Future forecasts

According to European Commission (2014) and European Travel Market (2013), Mexico is one of the secondary emerging economies from a tourism point of view with four other countries; Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and Argentina. Together they are so-called SLIMMA Nations and come in the development just behind the emerging economies (BRICS): Brazil, Russia, India China and South Africa. European Travel Market (2013) highlights Mexico's potential as an emerging destination as having improved infrastructure, low taxes and high disposable income.

People's attitudes towards Mexico are changing and more and more people are choosing Mexico as their long-haul destination. Even though leisure travel is still dominating, other forms of tourism, for instance, educational trips, are gradually increasing.

#### 4.2.6 Finnish people travelling to Mexico

The number of Finnish tourists travelling to Mexico has been fluctuating up and down especially between the years 2005 and 2011. According to Sistema Integral de Operación Migratoria (2015), in 2005 Mexico received 7,7 thousand Finnish tourists by air, while in 2006 the number went up to nearly 10,3 thousand. After that the number has been varying, yet not that significantly. In 2012 the solid growth began. During that year there were approximately 11,7 thousand Finnish tourist arrivals, in 2013 12,6 thousand and in 2014 13,9 thousand. The following table shows the exact numbers of Finnish tourists travelling to Mexico:

##### REPORTE DE LLEGADA DE VISITANTES VÍA AÉREA POR NACIONALIDAD

PAÍS: **Finlandia**

AÑO: **2014**

Fuente: Sistema Integral de Operación Migratoria (SIOM).

	ENE	FEB	MAR	ABR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AGO	SEP	OCT	NOV	DIC	TOTAL
2005	897	893	862	580	448	473	378	348	375	518	596	1,378	<b>7,746</b>
2006	1,648	1,405	1,080	553	504	457	465	348	289	466	1,162	1,888	<b>10,265</b>
2007	1,373	1,459	1,054	456	407	372	340	287	273	451	1,190	2,020	<b>9,682</b>
2008	1,594	1,566	923	432	443	355	388	359	350	656	1,232	2,039	<b>10,337</b>
2009	1,708	1,660	1,066	517	272	470	373	291	276	429	1,223	1,844	<b>10,129</b>
2010	1,815	1,698	1,050	411	435	375	357	349	330	560	1,243	1,725	<b>10,348</b>
2011	1,967	1,705	916	497	418	412	285	281	353	538	617	2,152	<b>10,141</b>
2012	2,281	1,952	1,448	403	453	387	327	300	296	442	674	2,725	<b>11,688</b>
2013	2,983	2,794	833	377	409	431	318	257	322	491	657	2,776	<b>12,648</b>
2014	2,934	2,815	1,361	531	384	433	387	290	263	532	1,449	2,478	<b>13,857</b>
TOTAL	<b>19,200</b>	<b>17,947</b>	<b>10,593</b>	<b>4,757</b>	<b>4,173</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>3,618</b>	<b>3,110</b>	<b>3,127</b>	<b>5,083</b>	<b>10,043</b>	<b>21,025</b>	<b>106,841</b>

Table 2. Finnish tourists travelling to Mexico. Source: Sistema Integral de Operación Migratoria (2015)

The table shows how Finnish people's holidays to Mexico take place mainly in wintertime, from November to March. During summertime the numbers fall considerably, perhaps due to the hot weather in Mexico.

According to Sistema Integral de Operación Migratoria (2015), Finnish tourists prefer more or less the same destinations than other international tourists. Cancun is leading overwhelmingly with 9,6 thousand Finnish tourists in 2014 while Mexico City received 3,3 thousand. In addition to these leading destinations, for example, Los Cabos received approximately 200 Finnish visitors, Puerto Vallarta 150 and Guadalajara 135. Other worth mentioning destinations for Finnish tourists are Monterrey, León, Cozumel and Hermosillo.

#### **4.2.7 Tourism organisations**

Initially tourism in Mexico was a totally private sector activity and its growth was restricted in size (mainly the area of Acapulco) and at that time the product available was, in general, poor, and developments were not planned (Theobald 2005). Since the 1950s tourism has had a role in national planning in order to try improving the economic situation (Boniface & Cooper 2009). The Ministry of Tourism (Sectur), that is responsible for policy-making in the tourism industry, was created in 1975 (Ruiz Chávez 2008).

The federal government has also contributed to tourism development in the country through the National Trust Fund for Tourism Development (Fonatur), which was created in 1974 (Theobald 2005) and since then, has been responsible for stimulating tourism and attracting private investors (Mexico Tourism Report 2015). It has also been managing the development of eight coastal tourism destinations, such as Ixtapa, Cancún, Los Cabos, Loreto, the Bays of Huatulco, Nayarit, Marina Cozumel and Playa Espiritu (Boniface & Cooper 2009 and Mexico Tourism Report 2015).

#### **4.3 The top 4 tourist destinations**

According to Sistema Integral de Información de Mercados Turísticos (2014), the principal destinations for international tourists travelling to Mexico were Riviera Maya with almost 3,5 million arrivals in 2013, Cancun with approximately 2,8 million arrivals, Mexico City with 2,4 million arrivals, Los Cabos with 1 million arrivals and Puerto Vallarta with roughly 395 000 arrivals. Other popular destinations were Nuevo Vallarta, Mazatlán, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Cozumel, Puebla and Merida. The following table shows the numbers of international tourists staying overnight:

Destino	2011	2012	2013	Var % 13/12
Riviera Maya	2,947,878	3,339,073	3,490,900	4.5%
Cancún	2,245,645	2,522,876	2,816,047	11.6%
México DF	2,073,594	2,276,948	2,378,687	4.5%
Los Cabos	900,921	917,739	1,076,218	17.3%
Puerto Vallarta	379,660	394,164	394,616	0.1%
Nuevo Vallarta	234,788	258,113	347,883	34.8%
Mazatlán	378,624	336,213	328,512	-2.3%
Guadalajara	271,712	301,692	320,170	6.1%
Monterrey	155,952	205,655	304,810	48.2%
Cozumel	315,223	246,501	262,316	6.4%
Puebla	135,806	133,458	235,474	76.4%
Mérida	158,987	183,215	204,529	11.6%

Table 3. The top destinations. Source: Secretaria de Turismo, DATATUR (2015)

Taking this into consideration, the top four destinations were selected and studied more closely. The next sections concentrate on these four destinations.

### 4.3.1 Cancun

Cancun has changed dramatically during the recent 40 years from a little fishing village to a popular tourist destination. It was back in 1970 when Mexico's planners decided to engage in building a new world-class resort in the Yucatán Peninsula and the location of Cancun was ideal to this purpose (Lonely Planet 2010). The first hotel in the resort was opened in 1971 and since then building new hotels has been continuous. At present Cancun is the largest resort in Mexico and the Caribbean (Insight Guides 2014) and it receives annually four million visitors (Lonely Planet 2010).

Today Cancún is divided into two main areas, Ciudad Cancún (downtown) and Isla Cancún (the Zona Hotelera). Ciudad Cancún is the heart of the city, where it is possible to explore, for example, the city's park Las Palmas, restaurants, which offer seafood and traditional Yucatecan fare and the city's centre itself. The Zona Hotelera consists of giant hotels alongside the Caribbean coast and it is the area of the city that is considered as Cancún by many tourists. Many bars, restaurants, nightclubs and shopping centres, too, are located in this area (Lonely Planet 2010).

Cancún is especially famous for its stunning beaches and turquoise waters but the destination has also a lot more to offer than the natural beauty, for example, cultural resources and a wide range of different tourist activities. What makes Cancún a unique tourist destination is that it is a combination of modern and ancient. In the same resort it is possible to, for example, try many different sport activities, such as snorkelling, golf and jungle tours but also admire the mesmerizing flora and fauna, such as the prehistoric-looking iguanas (VisitMexico 2015), and Maya ruins in two different archaeological sites in the Zona Hotelera (Lonely Planet 2010).

However, despite the glory of Cancún, the resort has been exposed to a few setbacks, such as Hurricane Wilma in 2005, which swept away large parts of the beach (Insight Guides 2014) and destroyed area hotels. The hotels have been rebuilt but, still, the resort is facing an on-going problem because the sand is beginning to leach out yet again. Hence, the government of Mexico is aiming to reconstruct the beaches of Cancún and in order to implement the project, it is planning to excavate 5.6 cu meters of sand from around the islands Cozumel and Isla Mujeres that will be an expensive project of around estimated 600 million Mexican Pesos. Environmentalists have already expressed their concerns about the project, which can possibly lead to enormous environmental degradation (Lonely Planet 2010).

#### **4.3.2 Mexico City**

Mexico City, the capital city of the country, was once the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlan that was constructed over the ancient Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico. To navigate the city, the Aztecs built a united network of canals. Most of these canals and other Aztec structures were ruined by the Spanish who arrived to the city in 1519 and constructed modern buildings and roads (Visit Mexico 2012). Today Mexico City has the characters of a modern city and it is the country's cultural and political centre (The Green Guide 2000). However, there is still some remaining evidence on the previous city planning, such as the Aztec pyramids at the Teotihuacán archaeological site and the canals of Xochimilco (Visit Mexico 2012).

Today Mexico City is one of the biggest metropolitan areas in the world. Obviously, due to its huge size, the city has infinite options to offer for its visitors (Visit Mexico 2012). In Mexico City it is easy to move from a place to another by means of a public transport system and there are many fascinating tourist sites nearby in every direction (Insight Guides 1999). Mexico City is a heart of the country in art, literature, music, nightlife and politics (Culture Smart, 2005). According to Choong et al. (2014), in 2014 Mexico City was ranked second in international overnight visitors of cities in Latin America with 2.6 million international tourists. Lima, the capital of Peru ranked first with 5.1 million visitors.

The most popular tourist attractions of the city are located in its historic centre, which includes Alameda Park, Metropolitan Cathedral, the National Palace, Palace of Fine Arts, Templo Mayor and Plaza de la Constitución or Zocalo (Visit Mexico 2012). Zocalo is the heart of the city and it has always been the centre of the whole country (Insight Guides 1999). Mexico City's Historic Centre was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987. It has an extraordinary architecture, which include examples from pre-Hispanic and colonial periods that lie next to the 20C buildings (The Green Guide 2000).

Still, there are many other popular tourist sites to explore outside of the city centre. The largest park in Mexico City, Chapultepec Park, is the home of Chapultepec Castle, the Modern Art Museum and the National Museum of Anthropology (Visit Mexico 2012), which is considered unique in the world. The park is large and verdant and it is a perfect place for tourists to go if they want to take a break from the crowded city. Other nature-based sites in the capital and nearby are, for example, the two volcanoes Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl and a sub-tropical garden paradise Cuernavaca, which is located one hundred kilometres below Mexico City (Insight Guide 1999).

Moreover, the neighbourhoods of Condesa, Coyoacan, Roma, San Angel and Zona Rosa, are interesting places to visit, too. Many cafes, markets, parks, plazas, shops and few of the capital's most important tourist attractions can be found there. The neighbourhood of Polanco is also located nearby, where it is possible to find Mexico City's best nightspots and trendiest restaurants (Visit Mexico 2012). Thus, in Mexico City it is definitely easy to find entertainment. Among many other things, it has a vivid nightlife that should be experienced (The Green Guide 2000).

Also the University City Campus of Mexico's National Autonomous University is worth to visit in Mexico City. It presents the modern architecture and it has extraordinary murals that have been designed by some of Mexico's most valued artists. The University Cultural Centre hosts multiple events and performances (Visit Mexico 2012).

The capital city has several urban problems, such as pollution and overpopulation (The Green Guide 2000). Also the crime rates in Mexico City are the highest in the country (Culture Smart 2005).

#### **4.3.3 Los Cabos**

Los Cabos is a dual destination, which is located at the tip of Baja California Sur. It is also known as "The end of the earth" due to its geographical location, and its territory is shared by Mexico and the United States. The destination is divided into two totally distinct areas, San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, which are connected by a 33-km highway, Corridor (Visit Mexico 2012). San Jose del Cabo is the municipal head of Los Cabos but Cabo San Lucas is the most important city in relation to tourist arrivals. It is one of the most visited tourist destinations of Mexico and Latin America due to its great variety of charming qualities (Visit Bajasur 2014). Each year thousands of tourists visit the resorts of Los Cabos in order to enjoy world-class fishing, water sports, golf, shopping and spas, etc. (Visit Los Cabos 2015).

San Jose del Cabo has the characters of an authentic Mexican town including cobblestone streets, intimate restaurants and boutiques that diverge from the central main square and mission church (Visit Mexico 2012). The destination provides diverse opportunities for tourists, and some recommendable things to do are visiting the beach, La Playita, where it is possible to observe thousands of birds and eat delicious seafood, and Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de la Laguna protected by UNESCO, which is a remote place for hiking and observing a great variety of wildlife (Insight Guides 2014).

Cabo San Lucas, in turn, is known for its vibrant parties (Visit Mexico 2012) that are the main attraction and reason for many people to visit the destination. Cabo San Lucas is a major tourist centre, and in addition to its popular nightspots, it has many bars, cafés, luxurious hotels, etc. (Insight Guides 2014).

The Corridor is also continuously developing as a tourist destination, and at present, there already exist numerous resorts and activities in the destination (Insight Guides 2014). The destination's charms are based on its exclusive hotels and championship golf (Visit Los Cabos 2015).

Los Cabos have been considerably influenced by North America, due to its geographical proximity to the United States. Particularly this can be seen in developments, shopping malls, real estate and atmosphere of the destination. Nevertheless, despite the great influence from the U.S., Los Cabos have many unique features, too. One of them is definitely its distinctive nature, which unites the Sea of Cortez to deserts and mountains (Visit Mexico 2012).

#### **4.3.4 Puerto Vallarta**

There are totally three historical stages in the development of Puerto Vallarta. The first stage and the second stage cover the years between 1851, when Puerto Vallarta was founded, and 1960 (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015). At that time, Puerto Vallarta used to be a peaceful fishing village (Visit Mexico 2012). Tourism was not involved in the development of the region before the third stage, beginning from the 50's (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015). Focusing on the tourism stage, Puerto Vallarta was not recognised as a tourist destination before 1964, when John Huston's film, *The Night of The Iguana*, was filmed in the destination and had a direct impact on the following tourist arrivals (Visit Mexico 2012). Moreover, the focal infrastructure projects were built in the region between 1965 and 1971, and since then all the development has led to positioning Puerto Vallarta as a leading international tourist destination (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015).



Today the region of Puerto Vallarta consists of several distinct, fascinating tourist destinations, which all together attract approximately 3.7 million visitors annually. It is one of the most popular winter destinations of the country for the reason that it is a very diverse destination with nearly perfect, tropical climate (Visit Mexico 2012). Puerto Vallarta is especially known as a romantic destination. In 2012, it was awarded as the “most Romantic Destination in Mexico” in the Reader’s Choice Awards. Due to its beautiful landscape and endless activities, Puerto Vallarta is a perfect holiday, wedding or honeymoon destination for couples. It is also a very traditional place to visit due to its long history (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015). Moreover, Puerto Vallarta has a diverse nature, too, including golden beaches, jungles and mountains (Visit Mexico 2012).

The River Cuale divides Puerto Vallarta into south and north. In the region there are many interesting tourist sites to explore, including the following ones. The Romantic Zone is located on the southern end of Puerto Vallarta (Visit Mexico 2012) that is also known as Old town Vallarta. It is a traditional Mexican town, characterised by cobblestone streets and tranquil atmosphere. Many boutiques, cafes, art galleries and nightclubs near Los Muertos beach are located there (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015). Running from the Romantic Zone to the beginning of the Hotel Zone (Visit Mexico 2012), the Malecon is an 870 meters long boardwalk located alongside the seashore, where many bars, restaurants, sculptures, boutiques, art galleries, jewellery shops, etc., can be found, and it is a popular place among both local people and visitors. Another interesting thing to do in the southern part of Puerto Vallarta is visiting Vallarta Botanical Gardens, located in the borders of the region, where it is possible to go on a picnic and admire a broad variety of native flowers and plants (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015).

The main square, Plaza de Armas, is located in the northern part of Puerto Vallarta (Visit Mexico 2012). It is an idyllic place, which has beautiful scenery towards the sea and mountains. Many concerts, art exhibitions and cultural presentations are held there (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2015). Many resorts and restaurants are located in the Hotel Zone and Marina, also in the northern part of the region (Visit Mexico 2012). Marina Vallarta is a modern and elegant area, which provides many different attractions, such as a luxury hotel zone, world-class golf course and a lighthouse, where it is possible to admire the scenery of Puerto Vallarta. Marina Vallarta is located only a few minutes away from the Puerto Vallarta International Airport (Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board 2012).

## **5. Theory behind the survey questions**

This section concentrates on the survey questions. It is important to notify why the certain questions and response options have been chosen. All of them were chosen carefully taking into consideration Mexico as a tourist destination. For example, in the question “What is the first thing that comes into your mind about Mexico?” the response options were selected considering what Finnish people could know about Mexico through, for instance, media, internet, guidebooks or other sources. It is interesting to see how the responses differ between people that have not travelled to Mexico and people that have. Are their opinions only presumptions or prejudices?

### **5.1 What comes into people’s minds about México?**

People tend to have expectations and prejudices about things and places in general. This goes also for tourist destinations. People, without having even travelled to a country, may have certain images, even prejudices, due to the media, marketing or other people’s experiences. The following factors are some of the things that surely come to people’s minds when thinking about Mexico.

#### **5.1.1 Nature**

It has been said that there are many Mexicos inside Mexico due to the country’s extremely diverse nature. Mexico certainly has everything, from two large mountain ranges to deserts, rain forests, volcanoes, cascades, caverns and long coastlines, etc. These rich natural resources offer a great growth environment for fauna and flora. Consequently, Mexico is a great destination for those who love nature and its wildlife. Some interesting facts are that Mexico has 2,896 species of vertebrates and it has more than 50 different kinds of reserves, such as national parks and wildlife refuges, which serve the purpose of protecting Mexico’s outstanding natural heritage (Insight Guides 2014).

Mountains and highlands define wide areas of Mexico. The mountain ranges the Sierra Madre Occidental and Sierra Madre Oriental occupy a large area of the country. They run down from the border of United States to Pacific and Gulf coasts uniting in the Central Highlights, in the historic heart of Mexico. From the Central Highlights they prolong to the Sierra Madre of Chiapas, which carry on south into Guatemala and to the north until the Yucatan Peninsula, where the territory is very unique (Insight Guides 2014).

Yucatan Peninsula has a very distinctive landscape compared to other regions in Mexico. It is worth to mention that the region has one the widest underground river systems in the world. Yucatan Peninsula is especially known for its numerous cenotes (natural pools) that also form part of the river system (Insight Guides, 2014). It has been estimated that there are approximately 6000 cenotes in the region and some of these have become major tourist attractions. Cenotes are fascinating attractions to visit due to the history of the country because they once were holy places for the Mayas (Yucatan Today, 2008).

The north of Mexico is characterised by deserts. The Great Arizona Desert extends from the US border to south through Sonora, Chihuahua and Baja California and various other states (Insight Guides 2014).

### **5.1.2 Indigenous cultures and their traditions**

Some of the most important attractions in Mexico are the indigenous cultures. The heritage of the Mayas, Incas, Inuit, Amerindians and Aztecs plays a big role in the Mexican culture. Phillips (2007) brings up an interesting fact; one of the reasons Mexico is attracting tourists to its archaeological sites is the mystery behind them. For example, Teotihuacán's visitor numbers may have something to do with the fact that nobody knows who constructed it. Nowadays it is the most visited archaeological site in the country. Walker (2005) also supports this, according to her, there are people that genuinely are interested in archaeology and for that reason travel to the sites, but there are also people that travel there out of curiosity looking for new and different experiences.

### **5.1.3 Food – tacos, tequila**

It is fair to say that Mexico is famous for its cuisine. Mexican food is a combination of foods from indigenous cultures and Spanish food that arrived in Mexico after Spanish people conquered the country. In addition to this, also French, Asian and American foods have influenced in Mexican cuisine. The Mexican cuisine is particularly famous for tequila, an alcohol made in Jalisco, tacos made from tortillas and varying ingredients, as well as beer, especially the brand Corona (Meksiko 2006). Mexican cuisine is famous as “tex mex” around the world, but when travelling to Mexico tourists notice that it is much more.

Mexican gastronomy is truly very distinctive because its ingredients come both from the Old and New Worlds. Some ingredients, such as corn, chicken, chillies, chocolate, turkey and vanilla, originate from pre-conquest times, while the Spanish brought dairy products, beef, wheat, onions and garlic, among other things, to the country. The typical food in the north of Mexico is generally drier and it is served with wheat tortillas, where as in the south the typical dishes are served with corn tortillas, more sauce and less meat. Howev-

er, chillies are common for the both northern and southern traditions. The smaller towns serve especially more traditional food with a regional flavour but, still, in the country's cities it is possible to find any type of foreign cuisine, too (Culture Smart 2005).

Different sauces are an essential element in Mexican cuisine. These include, for example, salsa roja ("red sauce", which is made of fresh tomatoes) and pico de gallo ("chicken beak", which is a combination of finely chopped coriander, green chillies, tomatoes and onions). Perhaps the most known sauce outside of Mexico is guacamole. Some typical Mexican dishes include mole, which is a sauce made of chillies, dark bitter chocolate, nuts and spices. Beans are an important accompaniment in Mexican cuisine and they are often mashed and refried. Fish and seafood is obviously important in Mexico, too, since the country has extensive coastline (Culture Smart 2005).

#### **5.1.4 Violence and instability**

The image of Mexico in the media has been quite negative. This is due to the on-going drug war and violence in certain regions. It has blackened the image of the whole country.

Business Monitor International believes that Mexico has a huge potential in terms of tourism, but is still facing adversities due to the increasing violence and political instability (Mexico Tourism Report 2014). The insecurity and crime in Mexico is due to several drug cartels operating in the country, and the unpredictable behaviour of drug traffickers and people associated with this.

The Mexico Tourism Report (2014) notes that in December 2012, when Enrique Peña Nieto was elected as the president of the country, the total number of murders within the nation was 100,000. This was since the launch of military-led security crackdown in 2006 (Mexico Tourism Report 2014, 24). The majority of murders were claimed to be drug-related violence. According to Osac (2013), the reason why Mexico has not been able to maintain security and stop the drug trafficking is that many officials have collaborated with the drug cartels and worked for them. In December 2011 the Mexican government disbanded a complete municipal police force of over 900 officers in Veracruz-Boca Del Rio due to their involvement in drug cartels. In September 2012 the navy arrested 35 members of the federal police force due to having links with the drug cartel the Zetas (Mexico Tourism Report 2014).

The areas that were most affected by crime and violence in 2011 were Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Mazatlán, Tijuana and Acapulco. In these cities the number of organized crime related killings was much higher than in others. Even though these are not the principal tourist destinations for Finnish people, the insecurity has affected that

some people see Mexico as a dangerous place. Having this in mind, a question asking, “What comes into people’s minds about Mexico” was added into the questionnaire. Whether people have a positive image of Mexico or a negative.

### **5.1.5 Party – spring break**

Mexico’s biggest holiday takes place in the Easter week (Semana Santa). This is the time of the year when most Mexicans take vacation, since only Easter Thursday and Friday are public holidays in the country. During the Easter week the middle classes tend to visit the coast before the beginning of the rainy season (Culture Smart 2005).

Cancun is especially a popular spring break destination, as it is famous for its lively night-life. However, the resort is most visited by the US citizens who exclusively tend to travel to Cancún during the spring break in order to discover the city’s wild parties (Lonely Planet 2010).

## **5.2 Types of tourism in Mexico**

Like Benseny (2007) notes, thanks to the diversity of culture, climate and other resources, Mexico has a great potential for different types of tourism. Especially the following ones are highly popular in Mexico.

Some of the following travel types are considered as forms of youth tourism because they are very popular among young people. Olimpia (2011) notes that youth tourism consists of several different forms, such as educational tourism, volunteer programs, “work and travel”, cultural exchanges, sport tourism and adventure travel.

The young independent traveller market is a vital segment of world tourism due to the travel habits that are characteristic to them; young people travel more often and for longer periods of time than most of older tourists and people who tend to purchase package holidays. The segment is also continuously growing due to the rise of income among young travellers and appearance of new markets in industrialising economies (Richards & Wilson 2004).

### **5.2.1 Backpacking**

The term ‘backpacker’ refers to a travel style that is characterised by freedom and mobility. Backpacker travel seeks to explore of one’s identity and of new remote places. The

backpack as a baggage has become a symbolic status for this type of travel. It is also vital equipment for backpackers because it obviously facilitates carrying necessary goods and moving from a place to another (Ateljevic & Doorne cited in Richards and Wilson 2004).

### **5.2.2 City trip (cultural tourism)**

Perhaps one of the most significant factors that make Mexico more interesting in the eyes of tourists is the richness of culture and history. Mexican culture of the day is a mix of the indigenous cultures of the region as well as the Spanish culture that arrived there through the Spanish conquest. Some of the most interesting features of the culture, that also attract a lot of tourists, are the remains of advanced Indian civilizations from the time before the Spanish conquest. This is called heritage tourism and is also part of cultural tourism (Walker 2005). The most famous remains are Teotihuacán, which was the first archaeological site to be promoted specifically for tourism purposes (Walker 2005), and Tula in Central Mexico, and the Mayan cities in Yucatán, and Chiapas in the southern Mexico (Boniface & Cooper 2009). In addition to the archaeology, architecture also forms an important part of Mexican culture. Some of the most important attractions are, the temple of Santo Domingo in the city of Oaxaca, Guanajuato with its underground tracks and beautiful Morelia which historical centre became a UNESCO world heritage site in 1991 (Visit Mexico 2015). Another example of great architecture is the over 220 years old Metropolitan Cathedral which is the oldest and largest cathedral in Latin America, and dominates in Mexico City (Sacred Destinations 2010).

### **5.2.3 Beach holidays**

Perhaps the most popular type of tourism is sun, sea and sand tourism. Mexico is full of beautiful beaches that enable, for example, winter-sun vacations. Some of the most important beach destinations are Cancún, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta, Acapulco and Nayarit (Cruz et al. 2014).

Due to its huge importance to Mexican tourism, beach tourism has been developed throughout the country recently. According to the Mexico Ministry of Tourism, during the period of January 2007 to September 2012 there were major private investments for the maintenance and development of tourism projects, when beach destinations captured 35.1 % of total resources, destinations in central Mexico 30.7%, Mayan regions 20.9 % and the northern border 13.3% (Journey Mexico 2015).

### **5.2.4 Food tourism**

As the attraction for local produce has increased, food tourism has become more popular. According to World Tourism Organisation (2012), gastronomy has become a central part of tourism experience. According to Hall and Sharples (2003), food tourism is either about taking part in food fairs, gastronomic festivals, farmers' markets and so on, or just about any tourism activity related to food. Like noted before, Mexican food is very popular around the world. It is clear that it also attracts tourists into the country. One of the most popular food tourism destinations in Mexico is the city of Oaxaca, where different kinds of culinary tours are being held (Shenoy 2005).

### **5.2.5 Adventure tourism**

Due to having a wide variety of ecosystem's, from mountain areas to deserts and coral reefs, Mexico offers a great opportunity for adventure tourism. In Mexico tourists can experience many types of adventures, such as, rafting in San Luis Potosi, parachuting in Michoacan, surfing in La Paz, swimming with whale sharks in Holbox, rock climbing in Monterrey, scuba diving in Isla Mujeres and the list goes on (Visit Mexico 2015).

### **5.2.6 Ecotourism**

World Tourism Organisation (2002) defines ecotourism as a form of tourism that strives for minimising negative impacts that tourism could have against the natural and socio-cultural surroundings. It also supports the maintenance of natural attractions and answers that the local communities profit from tourism. This type of tourism covers all nature-based tourism where the tourist observes and appreciates the nature and the culture at the destination (Velázquez-Sánchez, Velázquez, Bohórquez Canseco, Solana Vásquez & Delgado 2015). According to López-Espinosa de los Monteros (2002), Mexican government has actively started promoting ecotourism, as they think this particular type of tourism is effective when it comes to conserving and developing natural protected areas. Ecotourism has involved into a very popular form of tourism in the country and this might be due to Mexico having the sixth largest range of biodiversity in the world (Mexico Tourism Report, 2015). One of the many ecotourism destinations in Mexico is the UNESCO World Heritage Site Sian Ka'an, which is home for thousands of species of flora and fauna and remains the largest protected area in the Mexican Caribbean (Visit Sian Ka'an 2015). At Sian Ka'an tourists can encounter the nature in several different tours, such as bird watching, fly fishing, Mayan reef snorkel, where tourists are provided with beverages, snacks and a typical Mayan lunch (Visit Sian Ka'an 2015). There, like in ecotourism in general, the authenticity is the key point.

### **5.2.7 Educational trip**

Educational tourism has its main focus on developing the education process, enhancing educational experiences by providing scholarships abroad and travel packages including camps, foreign language courses, trips, training in all fields or categories of interest. Moreover, educational tourism covers summer schools, too, which are arranged at pre-university or university levels and national and international theme-camps, too (Olimpia 2011).

### **5.3 Different accommodation types**

There are many types of accommodation in Mexico. There are different kinds of hotels, from standard hotels to luxury hotels while not forgetting boutique hotels and *posadas* referring to small hotels (Meksiko 2006). In addition to hotels, hostels are also popular in the country, especially among backpackers, as well as camping sites where tourists can either rent a tent or bring their own (Meksiko 2006). Another affordable choice is bed & breakfast or even staying with friends or family. However, if the tourist is planning on staying longer it might be reasonable to rent an apartment, which is also possible with a fairly small rent.

Mexico's hotel industry as well as investment from major international hotel chains is expected to grow in future (Mexico Tourism Report 2015). The biggest hotel chains in Mexico are Best Western, with 120 hotels in the country, Camino Real, Hyatt, InterContinental, Radisson Hotels (Meksiko 2006), Accor, Hilton, Marriot and Starwood (Mexico Tourism Report).

## **6. Methods**



This chapter concentrates on different research methods. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are being discussed and compared with each other. It is discussed also why particularly quantitative method was used for this thesis, and what measures were used. Additionally, this chapter takes the reader through every phase of the research, from the beginning until the end.

According to Myers (2009, 6) research is “original investigation undertaken in order to contribute to knowledge and understanding in a particular field”. The tourism research has proliferated during the recent two decades and, in particular, the growth of academic journals has been remarkable. Academic journals, which deal with diverse subjects related to tourism, often use quantitative or qualitative research methods. Most journals focus only on one research type of which quantitative research methods are highly dominant based on previous studies (Davies 2003). This thesis uses a quantitative research method.

## **6.1 Quantitative research method**

Quantitative research, also named as hypothetic deductive, experimental and positivist research, is rather much used in social sciences (Hirsjärvi, Remes ja Sajavaara 2007). All countries and industries have already recognised the usefulness of quantitative methods as the business and econometric tool for examining business problems. Hence, the importance of quantitative techniques to modern economies cannot be underestimated (Smith 2014).

The paradigm emphasises the importance of universal laws of cause and effect. In the background of the quantitative research there exists realistic ontology that argues that the reality consists of facts, which are possible to prove objectively. This mind set derives from the philosophical tendency, logical positivism that emphasises that all information originates from a direct sensory perception and logical inference that is based on these perceptions (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007). According to Smith (2014) logical positivism emphasises that the only true source of authoritative knowledge can be acquired from logical and mathematical treatment of data. The positivist view differs from the ideology of qualitative research that rather emphasize the interpretive view for which it is essential to understand or interpret motives and beliefs (Smith 2014).

Quantitative data refers to such data that is numerical or can be quantified to facilitate answering the research questions and meeting the objectives of the research. Hence, the data can vary from simple counts to more complex data. To analyse and interpret the data usefully require knowledge of quantitative analysis techniques. Such techniques are, for example, simple tables or diagrams that demonstrate the frequency of occurrence and

different statistics, such as indices, that facilitate comparison between the research results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007, 406). According to Hoare & Hoe (2003) graphical representation of the data also facilitates considerably summarising the research results.

The following aspects are focal in quantitative research: conclusions of previous studies, previous theories, presenting hypothesis, defining concepts, plans for sampling data, putting variables to a table format and data to a statistically processed form, making conclusions based on statistical analysing of the observational data (for example: describing the results by means of percentage tables and statistical testing of the significance of the results) (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007).

The quantitative research in this thesis was conducted through a survey, which aimed to find out young people's images or prejudices of Mexico as a tourist destination. The survey was conducted in Webropol. The link to access the survey in Webropol was shared via Facebook for the reason that the aims were set for reaching the widest audience possible among young people. The survey consists of ten questions and is divided into three different sections. There were given multiple choices for each question, from which the respondents could choose the best option for them. However, to make the survey more reliable, there was also given a choice for "something else" that can encourage the respondents to respond the most truthfully possible. Many authors consider reliability vital for any research. Straub et al. (2004), cited in Venkatesh, Brown & Bala (2013) argues that a quantitative study is invalid without reliable measures. Hence, in the quantitative research reliability is a requirement for its validity (Venkatesh et al. 2013). Hoare & Hoe (2003) states that reliable research evidence will reinforce the execution of evidence-based interventions in practice and on the other hand, unconvincing evidence might require further study.

The questions of a respondent's age and gender were located at the beginning of the survey. This survey was especially directed to young people (adults) and for that reason the age categories 18-21, 22-25, 26-30 and 30 + were chosen. The choice for 30+ was given because some of the respondents could possibly be older. The question on gender was chosen to this survey with a purpose of finding out whether responses between the two sexes vary considerably or not.

The second part of the survey, the questions from three to eight, focused on respondents' attitudes towards Mexico. The third question was set for finding out what kind of general image Mexico has among young people. There were given multiple choices that include some general stereotypes of Mexico, such as tacos and tequila, but also a choice for "something else" because this survey aimed to examine whether the particular stereotypes of Mexico are common among young people or if there exist other stereotypes that

were not taken into consideration in the survey. Following in the survey, the question on whether a respondent has or has not visited Mexico was selected for the reason that the objective of the survey was to find out if people's attitudes towards Mexico are more prejudices than based on an experience of the country. The following question intended to find out on what kind of trip young people would preferably travel to Mexico. The question was chosen because the survey aimed to discover the most popular tourism forms among young people. From the perspective of youth tourism, the question is interesting and current because it has been researched that there exist common travel interests among young people, such as educational trips and adventure tourism (Olimpia 2011). Moreover, the following question that asked the preferable length of stay of a trip in Mexico also connects with the patterns of youth tourism. For example, Richards & Wilson (2004) argues that young people tend to travel for longer periods of time, thus, the survey aims to find further evidence on this matter. The last question of the second part of the survey looked into tourist products and services that young people would rather purchase during a trip in Mexico. The multiple choices given aimed to provide diverse options from which the respondents could choose the maximum of three most necessary to them during a trip. Also an option for "something else" was given because some of the respondents might have some other preconditions for a trip that were not given as a choice in the survey.

The third part of the survey looked into different accommodation types and had an objective to research what kind of accommodation young people generally prefer during a trip. The multiple choices varied from hotels to cheaper options, such as hostels because on behalf of the survey it is beneficial to acquire information that shows evidence on young people's preferences in relation to accommodation types. The last question of the survey questioned what a guidebook should offer and what kind of information would be most interesting and useful for young people. Yet again, there were given multiple choices of which maximum of three could be chosen and there were also included a choice for "something else" for acquiring more reliable data. The question was also essential on behalf of the thesis because one relevant part of the whole project is to create a mobile guide of Mexico for CreateTrips and for that reason it is important to acquire useful and reliable data of the subject, too. Examining the results facilitates reaching the objectives set for the thesis and also creating a successful mobile guide.

## **6.2 Qualitative research method**

Whereas quantitative research method is based on figures and diagrams, qualitative uses the meanings of words and phrases, and aims at understanding the phenomenon (Kananen 2008). According to Myers (2009), qualitative research is recommendable if the researcher wants to study one certain subject more in depth. Sometimes qualitative research is used as a precognition for later quantitative research, but it can also be used as

an additional research in order to deepen the already existing material from a quantitative research (Koskinen et al. 2005, cited in Kananen 2008). Quantitative research can be aimed either for several people or just for one person. A researcher can also continue doing research as long as they feel that they have got enough information (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007).

One of the qualitative research methods are interviews. Myers (2009, 121) notes, "interviews are one of the most important data gathering techniques for qualitative researchers in business and management". According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2007), there are different kinds of interviews: structured, open and theme interviews, whereas Eskola and Suoranta (1998) cited in Kananen (2008) note that in addition to these there are also half structured interviews.

The use of Internet for interviewing has increased in the recent years and surely is increasing all the time. It is believed that Internet makes interviewing more flexible and relaxed – respondents have more time to answer and the questions can be directed for the right people (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007).

A qualitative research method was not used for this thesis, because the writers believed that a quantitative research method is probably more effective and helps them to get a wider image of people's thoughts.

In a way, a qualitative research method would have brought a bit of diversity into the thesis. Say, for example, an interview - one of the pros of using an interview as a research method is that the researcher can target it for a certain person, group or an organisation. Though, with questionnaires they can as well, but not that precisely. In addition, another merit is that it is easy to reach the respondents later (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007), when compared to questionnaires where the researchers do not know who has answered.

## **7. Results of the research and analysis**

## **7.1 Webropol-survey**

After planning the survey, it was created in Webropol by adding the questions and the answer options in the system. Then, it was shared via Facebook by creating a group to which the writers invited their acquaintances to respond to the questions.

### **7.1.1 Demographic factors**

The survey of this thesis was targeted mainly at 18-30 year old Finnish people. It was sent for them by Facebook as well as part of CreateTrips' newsletter by email. There were 219 people added to the Facebook group, mainly the writers' friends and acquaintances. In total 144 people filled in the questionnaire, which exceeded the target, which was 100. One of the respondents left blank few questions; so actually, only 141 are fully filled in.

68.1% of the respondents are female, while 31.9% is male. When it comes to age distribution, the majority (72.3%) of the respondents are from 22 to 25 years old, which was expected and hoped-for. This might have had something to do with the fact that the survey was sent for the writers' acquaintances. The second biggest age group is from 18 to 21 (14.9%). This was desirable, because the majority of the people that use CreateTrips' travel apps are from 20 to 30 years old. This way the writers get wanted results exactly from the relevant people. Just a couple of the respondents are more than 30 years old.

### **7.1.2 Finnish people's perceptions of Mexico**

When asking what is the first thing that comes into people's minds about Mexico, the majority answers "food – tacos, tequila". This covers more than half of the responses with 56.7%. 20.6% of the respondents have indigenous cultures and their traditions on their minds, while 17% has drug war, violence and poverty. 2.8% of them think about something else, such as, "historical attractions, hot temperature, Mexican people, and colours of the houses and architecture". The rest, 2.1% and 0.7% think about nature and party – spring break.

The most of the respondents have not travelled to Mexico. They cover 92.3%, while 7.7% has travelled there. The majority, 65.2%, of the people would like to travel to the country while 30.5% answers "maybe". 4.3% would not like to travel there.

### **7.1.3 Finnish people's travel to Mexico**

When asking on what kind of trip would they go in Mexico, 72.3% of the respondents would go for a beach holiday while 45.4% would go backpacking. The next most popular type of tourism is adventure tourism with 37.4%, then food tourism (34.8%), city trip with 31.9% and educational trip with 14.2%. The rest, 7.1% answered ecotourism and 3.5% thought of something else. This, "something else" was: "to visit friends or host family, luxury break: Mexico City and Riviera Maya, and do exercise, taste different food and enjoy the beach/nature".

More than half of the respondents would stay from 8 to 14 days in Mexico. They cover 53.2% of the answers. 28.4% says that they would stay from 15 to 30 days while 9.2% says "more than 30 days". The rest, 9.2%, would stay only from 1 to 7 days.

When asking on what would people spend their money in Mexico, 76.6% answers restaurants. This might have something to do with the 56.7% that thinks about food when thinking of Mexico. The second most popular thing is shopping with 51.8%, nice accommodation with 48.2%, tourist attractions 41.1%, bars and clubs with 27% and guided tours with 19.1%. 8.5% of the respondents would spend their money on something else. One of them answered: "Travelling as many places in the country as possible. I guess there are so many other things to see in Mexico than just tourist attractions, bars and shops. I would want to see the real local life there and you can't put money value on that experience". Other answers are "transportation in the country, getting around, safety, exploring the country and to go different places, buy locally made stuff, renting a car or motorcycle, football matches, good food, tours, everything I'm interested in local culture, for exploring beautiful sceneries and for something ex tempore". One of them answered that they would go with a minimum budget.

The second question was "What kind of accommodation would you prefer?" Most of the respondents, in other words 64.8%, prefer a hotel while 11.3% prefer, perhaps a more affordable alternative, a hostel. 8.5% answered bed and breakfast and another 8.5% rented accommodation, whereas 7% prefer family and friends.

#### **7.1.4 Expectations on travel guides**

When asking what Finnish people expect a travel guide to offer the answers differ a lot. A great majority, 71.1%, says that they would like it to have "good to know" information, whereas 57% would like it to contain different attractions. 54.9% would like to have restaurants in a travel guide, 36.6% would like low budget activities and 26.8% accommodation. 25.4% thinks that there should be information about nightlife, 20.4% about shopping while 4.9% would like them to contain something else, such as, history and what to avoid. Two respondents would like it to include information about locals and their favoured places to

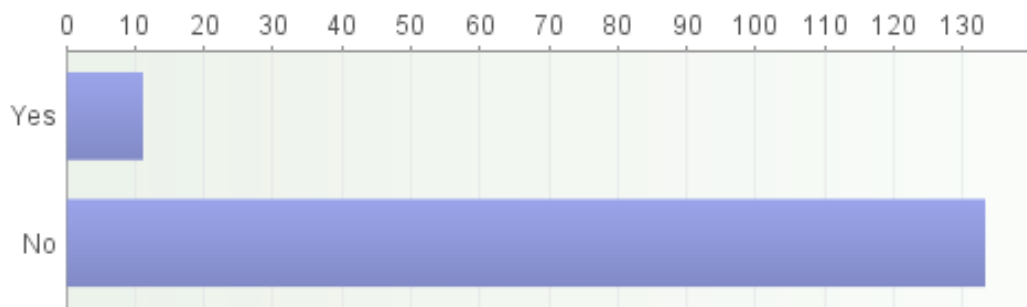
go. The answers are: “something what locals do or are going after work, weekend” and “the places were local people would go and what you should know when you go those places”. However, one respondent would be interested in things that are not at the main tourist route, things that are a bit more special; he answers: “Off the beaten track things to see and experience”. The last answer gives a more general image of a good travel guide: “The more comprehensive a guide would be, the better I would find it. Not necessarily by the number of places listed but that there would be a few “top-finds” of every category”.

### 7.1.5 The results’ reflection on statistics

It is important to put emphasis on the fact that most of the respondents (92.3 %) have not travelled to Mexico, and for that reason, the answers of those respondents can be interpreted as pre-images of the country. The result is ideal on behalf of the thesis because one of the aims was to find out whether the respondents’ pre-images are mostly positive or negative.

#### Have you visited Mexico?

Vastaajien määrä: 144



Toteutettu Webropolin avulla

Table 4. The distribution between the respondents that have travelled to Mexico and the ones that have not.  
Source: Webropol

According to the survey results, the image of Mexico seems to be more positive than negative among Finnish people because the majority of the respondents (65.2%) is interested in traveling to the country and 30.5 % of the respondents might want to travel there, too. Only 4.3 % of the respondents are not willing to travel to the country that is remarkably the minority of the participants. Hence, it can be noted that Mexico is seen as a relative attractive tourist destination to travel to among Finnish people.

When asking about Finnish people’s thoughts and assumptions about Mexico, 16,8% answers that the first things that come to their minds are drug war, violence and poverty. This is not a surprise, as when you write down the words “Mexico, violence” on Google

you find several articles about the recent incidents related to crime, drugs and violence in Mexico. For example, one is the Council on Foreign Relations that notes “*Mexico continues to experience high levels of violence as a result of illicit drug trafficking organizations and efforts to counter them.*” (CFR 2015). However, Rendón and Flores (2013) note that despite the fact that Mexico is having problems with insecurity and other conflicts the majority of the tourism destinations of the country are considered really secure and safe for tourists and can offer a peaceful tourist experience. The next table shows how the perceptions about Mexico differ among people that have travelled there and people that have not.

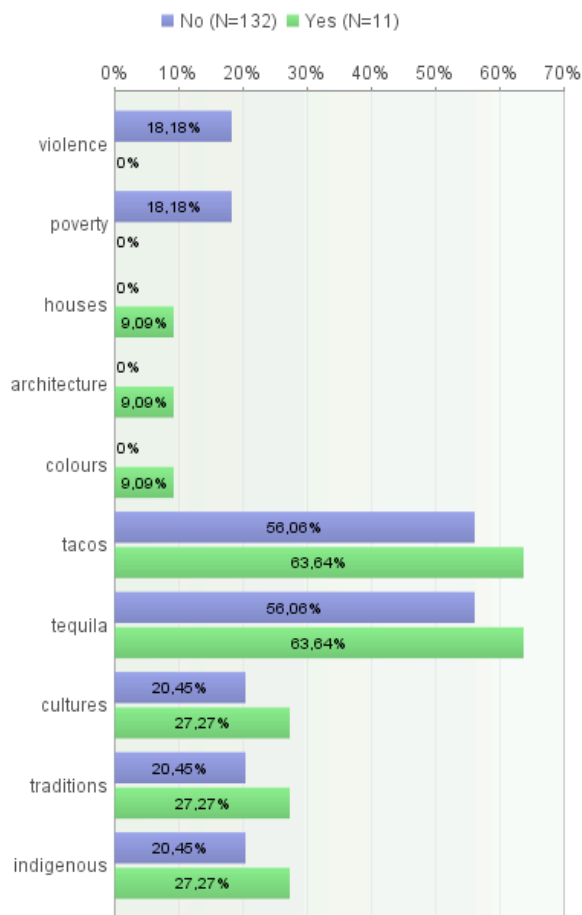


Table 5. The distribution between the respondents that have travelled to Mexico and the ones that have not and what comes first into their minds about Mexico. Source: Webropol

The ones that answered violence and poverty have not travelled to Mexico. They might just have read news and heard bad experiences about the country. However, the most dominant factors are food – tacos and tequila – which might be due to the fact that tex mex food is a rather popular dish in Finland.

According to UNWTO Tourism Highlights (2015), in 2014 the majority of international tourists (53% or 598 million) travelled for purpose of leisure. It is important to determine what is meant by leisure. Horner and Swarbrooke (2007) note that leisure is “free time to do what you want” which includes visitor attractions, cinema, holidays, theatres and so on.



27% travelled for other purposes such as visiting relatives and friends, religious reasons or health treatment, 14 % for business and professional reasons and the 6% was not stated. According to the results of the survey, Finnish people would rather travel to Mexico to enjoy a beach holiday. However, the results revealed that Finnish people are interested in exploring other sides of Mexico, too. According to the survey the next most popular types of tourism were backpacking and adventure tourism.

Moreover, based on the results, tourism related to Mexico's culture and nature attract Finnish people, too. The survey results revealed that considerably a high percentage of the respondents (31.9 %) would rather go on a city trip to Mexico, and a part of the respondents (14.2 %) would choose to go on an educational trip to the country. According to Theobald (2005) culture, education, health, skill development and wellbeing have become an essential part of the tourism experience. Theobald argues that this is due to the fact that consumers are more and more interested in self-improvement.

When analysing the results, it is important to point out that the Finnish embassy estimated that most of the Finnish people who travel to Mexico are middle age couples, thus, the answers of the interview presumably base mainly on the travel habits of this particular age group. In turn, the great majority of the survey's respondents are young people, and for that reason, it is interesting to explore opinions about the different age groups.

Theobald (2005) argues that all-inclusive holidays have become popular because many people are in a need of relaxation from the stresses of the work. The majority of the survey's respondents (64.8%) prefer hotel as an accommodation type. 11.8% of the respondents would prefer hostels if they travelled to Mexico, while 8.3% B&B. According to the survey, 53.8% of the respondents would travel there for up to 14 days, while 28% from 15 to 30 days.

In order to know what kind of travel guide would be convenient for Finnish people these following results need to be taken into consideration. When asking what would they be willing to spend their money, the majority (22%) answered restaurants. Therefore, it is important to include different restaurants in the guides. 18% of the respondents answered shopping. This means that the travel guide should include the best shopping places of the destination. Also, another important factor is accommodation. All these results help the writers to make the travel guides. The following table shows the distribution between different objects:

- clubs ● attractions ● tourist ● shopping ● restaurants
- accommodation ● something ● tours ● country ● budget

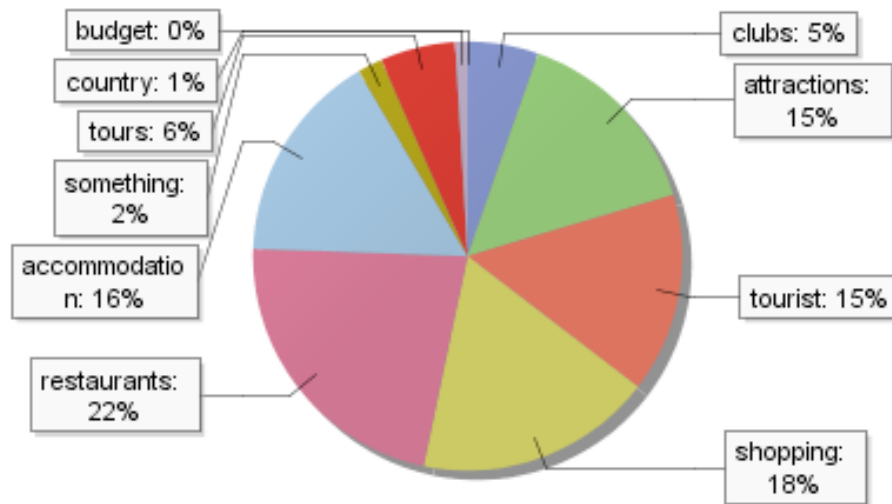


Table 6. Finnish people's spending in Mexico. Source: Webropol

The next question was quite straight forward, asking about that the respondents think a travel guide should offer. The following table shows how the answers differ:

- budget ● activities ● shopping ● nightlife ● accommodation
- attractions ● practical ● information ● restaurants ● something

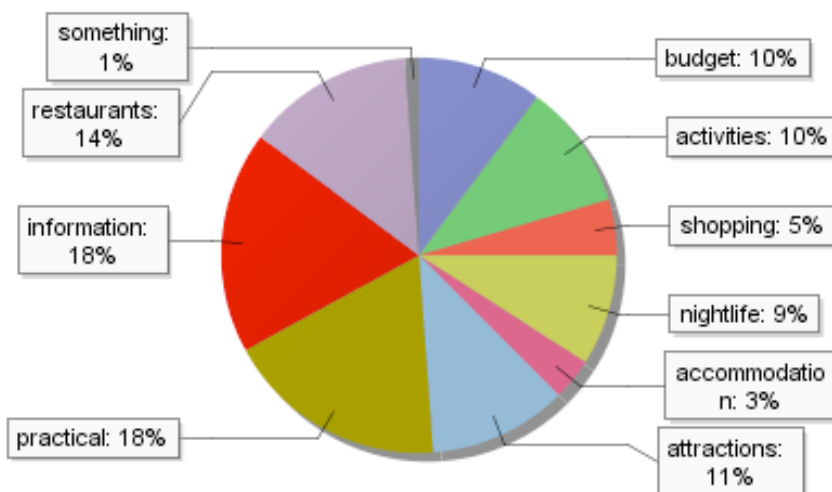


Table 7. What a travel guide should include. Source: Webropol

The majority of the respondents (18%) answered practical information. The writers thought that practical information could be, for example, transportation within the destination, general rules and hints about the local culture and habits and so on. In the end, the travel guides do not include a "practical information" section, because the company did not think it is relevant. The second most popular answer was restaurants, which could

already been seen from the previous question. Finnish people are fond of Mexican food and interested in spending their money in Mexican restaurants. Other answers are attractions, budget activities, which is especially popular among young people as well as night-life. These answers are approximate when it comes to making the travel guide.

### **7.3 Validity and reliability of the research**

Although studies try to avoid mistakes, the reliability and validity of the results might vary. For this reason, every research aims to examine the reliability of the study and there exists many different measurements and research methods for this purpose. The reliability of research means the repeatability of the measurement results. The reliability can be noted in many ways. As an example, the result is considered reliable if two calculators end up with the same result. In turn, validity is defined as the ability of indicator or research method to measure exactly what should be measured in the research. However, indicators and methods do not always correspond the reality what a researcher believes to research for the reason that the respondents might have understood some question of a survey differently than a researcher and if the researcher continues following the original hypothesis, the results are not valid (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007).

When the research, in this case, the questionnaire, is on paper, the respondents have time to answer the questions carefully. This way they have time to ponder the answers rather than answering fast. This surely makes the research more reliable as more reliable answers are expected.

The more responses the more reliable are the results. It is believed that 100 answers in a survey assure good and trustworthy results, so the target was set to 100. However, by sharing the survey around for as many people as possible, 144 answers were gained.

## 8. The travel application

This section concludes what the travel application should include according to the research done, the survey and interview results.

First of all, the four destinations (Cancun, Mexico City, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta) were chosen after studying the tourism in Mexico and especially Finnish people's travel habits when travelling to Mexico, such as, the most popular destinations. All these four were among the most important destinations in Mexico for Finnish people.

Secondly, each destination section will have subsections including necessary information about the destination. The following factors will be included:

- Accommodation at the destination (mainly hotels and hostels)
- Restaurants (from more affordable to fancier ones)
- Bars and clubs
- Shopping places (the most important malls, shopping streets and so on)
- Main attractions (their location, prices and opening times)

The travel guides were created online, on CreateTrips' webpage. They have a rather clear and easy webpage provided for the people wanting to create travel guides for their application. The guides start with a description of the destination and a photo. The photo can be taken either from Instagram or Flickr. It can also be the writer's own picture. After the description the writer adds as many sections as they like. In this case, these sections are "accommodation, restaurants, nightlife, main attractions and shopping". All these sections begin with a brief description and a photo. Inside these sections the writers add different places. It was recommended to have from 3 to 5 places (hotels, restaurants, bars et cetera), so the average in these guides is 4. After describing the places, the writers add from 1 to 3 photos. Creating these guides, it was important to make them look as interesting as possible. And this was made by adding beautiful and attracting pictures.

## 9. Discussion

This chapter concentrates on the conclusions as well as the process of this thesis, from beginning to the end. It also concentrates on writers' thoughts, concerns and what they have learnt. What could have been done differently, better? What were the challenges the researchers faced? This chapter also includes the future development and further research ideas.

While planning and making the survey, the writers were a bit worried about how to get enough responses. First, they thought that in addition to sending the survey on Facebook they should go and share it at Haaga-Helia Porvoo. Anyway, just in a few days, a sufficient amount of answers was received. They even exceeded the writers' expectations as the target was 100 and they got 144.

Like noted before, one of the respondents left a few questions blank. It is difficult to understand why this happened, either by a careless mistake or in purpose. Moreover, no one knows why the rest of the people did not answer, or even that, how many people answered through Facebook and how many after receiving the email. The survey, however, was rather clear and not too long. The most relevant thing is that the target number of responses was achieved, because the more research material the more reliable the results are.

The structure of the survey was conducted ethically and carefully. The writers agreed to carry out the survey anonymously, thus the names of participants were not asked in the survey. They also assured that the survey was completely confidential. Hence, the survey was ethically well planned and implemented taking into consideration the privacy of all participants. Moreover, the writers also thought that the anonymity only makes the survey more reliable because it allows the participants answer more freely, and, perhaps, more truthfully. As a whole, the survey was comprehensive and consistent with the objectives that had been set but, still, there are certain aspects that could have been researched further, for example by the following additional questions. For example, these questions could be used if a similar research than carried out in this thesis were conducted in the future.

The survey did not seek an answer for whether young Finnish people would like to purchase some kind of a package deal in relation to the accommodation options. This could have been an interesting question to research further in the survey because this could have provided valuable information on young people's travel habits.

As the survey researched young people's attitudes and prejudices towards Mexico, a question about whether young people are familiar about Mexico as a tourist destination could have also been included in the survey in order to get a clearer image about the level of knowledge that young people have about Mexico. The question about whether the respondents would like to travel to Mexico gave certainly an answer for the level of interest that young people have for Mexico as a tourist destination but it does not clarify exactly whether young people know much about Mexico. Nevertheless, as the question about the first thing that comes to mind of the respondent about Mexico revealed that the majority of the participants thought about "food- tacos and tequila", it can be assumed that Finnish young people are mostly familiar with these certain attractions of the country. Also, a quite high percentage (20.6 %) thought about "indigenous cultures and their traditions", and a 17 % "drug war, violence and poverty" that indicate that some of the Finnish also know about these aspects in the country. After all, the question on how much young people know about the country as a tourist destination or in general could have been more clarifying.

During writing the thesis, one of the challenges that the writers faced was the language. Both of the researchers' first language is Finnish, so it was a little challenging to do a whole thesis in English. In addition, some of the material and references were in Spanish, so the researchers faced even another challenge. However, they both have studied Spanish and lived in Mexico, so they gladly took up the gauntlet. Being able to use a variety of sources, in different languages, enabled the researchers to get a lot of diverse information, which then made the whole research more reliable. For example, the statistics of Mexico's tourism was only available in Spanish so it would have been impossible to get that kind of information without knowing the language. Even though, at times it felt quite demanding to have three different languages in one's head, but it also was rewarding as the results and material were wide and versatile.

Other major challenge that the writers faced was the extent of the topic. There were certainly no worries about the versatility of the thesis, but rather about a too broad topic. The writers thought at first that the thesis could be demanding to carry out due to the limit of time that they had planned for finishing the thesis but then, finally, they decided to stay with the original thesis plan anyway and use only more time for writing the thesis. The writers agreed that this was a feasible solution because giving more time for putting the thesis together truly made the whole project more comprehensive and versatile. However, the writers also worried at first whether the extent of the thesis might become confusing to the reader because the writers had decided to take so many different research tasks. In the end, the thesis turned out to be consistent in the writers' opinion because it proceeds according to the reporting instructions and includes all the needed sections.

Furthermore, the writers felt that it was lightly challenging to carry out the survey with a pair because they both had mostly studied and written their previous studies or essays on their own. However, the writers could easily work together and the thesis was put together without any problems. Writing the thesis together was a great learning experience for the both writers, not only for all the new information that they embraced during the gathering of information, carrying out the quantitative research, planning and implementing the mobile travel guide and writing the whole thesis but also for the reason that they learnt to work better in a group and take into account the other's ideas and opinions. For this reason, working with a pair can make the thesis more versatile because the considerations of the both are included in the content. The writers agreed that the outcome of the thesis shows evidence that this is true because in the end the thesis became informative and interesting to read.

Even though there were some demanding issues that the writers had to deal with the whole writing process, in the end the writers were pleased with the outcome of the thesis. The writers learnt so many new things about Mexico while researching information about the country and its tourism, even though the writers already knew many aspects about Mexico as a country and a tourist destination because they had both studied and lived there. The writers were already familiar with many cultural elements of the country, and the new information that the writers acquired mainly related to the history of the country and its tourism. The writers also learnt more from different types of tourism in Mexico and some new destinations that they had not visited. Perhaps the biggest challenge for the writers was to write only from the academic perspective using the relevant literature and not mixing the own opinions in the content, too.

The writers also improved their skills in using a quantitative research method. Not only did they use a quantitative research method, they also got to know to a qualitative research method. The writers are now able to distinguish when to use quantitative and when qualitative research methods. Moreover, the writers learnt from the previous studies that it would have been possible to combine the both studies in order to achieve more comprehensive and reliable data. Also the structure of the both research methods is now clear to the writers, and they can now exploit what they have learnt in their future studies. Hence, on the base of the knowledge that the writers have acquired about the research methods, the writers can easily approach other studies in their future professional life.

Moreover, the co-operation with CreateTrips was also a valuable experience to the writers in terms of their professional development. The writers learnt how to create a brief but useful travel guide about Mexico taking into account the visual and informative aspects. Overall, planning and implementing the travel guide for CreateTrips was a practical and creative experience to the writers. Creating the guide was relatively easy because the

company had already a prepared application for travel guides, where the writers only needed to fill in their information that had been acquired on the basis of the survey results, thus, taking into consideration the aspects that young Finnish people expect to read from a travel guide.

### **9.1 Suggestions for future research**

Finally, the writers think that it is important to give some suggestions for future research that are based on the facts that they have observed during writing the thesis. Firstly, the writers want to suggest that the future research of Finnish people travel to Mexico could mostly focus on researching the young people's travel interests and their thoughts about the country in a larger scale than in this thesis. In the end, many researches of the same topic only make the results more reliable. Even though this thesis used only a quantitative research method, the writers recommend that a future research on the same topic would use both the quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to get more specific and reliable results. In addition, when conducting a quantitative research, it is always important to aim for as high amount of responses as possible. In this thesis there were definitely more participants than was expected but surely even more responses would provide even more reliable results.

The survey carried out in this thesis was ideal for finding out whether Mexico is seen as an attractive destination to travel to among the young Finnish. Many respondents found Mexico as a destination that they would like to see and explore, but still a great number of the respondents were not interested to travel to the country. Hence, the future research could focus more specifically on the prejudices about the country.

As an example, the research on this topic could include a question on whether the young Finnish consider Mexico as a dangerous country. In order to qualify positive answers given, in the research there could be included a follow-up question about why a respondent considers Mexico as a dangerous country. The question could be formed in such a way that it would allow the respondent answer freely to the question without any suggestions on the part of the writers. In the end, the question in the survey of this thesis about the first thing that comes to the mind of a respondent about Mexico might had been a slightly leading question because the writers had already given multiple answers from which the respondents could choose, such as "drug war, violence and poverty" that a relatively high percentage of the respondents had chosen, even though there was also an option for a free answer. Thus, in a case that the topic of the survey will be researched and developed further in the future, it is recommended that the writers will be careful with leading questions, for the reason that it is possible that a research might result more reliable if the answers are not given in advance and the respondents must answer in their own words.



With a similar question it is at least important to include one option for a free answer as the writers had done and not to give all the options in advance.

Future research could also focus on finding new areas of interest for tourists apart from beaches that seem to be the most interesting attraction to young Finnish people at the moment according to the survey results. Mexico has a lot to offer for its visitors and it has much potential to become a more popular tourist destination. For example, the survey results indicated that backpacking, adventure tourism and food tourism are of interest to the Finnish, too. These forms of tourism could have potential to bring something new to the Finnish market.

Future research focusing on the examples given can possibly result very useful because more research on the same topic enables understanding better the interests and attitudes of the Finnish towards Mexico as a tourist destination. Once the interests and attitudes are recognised better, it will facilitate marketing the country's tourist destinations. Especially the quantitative research method is ideal for gathering a high amount of responses but as noted, it is profitable to combine the both research methods because some questions might require more clarifying and comprehensive answers.

## **9.2 Suggestions for improvement**

Even though Mexico is receiving more and more Finnish tourists, they should still try to market more Mexico as a tourist destination in Finland. It is still such an unknown destination for Finnish people and many people still have prejudices against it. Hopefully the CreateTrips travel application would make Mexico more popular among Finnish people.

In terms of marketing Mexico to Finnish people, on the basis of the survey results, it is highly recommended that travel businesses would devote to creating a safer image about Mexico as a tourist destination. As the survey results revealed, the prejudices that Finnish people have towards Mexico relate strongly to such issues as drug war, poverty and violence that are mostly reported in the media in Finland. For this reason, it is extremely important that travel businesses would focus on achieving more positive visibility for Mexico in the media. Improving Finnish people's perceptions of security in the country is a recommended starting point for travel businesses because the security reasons might prevent many Finnish people from choosing to travel to the country. The marketing could focus on promoting safe touristic areas in Mexico and the many sides that Mexico as a country has that provide a lot to discover to tourists. Mexico is certainly an exotic and a diverse destination to Finnish people, and for that reason it offers good opportunities in terms of creating new markets that travel businesses could promote in Finland.

The survey results suggest that young people engage attention mostly to such forms of tourism as beach tourism, backpacking, adventure tourism, food tourism and a city trip. These are especially some markets that travel businesses can consider developing further when promoting Mexico as a tourist destination to young Finnish people. As an example, at least the survey results give easily the idea that Finnish people are mostly familiar with Mexican food as tacos and tequila, and most probably in a way that they are consumed in Finland that do not correspond exactly the reality of the traditional Mexican cuisine. Therefore, food tourism could be marketed in Finland by bringing up some tempting details that Mexican cuisine has to offer to visitors and recommending the best places to visit to taste the different traditional food.

Moreover, based on the travel interests that Finnish people have, it is recommended that travel businesses would try to widen the awareness of new and distinctive destinations to Finnish people. In Mexico there are so many interesting and safe places to travel to, such as the destinations that were presented in this thesis, that are ideal places that Finnish people, regardless of age, could explore more. In this respect, travel business like CreateTrips are in a great position to increase people's awareness about unknown, exotic places through their travel guides. Perhaps if many followers of CreateTrips seem to be interested in the writers' online travel guide of Mexico, the company could add more content in the guide later on, such as information about other fascinating Mexican tourist resorts that might be of interest to the readers.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

This thesis focused on improving the image of Mexico as a tourist destination by providing information about the country in general and as a travel destination. The thesis started with an introduction about the country and the characteristics of its tourism. The country's history of tourism was presented and the tourism's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were analysed. Moreover, the four popular Mexican destinations; Cancún, Mexico City, Puerto Vallarta & Los Cabos were introduced by providing suggestions to the readers about a couple of interesting things to explore in the destinations. In order to improve the image of Mexico by marketing the destination, the writers also studied important factors relating to tourism research in general that were presented briefly in the thesis. At least the consumer behaviour and the main concepts of marketing are vital to understand when creating any service or product, such as the mobile travel guide relating to this thesis.

The research was carried out in order to get current information on Finnish people's interest towards Mexico as a tourist destination. The survey concentrated on the attitudes of the young people towards Mexico. Indeed, the survey results indicate that traveling to

Mexico has a relatively high level of interest among young Finnish people, and for this reason it would be profitable that Mexico became better marketed in the future in Finland. Creating the mobile travel guide with CreateTrips gave the writers an excellent opportunity for this because it certainly increases the visibility of the country in the Finnish network. CreateTrips can now further develop the travel guide if they wish so, and introduce new attractive destinations for Finnish people.

However, even though the survey results indicated that a high percentage of the young Finnish people would like to travel to Mexico, the results also revealed that many respondents have certain negative images of the country relating to drug war, violence and poverty. Thus, it can be noted that Mexico has a lot of potential as a tourist destination on the Finnish market but the reputation of the country's safety is definitely a major factor that prevents the Finnish traveling to the country. As pointed out in the thesis, in addition to achieving a great visibility online, marketing is also a great tool for creating a better image of the country as a whole. In this respect, travel businesses like CreateTrips are in a great position to improve the prejudices about the country by means of effective marketing that was suggested as a future improvement in this thesis.

According to the research, beach tourism attracts the Finnish people regardless of the age. It seems strongly that Mexico's beach tourism is already a well-known attraction among Finnish people but, however, the list of things to explore in Mexico is endless, and apart from the long coastlines, there are still so much more things to explore.

Overall, according to the research, it can be agreed that travel to Mexico is most likely going to increase in the future among Finnish people, and it has the potential to become a very popular travel destination for them. The writers hope that this thesis gives some valuable ideas and recommendations to the readers for future research that can help towards improving the image of Mexico among Finnish people. The writers also recommend that travel businesses will commit on creating new ideas for marketing the destination. Finally, this thesis can work as a basis for future research because there is still definitely much more to discover about the topic, thus further research is warmly recommended by the writers.

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## Attachments

### The questionnaire

1. What is your age?
  - ◇ 18-21
  - ◇ 22-25
  - ◇ 26-30
  - ◇ 30+
  
2. What is your gender?
  - ◇ Female
  - ◇ Male
  
3. What is the first thing that comes into your mind about Mexico?
  - ◇ Nature
  - ◇ Indigenous cultures and their traditions
  - ◇ Food - tacos, tequila
  - ◇ Drug war, violence and poverty
  - ◇ Party – spring break
  - ◇ Something else? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Have you visited Mexico?
  - ◇ Yes
  - ◇ No
  
5. Would you like to travel to the country?
  - ◇ Yes
  - ◇ Maybe
  - ◇ No
  
6. Imagine that you travel to Mexico, on what kind of trip would you go?

- ◇ Backpacking
- ◇ City trip
- ◇ Beach holiday
- ◇ Food tourism
- ◇ Adventure tourism
- ◇ Ecotourism
- ◇ Educational trip (study exchange, work placement etc.)
- ◇ Something else? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long would the visit last?

- ◇ 1-7 days
- ◇ 8-14 days
- ◇ 15-30 days
- ◇ more than 30 days

8. On what would you be willing to spend your money in Mexico? Choose a maximum of 3.

- ◇ Nice accommodation
- ◇ Tourist attractions
- ◇ Guided tours
- ◇ Shopping
- ◇ Bars and clubs
- ◇ Restaurants
- ◇ Something else? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What kind of accommodation would you prefer?

- ◇ Hotel
- ◇ Hostel
- ◇ Camping site
- ◇ Bed and breakfast
- ◇ Rented Accommodation
- ◇ Family and friends

10. What information do you expect a travel guide to offer? Choose a maximum of 3.

- ◇ Accommodation
- ◇ Restaurants

- ◇ Attractions
- ◇ Shopping
- ◇ Nightlife
- ◇ Low budget activities
- ◇ Good to know (practical information)
- ◇ Something else? \_\_\_\_\_

**Linkit oppaisiin:**

Los Cabos:

<http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDkhdW0CgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICA6JmGCQw>

Cancun:

<http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDkhdW0CgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICAgOSRCgw>

Puerto Vallarta:

[http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDk\\_cDoCgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICAgPKICgw](http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDk_cDoCgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICAgPKICgw)

Mexico City:

[http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDk\\_cDoCgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICAgOSRCgw](http://www.createtrips.com/store/travelbook/ag1zfmNyZWF0ZXRYaXBzcyj8LEghCYXNIVXNIchiAgIDk_cDoCgwLEgZBdXRob3lYgICAgICAgAoMCxIKVHJhdmVsQm9vaxiAgICAgOSRCgw)