SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET TOOLS IN THE HOSPITALITY MARKETING

Aurelie Krahl

Bachelor's thesis
March 2013
Degree Programme in Tourism

TAMPEREEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Tampere University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in Tourism

KRAHL AURELIE:
Social Media and Internet Tools in the Hospitality Marketing

Bachelor's thesis 71 pages, appendices 7 pages
April 2013

_____

The purpose of this thesis was to show hospitality professionals how important social media and Internet tools are nowadays in hospitality marketing. The target companies of the research were hotels and hostels, and the goal of the research was to help them to know how to develop their presence on the web and what advantages it would have for them. This is done by enlightening them about social media, but also give them advices and tips about internet tools and social media uses for businesses.

The data of this study were collected from literature, Internet expert articles, webpages analysis and by using a questionnaire survey. The aim of the survey was to learn about the customer Internet behavior concerning the habits before, during and after booking an accommodation. The results of the survey were analyzed using quantitative data analysis method. Other data were also analyzed using quantitative analysis method.

Findings pointed out that when preparing a trip, or even during and after, customers are widely using the Internet. They will share on social media with their friends about their trip, and beforehand they will read other customers' reviews about accommodation. For companies using the social media can have a great impact on their marketing, thus their sales, as it helps to attract more customers.

The results of the research indicate that customers are using the Internet more and more for buying and other purposes, and social media are still getting more users and developing for businesses. Thus it is recommended for hospitality professionals to start using social media besides their website in order to keep up-to-date with e-marketing.

_____

Key words: social media, e-marketing, hospitality, tourism

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

E-marketing, e-tourism, web usability, customer behaviour, and social media phenomenon are the main themes of this thesis. These themes will be introduced in detail in the following parts of the thesis.

This thesis researches the customer behaviour related to accommodations and the advantages of social media and Internet tools for hospitality businesses. No similar research was conducted before. This research provides information, which will help the hospitality professionals to develop their e-marketing strategies, and customer relationships. This is done by giving them tips and advices about the different Internet tools and social media.

The research aims at determining the needs and wants of customers and potential customers related to accommodations: before, during and after the trip. Additionally it aims at ascertaining the advantages of Internet tools and social media for hospitality companies.

The research is conducted as a quantitative research. Data collected contained a questionnaire survey, experts' web articles, analysis of hotels websites and social media pages, and literature.

Chapter 2 presents a more detailed and specified explanation of this introduction.

2 RESEARCH PLAN

This chapter explains how the thesis was carried out and why the author chose to research this specific topic. It also gives explanations about the concepts and theories used for the research and analysis, and present the questions that the author wanted to answer. In addition, it also describes what kinds of data were collected and what methods were used.

2.1 Research topic

 The author chose to research the use of social media and Internet tools in hospitality marketing. During the last years, social media and Internet tools have become more and more important for the tourism business, and it is now essential for tourism professionals to know how to use them properly in order to promote their business and to attract more customers. Moreover, with the development of Internet tools and social media during the last decade, the behaviour and habits of travellers have changed. The ongoing processes that take place before, during, and after their trip have evolved.

With this research, the author wanted to show to hospitality professionals the many benefits of the use of internet tools as well as the use of the social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest for example. Thus the goal of this research is that the results of analysis of all the collected data would benefit to accommodation such as hotels and hostels, in order to help them to develop their presence on the web and show then what advantages it would have for them to do so. Helping them would be done then by enlighten them about the social media phenomenon, but moreover by giving them tips and advices about Internet tools and social media uses for businesses.

The objectives of this research is to show professionals in the hospitality sector how to promote their establishment with the help of social media and internet tools, and thus also help them to attract more customers.

2.2 Concepts and theories

2.2.1 E-marketing

In order to understand the concept of e-marketing, e-business and e-commerce need to be defined first. E-business is the concept that contains all the different components of information technologies used in business. It includes of course purchases and sales, but also services related to customers and collaboration with business partners. E-commerce is a branch of e-business making business online across the extended enterprise. Few advantages from e-commerce that are good to mention are its availability (24/7 and direct access), its larger-scale (available all around the world), and its interactivity (customer service is improved). (Rowley 2002, 2 – 9).

After explaining those wider concepts it is now easier to understand what e-marketing is. E-marketing is considered as the marketing side of e-commerce. It is what a company does to communicate about, promote and sell their products and services around the Internet. Nowadays Internet has become a powerful tool for companies and their customer relationship management. Companies can interact online with their customers to learn more about their habits, buying behaviour, needs and wants. Moreover customers can ask questions to the company directly and give online feedback (known as reviews). Thanks to this online interaction, companies can increase their customer value and satisfaction. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens 2006, 691.)

The part of e-marketing that the author wants to highlight with this research is the advertising part. Thus it needs to be explained. Advertising is a form of marketing communications, which deals with getting information about a company, its products and services, or any other message, to the market. (McCabe 2009, 208.)

There are few types of advertising methods that will be useful to know about for this research. First, online marketing, which includes e-customer relation management and e-newsletters, is about placing advertisements on websites or sending them through e-mail database. (McCabe 2009, 216.) Next, there is e-mail marketing, which is a method used by direct marketing. To be able to use it, companies need first to build up customers' database. For example when a customer will ask a question on a company's website or buy a product on a website, it will be asked from him to fill in some contact details such as email address and demographic details. It is very important for companies to have a customer database with email addresses, as e-mail is nowadays usually used to confirm a booking, to send details of an itinerary or to send a customer reference number. (McCabe 2009, 268.) Lastly, there is viral marketing, which is the word of mouth used online. This has developed more and more over the last few years with the increase of social media on Internet. Viral marketing involves the customers, who will decide to share good or bad reviews about whatever product or service they liked or did not like. They will share relevant and striking content reflecting their personal opinions and values mostly by email or on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Tripadvisor to name the most famous ones. (McCabe 2009, 269.) Viral marketing reflects the way the marketing message goes from person to person like a virus spreads. The Internet and also the so-called smartphones have made it easier, with potential worldwide coverage. An effective way to stimulate viral marketing is for a company to publish something that users want to share with their friends because those will find it interesting or fun. (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan 2009, 270.)

2.2.2 E-tourism

E-tourism is all information communication technologies (ICTs) applied to the tourism industry. It reflects the digitisation of the processes and value chains in the tourism travel hospitality and catering industries. E-tourism includes all business functions such as e-commerce, e-marketing, e-customer relationship management, e-finance, e- human resources management, e-accounting, e-production, e-strategy, e-planning and e-management for all sectors of the tour-

ism industry i.e. travel, transport, leisure, hospitality. Information is the essence of tourism, so technology is essential for the industry to operate as its services are intangible. Nowadays ICTs are a necessity for the marketing, distribution, promotion and coordination of the tourism industry. If they are used efficiently, the Internet and the ICTs enable tourism companies to:

- interact efficiently with their customers and personalise their products and services
- develop tourism intermediation and increase the selling points e.g. the company's own website, Booking, Expedia and Opodo (mostly for hospitality companies)
- allow customers to communicate with other customers e.g. via Tripadvisor on the company's profile page
- provide location-based services by integrating data, content and multimedia information on Google Maps and Google Local

As the author wants to concentrate on the hospitality sector of tourism, it is important to know how hotels use ICTs. They use them in order to expand their operations, manage their inventory and maximise their profitability. ICTs systems simplify both in-house management and distribution through electronic media. Hotels also use ICTs and the Internet to sell their products or services and to market their company. Online presence is necessary in order to allow both individual customers and the travel trade to access precise information on availability and provide easy, efficient, inexpensive and reliable ways of making and confirming reservations. (Cooper, Fletcher, Flyall, Gilbert, Wanhill 2008, 626 – 639.)

2.2.3 Web usability

Usability as a general term is used to define how easy something is to use. It refers to how fast people can learn to use something, how efficient they are while using it, how memorable it is, how error-prone it is, and how much people like using it. If people can't or won't use a feature, it might as well not exist at all. (Nielsen, Loranger 2006, XVI) This can easily be applied to the web, and especially to the websites that companies create. In this research the author will

show how important is web usability for hospitality companies to keep customers on their website and make them come back on it.

A website can be used as a communication channel to raise awareness, build brand, shape customer opinion and communicate special offers. But a website can't just be there and no one takes care of it. A daily web presence is needed and can be used to add value to customers at the different stages of the buying process, whether it is before, during or after the sale. (Smith, Chaffey 2002, 21.)

2.2.4   Consumer behaviour

The consumer behaviour is the ways in which customers who buy products or services behave in their attitudes and values towards what they buy (Page 2003, 61). There are 7 key factors influencing consumer behaviour:

- Motivations: inner drives that people have which cause them to do something to satisfy their needs. In tourism, there can be e.g. need for escape, freedom, happiness, going far away.
- Culture: norms, beliefs and rituals, which are unique to each individual. Beliefs are views that individuals have about most aspects of their life. Concerning tourism, people will have beliefs about companies, products and services, tourism offers, and destinations. Those opinions can be positive, e.g. trust in a certain hotel, or negative, e.g. a feeling about lack of security in a destination.
- Age and gender: being male or female; young adults, adults or senior can influence consumer behaviour.
- Social class: position one occupies inside society, determined by such aspects as salary, capital, education, profession, family reputation, value of home and neighbourhood.
- Lifestyle: the way people allocate time, energy and money
- Life cycle: stages through which people might go through as they grow older e.g. single, young couple without kids, young couple with kids, mature couple without kids, old couple without kids, widow. It can also be applied to tourism, as travel habits and behaviours vary as people move

through their life cycle.

- Reference groups: entities that have an influence, direct or indirect, on a person's attitude or behaviour, e.g. family, friends, work colleagues. (Hudson 2008, 41 – 52.)

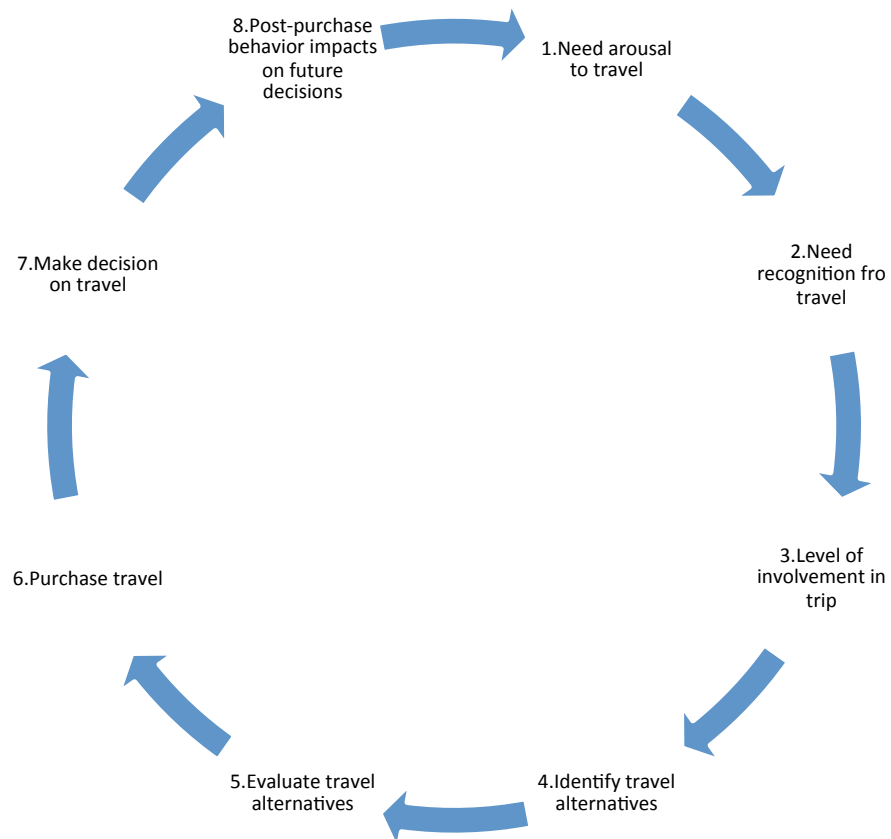Consumer behaviour is usually a process of stages, as seen in the model below:

Figure 1. Model of consumer behaviour for buying a trip (Cooper et al 2008, 56.)

2.3 Research questions

In this bachelor thesis, questions linked to the topic of the use of social media and Internet tools in hospitality will be answered. The author main researches will focus on answering those main questions: what are the social media and Internet tools that the hospitality companies such as hotels and hostels should use nowadays, why they should use them and how they should use them? Closely linked to those main questions are few sub-questions that will be answered through the research: Do the hotels offer what customers are looking for regarding social media and Internet tools? How do tourists and travellers organize their trips nowadays? Is Internet an essential part of their process for buying a trip (before, during and after the trip)?

2.4 Data and methods

In order to answer the research questions, primary and secondary data will be collected and analysed. As primary data, the author will make a survey, using a questionnaire targeting the customers or potential customers (tourists and travellers). Survey and questionnaire need then to be defined. Surveys are information collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences and behaviour (Fink 2006,1). A questionnaire is one of the tools used to carry out a survey. It is intended to make the communication easier. Different types of data can be collected that way:

- Opinions: it can ask what respondents think about something or how they feel about something.
- Behaviours and attitudes: it can ask what respondents do or what their intentions are.
- Attributes: it can ask about respondents' characteristics such as age, gender, education, occupation. (Altinay, Paraskevas 2008, 120-121.)

For this research, the questionnaire will aim at determining the travellers' behaviour before, during and after a trip. The author wants to find out in what extent are Internet and social media a part of the customers habits in the travelling process. Closed questions will be used in this questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaires will be processed with a statistical data processing program named Tixel. The processed results will then be analysed using the quantitative data analysis method, which helps researchers to answer their research questions by expressing the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of people in quantitative terms (Altinay et al 2008, 194).

Besides those primary data, secondary data will be collected by the author. Those data will be articles published by tourism or marketing professionals about the topic, and web-pages or social media pages of Tampere accommodation in order to determine which are using those tools efficiently or not efficiently in order to   advise them on what to do to use those tools in a better way. By collecting those data the author wants to determine which social media and Internet tools are good to be used by hospitality businesses, and what advantages they have in the hospitality marketing and customer relationship. Theories about e-marketing, customer behavior and web usability will be used to support the analysis of the data. Those secondary data will also be analysed using the quantitative data analysis method.

2.5   Structure of the research

Chapter 3 gives explanations about the social media phenomenon that has been getting more and more important in the last few years. It will also describe few of the main social media, especially those which are important for hospitality marketing.

Chapter 4 is about the customers' behaviour in the buying process for an accommodation, before, during and after, related to the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Chapter 5 concerns the social media in the hospitality marketing, related to the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Chapter 6 concerns the Internet tools in the hospitality marketing, related to the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Chapter 7 concludes the research and sums up the results and advices found.

3   THE SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENON

This chapter introduces what social media are by presenting them generally and also by defining more specifically each type of social media. Moreover the author will here describe few social media that are worth knowing for tourism businesses. In chapter 5, the author will then go deeper concerning those social media.

3.1   Generalities about the Social Media

Social Media are usually sites where users can add their own content but do not have control over this site in the way as they would with their own website. Social Media allow users to reach hundreds, thousands or even more people at the click of a mouse to send them a message. Those recipients can then also send that message to untold other masses of people. It is what is usually called "sharing" in the social media world. That way, customers are interacting with brands and contributing to marketing on a scale that was not imagined by most marketers ten years ago. (Charlesworth 2009, 286-291.)

There are several types of Social Media. The author will here describe few of them that will be useful in the research: microblogging, social networking, media sharing, and rating/reviewing.

Microblogging is a form of blogging that limits the size of each message posted by a user, called more specifically posts (Zarella 2010, 31). The most well-known microblogging site is Twitter, where the posts are called Tweets. This website will be described in chapter 3.3.

A Social Network is a website where people connect with friends, both those they know offline and those who are online-only friends. Social Networks are important for businesses, as they offer a number of opportunities for interacting with customers, and companies can have an account on those Social Networks to make that interaction possible. (Zarella 2010, 53.) The Social Networks that

will be considered in this research are Facebook and Google +. Those will be described in chapter 3.2 and chapter 3.6.

Media sharing websites allow users to create, upload and share multimedia content, sometimes called user-generated content. With the arrival of easy-to-use digital cameras and camcorders as well as high-speed Internet connections, Media Sharing websites have become extremely popular. (Zarella 2010, 77.) For this research the author chose to analyse Pinterest, which will be introduced in chapter 3.5.

Rating and reviewing websites allow users to review any product or service. According to an April 2009 Nielsen Media Research survey, 70% of consumers trust consumers opinions posted online. Nowadays, before buying a product or service, consumers read reviews about the product or service they intend to buy, and only after reading those reviews they take the buying decision and action. Whether a company is involved or not in the conversation, users are talking about the products, services and brands online. It is then up to the companies to answer to the reviews and to have a presence on a review site. (Zarella 2010, 131.) In this research the author will focus on the travel review website TripAdvisor, which will be described in chapter 3.4.

3.2   Facebook

Nowadays, Facebook is the world leader Social Network. It is the Social Networks with the most features Users can publish text, pictures, and videos. They can also share with their friends' publications from other friends or from companies. But not only can they share what they see on Facebook, they can also share mostly everything they find interesting on the web so that their Facebook friends can see it and also share it. Users can also join groups to discuss about their hobbies and interests for example. They can also create events and invite their friends to attend. Moreover they can play games directly while being on Facebook. So Facebook has become more and more useful for their users as they can do many things in the same place.

For companies also Facebook has become more and more interesting. Facebook allows businesses to create public profiles called "pages". Those have many of the same features as a user's profile. Users can connect with a Page and become fans in order to follow the company's publications easily. Pages can have public messaging wall, events, pictures, and custom applications. (Zarella 2010, 67.) Facebook describes its Pages as "a voice to any public figure or organization to join the conversation with Facebook users…a public profile lets users connect to what they care about" (Levy 2010, 44).

3.3   Twitter

Twitter is a messaging service that shares a lot of characteristics with other communication tools, with elements similar to email, texting, blogging, and so forth. But a few factors make Twitter unique. The messages you can send, called Tweets, can be no longer than 140 characters (spaces included), which is about the length of a news headline. Tweets are public, unless people make their account private but this is quite rare on Twitter. That means people can easily meet new people on Twitter. The Tweets are opt-in, and people choose to get a stream of Tweets of people and companies they choose to "follow". (O'Reilly & Milstein 2009, 7.)

Users usually share their daily life activities and events, but also their ideas, thoughts and comments about what people care about. Twitters users like to share their knowledge about the topics they are interested about, thus following people and companies sharing the same interests. By following others, users can then interact with them directly with private messages or with Tweets sent directly to another user on their Twitter page. More than just publishing, users will also "retweet" Tweets than they find interesting, which means that they share it on their own Twitter page with their own followers (people that follow a user) can read it. Moreover, like with Facebook, people using Twitter often share on Twitter interesting articles that they read on the web.

Twitter is an excellent mind reading tool. It lets people see not just what individuals are thinking about but also what groups are focusing on and trendy subjects of conversation. Moreover Twitter is a key business channel, letting companies engage with customers, partners and other constituents in a direct way that's both personal and public. (O'Reilly et al. 2009, 15-17.) Twitter is a powerful tool to stay connected with your customers. It can also be used a number of additional ways to make your business easier, better and more connected – from attracting new customers to making powerful new connections. (Micek & Whitlock 2008, 32.)

3.4 TripAdvisor

This reviewing website is especially made for tourism. The primary service provided by TripAdvisor is to allow people to write reviews about travelling services such as restaurants, accommodations, destinations and so on. Many customers preparing a trip will visit TripAdvisor to read reviews before making their purchase decision. Moreover it is possible for companies to get involved in the conversation by answering the reviews. This reviewing website is nowadays the largest online travel reviewing website in the world.

TripAdvisor makes it possible for travellers to plan and have the perfect trip. TripAdvisor offers advice from travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools. (http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/pages/about_us.html, 2013.)

3.5 Pinterest

Pinterest is a collection of virtual online pinboards that people use to share pictures they find interesting. Users "pin" pictures and other images to their personal pinboards and then share their pins with their online friends and followers. A pinboard is a place where people can create and share the things they like or find interesting. Users can have as many pinboards as they want, and organize

them by category. Pinterest is the most efficient and effective for visual sharing. Moreover, anything a user pins on Pinterest can be shared on Facebook and Twitter too, as they are made to co-exist. (Miller 2012, 2-8.)

Concerning businesses, Pinterest offers a unique new way to promote brands and engage with target customers. The benefits of using Pinterest to market businesses include: rapidly increasing popularity, attractive demographics, proven ability to drive traffic to other sites, appeal in specific vertical markets. (Miller 2012, 234.)

3.6   Google +

Google is more than just a search engine. The company has created many applications and services all aimed towards making the Internet a better place to hang out. From its famous Google Maps, News and Groups to its Google Earth projects, Google has created very useful tools. Recently Google entered the world of Social Media and created Google +, a Social Network that takes some of the best components of other of Google's services. (Hattersley 2012, 2-4.)

In many ways Google + is quite similar to Facebook, but it has already proven to be better when it comes to reaching the right people which can be very useful for companies. It is also more powerful than Twitter when it comes to keeping up with breaking news. One interesting feature from Google + is "Circle", which enables users to organize their friends into handy groups: friends, family, acquaintances, following and others can be created. Then users can choose to publish their posts to all their circles, only with some of them, or publicly with all Google + users. (Hattersley 2012, 2-4)

4 CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The purpose of this survey was to investigate consumer's habits in the process of booking an accommodation for a trip, related to Internet tools and Social Media. The questionnaire's data were gathered during February 2013 through email and various Social Media. The questionnaire (appendix 1,p.69) was sent to TAMK staff and students, but also through Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter to people who travel at least once per year for at least 2 days, which means there is a night stay needed. The goal was to get at least 100 respondents, which was well exceeded, as at the closing of the questionnaire form, there was 210 respondents, 209 of which qualified for the analysis.

4.1 Profile of respondents

Most of the respondents were women. Out of 209 people, 151 were women, which is 72 per cent and 58 were men, which is 28 per cent (figure 2, p.20). This can have several meanings. It can show that more women are inclined to take some time to answer online surveys or also that women spend more time online than men.
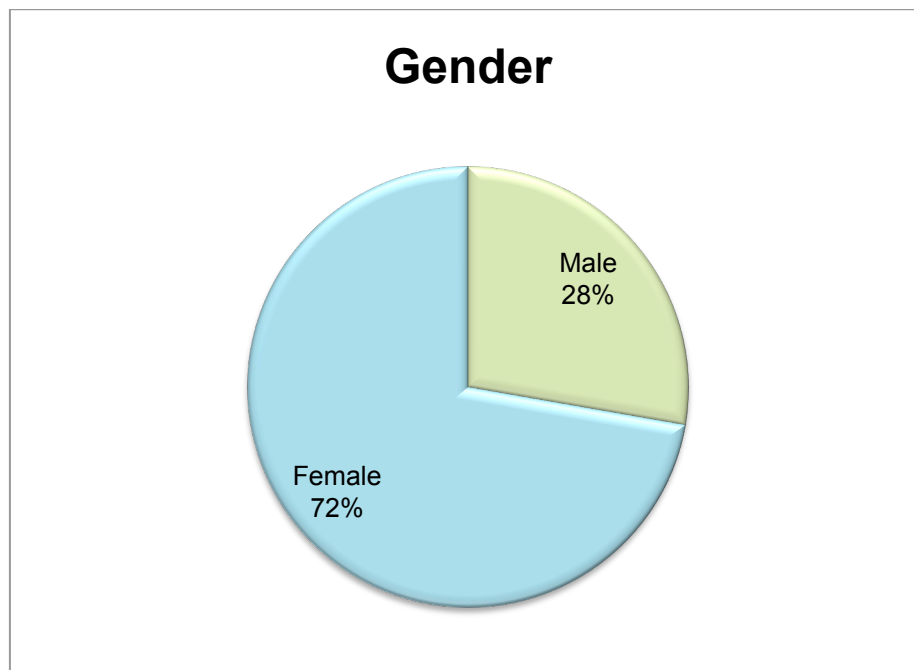

FIGURE 2. The gender of the respondents

The majority of respondents were between 21 and 30 years old (45 per cent). There were approximately the same amount of respondents aged 31 to 41 (18 per cent), 41 to 50 (16 per cent) and 51 to 60 (15 per cent), which makes then quite a good representation of each age group. People aged less than 20 or older than 60 were way less represented (figure 3, p.21). The 21 to 30 group being so much represented shows that they are the ones using the most the internet in their daily life, as most of them started to use it when they were kids or teenagers. According to Hudson (2008, 41-52) age and gender can influence consumer behaviour: male/female, young adults/adults/senior.
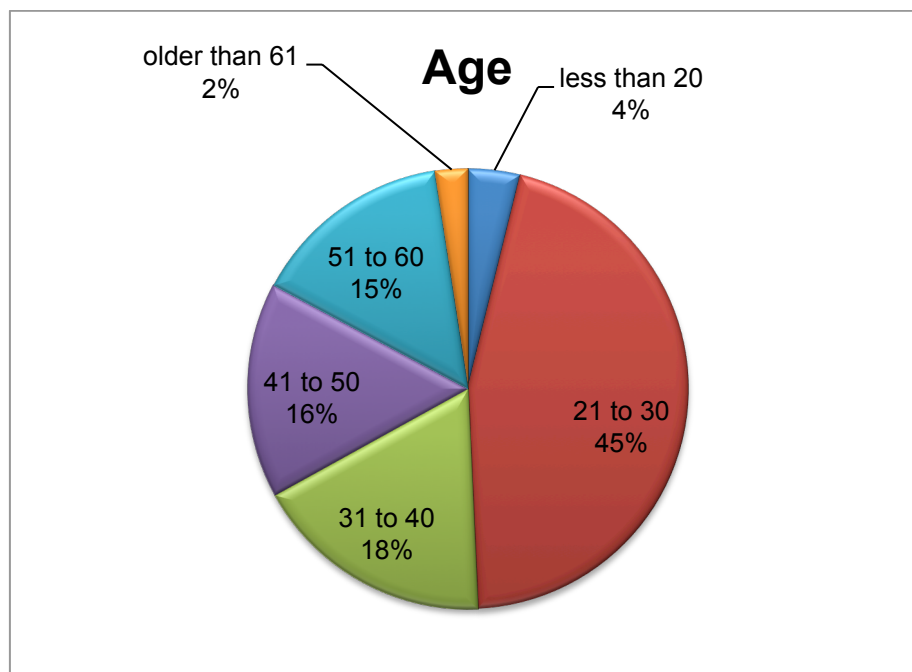
FIGURE 3. The age of the respondents

Concerning their occupations, most of the respondents declared being employed followed by students. Few unemployed and self-employed people answered, as well as 1 retired person (figure 4, p.22).

So few retired and/or older than 61 respondents shows clearly that people over 60 (5 people over 61 answered, 1 of them being retired) are not using the Internet so much, as for they were already all grown-up and in active life when the Internet became common in households. Thus most of them don't even see the need to learn how to use the Internet unless they have a specific reason, such

as having some family living abroad and then they need Internet to keep easily in touch.

FIGURE 4. The occupation of the respondents

Regarding the countries where the respondents came from, the author being an expatriate decided to divide the question into 2 questions: country of residence and nationality. Although 71% of the respondents are living in Finland, only 55% of the respondents are Finnish, which mean that 1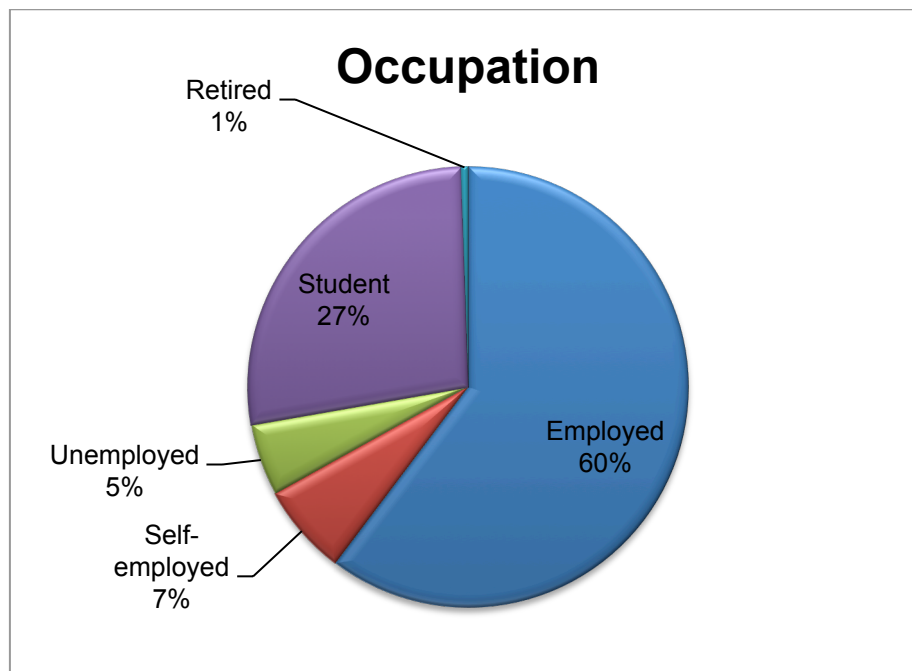6% of respondents living in Finland are from another country (figure 5 and 6, p.23). The culture from the country of origin and the culture of the country of residence both affect the be- haviour of people, as when moving abroad they bring their own culture with them, but then slowly integrate part of the new country culture. According to Hudson (2008, 41-52) culture is the norms, beliefs and rituals that are unique to each person. Moreover according to Hofstede culture is the collective mental programming of the people in an environment (Hudson, 2008, 41-52)

People residing in many different countries answered. Respondents living in Finland were the most numerous as 149 people living there answered. Then 19 people from France and 15 people from Germany answered the questionnaire, followed by 6 people from United Kingdom. Other countries, with only 2 or 1 respondents of each, included USA, Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Russia, Italy,

Hungary, Norway, Portugal, Malta, Romania, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Slovakia, and Poland (figure 5, p.23).
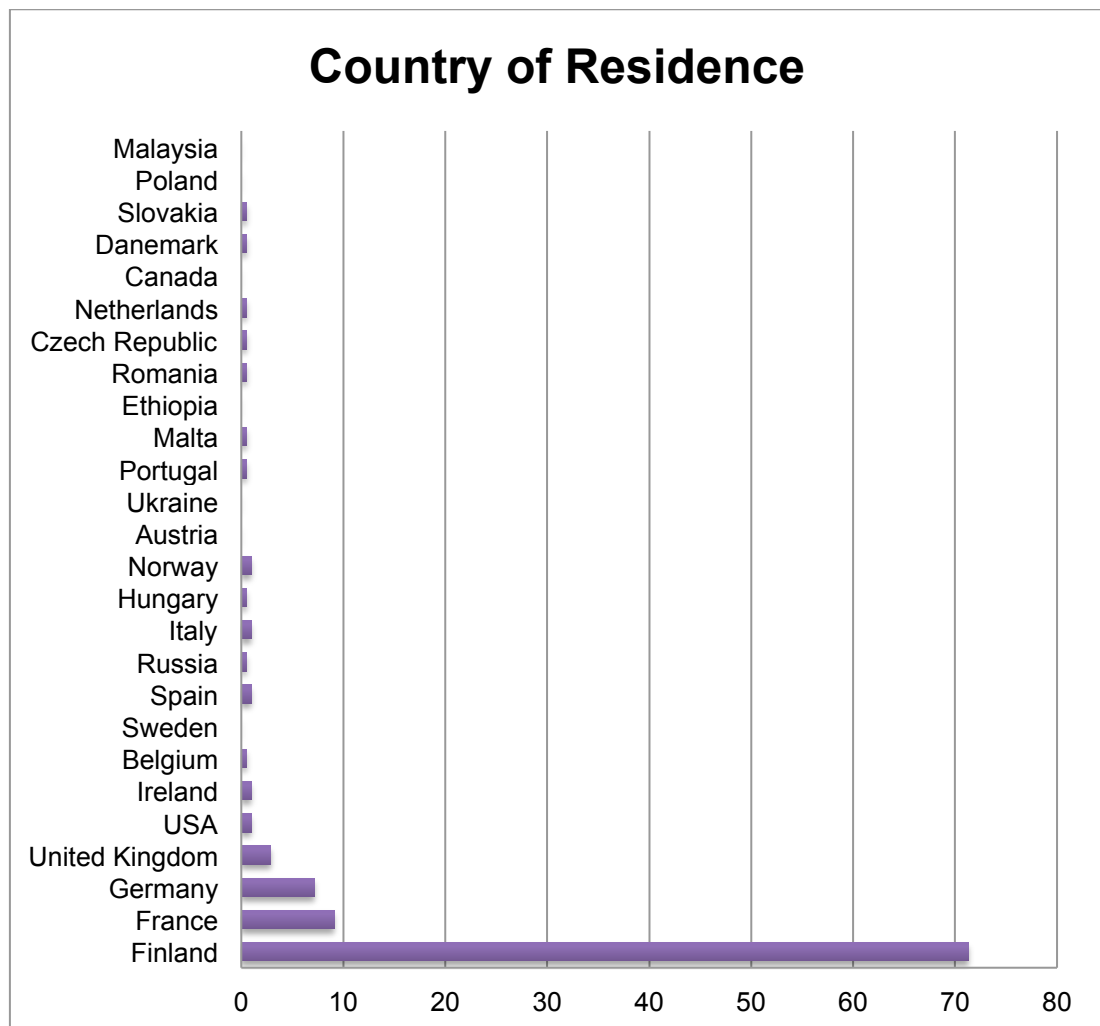
FIGURE 5. The country of residence of the respondents

In total the questionnaire got respondents from 23 different nationalities and countries of residence, mostly from European countries. As for nationalities, the majority were Finnish people with 115 respondents out of 209. Finnish people were followed by French and German people, with respectively 39 and 17 respondents. United Kingdom and Spain both brought 4 respondents, while Italy, Hungary, Denmark and Norway brought 3 respondents each. Countries with 2 or 1 respondents were USA, Ireland, Belgium, Russia, Austria, Ukraine, Portugal, Ethiopia, Romania, Czech Republic, Canada, Slovakia, Poland, and Malaysia (figure 6, p.24). Those results show that the answers to the survey will mostly a Finnish point of view, and also a world mix point of view.
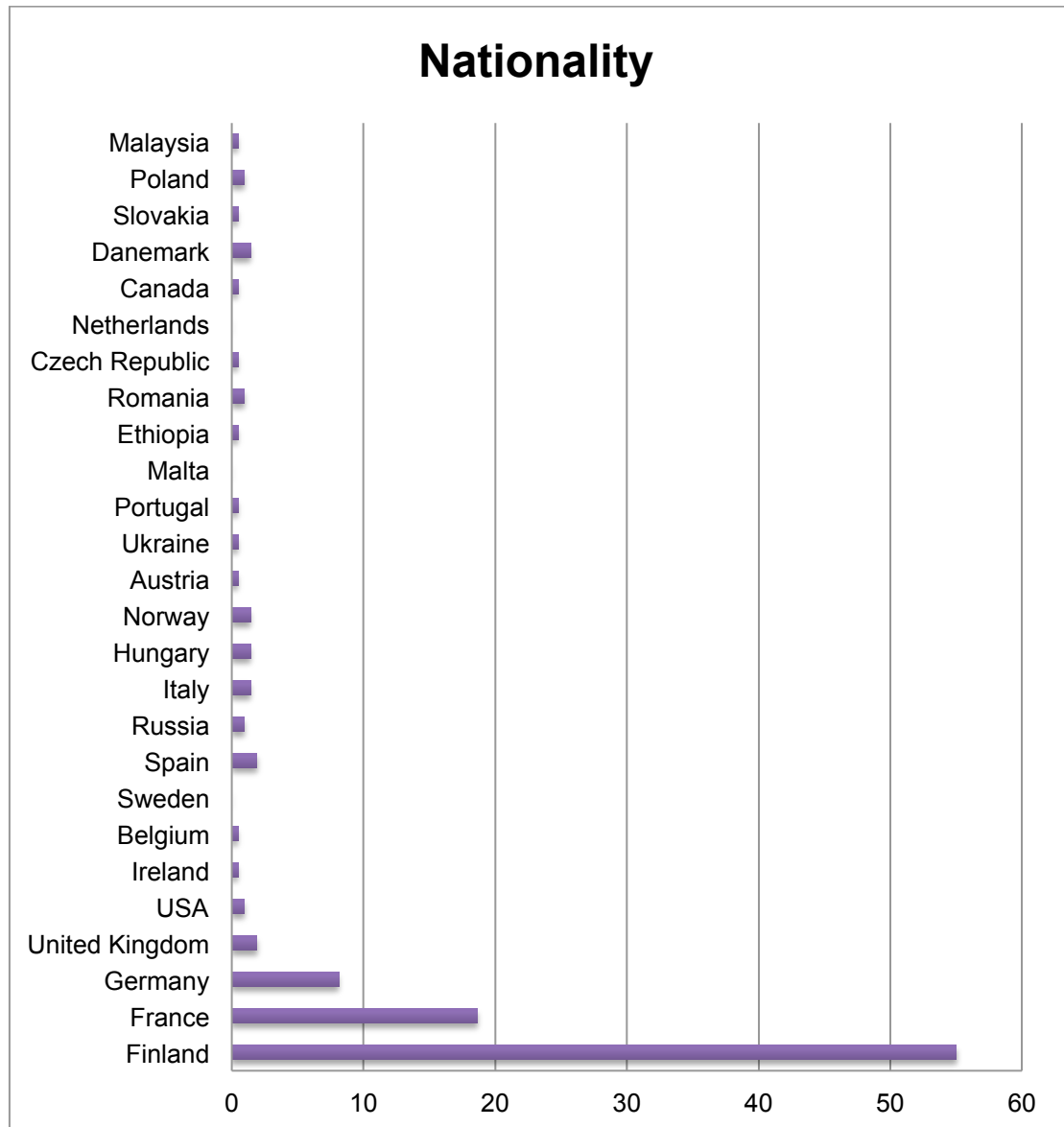
FIGURE 6. The nationality of the respondents

4.2 Travelling preparation behaviour

For companies to develop their marketing, it is good to know how the travellers behave regarding travels. When do they travel and why? What tools do they use to prepare their trips? The survey tries to answer those questions. It is important to know if the customers are people travelling a lot or not. Out of the 209 respondents, 41 per cent declared travelling 3 to 4 times per year, 31 per cent 5 or more times per year, and 28 per cent 1 to 2 times per year (figure 7, p.25). Those answers concern only trips for 2 days or more, which means that it includes an overnight.
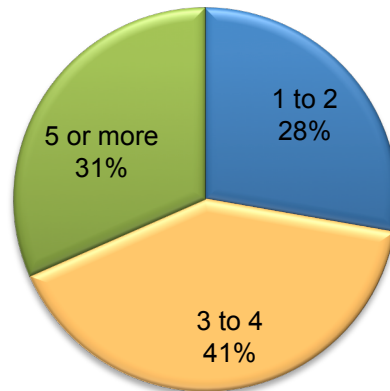
FIGURE 7. The frequency of overnight travels per year

The reasons for travelling are various. Most of the respondents, 64 per cent, travel for leisure purposes. Other reasons of travelling were seeing family/friends, with 26 per cent of the respondents, and business, with 10 per cent of the respondents (figure 8, p.25).
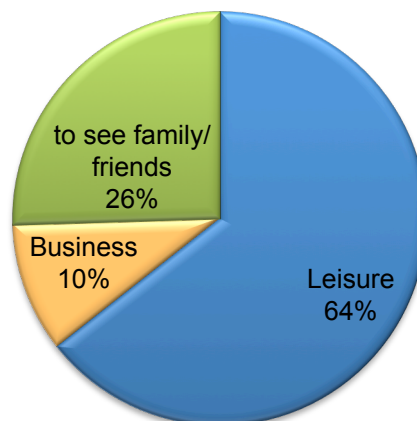
FIGURE 8. The reasons for travelling

Most of the respondents travelling choose a hotel to sleep, followed by respondents staying at friends/family. Those latter are the one who also travel for the reason of seeing friends/family. Another important accommodation, mostly used by students and young people, is hostel (figure 9, p.26). Both those are considered in the research considering Internet tools and Social Media marketing. Altogether 63 per cent of the respondents prefer to book a hotel or hostel when travelling for 2 days or more.

What kind of accommodation do you usually book when traveling?

Bed & Breakfast or guesthouse
4%

Own time share apartment
1%

Staying at friend/ family
26%

Hotel
52%

Cottage
1%

Rent an apartment or house
5%
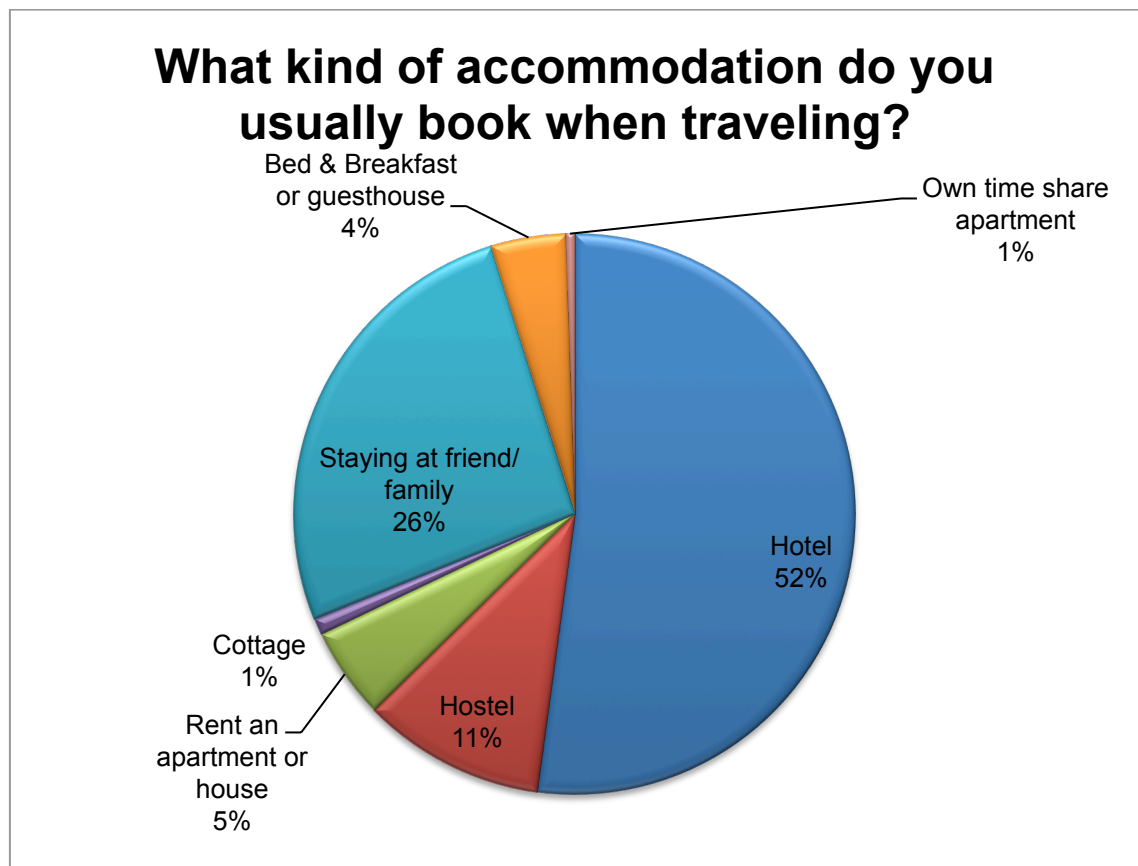
Hostel
11%

FIGURE 9. The kind of accommodation booked by the respondents

It is then important for the hospitalities companies, such as hotels and hostels, to know what sources people use when they want to choose an accommodation. Knowing that will help companies to develop their online marketing where the potential customers are looking for information. The question about the sources used to look for information about accommodation showed that people are widely using the Internet for this purpose. Respondents could, for this ques-

tion and the coming ones, choose more all answers that apply to their behaviour.

Out of the 209 respondents, 75 per cent of them go online to look for information about accommodation. Most of those check Internet accommodation website, with 72 per cent of them, or Internet hotel booking website such as booking or expedia, with 70 of the respondents. Also used as an information source, with 33 per cent of the respondents, are the websites about the destination itself where people usually find lists of accommodations. Reviews Social Media such as TripAdvisor where people will read others travellers opinions on accommodations is used by 22 per cent of the respondents, and general Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest is used by 8 per cent of the respondents. Also important 41 per cent of people ask their own family or friends when they want to be sure to stay in a good accommodation. According to Hudson (2008, 41-52) references groups such as family, friends, colleague and other travellers have a direct or indirect influence on a person's behaviour. Not being an online source, books and travel guides are still used by 21 per cent of the respondents to look for information. Others ways of searching for information such as travel fair or travel agencies are more rare which confirms the trend of the growing Internet marketing. Moreover new information sources such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing were mentioned by very few respondents (figure 10, p.28). This research of information before booking an accommodation contains several steps of the model of consumer behaviour (figure 1, p.11): level of involvement, identification of travel alternatives, and evaluation of travel alternatives (Cooper et al., 2008, 56).

What sources do you use when looking for information about accommodation?

Source	Value
other	1
Travel agent	1
Airbnb	0
CouchSurfing	1
Travel fair	3
Books/guides about the destination	21
Reviews social media	22
General social media	8
Websites about the destination	33
Internet hotel booking website	70
Internet accommodation website	72
Friends/family	41
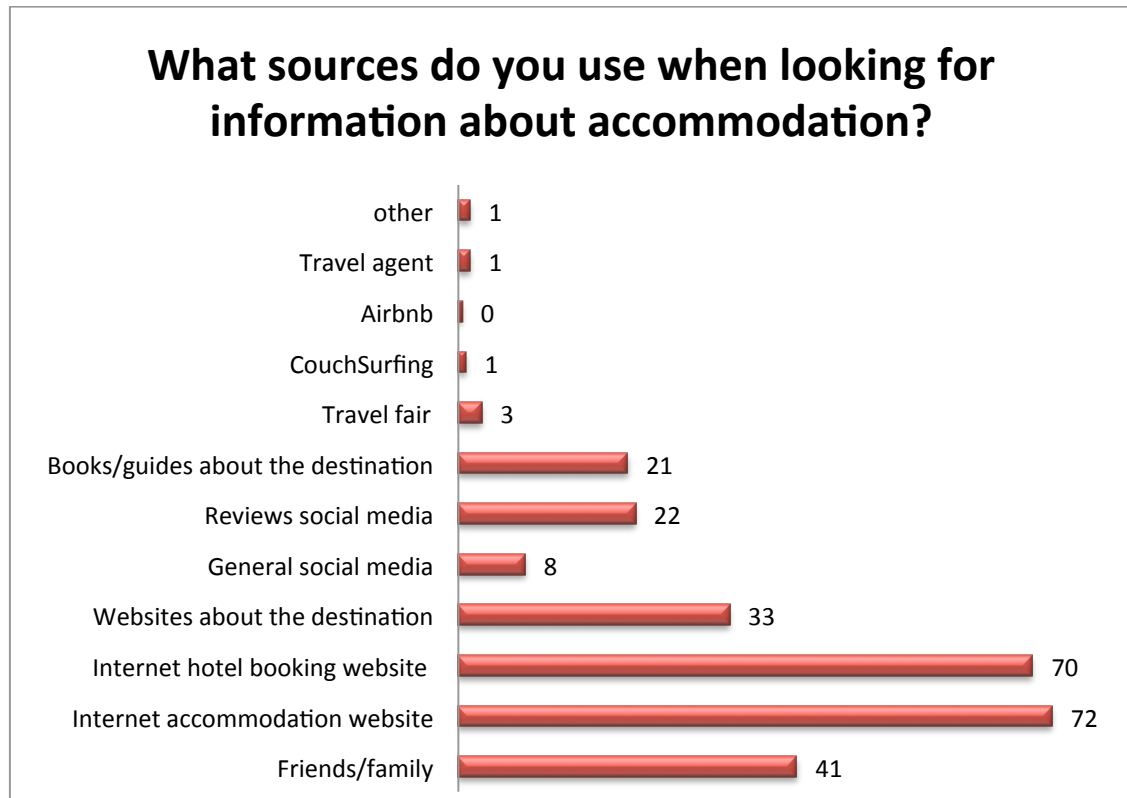
FIGURE 10. The sources used for information about accommodation

Few years ago most travellers were using a travel agent to book their trips, or they were calling the accommodation directly to book a night. Nowadays this has changed and only 16 per cent of the respondents use a travel agent and 15 of the respondents call the accommodation directly. The recent tendencies for booking are related to the way people search for information: online. 69 per cent of the respondents use a booking website such as Booking or Expedia and 60 per cent book directly through the accommodation website booking system. Most likely customers will choose to book through the way which is the cheapest at the moment of their purchase, which explains that they do not use only one way of booking their accommodation. As not all accommodations have an online booking system available on their website or for special requests, 42 per cent of the respondents also use emails to book an accommodation. For people travelling for business purposes, booking directly through the company is also an option. Hotel social media profile or page are not popular yet for this purpose. This is because only rare hotels have the possibility of booking directly through social media, with booking system applications such as Clerk (www.clerkhotel.com). As third-part booking websites such as Booking and Ex-

pedia are quite popular for travellers, it is important for accommodations which are not working with them yet to start doing it, as it would be a chance to get more customers (figure 11, p.29).
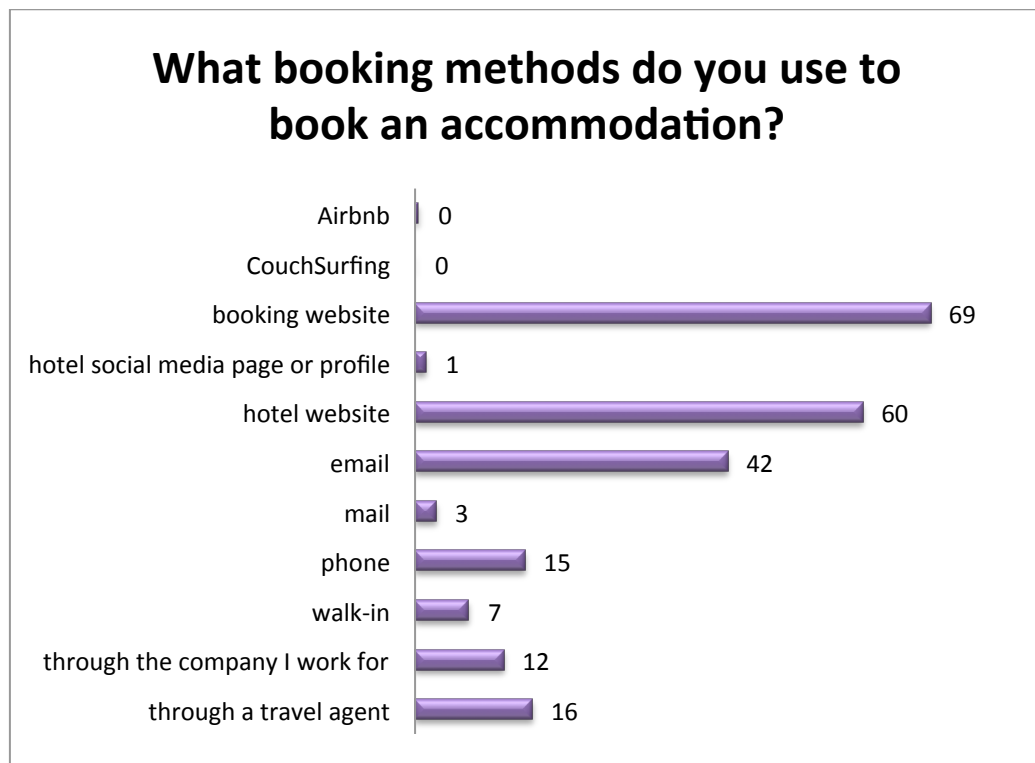
FIGURE 11. The booking methods used by the respondents

4.3 Uses of Internet and Social Media linked to accommodation

After knowing that more and more people use Internet for their accommodation researches and booking, it is also important to know how they use the Internet. For this research, the questionnaire focused on knowing then which Social Media people use and how they use them concerning travelling. Also it was asked from them what they find important regarding the e-presence of accommodations, which means where they would like accommodation to be on Internet.

What is somewhat important and very important as e-presence for the respondents are slightly the same (figure 12 and 13, p.31). For 45 per cent of them is it somewhat important that an accommodation in on a booking website such as Booking or Expedia, while for 46 per cent it is very important. For 43 per cent of the respondents it is somewhat important that an accommodation is on Google

map and Google Local so that they can specifically see the accommodation on a map with pictures and other information, while for 51 per cent it is very important. For 25 per cent of the respondents it is somewhat important that an accommodation has an own website, while for 86 per cent it is very important. This shows how important it is for travellers that an accommodation has its own website, as it allows them to directly find information, book a room, contact the customer service and so on. For 50 per cent of the respondents it is somewhat important that an accommodation is present on TripAdvisor where other travellers write reviews, while for 25 per cent it is very important, showing the importance of the reference groups in customer behaviour (Hudson, 2009, 41-52). Regarding the Social Media, they don't consider it is as important yet. Only 8 per cent said that it is somewhat important for an accommodation to have a Facebook page, while 2 per cent said it is very important. This is certainly because it is not yet so much used as a booking method (explanation, p.28, figure 11, p.29). Also, for 5 per cent of the respondents it is somewhat important for an accommodation to be on Pinterest while 2 per cent of the respondents said that a Twitter account for an accommodation was somewhat important. This shows that for most people who answered the survey, most being Finnish people, Social Media did not yet make their way concerning accommodation, mostly because most of the accommodations in Finland are not yet on the Social Media to show them how important it can be (see chapter 5.1, p.39). Social Media marketing regarding tourism is still quite new, but it is developing quickly. According to Gillin (2009, 3) the growth and acceptance of the web as a means to disseminate information has been nothing short of astounding, and many experts now predict that the Internet will become the world's largest advertising medium within the next 5 years. Moreover according to Evans (2008, 40) social media takes its roots in word-of-mouth, which is widely important for marketing. Word-of-mouth marketing can spread a message more quickly and convincingly than conventional marketing (Gillin, 2009, 3).

E-presence of an accommodation; it is somewhat important that it:

is on a booking website	45
is on google map/google local	43
has a pinterest account	5
has a twitter account	2
has a tripadvisor page with customer reviews	50
has a facebook page	8
has a website	25
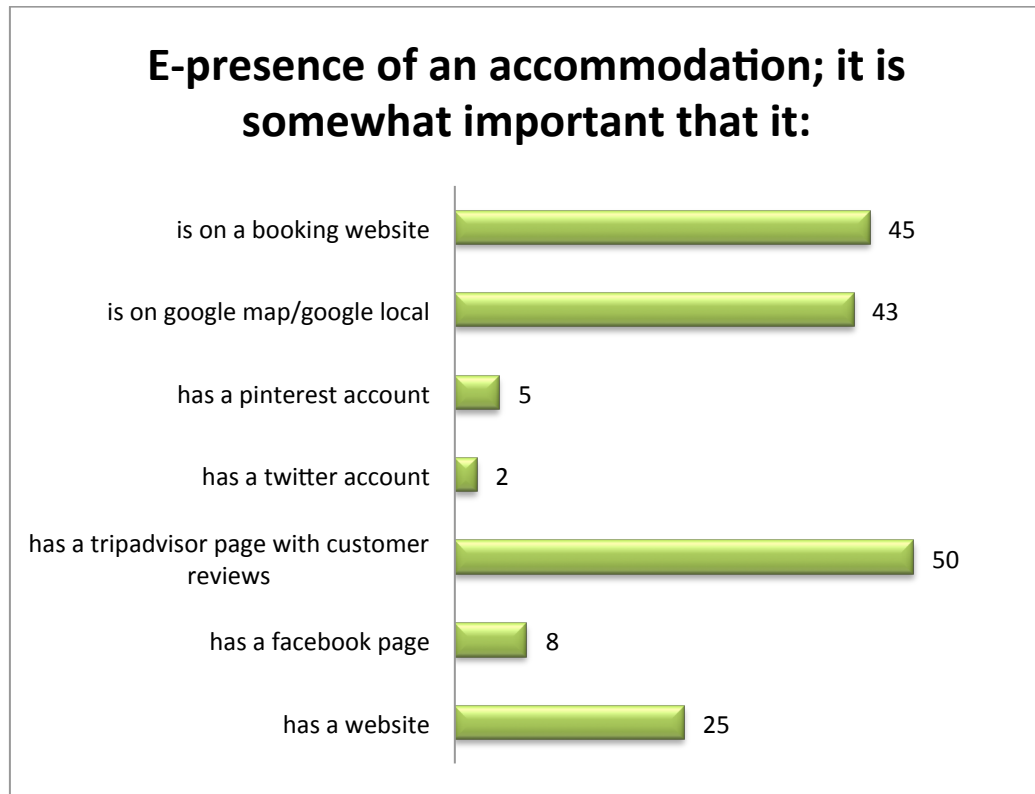
FIGURE 12. Importance of the e-presence of an accommodation: what is somewhat important for the respondents

E-presence of an accomodation; it is very important that it:

is on a booking website	46
is on google map/google local	51
has a pinterest account	0
has a twitter account	0
has a tripadvisor page with customer reviews	25
has a facebook page	2
has a website	86
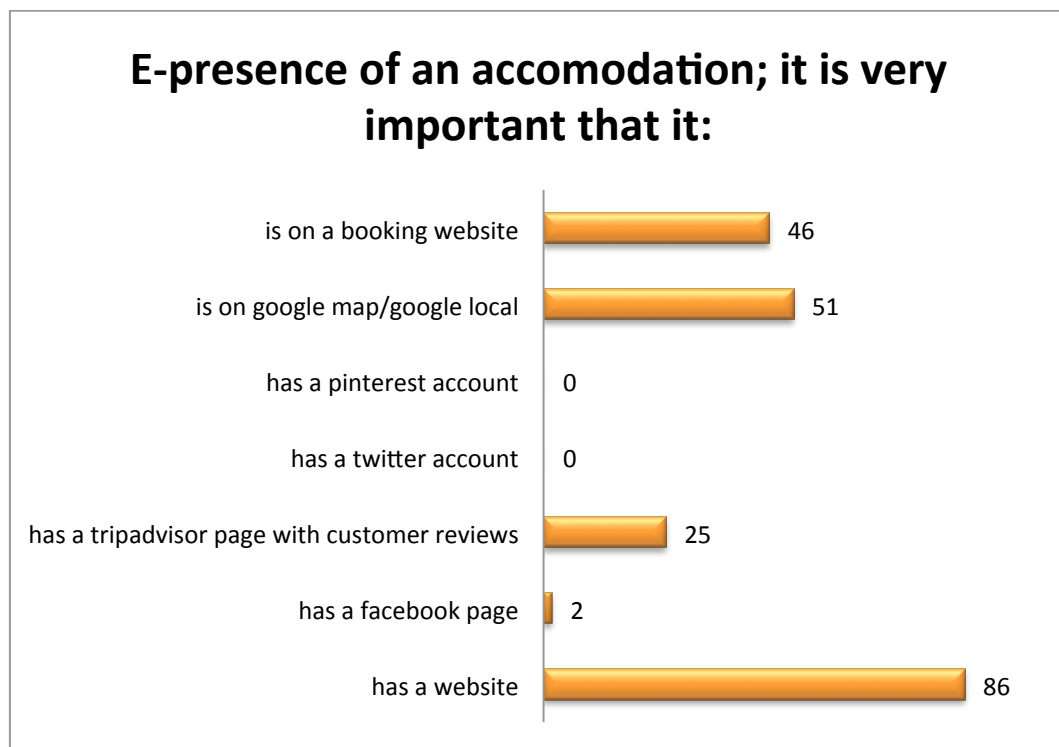
FIGURE 13. Important of the e-presence of an accommodation: what is very important for the respondents

Respondents are not using Social Media for travel information research and booking so much yet, but it is good for companies to know what Social Media their potential customers are using, so that they know where they should be too to interact with them. According to Charlesworth (2009, 213) an attribute of the online advertisement that is missing in all other media is its potential for interactivity. Only 10 per cent of the respondents declared using no Social Media at all. The majority of respondents use Facebook, with 84 per cent of them, followed by 35 per cent using TripAdvisor, 29 per cent using Google + and 24 per cent using Twitter. As Pinterest is quite new in Europe and not so well known here yet, only 10 per cent of the respondents said they were using it (figure 14, p.32). All those Social Media will be analysed in the following chapter, specifically for tourism businesses.

Which social media do you use?

Social Media	Value
Yelp	0
Tumblr	0
Linkedin	1
Blogger	1
Foursquare	1
Instagram	1
I don't use any	10
TravBuddy	0
Tripadvisor	35
Google +	29
Pinterest	10
Twitter	24
Facebook	84

FIGURE 14. The Social Media used by the respondents

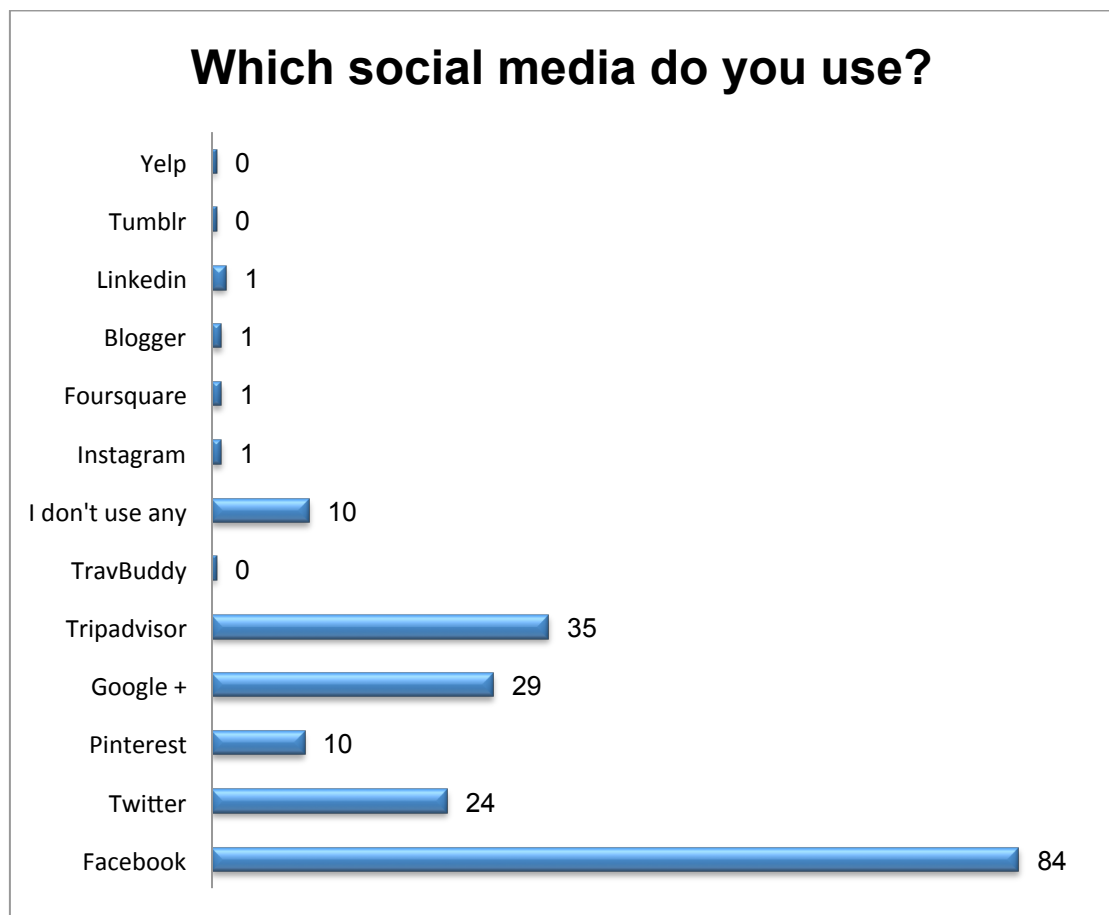If they do not use the Social Media to book their accommodation, it does not mean they are not using them for other reasons related to travel. Here it includes all Social Media that the respondents said they use. 164 out of the total of respondents answered the question about the use of Social Media. Before a trip, 52 per cent of the respondents use Social Media to get information about an accommodation, 46 per cent use them to get information about a destination, and 44 per cent use them to get other people's opinion about an accommodation. During a trip, 36 per cent of the respondents use them to share information and/or opinion about their trip with friends, and 49 per cent use them to share pictures from their trip with friends. After a trip, 24 per cent of the respondents use them to write a review about their accommodation, 60 per cent of them to share pictures of their trip with friends, and 43 per cent of them to share information and/or opinion about their trip with friends (figure 15, p.34). All those results show that Social Media are really popular already before, during and after the trips. People use them for word-of-mouth for what is called the post-purchase behaviour in the model of consumer behaviour (figure 1, p.11). This behaviour impacts on future decision (Cooper et al., 2008, 56). Moreover they use social media for feedback when writing reviews to sites like TripAdvisor or Google + Local, feedback being part of the post-purchase behaviour.

Do you use Social Media:

Category	Value
after a trip to share information and/or opinion about my trip with friends	43
after a trip to share pictures from my trip with friends	60
after a trip to write a review about your accommodation	24
during a trip to share pictures from my trip with friends	49
during a trip to share information and/or opinion about my trip with friends	36
before a trip to get other people's opinion about an accommodation	44
before a trip to get information about a destination	46
before a trip to get information about an accommodation	52

FIGURE 15. The respondents' use of Social Media regarding travelling

4.4 Accommodations websites and Social Media pages expectations

Being online for a tourism company is nowadays becoming more and more important, as customers are using Internet more and more for everything and also regarding travelling. Moreover this will increase even more in the coming years, as the teenagers and kids from today are the ones who were born with the Internet, and do everything through it. And those people are the customers of tomorrow. Then it is also good for companies to know what people expect from accommodations websites and Social Media pages. It will help to develop the e-marketing in the right way and attract customers.

Concerning an accommodation own website, a vast majority of the respondents expect the same elements: pictures of the accommodation, the rooms and the services, detailed information about the rooms, an online booking system, detailed information about the services available, a customer service via email, and information about the prices. Also some respondents mentioned their interest into having information about what to do in the city/area of destination on the accommodation website. Very few also expressed the desire for a customer service via instant chat or messenger (figure 16, p.35).

Those results show that customers mostly want detailed information on an accommodation website, so that when they look for information they can find everything they need at the same place, and do not have to ask questions about all the details concerning things such as what they can find in a room, or what services are available.

What are your expectations on an accommodation website?

- conditions about promotions clearly shown — 1
- information about the prices — 73
- information about what to do in the city/area — 22
- pictures of the accommodation, the rooms and the services — 94
- detailed information about the services available — 82
- detailed information about the rooms — 94
- online booking system — 89
- customer service via instant messenger/ chat — 8
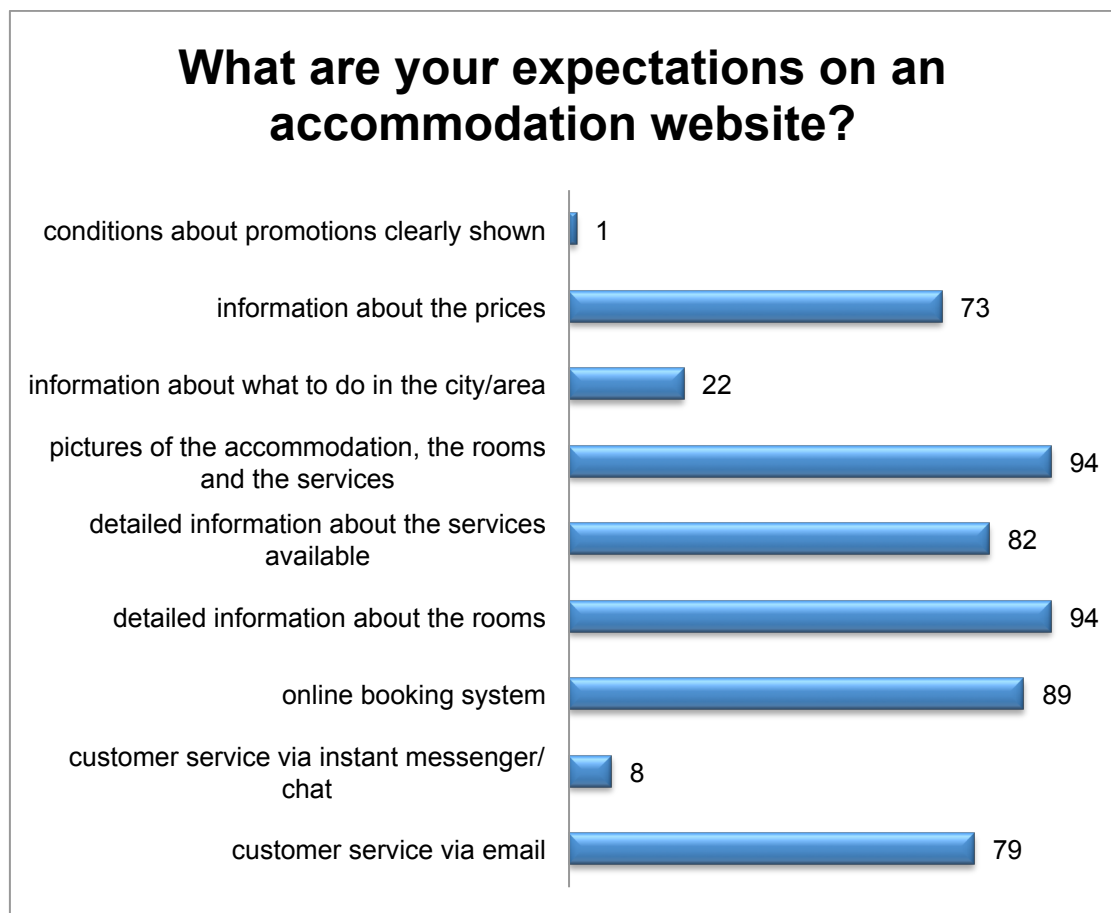- customer service via email — 79

FIGURE 16. The expectations on an accommodation website

This kind of information cannot all be on accommodation Social Media pages. When creating such pages it is then important to know what customers and potential customers would expect from such tourism companies pages.

Concerning Facebook and Twitter the expectation are quite similar. Not all respondents answered those questions as not all use those Social Media: 131 people answered concerning Facebook, and 75 people concerning Twitter. The most important things expected by the respondents were getting up-to-date information about the accommodation, obtaining special promotions and/or deals, and sharing experience about the accommodation (figure 17 and 18, p.36-37). It was seen earlier already that travellers share about their trips on Social Media, thus it is even better when the accommodation is present on Social Media, as the traveller can then also share directly with the accommodation and tag the accommodation when sharing with their friends so that their friends can see directly more information about the accommodation.

Following those main expectations, the wish for an efficient way of communicating online with the customer service was also mentioned by 32 per cent concerning Facebook and 25 per cent concerning Twitter (figure 17 and 18, p.36-37).

FIGURE 17. Expectations on an accommodation's Facebook page

What are you expectations on an accommodation's Twitter page?

- obtaining better prices than other customers — 17
- obtaining special promotions and/or deals — 40
- being entertained — 15
- sharing experience about the accommodation — 29
- efficiently communicate online with the customer service — 25
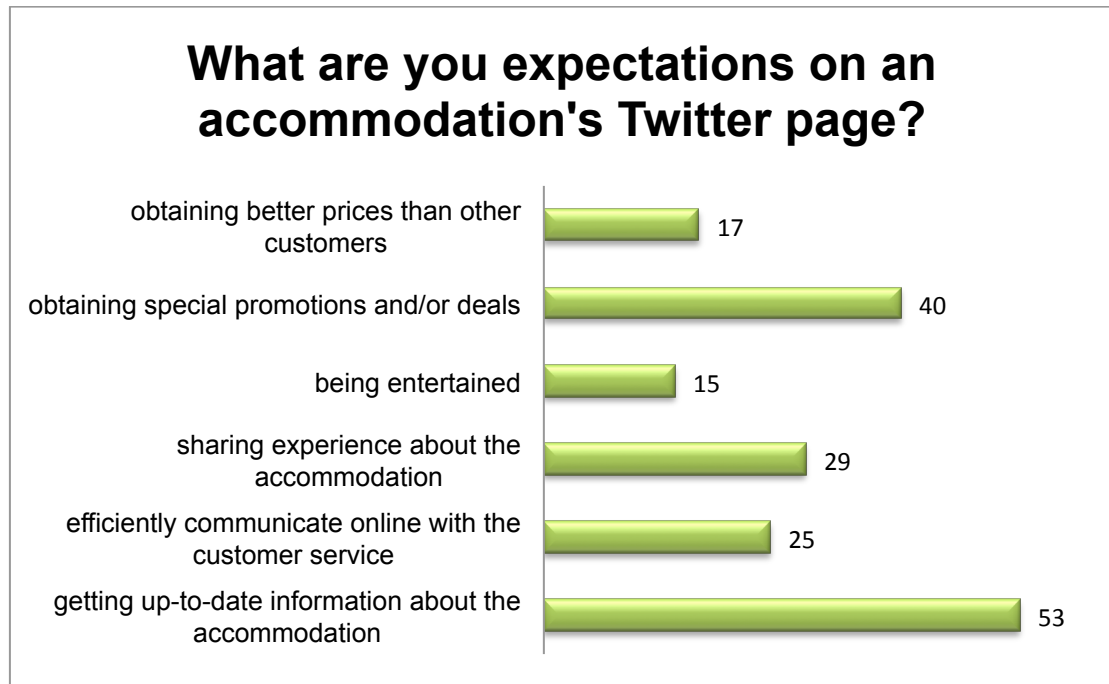- getting up-to-date information about the accommodation — 53

FIGURE 18. Expectations on an accommodation's Twitter page

Another kind of Social Media, widely used to look for information when preparing a trip and choosing an accommodation, is TripAdvisor. 128 respondents out of 209 expressed their opinion about what they expect from such a page about an accommodation. The most important for them is to get to know other customers' opinion on the accommodation, which means that customers' reviews are important to them. Also mentioned were the wishes to get tips from other customers about an accommodation and/or the destination, and also to be able to compare the accommodation with the other ones (figure 19, p.38). This is why it is important for the accommodations to fill in their pages with details and pictures on TripAdvisor, as usually even if companies do not do anything they will be there but there won't be detailed information and professional pictures.

What are your expectations on an accommodation's TripAdvisor page?

getting tips from other customers about the accommodation and/or/destination — 54

being able to compare the accommodation with other ones — 65

communicate with the customer service — 8

communicate with other customers — 13

getting to know other customers' opinion on the accommodation — 89

FIGURE 19. Expectations on an accommodation's TripAdvisor page

The last question of the questionnaire was about the expectations about one of the newest Social Media, Pinterest. As only few respondents knew it and/or use it, this question got 62 respondents. But the main expectations are quite clear. The main expectations on a Pinterest accommodation page are to see pictures that are not on the accommodation's website and to see pictures of all the types of rooms. Also respondents expressed the wish to see pictures of the destination and of the accommodation services (figure 20, p.39). Those results show that, as Pinterest is a visual Social Media, it is then expected for an accommodation to publish pictures, but not only the pictures that customers can see on the website. Customers wishes to see exclusive pictures there, pictures that they won't find on the accommodation website. Few customers also wish to see pictures of the staff, which allows them to know with whom they are talking in case they call or email the hotel (figure 20, p.39).

What are your expectations on an accommodation's Pinterest page?

Category	Value
see pictures of the customer service staff	8
see pictures of the staff in general	11
see pictures of the destination	53
see pictures of all the types of rooms	71
see pictures of the services available	37
see pictures that are not on the accommodation's website	76

FIGURE 20. Expectations on an accommodation's Pinterest page

With all those results, it can be seen how important is Internet nowadays for people, and how they use it already for their trips, but also what they would expect from Internet accommodation presence on websites and Social Media. In the following chapter Social Media marketing for accommodations will be explained more, giving tips and advices to companies on how to use them as a business.

5   THE SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE HOSPITALITY MARKETING

In this chapter, the author will go in depth in the world of Social Media and explain why hospitality companies should use each the one chosen and how they can use them, giving also tips how to attract customers. Moreover, the author researched which hotels and hostels of Tampere were already present on the Social Media.

5.1   Social Media e-presence of Tampere accommodations

Tourism marketers have the possibility to be on the Social Media as a company by creating business account, and thus join the dialogue that customers are already having about their products and services. Companies can listen, lead and participate. The cost of entry is relatively low, or even free in most cases, and the benefits are remarkable. Conversations lead to interactive dialogue, dialogue builds relationships and relationships foster affinity. It's how brands build loyalty. The use of Social Media is high and growing in all customers segments. (Green, 2007, 7-25.)

In Tampere, hotels and hostels marketers are not yet working so much with Social Media. The author found out that only very few of them are using them as a marketing tool right now. The Social Media e-presence of 27 hotels and hostels was analysed by the author in February 2013, 24 hotels and 1 hostel in the city of Tampere, 1 hotel in Nokia and 1 hotel in Ikaalinen (appendix 2, p.77). Out of those 27 accommodations, 4 are having a Facebook page, but only one is active and posting regularly to market the establishment and attract customers. On Twitter and Pinterest, only one is present, the very same which is active on Facebook, but his activity on Twitter and Pinterest quite low for now. On Google +, the author found out that none of the 27 accommodations was present. On TripAdvisor, all accommodations are there by default, as customers will write reviews even if the company does not take care of its profile. 13 out of 27 have filled their profile with more details and pictures, which is already a good thing to do but does is not enough on TripAdvisor. Out of 27 accommodations, 5 are

really active as they answer the customers' reviews, those being positive or negative.

5.2   Facebook

In April 2012, Facebook counted about 845 million active users per month, 20% of all page views on the web, and 100 billion connections. Moreover Facebook is present all over the world, with more than 220 million users in Europe and close to 175 million in North America (figure 21, p.41).
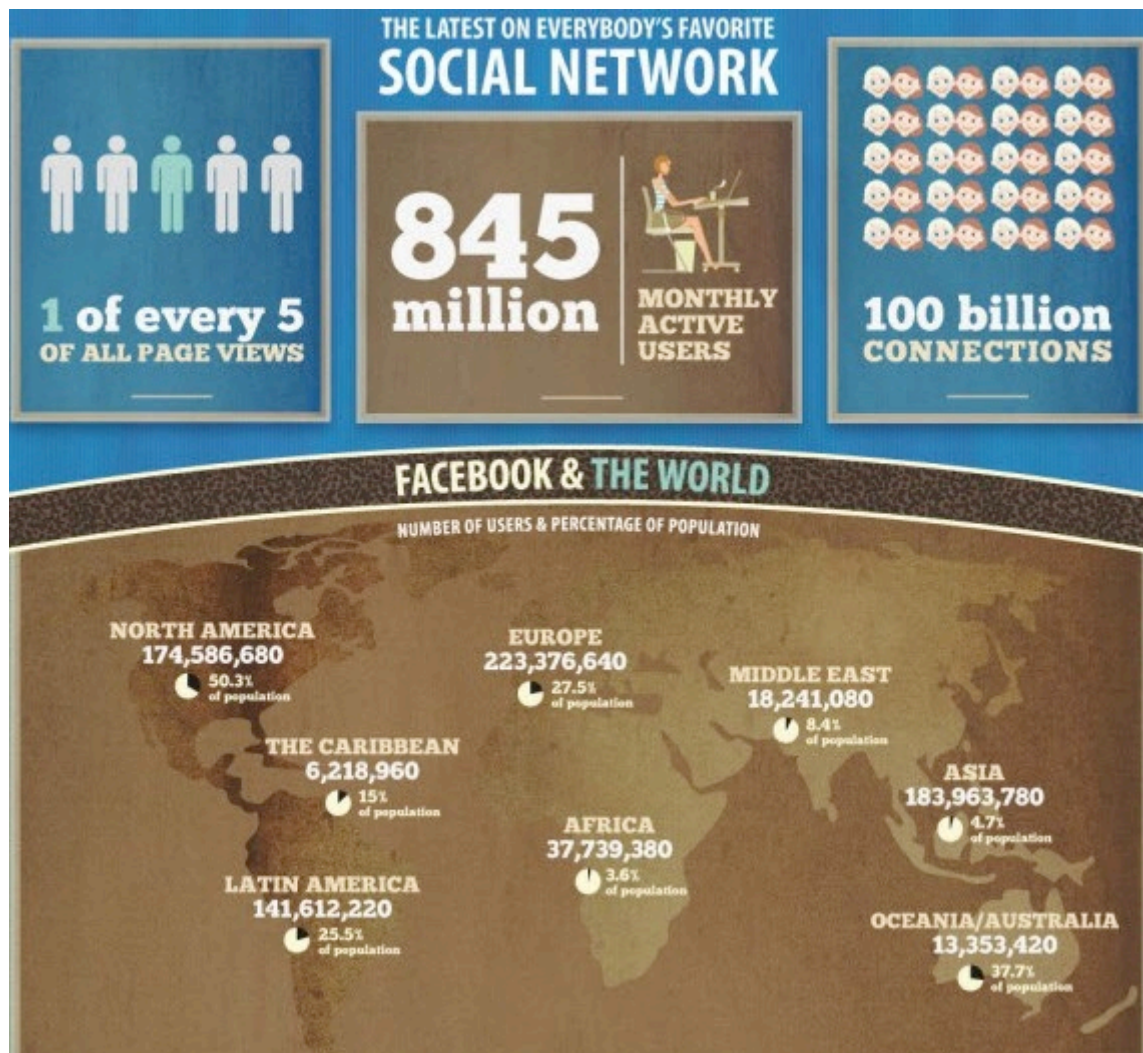

FIGURE 21. Facebook in numbers (www.jeffbullas.com)

Every day there are about 250 million photos uploaded, and 2,7 billion "likes". Around 37 million pages have more than 10 "likes", which means that they have

more than 10 fans. 425 million users use Facebook also on a mobile device such as phones and tablets. The average time spent for a visit is 20 minutes, though regular users will make several visits per day. On Facebook, 57% of the users are female and 43% are male (figure 22, p.42).
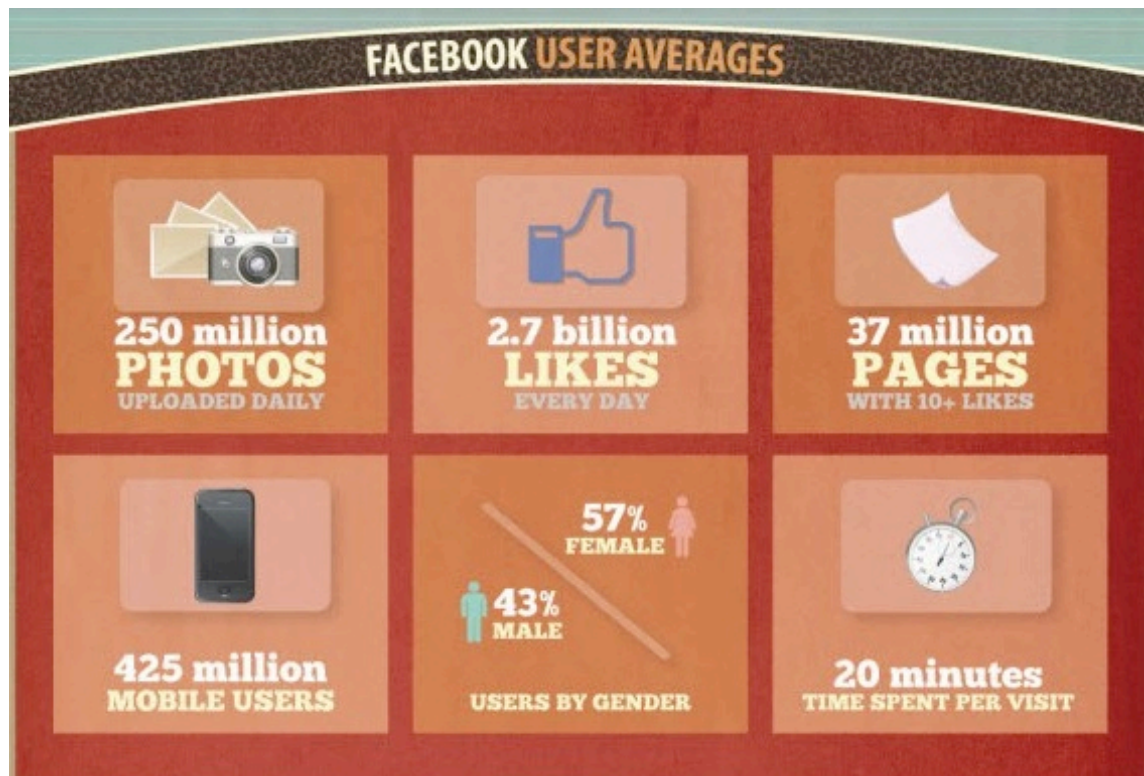

FIGURE 22. Facebook user averages (www.jeffbullas.com)

Facebook can be used effectively by businesses in two main ways. Firstly they can use it for community building by creating conversations, driving awareness and increasing their fan base. Secondly they can use it as a marketing and promotion tool: through the building of a community they have the opportunity to market and promote their products, services and events. Using Facebook as a marketing and promotion tool can be useful in driving traffic to their own website or in promoting a product/service launch or a special offer. (Levy, 2010, 124.)

To start using Facebook and create a business Page the very first thing a company will need is a Facebook personal account, as you need one to hook your Page to. It can be the account of one of the person who will take care of updating the Facebook Page, or one created especially for that so that every staff member updating the Page can use it and then it is also easier if the staff changes. (Levy, 2010, 126.)

A business Page contains various elements which are good to know a bit before starting using Pages, in order to use it efficiently from the start:

- a cover photo: this should represent the accommodation's brand image
- a profile picture: the best is to use the accommodation's logo there
- a composer: there the staff member can write to post regular updates such as text, pictures, polls, videos and so on
- a friend activity board: there people can see how their own friends who like the Page are engaging with that Page

Moreover, there is the possibility for the company to do various things with their posts. They can "pin" the most important story of the moment in order to anchor it on the top of the Page for up to 7 days. This is an interesting way to highlight special packages or special prices for rooms or services. They can also highlight other important stories, and hide stories that aren't engaging or relevant anymore. (www.facebook.com/business)

When starting to write posts on a Page it is useful to know what are successful posts which will be liked by the fans and potential customers. Posts should be short, between 100 and 250 characters, or visual, pictures and videos get 120% more engagement. (www.facebook.com/business)

Knowing those basic things, a company is ready to be active on Facebook and engage with customers. But to attract more people, especially potential customers, it is good to learn some tips about what to do with a Facebook business Page. The top 5 tips that should be known is that a company should post about 2 interesting topics related to their business regularly, find and "like" 5 new Pages at the start, tag people/Pages in the posts, ask people to comment, like, or share posts, and update the status daily (figure 23, p.44). It is very important to do those at the start, but then also to continue doing them regularly to make the conversation go on.
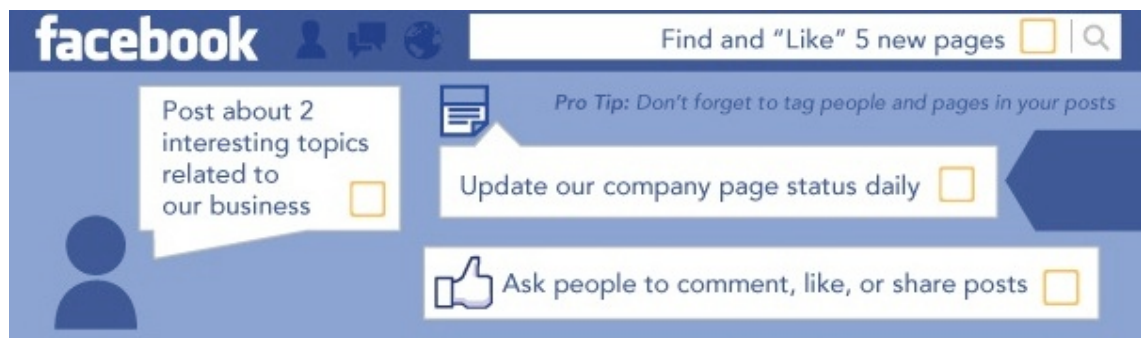
FIGURE 23. Facebook top tips (www.thewholebraingroup.com)

This is not a lot to do, but more can be done through Pages to attract people and get new customers. On a Page, a company can also:

- offer unique products or services
- set up a Facebook URL that reflects the business name
- follow up with fans comments and answer them
- post engaging questions or polls
- create a custom branded Facebook application
- use applications that allow to offer special discounts to the fans
- experiment with Facebook Ads to get more fans
- create fans various groups in order to segment the status updates
- link other Social Media to the Facebook Page

(www.quicksprout.com)

All those tips will help a company to grow their fan base, make fans engage with the company, and even make those fans become customers, if they were not already. If a company's Page is interesting, users will become interested by the company itself, which means in tourism, that when organizing a trip, they will be more likely to choose this accommodation if the Page is attractive and has interesting posts.

5.3   Twitter

In April 2012, there were over 465 million Twitter accounts, and 175 million tweets posted per day. The top 3 countries connected on Twitter were the United States, Brazil and Japan (figure 24, p.45)

FIGURE 24. Twitter in numbers (www.jeffbullas.com)

It is then interesting to know what people do share on Twitter, how they access it and how they decide who they will follow. 92% of the users will share interesting content, followed by 84% who will share tweets from personal connections and 66% who will share tweets they find being funny. 64% of the users access Twitter through the website, while 16% access it on a mobile device and 10% use a Twitter client such as Tweetdeck or HootSuite. 69% of users will follow people that were recommended by their friends, 47% will search on Twitter who they want to follow depending on their interests, 44% will follow users suggested by Twiiter, and 31% will follow users that were promoted (figure 25, p.46).
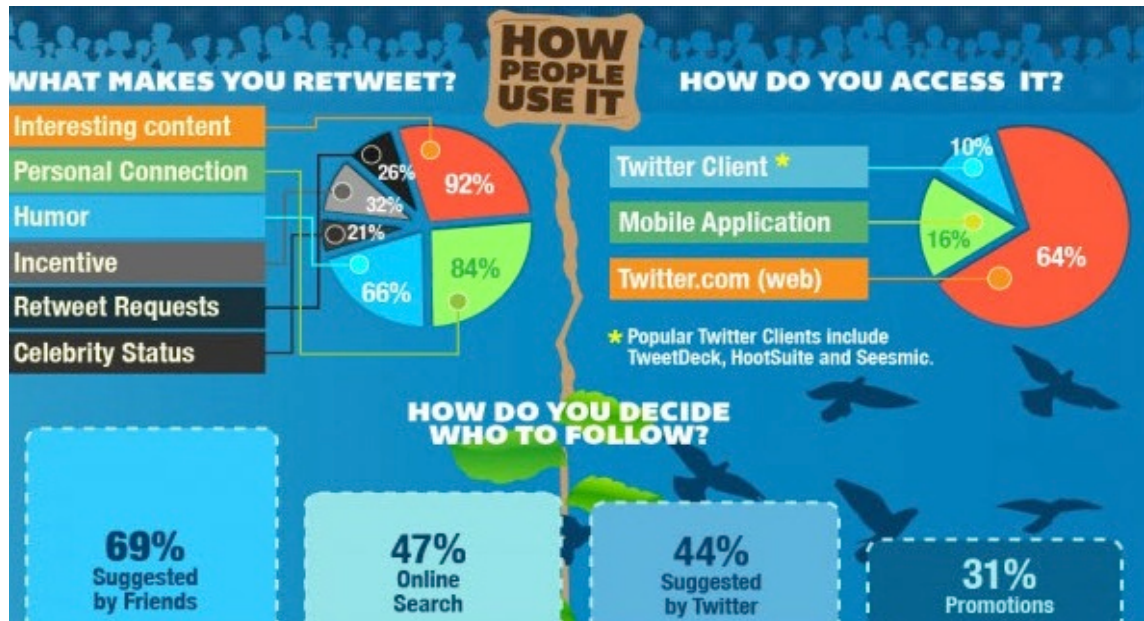
FIGURE 25. How people use Twitter (www.jeffbullas.com)

For companies that are new to the world of Twitter, it is important first to learn some vocabulary, as Twitter uses its own jargon, most of it which were created by the users themselves. Here is a list with definition of those important terms to know before starting:

- tweet: a tweet refers to a single Twitter post. It is also nowadays used widely as a verb to express the action of posting.
- hashtag (#): when users wants to designate related messages, they come up with a short term and prefix it with the # symbol, called hashtag in the Twitter world. Hashtags can designate various things such as events, groups of people, trendy topics, and so on.
- @messages: an @ symbol followed by a user name is a link to that user page. Thus @messages, also called @mentions or @replies, are a way to send a public message to a user. It will appear on your page for everybody to see it, and the other person will be informed that he/she got a message. Thus it is a key tool on Twitter, helping you discover new people.
- retweet: it refers to the action of sharing other users' tweet and giving them credits. Retweets, also shortened RTs, help important messages work their way around Twitter. Being retweeted a lot is a sign of influence on Twitter. When someone posts interesting tweets, other users will retweet those tweets to share them with their friends.

- DM: this refers to the private message option of Twitter. DM, direct message, fit the usual 140-character mould. But in order to send a DM to a user, this user has to be following you.(O'Reilly & Milstein, 2009, 43-49.)

When creating a business Twitter account, there are few things that are good to do first, to ensure the company a good start. Before posting any tweet, it is good to take the time to observe people on Twitter and especially to understand the ways people talk about your company, as Twitter is a great medium to have conversations. Twitter also gives an accommodation the opportunity to show the personality and humanness behind the organization. This will help to grow conversations and develop relationships. But users don't want to talk with nameless entity. So the company must decide who will take care of Twitter. It can be one or more persons, but those need then to be identified using the 160-charactio Bio in order for the users to know whom they are dealing with. Moreover when answering to someone it is then good for the person writing to sign messages with initials, in case more than one person takes care of Twitter. An even more important thing is to make sure the company is findable through the Twitter search. For this, the accommodation name must be written in the Name field. (O'Reilly et al., 2009, 189-203.)

After that the company is ready to tweet and be active in the conversation with the other users. There are 4 main tips to apply for a business to drive awareness, attract potential customers, and make users follow the company (figure 26, p.48). Firstly, a business account should retweet 2 interesting tweets per day, retweeting being an essential part of the way people hold conversations on Twitter, to show to their followers that they are interesting which is a good way to build relationships. If a company wants to comment a retweet, there is the possibility to use a Twitter client such as Tweetdeck, this option being not available on Twitter website. Secondly, a company should follow 10 new people per week, which helps to get more followers, especially users that follow the tourism industry's experts. Moreover a company should follow almost everyone that follow their account, as when doing so it opens the DM channel, which can be very useful for customer support. Thirdly, it is good to write at least 3 new tweets every day. Those can be business related, promotional, something fun

and interesting, and so on. Finally, a company should not forget to use the hashtag # symbol to ensure their tweets appear in trending topics. (figure 26; O'Reilly et al., 2009, 207-227.)

FIGURE 26. Twitter top tips (www.thewholebraingroup.com)

By following those few important tips, the company should already have a good start and be able to attract potential customers. In order for users to find the company it is also a good idea to a link to the Twitter account on the company website so that customers visiting the website can know about the Twitter account.

To keep users interested, the accommodation should not post only about the company. The staff taking care of Twitter should think of it as a way to exchange mutual interesting information. So instead of tweeting only about the company, they can also post inspirational quotes, third-party links, pictures, resources and tips that would be of interest to people following the company. As a tourism company in Tampere, interesting tweets could be about Finland, Tampere, what to do in the area, weather forecasts, tourism news, Finnish culture and cuisine, and so on. Then when tweeting about your company, it is also good to vary the type of tweets, with posts such as news, deals, special offers, events and so on. Moreover the persons taking care of Twitter would raise the interest of the followers by tweeting personal updates, even if work-related. This kind of tweets makes them feel like being part of the company, part of a community. (O'Reilly et al., 2009, 211-219.)

When a company is actively using Twitter, it will happen that users come to give feedback, those being negative or positive. It is then the time for the company to show that they can offer solid customer support even through Twitter. The good

thing is that when a customer will write you a feedback with the @message, you can then answer publicly, demonstrating your company's responsiveness. When customers come to ask you questions this way, it is a possibility that more people would have the same question, so it is a good idea to show the answer publicly. Of course for some more private issues, the DM option can be used. In addition to the @message and DM questions and feedbacks the company gets, it is wise to have a look on Twitter search and respond to complaints about the company, as usually the name of the company will appear in the tweet.(O'Reilly et al., 2009, 209.)

5.4   TripAdvisor

Nowadays, TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel community with more than 60 million monthly visitors and 32 million members. The website has over 100 million reviews from customers and more coming every day. The website is available in 21 languages. (www.tripadvisor.co.uk)

According to a survey made by TripAdvisor in January 2013, based on the results of 15595 travellers and 19447 accommodations, 93% of travellers worldwide say their booking decisions are impacted by online reviews. Thus 51% of travellers worldwide have written a review of an accommodation after a trip. Concerning the point of view of accommodations, 98% of the U.S. accommodations say reviews are important for booking. Thus 92% of U.S. accommodations actively monitor social media, showing how important the phenomenon has become in the tourism industry (figure 27, p.50).

FIGURE 27. Online reviews are changing travel (www.tripadvisortripbarometer.com)

When signing up for a business account on TripAdvisor, it allows the company to update their details, showcase the company with professional pictures, receive e-mail notification of new reviews, respond to customer reviews, promote the company with free widget and badges which can be placed on the company's website, and compare the company with competitors by tracking the performances (www.tripadvisor.co.uk).

In order to market the company on TripAdvisor, few things can be done. The company can register with TripAdvisor's management center in order to have access to free resources which can help to make the most of the website. On the company's TripAdvisor page the company should share information about the accommodation, the more details the better, upload at least 20 pictures as users enjoy pages with pictures, and add videos to bring your accommodation to life for travellers. Moreover the company should encourage the customers coming to the accommodation to write reviews after their trip. To do that, staff can put TripAdvisor custom cards in the rooms, and widgets on their website.

A very important part of the activity of a company on TripAdvisor is to answer the customer's reviews, both negative and positive. This will show the professionalism of the company. But it is important to follow some tips to do it well. The company should answer promptly, express appreciation to customers who took the time to write a feedback, personalize the answer, highlight the positive

of the feedback, be polite and professional, and if the feedback is negative explain what has been done to resolve the problem. Taking care of the problems encountered by some customers can help to get back customers who would not have come back if the company did not answer the feedback and did not mention the change. Bad feedbacks left with no answer are the worse for a company reputation, because word-of-mouth is even stronger online. Thus if an unhappy customer does not get an answer to his negative feedback, he will let it know to all his friends on Social Media, or/and via email. (http://tripadvisor4biz.wordpress.com)

Moreover, if the company has a Facebook Page, it is possible and recommended to link the company's TripAdvisor profile there. A TripAdvisor application can be added to the Facebook Page so that the Page's fans can read the reviews through the company's Facebook Page. This can be done by using the marketing tools of the TripAdvisor management center.

5.5   Pinterest

Since its creation Pinterest has been getting bigger every month. In December 2011 it became one of the top 10 largest social media with 11 million visits per week, 7 million being from U.S. In January 2012 it reached close to 12 million monthly unique visitors in the U.S., which makes it the fastest site in history to break through the 10 million unique visitors mark (figure 28, p.52). In February 2013, ComScore website stated that Pinterest had 48.7 million users.
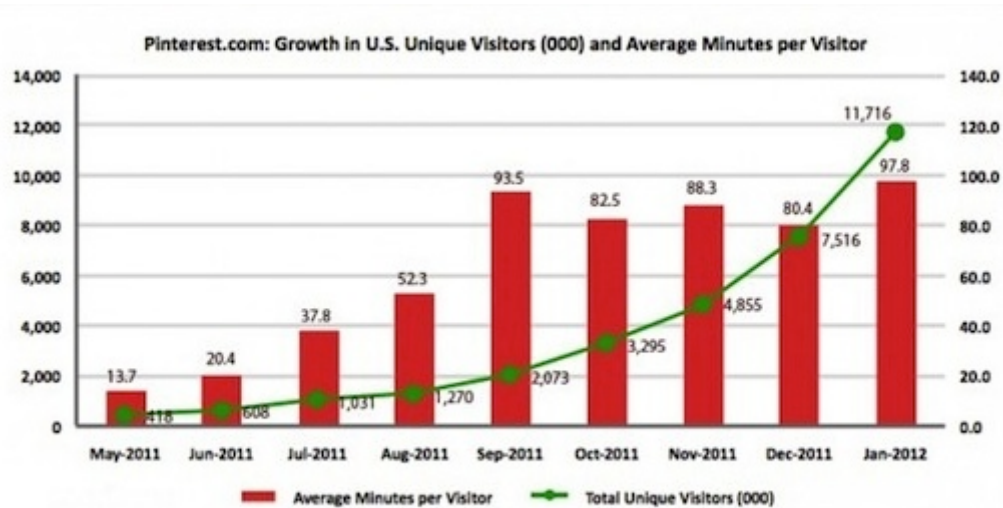
FIGURE 28. Pinterest growth in U.S.(www.internetmarketinginc.com)

Concerning Europe, Pinterest seems to also have created some buzz. From May 2011 the growth rate for visitors has been huge. The fastest growing market between May 2011 and January 2012 was Germany with a spike of over 2956 percent, and in January 2012 the site had 67,000 unique visitors. Spain ranked second with a rise of 1348 percent between May 2011 and January 2012, with 62,000 unique visitors in January 2012. United Kingdom got 245,000 unique visitors in January 2012 (figure 29, p.52).
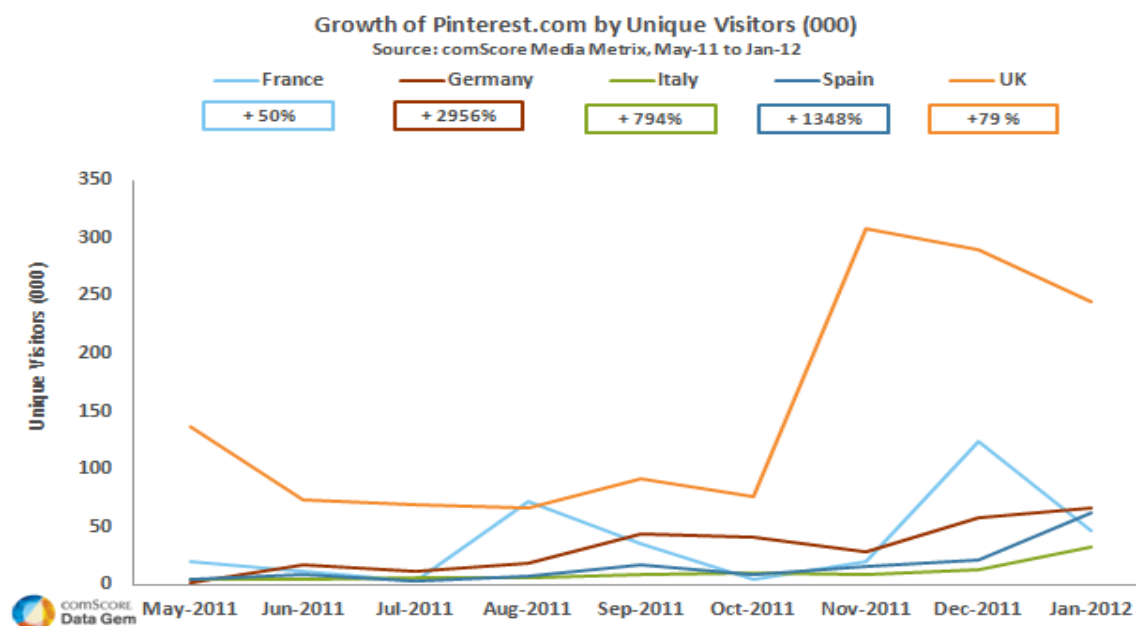

FIGURE 29. Pinterest growth in Europe (www.comscoredatamine.com)

Using Pinterest can have many benefits for an accommodation:

- It drives traffic and sales: this is probably the number one reason for companies to use Pinterest. Companies pin items to their pin-boards with the hope that potential customers will click on those pictures, in which case they will be taken to the company website and eventually purchase something.
- It gives possibility to provide rooms or services information
- It allows the company to highlight events and special offers: the company can pin pictures but also videos of past and upcoming events.
- It allows the company to engage with customers: a company can encourage customers to repin items and share them with their friends. When repining items, those will appear on a pinboard on their Pinterest page.
- It improves the company's website search rankings: the more users click back to the company's website, the higher the website ranks with Google and other search engines, back-linking being one of the key contributors to how high a site ranks on a search results page.
- It allows a company to conduct a market research: a company can learn about their customer by looking at what they pin and repin. (Miller, 2012, 235-236.)

When creating a Pinterest page, there is a few things to do. First the accommodation should write a promotional description, telling who the company is and what they offer. Then the profile picture should be the logo of the company or for an accommodation it can also be a beautiful picture of the hotel/hostel. It should also not be forgotten to link back to the company website, and to add a Pinterest "follow me" button on the website. After that, interesting and appropriate pinboards should be created. It is possible to create as much as one want. (Miller, 2012, 240-241.)

The 4 top tips to know about Pinterest, in order to raise users interest and get potential customers follow the company's pinboards, are to add one new board with at least 6 new pins each week, follow 5 new interesting and inspiring pin boards each week from other users related to the tourism industry, post prod-

ucts or services images as pins leading back to your website each month, and always use keywords in the pin descriptions and board titles to make users find them more easily when using the search tool (figure 30, p.54).

FIGURE 30. Pinterest top tips (www.thewholebraingroup.com)

By applying those few very important tips, an accommodation should get additional followers, and attract potential customers to their website with the possibility to get them to buy a room for a future trip. Moreover, for even more effective marketing with Pinterest, several other tips can be put in use:

- Optimizing the company's website content for Pinterest sharing, especially aesthetically pleasing images and graphics inside the website articles.
- Experimenting with alternative pin board styles. Checking what other tourism companies do as innovative board styles can give ideas.
- Spacing out the Pinterest activities. A good thing is to not post ten of new pins at the same time, but to add one new pin every hour or so for ten hours. This is a good way to give the opportunity to more users to see the pins in their stream.
- Re-pinning responsibly. Before re-pinning other users' pins, make sure the links are still working properly, as pins are usually linked to some website or blog
- Posting more than just rooms or services pictures. Interesting pin-boards could be about the destination, Finnish typical products, Finland, what there is to see in Tampere, where to eat in Tampere, and so on.
- Creating an "About us" pin-board. Users want to know who is behind the curtain. They want to know whom they are dealing with, especially in

case of need of customer support.

- Connecting socially. If you are on other social media such as Facebook or Twitter you can put a link to those on your Pinterest profile. On Facebook you can add a Pinterest application to link your accounts and show your pin-boards on Facebook. And as other social media, it is made for conversation, so a company should comment other members' pins and answer comments on their pins. (Miller, 2012, 243-248.)

5.6   Google +

As of December 2012, Google + was the fastest growing network. More than 500 million people had upgraded, which mean that people who were using Gmail or other Google tools are now connected to Google +. All Google tools are now linked to each other. If someone uses one of the tools, he can use all the other tools with the same account. Out of those 500 million people, 135 million are active in Google + stream. Moreover the Google "+1" button, which is the way a Google user shows he likes a publication on the web, is served more than 5 billion times per day. (http://googleblog.blogspot.com)

Google + is all about people and the relationships between people. For accommodations it is a way to connect with customers. Moreover it makes the accommodation more findable on Google search, as Google indexes it. A great tool which is unique to Google + is Hangouts. It allows representatives of companies to have live videos conversations with their customers or clients, with up to 9 people at a time. (Hattersley, 2012, 246-247.)

To create a Google + page for a company, a personal account is needed. Either one person of the staff can use its own to hook the page to it, or a special personal account can be created for the purpose. Then, when creating the accommodation's page it is good to fill the information sections with as much details as possible, as it will be directly linked to Google + Local, Google Map and all other Google tools.

To start using Google +, there are tools on Google + to guide businesses and help them. The first thing to do when the page is filled and ready is to start the conversation by writing the first post. Also it is good to advertise on the company's website that there is a Google + account, a badge can be create for that. It is also a good way to make people who already know the company follow its Google + account and add it to one of its Circle. To get more followers, it is also wise to search for other companies or people involved in the tourism industry and add them to the Circles.

The top 5 tips to follow when starting with a Google + page are to add 5 new people to the Circles each week, share content at least twice per day, make sure the posts are always set to "Public" in order to reach maximum users, host or/and offer a monthly Hangout session for a topic related to the tourism or hospitality industry, Hangouts can be easily advertised using the Google + events tool (figure 31, p.56).
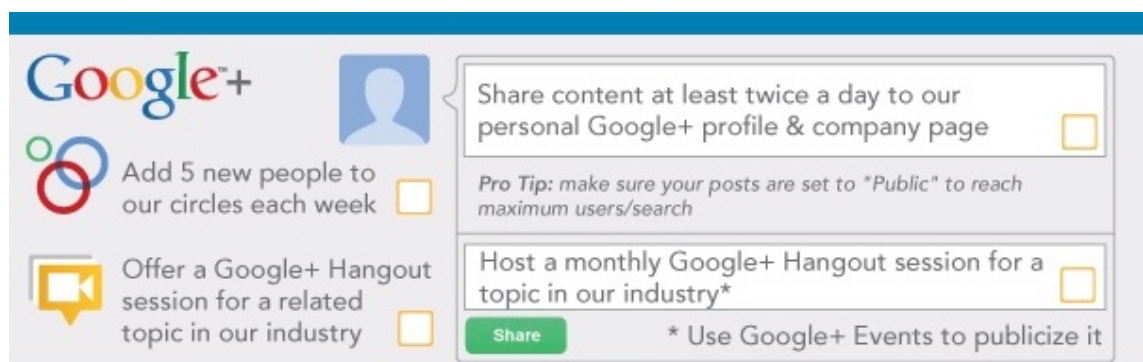

FIGURE 31. Google + top tips (www.thewholebraingroup.com)

Those tips are the minimum for a company to do on Google + to make the conversation go on, and to attract customers. Of course more can be done to do better and have more influence on Google +, and attract more potential customers, such as:

- Making use of enhanced images and video galleries.
- Linking all the social media used by the company using the "Recommended Links" section, so that Google + followers can find the company on other social media.
- Posting regularly and keeping up the e-marketing efforts in order to se-

cure the SEO (Search Engine Optimization, p.57) benefits that come along with popularity on Google +. The company should always keep in mind that Google + is part of Google, and that Google is the most important search engine in the world.

- Attending public Google + Hangouts hosted by the hospitality and tourism industry experts in order to build relationships and expand the company web presence.

- "Circling back" users who follow the company to expand the reach of the company's Google + page.

(www.jeffbullas.com)

6 INTERNET TOOLS IN THE HOSPITALITY MARKETING

In this chapter the author will analyse few of the Internet tools which are good to know about for marketing a hospitality business online: website, search engine optimization, and Google + Local. Moreover the author will analyse Tampere accommodations own websites and research if those are using Google + Local.

6.1 Tampere accommodations and Internet tools

The websites of 27 accommodations were analysed in March 2013 (appendix 2, p.77), which was the exact same list as for the Social Media analysis (chapter 5, p.38). Out of 27 accommodations all but 3 have a website with a good web usability (defined p.9-10). Out of the 3 which did not fulfil all the requirements of web usability, one did not have a real website. It had just a single page with little information about the accommodation and a link to a booking system. The 2 other websites are quite okay but would definitely need some refreshing to attract and keep visitors on the website, as a website has around 30 seconds to convince the visitor to stay (Nielsen and Loranger, 2006, 30).

The elements analysed with the usability theory were the links, the design of the website, the easiness of navigation and memorization, if there was a booking system, if there was recent updates, if there were information about how to get there, and what information could be found about the prices of rooms. (Nielsen et al., 2006, xvi, 171-172.)

Concerning the 24 other websites, the author was surprised to find that so many were very good concerning web usability: all links were working, the pages were clear and nice to look at, the sites were easy to navigate and memorize, they had a booking system integrated in the site, and most of them had recent updates.

About "how to get there", most of them had a small Google Map which linked to the Google Map website. Some had own maps but those were difficult to under-

stand for people who don't know Tampere already. Moreover some added text instruction, which is very good, as customers can them simply follow those instructions.

Regarding the information about the rooms and their prices, only few had the prices on their websites. To be able to get any idea of prices, it was necessary to proceed through the booking system and put specific dates. Only 9 out of 27 had the prices, or starting prices, directly on the website.

After analysing the accommodation websites, the author researched if the accommodations were present and active on Google + Local, formerly Google Places. Out of 27 accommodations, 17 had filled their details and information, and add a professional picture of the establishment. However none are active on Google + Local, meaning that none have responded to the customers reviews published there.

6.2   Website and web usability

In order to have an e-presence, the very first thing marketers usually do is to create a website. But there are rules to follow to be able to keep visitors on the website and make them come back. Marketers have to design attractive sites, which must project the brand image. The site should communicate what the company is and what it has to offer. It should be easy to navigate and memorize. Visitors are not going to wait for graphics to load: if it takes too long, they will close the website. The site should be also organized so the visitors can quickly get to the information they are looking for. The key is to create enough value and excitement to get visitors to come to the site, stick around and come back again. Today's web users are quick to leave any website that does not meet their expectations, which means that a company must frequently update its site to keep it up-to-date, fresh and exciting. (Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2006, 696.)

According to Susan Sweeney (2008, 65-78) elements that make visitors stay and come back on a company website are:

- An attractive website content
- A "What's new" page, with for example summaries of recent travel packages, news about the company, promotions, and so on.
- Specials, promotions and packages section. Everyone likes to get a deal. The company might use permission marketing so that customers get updates about those directly in their email box.

The more often a unique visitor comes to a website, the more the brand image is reinforced, the more the target market feels a part of a community, the more likely they give the company the permission to stay in touch, the more likely they will tell others about the company, and the more likely the company will be first in mind when booking an accommodation. (Sweeney, 2008, 65-78.)

When visiting a website, people arrive usually on the homepage. The 4 most important things a homepage must communicate to new visitors in the 30 seconds they spend of the page are what site they have arrived at, what benefits the accommodation offers them, something about the accommodation and its latest products and services, and how to get to the most relevant sections. A company has in average 1 minute and 49 seconds to convince a potential customer that they are worth doing business with. (Nielsen et al., 2006, 30.)

A well-structured site gives visitors what they want when they want it. With a nice looking design, visitors find and manage information easily. An appropriate information architecture makes visitors comfortable to explore and confident that they can easily come back to the previously viewed pages. (Nielsen et al., 2006, 171-172.)

Artistic elements such as typography and colour schemes play an important part in making a good first impression on the visitor. According to Nielsen et al. (2006, 213-215) companies should use common fonts size at or above 10 points, they should avoid busy backgrounds, they should use black text on

white backgrounds, and they should keep moving, all-cap, and graphical text to a minimum.

Moreover the companies should choose the text fonts wisely, as if visitors are not comfortable with the one chosen they won't stay on the website. The best choice is to opt for those that are available on most computers and browsers, so that it is optimized for everyone. Most common font families are serif and sans serif, with fonts such as Arial, Georgia, Times New Roman, Trebuchet MS, and Verdana. The best designed for online reading being Georgia and Verdana. (Nielsen et al., 2006, 232.)

After having taken care of all the design parts of the website, it is all about the content. Content is also an important key part of SEO, which will be developed in the following part. The most important thing when writing is to write for the readers. Thus the accommodation must think about who is the intended audience, identify the targeted audience in order to efficiently communicate ideas and keep the focus on the right path. The accommodation should be in touch with the visitors' interests and needs. The main tips include using simple term so that everyone understands, avoid acronyms, and avoid the use of sarcasm, wordplay and clichés. The web is a worldwide medium, but idioms do not easily cross borders. (Nielsen et al., 2008 258-262.)

When the content of a website is interesting, the visitor will wish to be able to share it with friends. In order to allow the visitors to do so, it is useful to put tools such as share buttons and tell-a-friend script on the website. That way with the click of a mouse, an article from the website or a page from the website will be shared through email or on a social media, allowing more visitors to the website, hence more potential customers.

6.3   SEO - Search Engine Optimization

When an accommodation has created a website with quality content, it is time to start thinking more about SEO practices in order to let search engines know the website is there and what it is about. SEO can be quite complex, but there are few easy things that need to be known. In search, as the entire process of text based, the text content of a website is the most important element. Thus, keyword selection is the key of SEO. The search engines care about how much text a website has, how it is formatted and what it says. (Grappone and Couzin, 2008, 52-53.)

Keywords are the words that users type into a search engine when looking for information about a specific topic. Search engines base the website's rank, to a great extent, on the number and type of keywords in the pages (Kent, 2008, 61). Search engines identifies a certain density above all others, which is 1-2%, which means that if the webpage is 1,000 words long, the keyword has to appear 10-20 times in order to be found through the search engine results. However the keywords should always be included into the content of the website, search engine are quite smart, and one cannot trick them easily. (http://blog.getrank.org)

Keywords must be chosen wisely and thoughtfully. The best way is to have a staff brainstorming and think about what keywords the potential visitors would use to find the company. Other tips to find the best keywords are to:

- Remember to put the name of the accommodation as a top target keyword.
- Think about the products, services offered, with both generic and proprietary descriptions.
- Name the needs the company fills.
- Think seasonal.
- Embrace misspelling, alternate spelling and slang.
- Locate the company.
- Look at the website's access logs as most show the keywords that visitors used to reach the website

- Synonyms
- Singular and plural, as search engines treat them differently (Grappone et al., 2008, 109-130; Kent, 2008, 74-78.)

Usually the company should pick one main keyword or phrase for each page of the website, which is then placed at the beginning of the <TITLE> tag into the HTML code, and integrate the other keywords throughout the page, where suitable. The <TITLE> tag is the title a web user will see when getting results from a Google search. Another tag to know is the DESCRIPTION meta tag, which is often the description a web user will see under the title of the page in the list of search results. Meta tags are special HTML tags that can be used to carry information, which can then be read by web browsers or other programs. Thus it is pretty important to fill this tag. It should be placed immediately after the <TITLE> tag, and filled with a keyworded description of up to 250 characters including spaces. (Kent, 2008, 103-109.)

Other elements of the website which will be analysed by search engines are links and backlinks. Links in the website pages fulfil various goals: they help searchbots find other pages on the website, keywords in links tell search engines about the pages that the links are pointing at, and keywords in links also tell search engines about the page containing the links. Links need to be present into and out of the pages. All the pages should be part of the navigation structure. Thus it is a good idea also to have links within the body text. When creating webpages companies should create links on the page to other pages, and make sure that other pages within the site link back to the page they created, using keywords placed in the <TITLE> tag. (Kent, 2008, 116.)

After that it is also important to know that search engines also take into consideration how many other websites have links to the company website, as a reference. Those are called backlinks. In order to get more other websites have the company's website link, few strategies are possible:
- Guest posting on tourism and hospitality industry blogs.
- Collaborating with tourist office, tourism industry companies and local companies, having a page with their links on the company's website and

them doing the same on their website.

- Having an account on some tourism industry or accommodation directories. (http://blog.getrank.com)

After completing the 3 other aspects of SEO, the next step is to promote the company on social media (see chapter 5, p.39). This allows the accommodation to bring more traffic to the website but also get the accommodation a higher rank on Google and other search engines. It will also give the possibility to the accommodation to put keywords in more places than the website itself, and backlink the website more often, hence the importance of putting the website address on all the social media used by the accommodation.

Taking these four points – content, keywords, links, social (figure 32, p.64) – into consideration will help the accommodation immensely in conquering the task of having a search engine optimized website. With those the website will fast become noticed by search engines and start rising in the ranks. (http://blog.getrank.com)

FIGURE 32. The SEO Pyramid (http://blog.getrank.org)

6.4   Google + Local

Formerly Google Places, Google + Local has been created in order to combine Google search, Google + and Google business directory features. Its primary use is to allow web users to search out and find detailed information on local companies. The benefits of using Google + Local are to take into consideration: better search rank, more traffic to the website, useful information through data analysis, and the possibility to build up a community of customers. (www.mybizonlineservices.com)

Another element to remember is that Google + Local is part of the numerous Google tool, and with the recent update of Google, all are linked together. This means more visibility in search results and more visibility also inside Google + network itself, as Google + Local is directly a part of Google +. Moreover, according to Google, 20% of all searches nowadays have local intent, 40% on mobile devices., and over 90% of consumers search online for local companies, hence making it obvious that local search visibility is highly important for companies. (www.vocus.com)

Even if an accommodation does not take any action on Google + Local, the business might appear in the local searches, as the major search engines pull data from a lot of different sources. Nevertheless, Google let accommodations submit details about the business directly to local search, thus increasing the probabilities of being found during a local search and increasing the amount of information shown. Typical information that is possible to provide includes:

- The street address
- The phone and fax numbers
- A link to the accommodation's website
- A description of the accommodation
- The list of payment methods accepted
- The operating hours: for a hotel, it means the reception opening hours
- The year the accommodation was created
- The languages spoken by the reception staff members and customer service

- The products and services offered
- Photos of the establishment

(Kent, 2008, 199-201).

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although most accommodations in Tampere have a website for their customers, almost none are using social media. Most website have a good web usability to keep the customers on the website and make them come back. Good web usability will also keep visitors on the site, with the probability to transform them into customers.

Nevertheless, almost none of the accommodations are present on the social media, which would be useful for hospitality e-marketing. It would help the company to drive more traffic on the accommodation website, increase communication with customers, improve online influence, reach more potential customers, and get higher ranking in the search engines results, thus linked to search engine optimisation.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Google +, and Pinterest have all together billions of members, which makes them very useful for businesses for emarketing. For tourism companies it is a huge amount of potential customers. Moreover all those social media are easy to use for companies and a lot can be done with them. Thus the author recommends to Tampere accommodations to start creating and using business profiles on those main Social Media. Besides, emarketing on social media is now growing fast. Thus it is recommended to use social media to not be left behind. Social media will continue to develop for businesses, and concerning hospitality companies new applications on Facebook for direct hotel bookings are appearing.

The customer behaviour survey, although mostly a Finnish point of view, showed that nowadays Internet is a very important part in the research for information when organising a trip. Moreover customers' reviews are considered important to read to get an opinion about an accommodation. Thus a company should always monitor its reviews, on TripAdvisor and Google + at least, and answer each of them, especially negative once. Not answering negative feedbacks can do bad publicity for a company, as word-of-mouth can go really fast through the web. Furthermore customers share a lot before, during and after

their trip, through social media. They share information, opinions, pictures of the accommodation and destination. Thus it is good for the accommodation to be present on the social media used by their customers to get into the conversation with them while they share about the accommodation.

REFERENCES

Book references:

Altinay, L. & Paraskevas, A. 2008. Planning research in hospitality and tourism. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Charlesworth, A. 2009. Internet marketing: a practical approach. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Cooper, C., Fletcher, J., Fyall, A., Gilbert, D. & Wanhill, S. 2008. Tourism: principles and practice. 4th edition. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Fink, A. 2006. How to conduct surveys: a step-by-step guide. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Gillin, P. 2009. Secrets of social media marketing: how to use online conversations and customer communities to turbocharge your business. Fresno, CA: Quill Driver.

Grappone, J. & Couzin, G. 2008. Search engine optimization: an hour a day. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Green, C. 2007. The travel marketer's guide to social media and social networks: sales and marketing in a web 2.0 world. The HSMAI Foundation.

Hattersley, M. 2012. Google+ Companion. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley.

Hudson, S. 2008. Tourism and hospitality marketing: a global perspective. London: Sage.

Kent, P. 2008. Search engine optimization for dummies. 3rd edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Kotler, P., Bowen, J. & Makens, J. 2006. Marketing for hospitality and tourism. 4th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Levy, J. 2010. Facebook marketing: designing your next marketing campaign. 2nd edition. Indianapolis, IN: Que.

McCabe, S. 2009. Marketing communications in tourism and hospitality: concepts, strategies and cases. Oxford: Elsevier.

Micek, D. & Whitlock, W. 2008. Twitter revolution: how social media and mobile marketing is changing the way we do business and market online. Las Vegas, NV: Xeno Press.

Middleton, V., Fyall, A. & Morgan, M. 2009. Marketing in travel and tourism. 4th edition. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Miller, M. 2012. My Pinterest. Indianapolis, IN: Que.

Nielsen, J. & Loranger, H. 2006. Prioritizing Web usability. Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

O'Reilly, T. & Milstein, S. 2009. The Twitter book. Sebastopol: O'Reilly.

Page, S. 2003. Tourism management: managing for change. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Rowley, J. 2002. E-business: principles and practice. Hampshire: Palgrave.

Smith, P.R. & Chaffey, D. 2002. eMarketing eXcellence: the heart of eBusiness. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
Sweeney, S. 2008. 101 ways to promote you tourism web site: filled with proven Internet marketing tips, tolls, and techniques to get visitors to your site and your destination. 2nd edition. Gulf Breeze, FL: Maximum Press.

Zarrella, D. 2010. The social media marketing book. Cambridge, MA: O'Reilly Media.

Electronic references:

Blaida, J. 2012. Sensible Social Media Checklist for Business v.2.0. Read 18.2.2013. http://www.thewholebraingroup.com/sensible-social-media-checklist-v20-infographic/

Bullas, J. 2012. 48 Significant Social Media Facts, Figures and Statistics plus 7 infographics. Read 18.2.2013. http://www.jeffbullas.com/2012/04/23/48-significant-social-media-facts-figures-and-statistics-plus-7-infographics/

Clerk Hotel Management. 2012. New Booking Facebook App for accommodation business. Read 10.04.2013. http://www.clerkhotel.com/news/news/new-booking-facebook-app-for-accommodation-business/

ComScore. 2012. Is Pinterest the Next Big Social Network in Europe? Read 20.2.2013. http://www.comscoredatamine.com/2012/02/is-pinterest-the-next-big-social-network-in-europe/

Facebook. 2013. Facebook for business. Read 19.2.2013. http://www.facebook.com/business

Gill, R. 2012. What your business needs to know about Google Plus Local. Read 20.2.2013. http://mybizonlineservices.com/google-plus-local-infographic/

Google + Official Blog. 2012. Communities and photos. Read 21.2.2013. http://googleblog.blogspot.fi/2012/12/google-communities-and-photos.html

Konopinski, J. 2013. Four Things Marketers Should Know About Google+ Local. Read 20.2.2013. http:// http://www.vocus.com/blog/a-guide-to-google-local/

Oxford, J. 2012. Pinterest Data You Can't Ignore: the Ultimate Guide to Pinterest. Read 20.2.2013. http://www.internetmarketinginc.com/blog/the-ultimate-guide-to-pinterest-infographic/

Patel, S. 2012. 75 Tips to Manage Your Social Media Efforts in 2012. Read 15.2.2013. http://www.quicksprout.com/2012/09/10/75-tips-to-manage-social-media-efforts-in-2012/

Ramkalyan, R. 2013. The Beginner's Guide to SEO. Read 20.2.2013. http://blog.getrank.org/2013/02/the-beginners-guide-to-seo-infographic/

TripAdvisor. 2012. "How To" Guides. Read 19.2.2013. http://tripadvisor4biz.wordpress.com/how-to-guides/

TripAdvisor. 2013. Tripadvisor for business. Read 19.2.2013. http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Owners

TripAdvisor. 2013. TripBarometer: the World's Largest Accommodation and Traveler Survey. Read 19.2.2013. http://www.tripadvisorbarometer.com

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Bachelor Thesis Survey

Bachelor Thesis Survey

Hello everyone,

I am a bachelor student in the tourism degree at TAMK university of applied sciences in Tampere, Finland. As part of my bachelor thesis, I am conducting a survey to investigate consumer's habits in the process of booking an accommodation for a trip, related to internet tools and social media. I would greatly appreciate if you would fill out this short survey. It will take no more than 10 minutes.
Your participation in this study is voluntary, but you must be 18 or older to participate. Your responses are kept anonymous and will be used for research purpose only.
Thank you for your time and consideration. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Aurelie Krahl, bachelor student
Tourism degree
TAMK university of applied sciences
*Required

On average how many times per year do you travel for 2 days or more?
choose only one

○ none

○ 1 to 2

○ 3 to 4

○ 5 or more

Do you mostly travel (2 days or more) for:
choose only one

○ Leisure

○ Business

○ to see family or/and friends

○ Other:

What kind of accommodation do you usually book when traveling?
choose only one, the one you book the most

○ Hotel

○ Hostel

○ Rent an apartment or house

○ Cottage

○ Staying at friend or family

○ Bed and breakfast or Guesthouse

○ Camping

○ Other:

What sources do you use when looking for information about accommodation?
choose all the ones you use

☐ Friends and/or family

☐ Internet accommodation website

☐ Internet hotel booking websites (such as booking, expedia, venere, opodo)

☐ Websites about the destination

☐ General social media (such as facebook, twitter, pinterest)

☐ Reviews social media (such as tripadvisor)

☐ Books or guides about the destination

☐ Travel fair

☐ Other:

What booking methods do you use to book an accommodation?
choose all the ones you use

☐ through a travel agent

☐ through the company you work for

☐ walk-in

☐ phone

☐ mail

☐ email

☐ hotel website

☐ hotel social media page or profile

☐ booking website (such as booking, expedia, opodo, venere)

☐ Other:

How important is it to you that an accommodation:

	Not important at all	Not too important	Somewhat important	Very important
has a website	○	○	○	○
has a facebook page	○	○	○	○
has a tripadvisor page with customer reviews	○	○	○	○
has a twitter account	○	○	○	○

	Not important at all	Not too important	Somewhat important	Very important
has a pinterest account	○	○	○	○
is on google map/ google local (so that you can specifically see the hotel on the map with pictures and other infos)	○	○	○	○
is on a booking website (such as booking, expedia, opodo, venere)	○	○	○	○

What are your expectations on an accommodation website?
choose all that apply

- ☐ customer service via email
- ☐ customer service via instant messenger/chat
- ☐ online booking system
- ☐ detailed information about the rooms
- ☐ detailed information about the services available
- ☐ pictures of the accommodation, the rooms and the services
- ☐ information about what to do in the city and/or area
- ☐ information about how to get there
- ☐ Other:

Which of the following social media do you use?
choose all that apply

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ Google +
- ☐ Tripadvisor
- ☐ TravBuddy
- ☐ I don't use any
- ☐ Other:

Do you use social media:
choose all that apply

- ☐ before a trip to get information about an accommodation
- ☐ before a trip to get information about a destination
- ☐ before a trip to get other people's opinion about an accommodation

☐ before a trip to book your accommodation

☐ during your trip to share information and/or opinion about your trip with friends

☐ during your trip to share pictures from your trip with friends

☐ after your trip to write a review about your accommodation

☐ after your trip to share pictures from your trip with friends

☐ after your trip to share information and/or opinion about your trip with friends

☐ Other:

What are your expectations on an accommodation's Facebook page?
choose all that apply

☐ getting up-to-date information about the accommodation

☐ efficiently communicate online with the customer service

☐ sharing experience about the accommodation

☐ being entertained

☐ obtaining special promotions and/or deals

☐ obtaining better prices than other customers

☐ Other:

What are your expectations on an accommodation's Twitter page?
choose all that apply

☐ getting up-to-date information about the accommodation

☐ efficiently communicate online with the customer service

☐ sharing experience about the accommodation

☐ being entertained

☐ obtaining special promotions and/or deals

☐ obtaining better prices than other customers

☐ Other:

What are your expectations on an accommodation's TripAdvisor page?
choose all that apply

☐ getting to know other customer's opinion on the accommodation

☐ communicate with other customers

☐ communicate with the customer service

☐ being able to compare the accommodation with other ones

☐ getting tips from other customers about the accommodation and/or the destination

☐ Other:

What are your expectations on an accommodation's Pinterest page?
choose all that apply

☐ see pictures that are not on the accommodation's website

☐ see pictures of the services available

☐ see pictures of all the types of rooms

☐ see pictures of the destination

☐ see pictures of the staff in general

☐ see pictures of the customer service staff

☐ Other:

Gender *

○ Male

○ Female

Age *
less than 20

Country of Residence *

○ Finland

○ France

○ Germany

○ United Kingdom

○ USA

○ Ireland

○ Belgium

○ Sweden

○ Spain

○ Russia

○ Italy

○ Other:

Nationality *

○ Finland

○ France

○ Germany

- ○ United Kingdom
- ○ USA
- ○ Ireland
- ○ Belgium
- ○ Sweden
- ○ Spain
- ○ Russia
- ○ Italy
- ○ Other:

Occupation *

- ○ Employed
- ○ Self-employed
- ○ Unemployed
- ○ Student
- ○ Retired
- ○ Other:

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Powered by [Google Docs](#)

Appendix 2: List of hotels and hostels analysed (social media and website)

- Cumulus Koskikatu
- Cumulus Rautatienkatu
- Spa Hotel Rantasipi Eden
- Spa Hotel Rantasipi Ikaalinen
- Scandic Tampere City
- Scandic Tampere Station
- Sokos Hotel Ilves
- Sokos Hotel Tammer
- Cumulus Hämeenpuisto
- Cumulus Pinja
- Holiday Club Tampere Spa
- Holiday Inn Tampere
- Hotel Victoria
- Norlandia Care Tampere Hotel
- Scandic Rosendhal
- Sokos Hotel Villa
- Hotel Kauppi
- Haapalinna
- Hotel Hermica
- Hotel Homeland
- Mango Tampere Hotel
- Hotel Lamminpää
- Hotel Ville
- Hotel Omena 1
- Hotel Omena 2
- Apartment Hotel Tampere MN
- Dream Hostel Tampere