

**The needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19**

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<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the tourism industry worldwide immensely. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of overnight stays in the destination of Finnish Lapland decreased. In the whole year, a total of 2,1 million overnight stays have been registered in Finnish Lapland, which is a decline of -34% in comparison to 2019 (Business Finland 2021). In the capital of Rovaniemi alone, there was a decline of -48%, which comes down to a total of 401.000 overnight stays. Moreover, in that same year, approximately 38% (776.000) of the total number of overnight stays were booked by international tourists (House of Lapland 2020).</p> <p>This thesis research will be primarily focused on the study of the (potential) changes in needs and behaviour of international leisure tourists that visit Finnish Lapland post COVID-19. The research aims to gather more knowledge and insights regarding the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (upcoming 3 years), to assist accommodations in Finnish Lapland with improving their business model in pandemic situations.</p> <p>The study itself is scoped down to international leisure tourists visiting Finnish Lapland from the top-5 growing markets: the United Kingdom, France, China, Germany, and the Netherlands. Data was collected by gathering the opinions of international leisure tourists from the beforementioned countries through an online survey that was spread through various Facebook groups. The results and analysis of the collected data can be found in chapter 6.</p> <p>The final outcome of the research would be to develop a guidebook for accommodations operating in Finnish Lapland to assist them with improving their business model in pandemic situations, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidebook is created so that the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland can better understand their customer's travel behaviour and needs post COVID-19. Furthermore, it also describes what kind of services international leisure tourists value most post COVID-19 and the three most relevant recommendations for the accommodation industry. The final guidebook can be found in Appendix 7.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Travel behaviour, customer satisfaction, needs, values, international tourists, Finnish Lapland, COVID-19	

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## Abbreviations

COVID-19	The contagious Coronavirus disease that was first discovered in China at the end of 2019.
DACH	Is used as an acronym for the following three countries: Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product.
GDPR	European legislation on Data Protection.
LME	Finnish Lapland Tourist Board ry.
Leisure tourists	Tourists that visit a destination for the purpose of a vacation.
PCR-test	A test that is used to detect the COVID-19 virus in individuals.
WHO	The World Health Organization.

# 1 Introduction

This thesis research focuses on the analysis of the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (within the next 3 years, 2022-2025). The primary reason why this research was conducted is because that at time of writing this thesis, I noticed that quite some research was already conducted globally by other countries regarding needs and travel behaviour post COVID-19. However, there was little to no research published yet regarding this subject specifically for the region of Finnish Lapland. The lack of research and knowledge around this subject for the region of Finnish Lapland sparked my interest to investigate this matter during my thesis research. Additionally, the thesis topic was also chosen partly as a result of my personal motivation. During my study at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, I realized that I wanted my thesis topic to be relevant and current. My wish was that the outcome of my thesis would have an actual impact and help to solve a current problem that the tourism industry is facing. My interest specifically went out to the region of Finnish Lapland, the reason for this being my multiple years of previous work experience in the travel industry marketing and selling incentive travel experiences to this destination.

Empirical data was collected during this research in two different ways. Firstly, a global case study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the results and conclusions of research that is already published about this subject. This information was later used to design the survey questions and to analyze the results of this research. Secondly, an online survey was conducted and shared through various Facebook groups that have a connection with travelling to Finnish Lapland. The results of this online survey have been analyzed and discussed. Based on the results of the analysis, three concrete recommendations for the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland are created.

The results of this research will be shared with local entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland in several ways. Firstly, the thesis will be published on the online platform 'Theseus'. Secondly, the final product of this thesis is a guidebook for the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland (Appendix 7) which will be published online on Flipsnack for anyone who wishes to view it. Thirdly, the results of this thesis research will be presented and shared with the commissioner of this thesis, the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board Ly. During one of the online meetings that were held with the commissioner (LME) in preparation for this research, they stated it may also be possible to present the results of the thesis research during one of LME's online workshops. These workshops are organized regularly to support local entrepreneurs in Lapland and provide them with information about current

events. Besides local entrepreneurs that are active in the accommodation industry (e.g. accommodation managers and owners), the results of this research may also be of interest for various touristic organizations e.g. Visit Lapland, Visit Finland, Visit Rovaniemi, Lapin yrittäjät ry (Lapland Entrepreneurs), Finnish Lapland Tourism Board (LME).

## **1.1 Current situation**

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. Only two months later, the COVID-19 virus was officially declared as a pandemic as it was spreading fast throughout central Europe (Neuburger & Egger 2020, 1003). Since then, the pandemic has promptly spread to more than 210 countries globally. In 2020, it was estimated that there were approximately 32 million cases and almost 1,000,000 deaths as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, this pandemic has had a significant impact on the global travel industry which is facing immense challenges economically because of COVID-19. To give an example, in 2019 international tourist arrivals increased by four percent to more than 1.5 billion worldwide. Many experts believed that 2020 would be a great year for the tourism sector. However, since to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in China in 2019 the industry has been struggling. In comparison to 2019, an exceedingly successful year in terms of international tourism, international tourist arrivals have decreased by 65% in the first half of 2020. This is the most consequential decline in the history of passenger arrivals. (Kumar & Shohel 2020, 1487.)

Additionally, the number of overnight stays by foreign visitors in the whole of Finland in August 2021 dropped by 66% in comparison to the same month in 2019. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of overnight stays in the destination of Finnish Lapland decreased immensely. During the whole year, a total of 2,1 million overnight stays have been registered in Finnish Lapland, which is a decline of -34% in comparison to 2019. Furthermore, when looking at the number of overnight stays in Finland within the group of non-resident tourists from January to August 2021, 133.000 overnight stays were registered by Germans, 31.000 by Dutch tourists, 28.000 by French tourists, and 25.000 by tourists from the UK (Business Finland 2021). In the capital of Rovaniemi alone, there was a decline of -48%, which comes down to a total of 401.000 overnight stays. In that same year, approximately 38% (776.000) of the total number of overnight stays were booked by international tourists. Most overnight stays that were booked by international tourists in Finnish Lapland were registered during January, February, and March. As shown in Figure 1, the development regarding overnight stays has declined immensely in 2020 for the first time in several years, mostly due to a decline in international tourists. It is



estimated that international tourism will start to grow again in the summer of 2021, however, it will most likely take several years to recover back to the level before the COVID-19 pandemic (House of Lapland 2020). Furthermore, Mr. Mitsutaka Shoji, Director & Chairman of Kuoni Tumlare Corporation Japan mentions that he believes that the demand for holidays to Finnish Lapland from Asian countries will most likely increase again in the winter of 2022 or 2023. (House of Lapland 2021.)

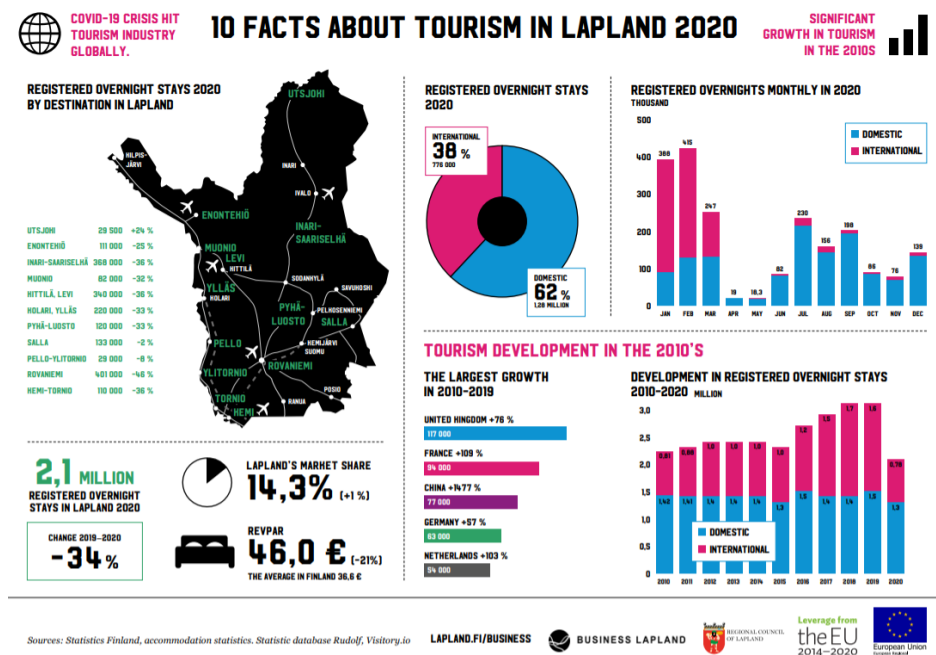


Figure 1. Facts about tourism in Lapland in 2020 (Adapted from House of Lapland 2020)

## 1.2 About the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board (LME)

This thesis is written with the help of the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board Ly. (Lapin Matkailuelinkeinon liitto, LME) as a commissioner. This association was founded in 2010 and now co-operates with over 40 tourism companies in the region of Finnish Lapland. LME is established in the city of Rovaniemi (the capital of Finnish Lapland) to bring together and connect local tourism businesses. According to LME (2021), Lapland is currently the second strongest province in Finland (Uusimaa being the first). The Finnish Lapland Tourist Board currently consists of three full-time employees and a 9 + 5 advisory board which consists of different companies operating in Finnish Lapland. The association directs and develops shared visions and marketing with their partners and acts as the main point of contact to authorities and lawmakers and other parties that work outside of the Finnish borders that promote tourism in Finnish Lapland. For example, LME created toolkits for entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland to assist them to create agreements with tourism businesses outside of Finland such as travel agents and tour operators.

Additionally, the association is the main project partner for the Visit Arctic Europe project, which focuses on developing Lapland (Finland, Sweden, and Norway) as a 365 days a year travel destination, valuing sustainability and high-quality tourism products. (Visit Arctic Europe 2021.)

Furthermore, the main goals for LME are described as follows (LME 2021.):

- To promote the general and common interests of companies operating in the tourism sector.
- To encourage co-operation between its members.
- To improve general operating conditions.
- And lastly, to raise the profile of the tourism industry.

### **1.3 Research objectives and questions**

This thesis research is primarily focused on the study of the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (within the next 3 years, 2022-2025). The research aims to develop a guidebook for accommodations operating in Finnish Lapland to assist them with improving their business model in pandemic situations, for example, COVID-19. The guidebook is created so that the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland can better understand their customer's travel behaviour and customer's needs to improve customer satisfaction post COVID-19. Furthermore, it also describes what kind of services international leisure tourists value most post COVID-19, and it provides three concrete recommendations for the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland. The guidebook is created in such a way so that it is easy to read and understand. To create this guidebook, the following research questions are to be answered:

*RQ1: In what way has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists?*

*RQ2: What kind of services do international leisure tourists value when travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025)?*

For the second research question, a decision was made to focus on international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish Lapland in the short-term, within the upcoming 3 years (2022-2025). The main reason for this decision is that the COVID-19 pandemic is, unfortunately, currently still ongoing. The situation regarding travelling

abroad is changing continuously (e.g. the travel restrictions). Because of this, it may be very difficult to research the needs and travel behaviour of international tourists in the long-term. Furthermore, international tourists were picked as a target group because international travel was affected the most by the pandemic, and has declined considerably.

With the help of the overlay matrix (Table 1), the connection between the online survey questions and the above research is shown. It is important to note that some of the questions in the online survey may be overlapping and can be seen as a service and/or as travel behaviour. For example, in question 15, the mode of transportation refers to travel behaviour. However, shuttle bus or charter bus transportation can also be an extra service that is offered by accommodations. For this reason, the decision regarding which category (travel behaviour or services) the survey question connects most to is based on my own personal view as a researcher, and on how I want the question to be interpreted by the reader.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Theoretical connection</b>	<b>Connection with the survey questions</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>1. In what way has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists?</b>	Chapters 2.1, 2.2, 3.2	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21	Chapter 5.3, 6, 7
<b>2. What kind of services do international leisure tourists value when visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025)?</b>	Chapter 2.3, 2.4	Q5, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13	Chapter 5.4, 6, 7

#### 1.4 Scope of the research

As already mentioned, this thesis research will be primarily focused on the study of the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in visiting

Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025). According to House of Lapland (2020), the countries which have shown the largest growth from 2010-2019 regarding international tourism to Finnish Lapland are The United Kingdom (+76%), France (+109%), China (+1477%), Germany (+57%), and The Netherlands (+103%). For this reason, the research that is conducted is specifically focused only on international leisure tourists traveling to Finnish Lapland departing from the beforementioned five countries. To clarify the full extent and scope of the research, the full extent of the research that has been conducted is visualized in Figure 2.

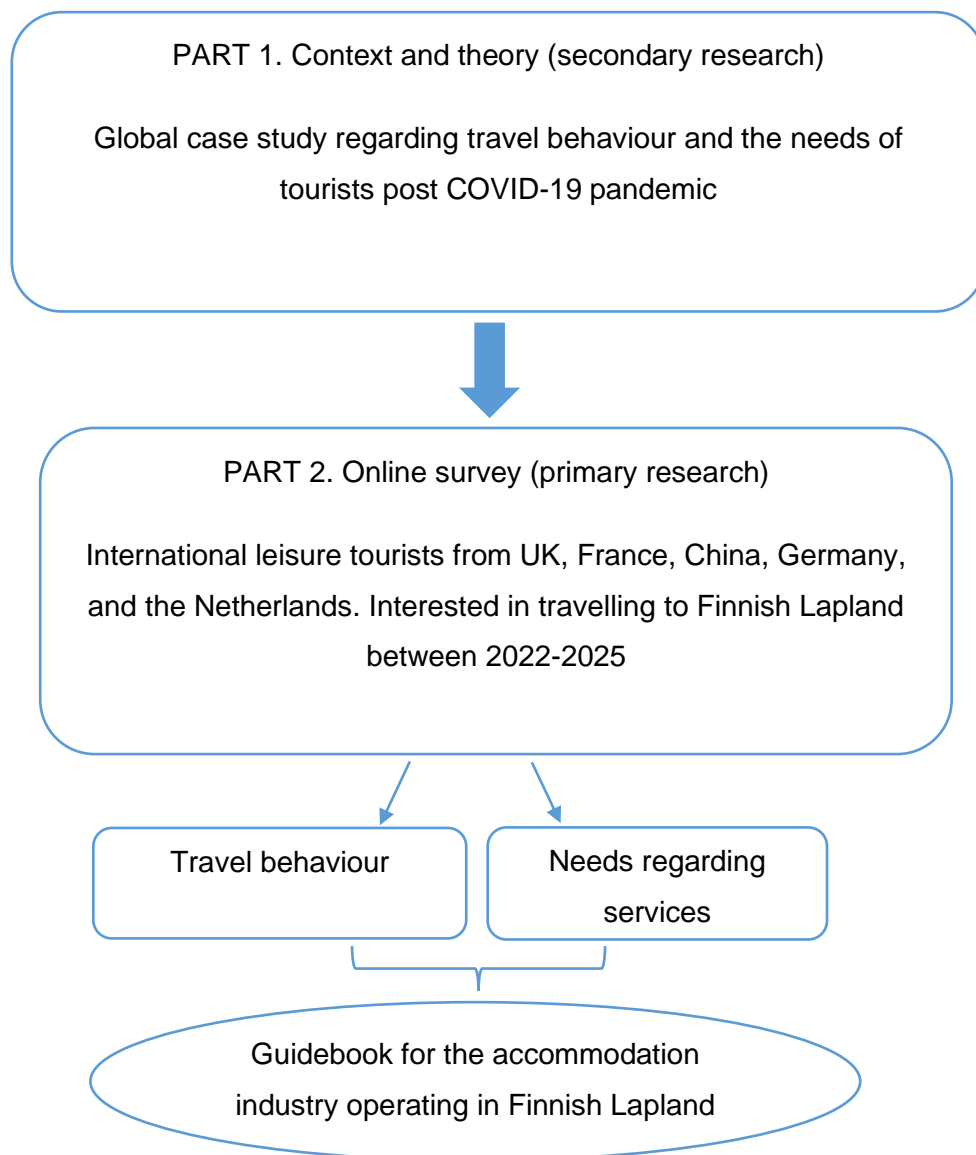


Figure 2. Visualization of the research

Furthermore, it is important to note that the results of this research are purely based on expectations of international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish

Lapland post COVID-19 (in the upcoming 3 years, 2022-2025). At the start of this research, a choice was made to not include the opinions of tourists that have already travelled to Finnish Lapland during the pandemic. The main reason for this was that, although leisure tourism in Finnish Lapland was somewhat possible during the Coronavirus pandemic, there have been extremely strict travel restrictions in place for international leisure tourists arriving in Finnish Lapland. For example, at the end of 2020 international tourists were only allowed to enter Finnish Lapland by showing a valid PCR test no older than 72-hours at entry. They were then allowed to visit for a maximum of one week, before they would have to undergo a second PCR-test in Finland (Yle.fi 2020). Moreover, there has been a substantial decline in passenger demand and available flights to Finnish Lapland during the COVID-19 pandemic. To name an example, Finnair cancelled approximately 177 flights to Finland including several flights that would fly to Finnish Lapland between 20-28<sup>th</sup> of march 2020 (Uusi Suomi 2020). Thus, it would be very difficult to find a platform to spread the online survey specifically to this small group of tourists that have travelled during the pandemic.

## **1.5 Thesis structure**

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on the reasons for conducting this thesis research and how empirical data was collected. It also gives the reader more insight regarding the commissioner of this thesis, the research objectives, and questions, and finally the scope of this research. Additionally, it also explains the current situation to so to say 'set the stage'.

In the second chapter, the concepts that are linked to travel behaviour (consumer behaviour and satisfaction) are described in detail. Furthermore, this chapter also reveals how these concepts are linked and how needs are connected to motives and values of individuals. Furthermore, some of the characteristics of services in the tourism industry are explained as well since this is relevant to the second research question. In the third chapter, a global case study was conducted regarding the changes in tourists' travel behaviour and their needs during and post COVID-19. Some of the most interesting findings of this case study have been used as input when creating the survey questions for the primary research.

Furthermore, in the fourth chapter, the research methodology is outlined. It provides the reader with additional information regarding the research approach that was taken, methods that were used to collect data, and the steps that were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of this research. Furthermore, this chapter also describes some of the challenges during the research and how they were tackled.

Moreover, the results of the online survey are presented and analyzed in chapter 5. This chapter also briefly explains how the collected data was analyzed, and the background of the individuals that have participated in this research. Furthermore, the final results of the research (online survey) are discussed in chapter 6. Additionally, the two research questions that were created are answered in this chapter as well.

The conclusion of this research is described in chapter 7, in which the theoretical and managerial contributions of this research are discussed and three concrete recommendations for the accommodation industry to improve their business model during pandemic situations are given. The aim of this research was to develop a guidebook for accommodations operating in Finnish Lapland to assist them with improving their business model in pandemic situations, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic. The process of creation of the final product, the guidebook, is explained in chapter 7.4. Furthermore, a visual copy of the final version of the guidebook has been added in Appendix 7. Finally, a reflection was added that gives a detailed insight into how I have personally experienced the thesis writing process and some of the learnings that took place.

## **2 Literature review and conceptualization**

In this chapter, the most important key theories and concepts are discussed since these will play a big role and be of great value during the research process and when answering the research questions. To be more specific, the connection between travel behaviour, consumer behaviour, customer satisfaction and needs, values and motivation is explained below.

### **2.1 Travel behaviour**

For this study, a choice was made to focus on researching the potential changes in travel behaviour of international tourists post COVID-19. Travel behaviour is a very frequently discussed concept in the tourism industry. Over the past decades, there have been many different definitions of travel behaviour. Motivation is a crucial component of travel behaviour since it is linked to the decision-making process of travellers and indirectly connected to customer satisfaction and the needs of the tourist. Uysal & Hagan (1993) found that motivation can be defined as follows: *'The power to derive all actions'*. They believe it is the power behind the behaviour of travellers (Yun-A, Kyun-Won & Hee-Ju 2021, 2). According to Van Vuuren & Slabbert (2011, 694 – 695.) travel behaviour in tourism can be described as: *'The way in which tourists behave according to their attitudes before, during and after travelling'*. They also mention that there are different factors that can influence travel behaviour such as motivation to travel, attitude and various situational and environmental factors play a role as well.

According to a recent research published by Marin-Pantelescu (2021, 17 – 24.) about the tourist behaviour of travelling millennials in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourist behaviour of travellers will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other trends that have an impact on the way of travelling. More attention is paid to safety protocols and so-called 'contactless travel experiences'. Furthermore, safety and hygiene aspects will become crucial during the decision-making process, especially when choosing a holiday destination, activities, and transportation method.

### **2.2 Consumer behaviour**

There are many different definitions of consumer behaviour, some definitions are very useable to define consumer behaviour within the tourism industry. According to Cuculeski, Cuculeski & Tashkov (2015, 3.) consumer behaviour within the tourism industry can be described as: *'The process by which consumers decide to buy or use a product or service'*. The process involves various activities such as decision-making, acquiring, the

use of and disposal of products and services.’ Cuculeski et al. also mention that mapping consumer behaviour within the tourism industry is especially important to fully understand their motivations for travelling and participating in certain activities. There are many elements that can have an affect consumer behaviour, one of the most important being motivation and the customers’ ability/determination to purchase the product or service that they desire.

Schmoll (1977) defines consumer behaviour in tourism as: ‘*The study of why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision*’. She developed a framework that includes a total of four categories within the travel decision process: the travel stimuli (e.g. advertising of tourism agencies), different external variables (e.g. the quality of the services at the destination, the travellers’ destination image, highlights tourists wish to see, and the taken risks), personal and social determinants of travel behaviour (social status, personality and attitude with regard to experiences in nature or cultural experiences) and features of the touristic services (these are identified when arriving at the destination). This model (Figure 3) is more based on tourists’ economic situation and social surroundings e.g. motives, ambitions, personal drivers, and needs. (Rodica & Olimpia 2009, 1011 – 1012.)

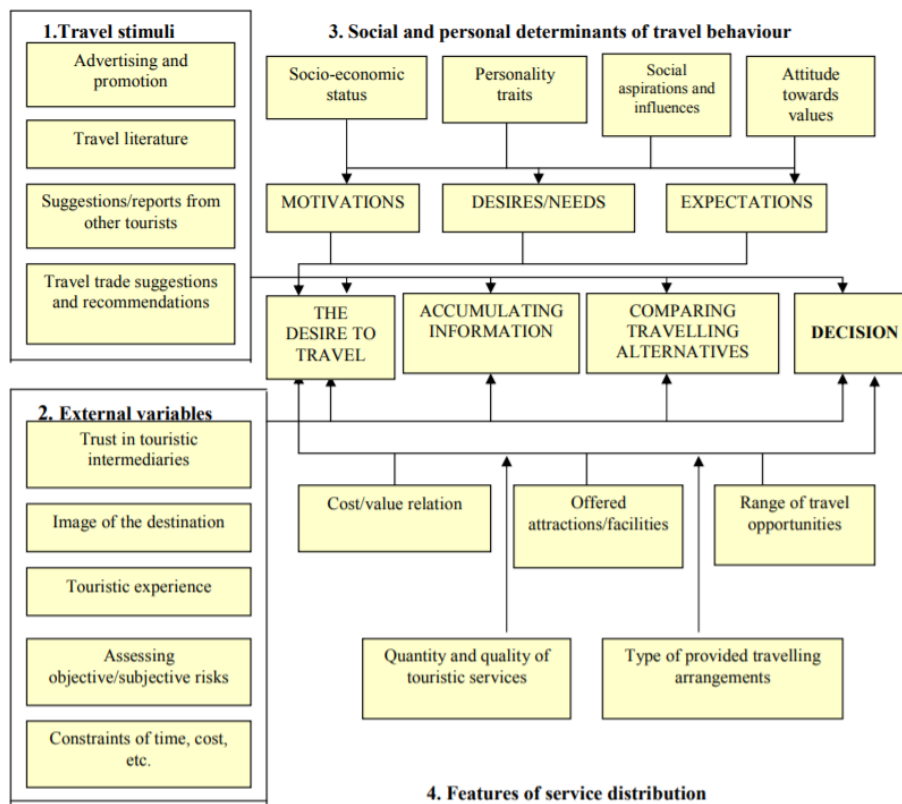


Figure 3. Travel decision process framework (Adapted from Schmoll 1977).



### 2.3 Customer satisfaction as a part of customer behaviour

It is broadly acknowledged that customer satisfaction is connected to consumer expectations. According to Bolton & Drew (1994), It can be defined as *'A feeling or emotion resulting from the consumer's disconfirmed expectations'*. Additionally, Bitner (1992) described that customer satisfaction and behaviour is significantly influenced by the physical surroundings of the customer. In her framework, she implies that the physical environment plays a key role in connection to the consumers' (travel) behaviour, perceptions, and their overall experience. She argues that the impression that the customer has regarding the environment of a service is influenced by factors such as the level of quality, ambience, the activities that are happening, and interior e.g. of the reception desk. These factors can influence the customer's satisfaction and therefore also on overall experience. (Abubakar & Mavondo 2014, 836 – 837.) Furthermore, Gunn and Mercer (2009) argue that the image of a destination can also influence customer behaviour and their satisfaction when travelling. For instance, this happens when choosing a tourist destination in the decision-making process before the trip and when the holiday has ended (the destination image that is perceived after the trip). The experience the tourist has when visiting the destination should match with their needs in order for the experience to have a positive effect on satisfaction and intention to re-visit the destination in the future. (Teviana, Ginting, Nurbaity-Lubis, Gultom 2017, 439.)

The Kano Model (1980) was created by researcher N. Kano describes the various needs of customers (Figure 4). In this model, there are four different categories in which customers can be divided. Firstly, there are 'basic needs' which refer to needs that are straightforward to customers. Often, they (customers) are not able to identify these kinds of needs themselves since customers believe that these needs are self-explanatory. For this same reason, it is very difficult to satisfy customers by fulfilling these kinds of needs. This is the very standard of 'needs' that customers often expect. Secondly, there are 'expected needs', as the name suggests these are the needs that customers expect to receive. These needs have some kind of importance for the customer. Moreover, companies can get more insight regarding these needs by asking customers about their wishes (e.g. through a questionnaire or survey). By fulfilling these needs, customers will not be unsatisfied. It will make them feel like they have received the quality they wished for. Finally, there are 'excitement needs' which are the needs that the customer may be unaware of. As a company, it is important to determine what these needs are to exceed the customer's expectations. If these kinds of needs (either via modernization through technical trends or through excellent services) are implemented correctly, the customer

will feel surprised and very pleased which will result in so-called 'attractive quality'. (Kvist 2005, 10 – 11.)

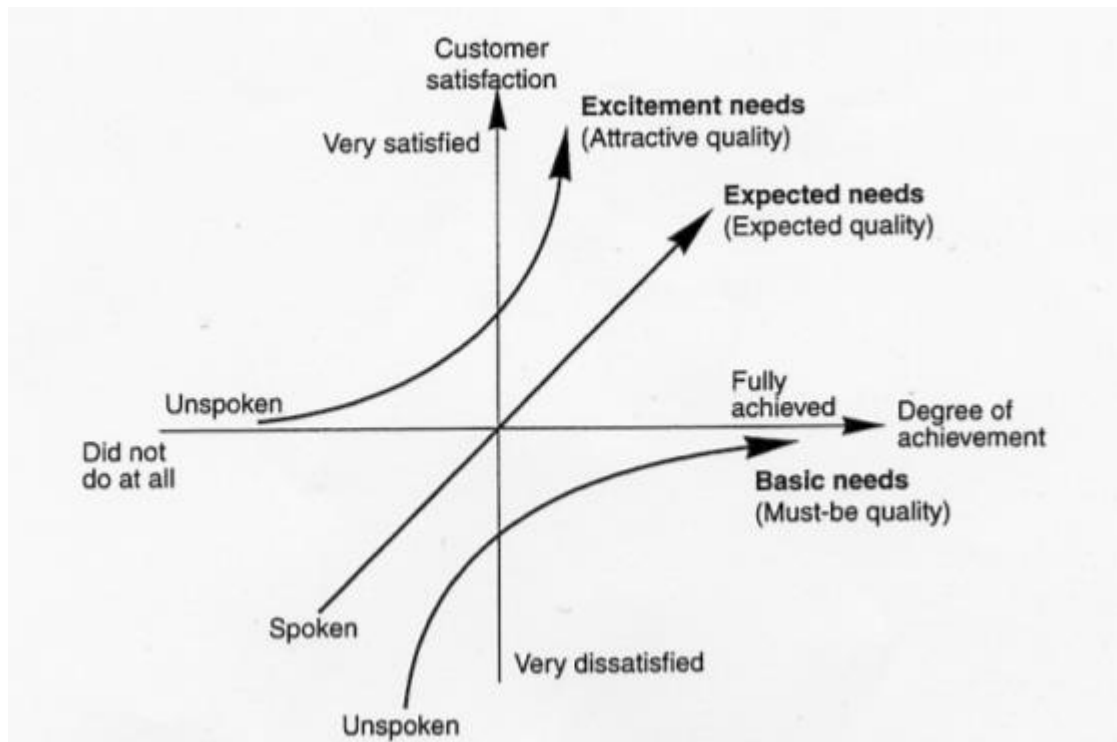


Figure 4. The Kano model (Adapted from Kano 1980).

### Motivation and needs

Tourism motivation mirrors the tourists' behaviour, their favoured activities on-site, and the ultimate reason to travel. Motivation can be described as a need or a circumstance that evokes the traveller to go on a vacation. It is expected that the vacation brings some level of satisfaction to the tourists' needs. Furthermore, according to Kock, Josiassen & Assaf (2018) motivation is also considered to be the reason why an individual wishes to travel, chooses a certain destination, and wants to engage in certain activities during their vacation. (Borges-Tiago et al. 2021, 3 – 4.) Additionally, there are two types of motivation that can lead to a change in behaviour: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The first (intrinsic motivation) refers to the type of motivation that is connected to the pleasure an individual acquires from the behavioural change itself, whereas extrinsic motivation primarily occurs when an individual shows the behaviour as a result of external factors that are pressuring the individual. (Coroiu, Moran, Campbell & Geller 2020, 3.)

The COVID-19 pandemic may have changed travellers motivation to travel to a certain destination. Furthermore, Aebli, Volgger & Taplin (2021) suggests that hygiene factors now have a significant impact on traveller's motivations. Moreover, they now are more

aware of hygiene and other potential risks when travelling during the decision-making process. (Borges-Tiago et al. 2021, 3.)

A.H. Maslow (1943) describes the hierarchy of needs framework in his book 'A Theory of Human Motivation'. At first, he described levels of needs within the pyramid: self-actualization, esteem needs, love and belonging, safety and security, and lastly there are physiological needs. The most basic needs are described at the bottom four levels of the pyramid whereas more complex needs that are necessary for growth are stated at the highest level of the pyramid. In 1970, Maslow extended his theory and described three more levels of need (cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and transcendence needs). Below all the levels within the pyramid are further described, from the bottom level to the highest level within the pyramid (Figure 5) (Mcleod 2020):

- 1) The physiological needs → these needs are crucial for survival, e.g. sleeping or food
- 2) Safety and security needs → these are often given by family or by society, e.g. security in the form of a regular income from working, or good mental/physical health status.
- 3) Love and belonging → refers to needs that are related to social involvement. For example the need for friendship and/or trust.
- 4) Esteem needs → these can be divided into two different groups. First of all, there are 'self-esteem needs' (e.g. achievement, independence) and secondly, there is the wish to be respected by people around you and to have a good reputation (a persons' status).
- 5) Cognitive needs → these kinds of needs refer to the need for wisdom, intelligence, and the need to explore and be curious.
- 6) Aesthetic needs → the need for recognition (in the form of appreciation from people around you), attractiveness (allure), and balance.
- 7) Self-actualization → these needs are described at the highest level of the pyramid and relate to a persons' wish for evolvment and experiences. These kinds of needs can be referred to as desires, for example, the desire to excel at mathematics, in the field of sports, or in painting.
- 8) Transcendence needs → Motivation by experiences that help the person transcend beyond the personal level of him/herself. For example, nature experiences, service to others, faith in religion.

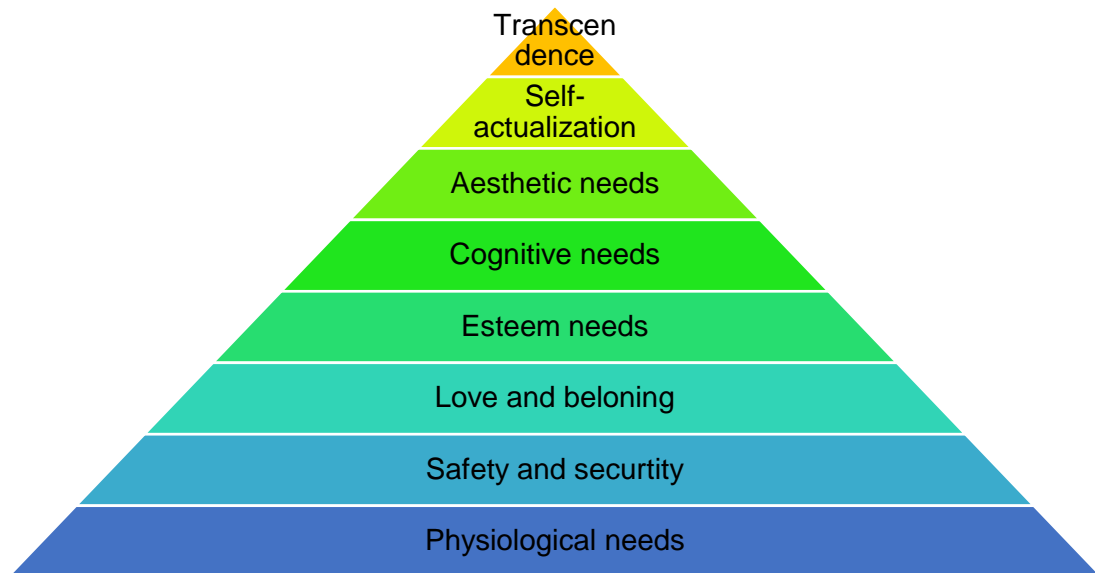


Figure 5. Visualization of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (adapted from McLoad 2020)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a great addition to the previously explained Kano model. Both models supplement each other since the Kano model only mentions four categories of needs whereas in Maslow's hierarchy pyramid there are eight different levels of needs.

### Values

There are many different definitions of value within the tourism industry. Perhaps one of the most important is the definition of Lai (1995). He defined consumer value as: *'The possession and consumption of products and services and it is more commonly referred to as "perceived value"'* (Gallarza & Gil 2008, 6). Furthermore, according to Almquist, Senior & Bloch (2016, 4) values related to products and services can be defined into four different categories:

- Functional needs – For example, products and/or services that save time or reduce effort.
- Emotional needs – These are products or services that reduce anxiety, have a nice design, provide wellness or therapeutic value.
- Life-changing needs – These are products or services that increase motivation.
- Social impact – Self-transcendence when purchasing a product/service.

The framework that was introduced by Almquist et al. focuses on values that are related to products and services looking from a customers' perspective when evaluating them (Figure 6). At the bottom of the pyramid, the functional and emotional elements that are related to various physiological and safety needs are described. At the top of the pyramid,

Almquist et al. placed values such as self-actualization and transcendence. For this research regarding the needs and travel behaviour of international tourists, we will mostly focus on emotional needs that create a sense of safety/reduce anxiety since we will be defining which services international tourists value when travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025).

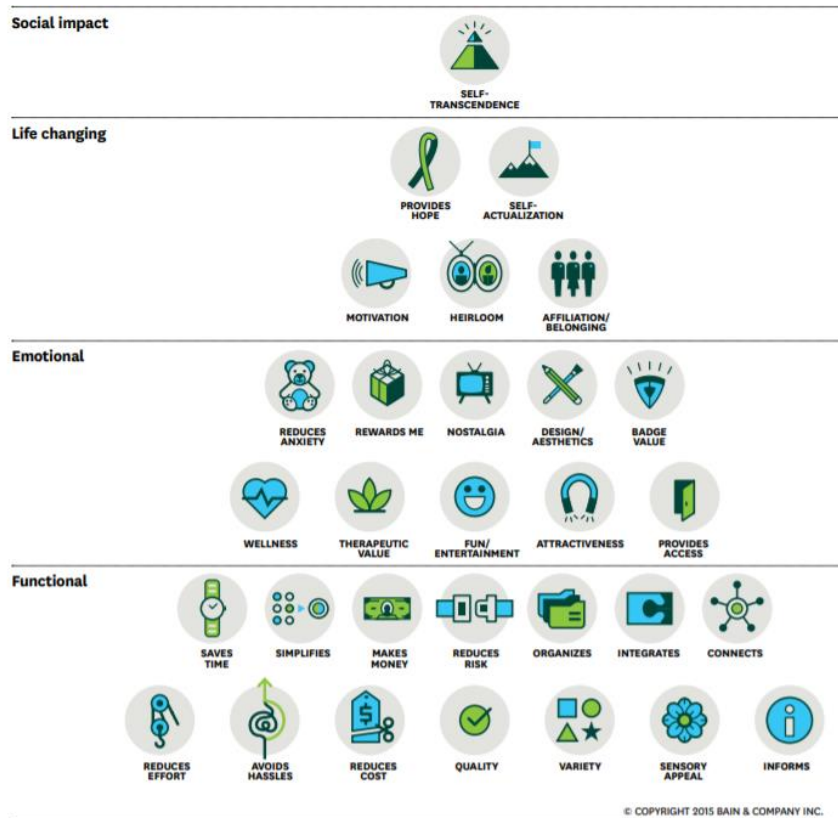


Figure 6. The value pyramid (Adapted from Almquist, Senior & Bloch 2016)

## 2.4 The characteristics of services in tourism

Since the second research question is focused on the services that international tourists value post COVID-19, it is necessary to look deeper into the definition of a service in the world of tourism. According to Kotler et al (1998) services can be defined as: *‘Any activity or benefit one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Production may or may not be tied to a physical product’*. They also have various characteristics that differentiate them from tangible products (Reisinger, Kandampully, Mok & Sparks 2001, 7.)

Reisinger, Kandampully, Mok & Sparks (2001, 15 – 39) describe the different characteristics of tourism services. First of all, most of the services are primarily intangible, which means that they consist of activities and experiences that cannot be

physically touched. For example, when booking a holiday the tourist may have thoughts regarding how safe the holiday will be, and then decide to purchase some kind of travel insurance. Additionally, sometimes services consist of a combination of intangible and tangible components (e.g. the quality of the service and the meals at a restaurant). It is important to note that in tourism the service offering is mostly the same as the actual product. Sometimes services that are offered are very visible to customers, while other kinds of services take place behind the scenes. Additionally, most suppliers also offer additional services that are essential to their primary service or can be used to improve it in some way.

Moreover, tourism services can be divided into four different levels. Firstly, there are basic services such as accommodation. These services are the primary reason for a tourist to make a purchase. Next, there are tangible support services that are based on the actual service that is expected by the customer (e.g. a pleasant bed or room, transportation to/from the accommodation, quality of food, and the cleanliness of facilities). On the third level, there are augmented products that combine tangible and basic services and add value regarding reliability, responsiveness, service quality, and price. And lastly, the potential product refers to secondary services that can be purchased as an addition to the core service to offer more benefit to tourists. Another characteristic of a service is that the production and consumption process is inseparable. This process starts at the moment that the tourist arrives at his/her holiday destination. The service cannot be taken back home after the holiday ends, since they are perishable and the service is connected to the place where it is produced. Furthermore, heterogeneity is another feature of tourism services. This means that they are all different from each other in standards and quality since they are offered by humans. Prices of services often also vary since it is difficult to put a price tag on something that is intangible and highly dependent on the skills and knowledge of humans. For this same reason most of the time it is not possible to receive a guarantee or warranty for the service that is purchased. Additionally, the quality of the services is also highly dependent on the demand of the tourist to purchase the service. For instance, the demand for certain services such as ski rental can change because of seasonality.

### 3 Global case study

Before the online survey was created, a global case study was conducted to look into relevant research and reports that other countries have published about travel behaviour and the needs of tourists post COVID-19 pandemic. At the moment of writing this research, there were already some interesting reports and peer-reviewed articles that had been published regarding the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on tourists' needs and behaviour. However, it is important to mention that since the pandemic is currently still ongoing, new articles and interesting findings are published quite rapidly – on a daily basis. The cases that are described in this case study were used as guidance and input when creating the questions for the online survey.

#### 3.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in Finnish Lapland

Varanka et al. (2021, 46 – 47.) mention the following in their report *The COVID-19 epidemic and its effects on Finland: 'The globally poor coronavirus situation and the imposed travel policies and restrictions make the recovery of international tourism demand uncertain and slow, for instance, when it comes to the Asian market, which is significant for Finland.'* According to this report, international tourism has significantly decreased. The tourism demand in Finland will be at the same level as before the pandemic at the earliest in 2023. Travellers will need to gain more confidence when traveling. However, since this will take time, there most likely will be bankruptcies in the service industry until the international demand to travel to Finnish Lapland is restored. Furthermore, the report also mentions that activity suppliers will suffer losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as some 'experience activities' may cause the COVID-19 virus to spread among tourists.

According to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2021a), the estimation for 2021 in terms of tourism spending is that it will remain approximately 30 to 40 percent below the level it was pre COVID-19. This estimation is more positive than the estimation that was given by the Ministry earlier this year (spring). However, without international tourism and cross border travel, the above will not be accomplished this year. The expectation is that the international tourism numbers will continue to fall, resulting in a loss in tourism spending of approximately 3.8-4.3 billion euros in 2021. Additionally, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment mentions in their sector report that was published in February 2021 that the tourism industry in Finland has been consistently growing in the period 2015-2019. The Finnish tourism industry consisted of approximately 29.000 businesses in 2019. Furthermore, over 119.000 employees were working in the

sector, and with a total turnover of 21 billion euros, the tourism industry is accountable for roughly 2.7% of Finland's gross domestic product (GDP). However, after several years of success, the growth of the industry has suddenly come to a stop at the beginning of 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and the limitations to traveling. Many employees that were actively working in the industry have been laid-off, and the total turnover has crashed immensely (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2021b).

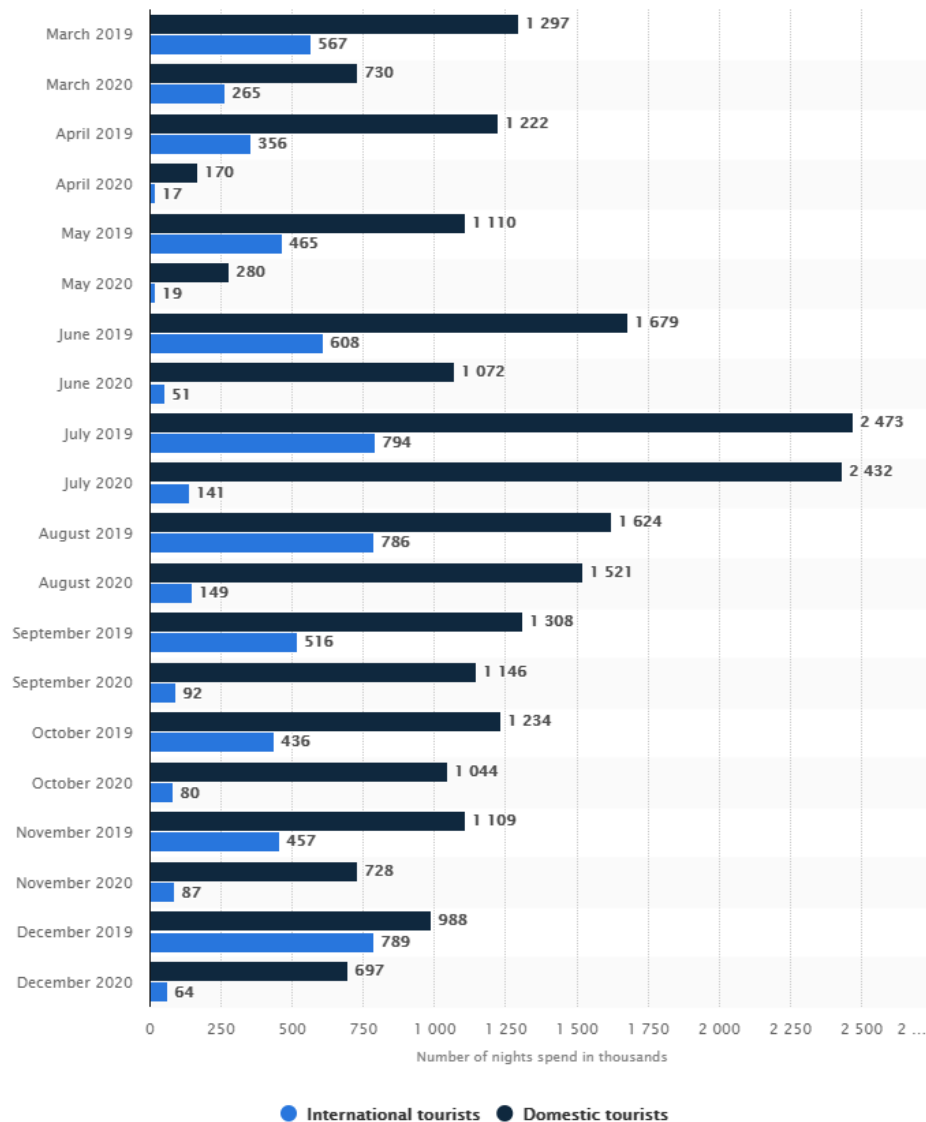
According to a Bachelor's thesis research by Hirvonen & Jeskanen (2021, 46 – 47.) regarding the accommodation industry in times of COVID-19 in the region of Levi in Finnish Lapland, domestic tourists that have visited Levi during the COVID-19 pandemic have a preference for services that avoid encountering other people when travelling. For this reason, one suggestion that is made in this research is that hotels should offer room service, instead of breakfast buffets so that no physical encounters with other tourists take place during breakfast. Additionally, this research also concludes that domestic tourists value health- and safety measures that are taken into account by the accommodation. Furthermore, recommendations that were made were regarding the implementation of a service that would include delivery of rental ski equipment straight to the tourists' accommodation, and to start offering a private shuttle bus service so that human contact is avoided during the holiday. It also states that domestic tourists mostly prefer to stay in cottages during their stay in Levi. The main reasons for this are that cottages are perceived to be less expensive than hotels, the peaceful and quiet surroundings, and domestic tourists also enjoy cooking their own food in the kitchen provided by the cottage during their holiday. Even though this particular research is not focused on international tourists but on domestic tourism and it is only applicable for the region of Levi, this report still provides some excellent information. The results are important to take into account, since some conclusions may overlap with the outcomes of this research. Furthermore, a similar thesis research was published by Madubuike (2020, 33 – 36.) that describes the effect of COVID-19 on travel behaviour in tourism within residents of Vantaa in Finland. Even though the scope of this research is limited to Vantaa residents, his research concluded that COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the behaviour of travellers, for example, when choosing their holiday destination.

In the year 2020, tourists spent approximately 9.3 billion euros compared to roughly 16.1 billion in 2019. In conclusion, the pandemic was responsible for over 40% of reduced tourist spending in Finland in 2020 (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2021c). When comparing the number of overnight stays by domestic and international tourists in Finland in 2020, it is noticeable that the overnight stays by international tourists have decreased by approximately 92% in comparison to 2019 (Table 2). Furthermore, most



international tourists that have booked overnight stays in 2021 are from the following countries 5 of origin: Sweden (82%), China (80%), Japan (77%), Spain (76%), and the USA (74%) (Niinimäki 2021a). Additionally, according to a survey that was held in March 2020 among over 600 Finnish tourism companies within the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector approximately 96% of the inquired companies stated they had received booking cancellations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Niinimäki 2021b). It is estimated that the full recovery of the industry might take several years, which might cause slow growth within the sector in the near future. Furthermore, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment reports the following: ‘*The pandemic has also affected the consumer demand and behaviour of tourists, which should be taken into account in service production and its development*’ (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2021c).

Table 2. Number of overnight stays in Finland (domestic and international) in 2019 compared to 2020 (Niinimäki 2021c).



The Lapland Tourism Board (LME) has conducted a similar research in 2020, with the aim of sketching future scenarios and a roadmap for the tourism industry in Finnish Lapland based on travel expectations post COVID-19. The research was conducted with the help of stakeholders, who have filled in a survey and participated in two workshops regarding this matter. In total, four different future scenarios have been defined: multidimensional crisis, east sets the tone, European travel community, northern international platform. The report also briefly mentions their expectations for each of these scenarios regarding consumer needs and behaviour in the upcoming years. For example, the third scenario describes a situation when the COVID-19 pandemic has been brought under control in Europe. In this case, travellers will be already somewhat acquainted with the rules and restrictions (e.g. keeping a safe distance from others). In this scenario, the expectation is that travellers especially value flexibility when booking their trip since Corona regulations could increase at any time. Tourists that book their holiday in this scenario are especially interested in nature tourism. (Finnish Lapland Tourism Board 2020, 15 – 35.) This report provides some excellent information as a starting point for this thesis research. In comparison to the research that has already been conducted by LME, the research results of this research will not be based on the opinion of stakeholders but that of the end consumer (international leisure tourists). For this reason, this thesis research will be a great addition to LME's previously conducted research.

Visit Finland has also gathered information regarding the outlook on the tourism industry and included this subject during their webinar in European markets in April 2020. Their research focuses on the market changes within the Russian and European markets (UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy). Below few of the trends and opportunities that are mentioned during the webinar are briefly described (Visit Finland 2020, 16 – 55):

- Finland as a sustainable destination: Tourists from all the above-mentioned countries will strongly value outdoor and nature activities after the pandemic has ended. Not only because it is safe, but also because of the desire to relax.
- Finland, in the view of Russian tourists, will be a 'safe' and 'clean' destination to visit post COVID-19.
- Luxury travel (e.g. in wilderness cottages), with all safety measures in place will increase in popularity among Spanish, French, Italian and Russian tourists.
- By marketing Finland as a destination to visit the whole year round, it will be possible to spread the tourist arrival immensely and this will help to prevent spreading of the virus.

However, it is important to note that this research was conducted at the very start of the pandemic in Finland. The results of the research might be different if the same research would be conducted today. Furthermore, this research focuses on the outlook on the tourism industry in the whole of Finland and is not specifically aimed at the destination Finnish Lapland. Thus, it will be interesting to see if the results of Visit Finland’s research will be similar to this research.

### 3.2 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel behaviour and needs

The European Commission has released a report in 2020 regarding the behavioural changes in tourism in times of COVID-19. This report concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic will most likely have a significant influence on tourist behaviour. According to the report, the willingness of travellers to travel and the choice of destination is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The estimation is that tourist arrivals will decrease somewhere between 38-68% in 2020 depending on various future scenarios (Figure 7). This report describes that consumer behaviour will be affected by psychological and economic factors in the upcoming years. The first factor (psychological) is associated with several aspects e.g. the fear of contamination when traveling, the willingness to travel, and the consumer’s preferences in holiday destinations. A few examples of economic factors are income as a result of unemployment or a decrease in the number of working hours. However, the report also mentions opportunities for countries that focus on diverse and sustainable forms of tourism. For example, consumers will be more attracted to safe and healthy environments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The popularity of less crowded touristic destinations will increase, this is especially relevant to rural and nature tourism. Tourists’ preferences are changing (for example preferences in transportation and/or sustainable tourism), and this will eventually lead to new touristic offerings and new touristic products (Marques-Santos, Madrid-González, Haegeman & Rainoldi 2020, 6 – 27).

	Confidence to travel scenario	Fear to travel scenario	Second wave scenario
Domestic tourist	-30%	-46%	-61%
International tourist	-50%	-61%	-79%
Intra-EU tourist	-44%	-60%	-73%
Extra-EU tourist	-57%	-62%	-88%
Average	-38%	-52%	-68%

Figure 7. Estimated changes in tourism arrivals in 2020 within the European Union, compared to 2019 by scenario (Adapted from Marques Santos et al. 2020).

According to Zhu & Deng (2020, 17 – 18) some of the restrictions that were introduced during the pandemic, e.g. social distancing, seem to have become the 'new normal' in several countries where the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is lessening. This development affected the behaviour of tourists and their lifestyle, as they are now often more aware of returning to nature and the importance of 'slowing down', which could be an opportunity. Zhu & Deng concluded from their research that there is a growing interest in rural tourism among Chinese tourists.

Additionally, tourists are more interested in the opportunities regarding domestic tourism destinations as a result of travel restrictions. However, on the flip side, many aspects of tourism still involve human interaction and are negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, cultural tours that are organized inside busy and congested cities (Sengel 2021, 222 – 223). Other recent research has shown that the social-distancing trend might have a positive effect on camping and caravan tourism as well since it is considered to be safe in terms of social distancing (Sengel, Genç, Iskin, Ulema & Uzut 2020, 1431). A survey that was conducted in December 2020 among travellers that had booked a holiday on the popular booking platform Booking.com, concluded that approximately 70% of the travellers expect that attractions take the possibility to social distance from others into account when visiting (Booking.com 2020, 14). Furthermore, Skift and Oracle Hospitality have also surveyed tourists regarding some factors that hotels can offer to them to make them feel more at ease during their holiday. The result of this survey concludes that tourists value contactless payments, digital room keys, and digital messaging services the most (Howarth 2021).

A recent study by Li, Thi Hong Hai & Andres (2020, 1 – 5.) has concluded that travellers are more likely to use their own means of transportation than public transport post-pandemic. This could potentially result in an increase in road traffic, however, this has yet to be proven by future research. The research also concluded that most respondents (over 50%) are planning to take their next holiday approximately 6 months (or longer) after the effects of the pandemic have been stabilized. Additionally, the research showed that so-called 'crisis-resistant' tourists who are generally older of age and have an advanced level of education, are more unlikely to decrease the length of their future holiday. Research by Awad- Núñez, Julio & Gomez (2021, 6 – 16.) regarding the use of public transportation and shared mobility services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain shows that 89.7% of respondents are still willing to use public transport. However, many of the respondents (52.1%) noted that they would demand that the mode of transport gets sanitized thoroughly. More interesting is that this research also includes shared mobility services such as biking or kick scooter-sharing. The conclusion was that the willingness to

use these services was relatively low before the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas nowadays approximately 67.7% of respondents would be willing to use the beforementioned methods of transportation. A possible reason for this would be because they believe that it would be safer to travel in an open environment rather than closed. Additionally, Abdullah, Dias, Muley & Shahin (2020, 7.) researched the factors affecting the mode choice before and the during COVID-19 pandemic. Remarkably, variables such as comfort and travel time have generally gotten less important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the research pointed out that so-called 'infection-related factors' such as the wearing of face and mouth masks, keeping distance, and cleanliness became a high priority for travellers on flights and public transport.

Research regarding travel behaviour during COVID-19 in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (DACH region) by Neuburger & Egger (2020, 1005 – 1012) concludes that it is likely that so-called 'perceived travel risk' during a health crisis could lead to a decline in travel demand. Brewer & Fazekas (2007) found that susceptibility can be seen as the awareness that a person has regarding the risk of being contaminated, while perceived severity is the perception of the gravity of the disease. Since risk perception has such a big impact on travel behaviour, it is important to reduce the risk perception of travellers so that the tourism industry is able to recover from the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic more rapidly. This can be done by adding health and safety measures when travelling and by providing clear information to tourists regarding the cancellation and the possibility of refunding. Neuburger & Egger also mention that a person's risk perception during domestic and international travel in times of a health crisis is determined by the probability of contraction. Moreover, they also acknowledge that risk perception is often driven by the media and the opinions of others. According to Floyd, Prentice-Dunn & Rogers (2000, 407 – 429.) a person's perceived risk is closely related to one's perceived susceptibility to sickness and its perceived severity. The COVID-19 pandemic most certainly had an impact on the perception of tourists traveling and it will have an impact on the way that tourists travel for a substantial period, specifically looking at the pace, intensity, and spontaneity of traveling (Lahood 2020).

Furthermore Bae & Chang (2020, 1031.) discussed the effects of the coronavirus and risk perception of tourists in South Korea. Their research concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to offer more high-end services and customized travel experiences to minimize the tourists' perceived risk. For example, in exchange for large hotel breakfast buffets which were very alluring to tourists before the pandemic, room service might become very popular now since tourists value their own private space more than before. Moreover, tourism activities that aim their attention at hosting small groups

and require reservation beforehand may also become more popular. Bae & Chang mention that hotels will need to start giving tourists more personalized room experiences which are largely dependent on the tourists' needs so that they can ensure safety during the tourists' stay to the maximum. Moreover, Ivanova, Krasimirov-Ivanov & Ivanov (2021, 7 – 9.) have published their research regarding tourist behaviour in Bulgaria post COVID-19. In this report, they conclude that respondents value disinfection control of rooms and facilities in hotels and a reliable health care system in the destination the most.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the accommodation decision-making process of Greece residents. Pappas & Glyptou (2021, 7 – 8.) state that it is probable that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of participants consider self-protection and want to avoid situations in which infection can occur. Hygiene has also become a more important aspect when booking accommodations. Moreover, the report mentions another interesting point: the participants that participated in the research believe that if an accommodation offers a high level of health and safety aspects, it represents a high level of quality. The results of this research were the same among older and younger age groups. Moreover, the pandemic also has had a significant negative effect on the accommodation sharing industry. Accommodation sharing platforms have experienced a decrease in bookings. For instance, the number of weekly bookings on the popular platform Airbnb have fallen between January and March 2020 by 96% in Beijing and 29% in the city of Milan. Furthermore, the pandemic has also caused the number of accommodation hosts on Airbnb to decrease in 2020. The future of this way of travelling is still uncertain, and it may take years to recover from the implications that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on this industry. (Gerwe 2021, 2 – 7.)

According to Aronica, Pizzuto & Sciortino (2021, 12.) the COVID-19 pandemic is causing a shift in consumer patterns in the near future, and it might also severely affect people's movement and their choice of travel destinations in the upcoming years. Since consumer preferences are changing, destinations need to start drawing tourists by advertising their destination as 'safe to visit' post-pandemic. Tourists now have a preference for less populated holiday destinations, which will possibly result in destinations promoting different, more sustainable types of tourism. Therefore, Aronica et al. suggest that destinations should therefore promote alluring areas with promising potential, for example, towns, parks, and protected nature areas which are still relatively undiscovered as international tourist destinations. If this is executed correctly, post-pandemic tourism may result in further local development, and it will assist to mitigate the negative effects of mass tourism that were very noticeable and a substantial threat to the industry before the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Bachelor's thesis research that was recently published by Kitinoja (2021, 28 – 35.) investigated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on air travel between a group of Millennials. The research concluded that most Millennials are not very worried about the possibility of COVID-19 infection on flights and that they are still willing to fly. In fact, 51% of the respondents in this research have stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has not had any effect on their willingness to fly. However, the research does mention that Millennials would be worried when sitting next to a person that is infected with the COVID-19 virus during air travel. Furthermore, the safety measures (e.g. mask requirement, COVID-19 testing before boarding, and vaccination requirements) would result in Millennials feeling safe and therefore more willing to travel by airplane. In this research, vaccination was by far the highest safety measure that would result in Millennials to fly again. 38% of respondents indicated that they would fly again after vaccination.

In August 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a guidance report for the accommodations industry which describes multiple guidelines that they can follow during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the aspects that is described in this report are preventive measures such as the use of social distancing, hand disinfection, and mouth protection. The WHO describes this as one of the main methods to prevent COVID-19 prevention and recommends all of the above-mentioned preventive measures to accommodations. Additionally, the WHO mentions that it should be mandatory for accommodations to have 'protective kits' at the reception desk which contain items e.g. disinfection lotion, eye protection, face masks, etc. that can be used in case of a COVID infection. Additionally, special attention should be paid to cleaning the facilities in line with the WHO advice for environmental cleaning and disinfection. Furthermore, according to the WHO it is necessary for accommodations to have a ready-made plan of action that can be followed in case local infection occurs. This action plan could consist of a reduction in the capacity in the case social distancing is not possible, how to implement social distancing using physical barriers, and an explanation regarding regulations for hotel staff related to the sanitation of spaces, personal hygiene of hotel staff, and the process the hotel staff has to go through if they feel ill. The action plan could even include a description of the accommodation's policies that are related to working from home and a description of the screening process that can be used for hotel employees to detect illness when they come to work. (World Health Organization 2020, 1 – 3.)

### **3.3 Relation to the primary research**

All of the beforementioned cases gave an excellent insight into the current situation regarding the travel behaviour of tourists during COVID-19 globally. For most destinations,

it seems that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed travel behaviour and/or needs of tourists in several ways (e.g. transportation, hygiene factors, and risk perception of a destination). Most of the questions that were created for the primary research (online survey) are connected to the cases that are described in this case study. The relation between the questions in the online survey and the subjects that were described in this case study is noted in Table 3. It gives a clear insight into how this case study has contributed to the creation of the questions that were presented in the online survey.

Table 3. Relation of the topics in the case study to the survey questions

<b>Sub-topic</b>	<b>Question(s) in the online survey connected to this case study</b>
<b>Effect of COVID-19 on choice of accommodation</b>	6, 7, 8
<b>Effect of COVID-19 on choice of activities and modes of transportation</b>	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
<b>Hygiene &amp; preventive COVID-19 measures that accommodations can undertake according to WHO</b>	9, 10, 11
<b>Effect of COVID-19 on destination image and perceived risk of the destination</b>	18, 19
<b>Travel behaviour and interest in sustainable travel post COVID-19</b>	20, 21



## 4 Research methodology

In this chapter, the research approach that was taken, the methods of data collection, and the process of creating the online survey have been described in detail. Additionally, more information can be found regarding the storage and usage of data, reliability and validity of the research. Lastly, some of the challenges during this research have also been explained.

### 4.1 Research approach

The research that will be conducted consists of a two-step process which is a combination of secondary research (theory, context and global case study) and primary quantitative research (online surveys). During the writing of this thesis, the global case study (Chapter 3) was conducted to get more insights regarding the international situation and how other countries are preparing for the post COVID-19 situation. The subjects that were discussed in the cases were then used as inspiration for creating the questions in the online survey. The primary research consists of quantitative research as data is collected from respondents through an online survey which was spread through numerous Facebook groups.

#### Process of creating the online survey

The first step in the creation of the survey was to write a cover letter that will be posted on various Facebook platforms. The tone of voice in this cover letter is very friendly, and a picture of Finnish Lapland has been added to the post which is done to get the reader's attention. In this cover letter, the thesis subject and the approximate time it takes to complete the survey are briefly introduced to the reader so that they know what to expect. When posting in some of the Facebook groups, the intention why for joining and placing a post in the group was given to the owner of the group. However, this was not automatically asked by all of the beforementioned Facebook groups/channels. For this reason, the following statement has been placed at the end of the invitation text: *'Administrators of this group, if this kind of post is not allowed on this channel then please feel free to delete it.'* An example of the cover letter/invitation to the survey that was shared on Facebook has been added in Appendix 1.

Furthermore, when posting the survey on the Facebook groups/channels, the Facebook algorithm has been taken into account to create more engagement and visibility. Neil Patel, one of the top 10 marketers according to Forbes (one of the world's leading media companies), mentions in his blog that the Facebook algorithm can be triggered by the

amount of engagement such as likes, comments, and shares of a post (Patel s.a). For this reason, a decision was made to react with a personal 'thank you' message to all responses that respondents have written on the post that was created (Appendix 2).

The online survey that was created consists of a total of 22 questions and takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. All of the survey questions that were included in the survey are added in Appendix 3. Most of the questions consisted of a multiple-choice format. In addition, several questions have so-called 'rules' connected to them. This means that if the respondent answers 'yes' or 'no' to one of these questions a follow-up question will appear, which will ask the respondent for an explanation to the previous question. The main purpose of the open textbox answers is to confirm if the respondent has understood the question well enough, and to be able to name some examples when writing the research results. Furthermore, when designing the survey, the questions in the online survey are set up logically. The first four questions are demographical questions which are used to 'filter out' any respondents that do not belong to the target group. One example is the first question of the online survey, which asks the respondent what their current country of residence is. On the second page of the online survey, the questions refer to travel behaviour and needs regarding their stay in accommodations. On the third and final page, some more complex questions are stated. For instance, questions regarding the post COVID-19 destination image and if they would travel more sustainably in the future as a result of COVID-19.

A short introduction to the survey was added to give the reader more information regarding the research and the survey. The introduction states the following text: *'This research focuses on the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that are living in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, or the Netherlands and are interested in visiting Finnish Lapland in the near future (within the upcoming 3 years). This survey is fully anonymous. All data will be only used for the purpose of this thesis research and will be deleted after the thesis has been published'*. One of the criteria for completing the online survey is that the international leisure tourist currently lives in one of the following countries: The United Kingdom, France, China, Germany, or the Netherlands. Additionally, the second criteria to complete the survey is that the respondent must indicate that they are interested in travelling to the destination of Finnish Lapland in the upcoming 3 years (2022-2025).

Additionally, the survey was tested by several individuals before publishing it on the Facebook groups. This was done to make sure that all the questions are understood

correctly by the audience and to see how much time it would approximately take to complete the survey. Moreover, the full survey has been checked for any inconsistencies together with senior lecturer in quantitative research P. Saaranen as well. Finally, the online survey was improved aesthetically. For example, by adding a picture of Finnish Lapland was added as a background to make the survey look more beautiful. The main reason for this was that this would hopefully encourage respondents to not lose interest and answer all of the questions. Finally, the survey response time was set to the period of 1<sup>st</sup> of November – 30<sup>th</sup> of November (exactly 1 month time).

## **4.2 Data collection methods**

In general, there are two different types of research: primary and secondary data collection (Capella University 2015). Secondary data collection is mainly used during the writing of the literature review, and during the desk research in the form of a case study regarding changes in travel behaviour during COVID-19 globally (Chapter 3). The primary research that is conducted consists of quantitative data collection by analyzing the results that are collected from an online survey that was filled in by international leisure tourists in the period of 1<sup>st</sup> of November – 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2021.

### **Sampling method and population**

Sampling can be described as follows: *'A strategy used to select elements from a population.'* When determining the sample size it is important to try to establish a forecast of a number of quantities. This sample should preferably be representing the full population. (Datallo 2008, 3.) The sampling method that is applied during this research is a form of non-probability sampling also known as voluntary response sampling. McCombes (2019) describes this sampling method as follows: *'Voluntary response sample is mainly based on ease of access. Instead of the researcher choosing participants and directly contacting them, people volunteer themselves'*. According to McCombes, one downside to this method of sampling is that the outcomes may be slightly biased since some individuals will be more interested in the subject and to fill out the online survey than others. The survey will be spread among international leisure tourists on public social media platforms, mainly Facebook. A few fellow students at Haaga-Helia also offered to share the online survey and send the link to their connections. Furthermore, during the survey period a lot of participants also shared the Facebook post with their connections/friends and in other relevant groups. When respondents share the survey link with others in their network within the same population, it can be seen as

snowball sampling (Datallo 2008, 6). In conclusion, both voluntary response sampling and snowball sampling methods were used during this research.

To determine the full population of this research, data is collected that indicates the amount of international tourist arrivals before the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of international tourist arrivals in Finnish Lapland in 2019 was 1.297,737 (VisitFinland 2019). However, for this research, the population is based on the total amount of international tourist arrivals in 2019 coming from the top-5 countries that have shown the most international growth (The United Kingdom, France, China, Germany, and The Netherlands). For this reason, only international arrivals coming from these countries were included, which resulted in a population consisting of 635.033 international tourists that arrived in Finnish Lapland from the beforementioned countries in 2019 (Table 4) (VisitFinland 2021).

Table 4. Number of international arrivals in Finnish Lapland in 2019 by tourism season and country of residence (adapted from VisitFinland 2021).

<b>Season (year of 2019)</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Country of residence</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>
Winter season (11-04)	LAPLAND	Germany	35857
		United Kingdom	87880
		China and Hong Kong	57473
		France	37446
		Netherlands	21650
Summer season (05-10)	LAPLAND	Germany	47354
		United Kingdom	3941
		China and Hong Kong	7418
		France	7559
		Netherlands	11071
High winter season (12-02)	LAPLAND	Germany	24371

		United Kingdom	76690
		China and Hong Kong	46788
		France	28748
		Netherlands	15998
High summer season (06-08)	LAPLAND	Germany	40530
		United Kingdom	2176
		China and Hong Kong	3179
		France	5905
		Netherlands	9372
High spring season (03-05)	LAPLAND	Germany	12686
		United Kingdom	6294
		China and Hong Kong	6299
		France	8545
		Netherlands	5858
High autumn season (09-11)	LAPLAND	Germany	5670
		United Kingdom	5433
		China and Hong Kong	9470
		France	1893
		Netherlands	1479
<b>Total</b>			<b>635.033</b>

The exact number of surveys that is necessary to start the analysis of the results was determined by sample size calculation. An inadequate sample size most likely will result in less validity of the entire research (Dolnicar, Grün, Leisch & Schmidt 2014, 296). To

determine the number of survey responses needed for this research, a sampling size calculator was used. This is an online tool that is provided by Survey Monkey, one of the largest leaders in survey software. This tool calculates the necessary sample size automatically by using three variables (SurveyMonkey s.a.):

1. Population size → This refers to the total amount of people that this research is focused on. As mentioned before, a total of 635.033 individuals from the UK, China, Germany, France, and the Netherlands have travelled to Finnish Lapland in 2019. For this reason, the population size is based on this amount of travellers.

2. Confidence level (%) → The confidence level is expressed in percentages, and tells about the degree of confidence that people inside of the population will respond to the survey questions within a specific limit, e.g. between the number x and y.

3. Margin of error → The margin of error is also expressed in percentages. It explains to what extent the outcome/results of the survey (opinions of the sample group) can vary in comparison to the attitudes of the entire population. This can be calculated by using the following formula:  $\text{Margin of error} = Z \times Q / \sqrt{N}$ . In this case, N is the sample size, Q = the population standard deviation, and Z stands for the z-score, which is determined by which confidence level you are aiming for. First, the margin of error was calculated which resulted in an outcome of 6%. This percentage was used during the sample size calculation. The result was that to reach a confidence level of 85%, a total of 144 surveys have to be completed. However, for a 95% confidence level the amount of responses increases greatly to a total of 267 (Figure 8). For this research, the aim regarding the number of responses would be between 144 - 267 responses. By collecting this many (completed) survey responses, the research results will be approximately 85% to 95% representative for the entire population.

The image shows a screenshot of the SurveyMonkey 'Calculate your sample size' tool. The interface is clean and modern, with a light blue background. At the top, the title 'Calculate your sample size' is centered in a bold, dark blue font. Below the title, there are three input fields arranged horizontally. The first field is labeled 'Population Size' and contains the value '635033'. The second field is labeled 'Confidence Level (%)' and is a dropdown menu set to '95'. The third field is labeled 'Margin of Error (%)' and contains the value '6'. Below these fields, the calculated 'Sample size' is displayed in a large, bold, green font as '267'. Underneath the sample size, there is a small paragraph of text: 'Doing market research? SurveyMonkey Audience gets you the right survey respondents fast and easy and helps you target them by demographics, consumer behavior, geography, or even designated marketing area.' At the bottom of the form, there is a green button with the text 'Choose your audience'.

Figure 8. Calculating sample size on SurveyMonkey

to reach the desired target audience, different Facebook pages, public and private groups that had a relevance to travelling to Finland or Finnish Lapland were randomly selected to spread the online survey. All of the Facebook groups that are included have a large number of international followers (individuals) that are interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland. The link to the online survey has been posted in the evening on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. The reason for posting the survey in the evening is because the target group may be at work throughout the daytime, so it was assumed that the post may be more visible if it is posted in the evening and individuals have time to fill in the survey after their workday. The survey was initially posted in the following 19 Facebook groups/channels:

List of Facebook groups (highest amount of followers to lowest)

- Visit Rovaniemi (<https://www.facebook.com/VisitRovaniemi.fi>) – 189,454 followers on 01/11/2021/21
- Only in Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/OnlyInLapland/>) – 115,423 followers on 25/10/21
- Discovering Finland (<https://www.facebook.com/DiscoveringFinland>) – 91,000 followers on 31/10/21
- Levi Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/levilapland>) – 87,107 followers on 25/10
- All about Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/allaboutlapland/>) – 77,784 followers
- Destination Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/DestinationLapland/>) – 41,583 followers on 25/10/21
- Visit Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/visitlaplandSuomi/>) – 29,123 followers on 25/10/21
- Lapland Holiday Chat (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/126443944135668/>) – 19,700 members on 25/10/21
- Love Finland (<https://www.facebook.com/Lovefinland099/>) – 18,471 followers on 31/10/21
- #Finland (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/finlandmagazine/>) 15,000 members on 25/10/21
- Lapland Love (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LaplandLove/>) – 11,900 members on 25/10/21
- Lapland for everyone (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LaplandForEveryone/>) – 6.300 members on 29/10/21
- Lapland & Northern Lights (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/451689585467622/>) – 6,100 members on 25/10/21

- Rovaniemi Travel Forum  
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rovaniemitravelforum/>) – 5,700 members on 25/10/21
- Visit Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/694426517702092/>) – 5,500 members on 25/10/21
- Travel in Finland - tips and ideas FI  
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2924812484511009/>) – 5,300 members on 25/10/21
- Heart of Lapland (<https://www.facebook.com/heartoflapland>) – 4,800 followers on 25/10/21
- Lapland Travellers (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/laplandtravellers>) – 2,200 members on 25/10/21
- Tipps für die Reise nach Finnland  
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Reisetippsfinnland>) – 1,200 members on 07/11/21

In the first week of spreading the survey through Facebook, it was noticeable that there were close to zero Chinese individuals that had answered the online survey yet. To reach more Chinese respondents, a Chinese tourism lecturer was contacted by e-mail on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. She mentioned that Chinese tourists often are not able to use Facebook, since this platform is banned from usage outside of Hong Kong. This could be one of the reasons why it has been difficult to find Chinese respondents during the survey period. She offered to spread the survey within her inner circle through Facebook and WeChat, and this resulted in some more responses from Chinese respondents. Moreover, the survey was spread to Chinese individuals with the help of fellow students of Chinese nationality that offered to help by spreading the survey to their inner circle. Another action that was taken was to create profiles on Chinese social media channels. For instance, WeChat, Weibo (Twitter of China), and Bilibili (also known as the Chinese Youtube) to spread the online survey on these channels. Unfortunately, this proved to be extremely difficult since most of these platforms only allow registration by using a Chinese phone number. Eventually, only registration at Bilibili was successful, the survey link was posted there in the comment section of videos that had a relation to Finland or Finnish Lapland (Appendix 4). Bilibili has over 223 active users in 2021, most users are living in large cities in China (Chernavina 2021).

On Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the survey link was also spread on more general Facebook groups that were specifically targeted at attracting Dutch, French, German,



Chinese individuals and were related to travelling. The main purpose to post on these Facebook pages was to receive more responses from these travellers, so that the final results of the survey would be more generalizable for the full population.

#### List of Facebook groups (Dutch, French, German, Chinese) related to travelling

- Bon Plan Voyage (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3323683467671368/>) – 142,531 members on 08/11/21. Group focused on planning trips and sharing experiences among French individuals.
- Voyage de reves (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/114899036623563>) – 455,900 members on 08/11/2021. French page about dream holidays.
- Wereldvrouwen (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/461747104002985>) – 23,300 members on 08/11/2021. Group of Dutch women travelling all over the world
- Voyager au Feminin (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/739909326141802/about>) – 16,276 members on 08/11/21. Targeted at French woman that like travelling.
- I Love Travelling 我爱旅行 (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/458601328217775>) – 10,300 members on 16/11/21. Asian travel community.
- Reizen wereldwijd (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/573488912833654/>) – 6,500 members on 08/11/21. Page for Dutch individuals who love travelling.
- Les francais de Finlande (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/france.finlande>) – 6,001 members on 08/11/21. Group for French individuals who love or live in Finland.
- Voyager en Laponie (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1372911219748518/about>) – 692 members on 08/11/2021. French travel group related to travelling to Lapland.

A little over one week before the survey closed, on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> of November, the survey was posted a second time in the Facebook groups. Only this time, the following sentence was added to the post using bold text font: *'Urgent! I only need a few more respondents more for my thesis research. Please help me out by filling out this survey'*. This was done to draw attention to the survey one final time and to collect as many responses as possible before the closure of the survey link.

#### **Storage and the usage of data**

All of the data that is gathered during this thesis will be stored on Haaga-Helia's OneDrive Portal for students. This platform is secured by the students' password and two-factor

authentication. Moreover, regular back-ups of the thesis document are also placed on a USB stick which is only in the possession of the student and locked with a password. All of the data that is gathered during the thesis research is only used for the purpose of writing this thesis and will not under any circumstance be used for future projects. During the writing of this thesis, the fundamentals of the European legislation on Data Protection (GDPR) are being taken into account. The data that is collected is stored on Haaga-Helia's OneDrive Portal for students for only a limited amount of time. All data will be fully deleted when the thesis process has finished and the thesis has been published and evaluated. After the survey period has ended on the 30th of November, the online survey will be closed so that the final results can be analyzed. Additionally, the following (online) applications and tools will be used during this research:

- Onedrive (password protected): the Onedrive will be used to store all survey results (Excel format) until the thesis has been publicly published on Theseus.fi.
- Webropol: used to design the online survey and to extract and analyze the results of the survey.
- SurveyMonkey: used to determine the amount of sample size and margin of error.
- Flipsnack: this online tool has been used to create the lay-out of the final guidebook (appendix 7). More information about the process of creation can be found in chapter 8.

### **4.3 Validity and reliability of this research**

During the writing of this thesis research, validity and reliability were taken into account during various phases of the research.

Cook & Campbell (1979) describe validity as *'The best available approximation of the truth or falsity of propositions, including propositions about cause.'* (Datallo 2008, 11). When deciding which data collection method should be used during this research, ensuring the validity of this research was taken into consideration. For instance, all of the survey questions are based on information that was found in the examples provided in the case study (Chapter 3) to ensure their relevance to travel behaviour. Furthermore, all of the questions in the online survey have been carefully assessed with the help of the various criteria that were determined by Burns & Bush (2010, 332 – 341.) to make sure they are not steering, focused, and clear to the reader.

The reliability of this research was tested by paying attention to reliability as much as possible throughout the whole thesis writing process. For instance, the online survey was tested with the help of friends, colleagues and family members before publishing it online,

to determine if all of the elements of the survey were logical and understood correctly. Moreover, the definition of certain terms that are used in the survey e.g. 'travel behaviour' were given to the respondents to make sure all the respondents understand the question in the same way. The survey was made to be fully anonymous, respondents were not required to fill in any personal information. By doing this, the respondents might feel more free to speak their minds and give their true opinions. A final question at the end of the survey was added that could be filled in by the respondent if they had any questions or comments that were relevant to this research. None of the respondents have indicated here that they did not understand the questions that were asked in the survey.

Before publishing, the survey was checked by quantitative research lecturer P. Saaranen one final time. The survey questions were also discussed together with the thesis supervisor during one of the guidance meetings. Based on their feedback, some of the questions were adjusted accordingly. The final results of the online survey were extracted and analyzed with the help of P. Saaranen during an online meeting on Microsoft Teams. This way, it was certain that the data from the surveys was extracted successfully and analyzed in the right way. Lastly, it was considered to publish the survey on two different moments to check and improve the reliability of the outcomes. Unfortunately, this was not possible in the given timeframe to complete the online survey (1 month).

#### **4.4 Research challenges**

During the writing of this research, there were some minor challenges during the research phase. At first, I had planned to focus my research on interviewing tour operators instead of the actual end consumer (international leisure tourists). The reason for this, was that I personally thought it would be very difficult to find a platform to connect to international leisure tourists that are interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19. I was also very grateful that the commissioning party (LME) indicated that they might be able to bring me in contact with some tour operators.

However, later on in the process it was concluded that unfortunately it was not possible to receive direct contacts through LME because of GDPR and privacy regulations. Of course, this is totally understandable. However, as a result, I was forced to gather contact information from relevant tour operators myself by searching the organizations on Google. After the interview invitations were finally send out to the tour operators by e-mail, not a single reply was received in over two weeks' time. This is when a decision was made to adjust the research approach to a quantitative research approach, and focus on international leisure tourists (the end-consumer) after all. One of the reasons for this, was

that LME's contact person had mentioned during one of the online Zoom meetings that service providers in Finnish Lapland have stated to him before that they believe that there is a lack of information about the demand of tour operators. Businesses occasionally feel that the tour operator does not demand similar things as the end consumer (international leisure tourists). Gathering information directly from international leisure tourists will also have a positive effect on the research results since they would be more reliable this way. Luckily, all necessary adjustments were implemented quite rapidly, and this minor setback did not affect any deadlines that were set prior to the start of this thesis research.

It is important to consider that the results of this research should be generalizable for the full population (Middleton 2019). To make sure that the results were generalizable, the aim was to receive approximately 50-60 survey responses from each group of individuals living inside China, the Netherlands, France, the UK, and Germany (250 survey answers in total). Unfortunately, this turned out to be very challenging and the bar may have been set too high. Even though a lot of effort was made during the survey period to try and reach out to individuals living in China, France, and Germany, there was still a lower response rate from those three countries than from the UK and Netherlands. One reason for the low response rate may be because the invitation text that was used in the Facebook post and the language of the online survey itself was English. Since the survey was not published in different languages (Chinese, French, and German), this could have prevented individuals from participating in this research. Additionally, it was extremely difficult to reach out to Chinese individuals on their own social media platforms because of limitations to social media that are set by the Chinese government.

## 5 Research results and analysis

In this chapter, the results of the online survey are presented and analyzed. Firstly, an explanation is given regarding how the collected data was analyzed. Secondly, a brief description of the background of the respondents that have participated in the online survey is given (for instance country of residence, age, and gender). Thirdly, the findings related to the first research question (travel behaviour) and the findings regarding the second research question (needs of international tourists post COVID-19) are described.

### 5.1 Analysis of the collected data

Quantitative data analysis is a way of measuring results by using multiple variables. For example, variables can be presented as gender or age. Additionally, qualitative data can be categorized even further into so-called 'metric' and 'non-metric' data (Figure 9). (Singh 2015, 122 – 123.)

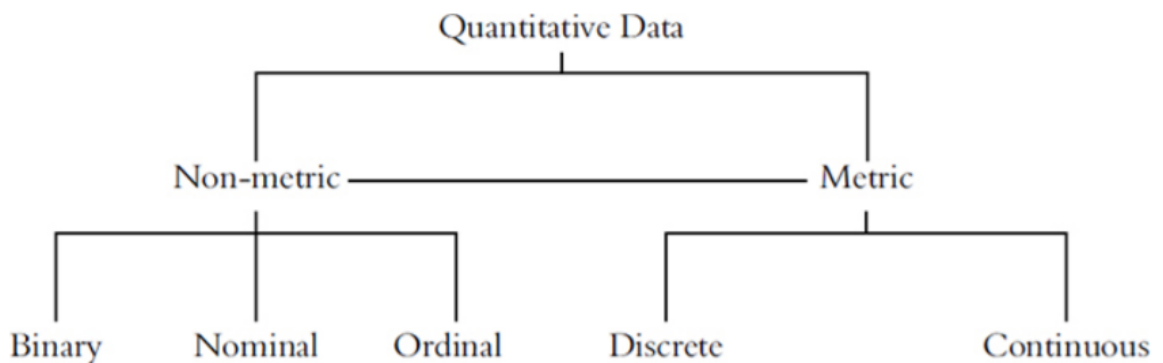


Figure 9. Classification of the types of qualitative data (Adapted from Singh 2015).

According to Singh (2015, 123 – 128.) metric data refers to data that can be determined by measuring the distance between the values. It can be split into two categories: discrete and continuous data. The first (discrete) refers to computable data, e.g. the number of students in a school whereas in continuous data the variables are quantifiable and demonstrated on a continuous scale. Non-metric data is gathered based on either binary, normal, and/or ordinal scales. It is not possible to measure the distance between values of non-metric data. Furthermore, it is derived from the metric properties that characterize the range between the scale values if data is found to be metric or non-metric. Moreover, the scales consist of various types that are different concerning the way that they interpret the connection among the scale values. When analyzing quantitative data, there are two different groups of statistical methods that can be distinguished: descriptive and inferential statistics (Figure 10). Descriptive statistics often represent a group's characteristics in a

chart or graph, and inferential statistics are used to make assumptions based on inferences that are found in the data. Therefore, this kind of method is also used to see if the results can be generalizable for the full population. Examples of descriptive research are either univariate, bivariate, and multivariate measurements.

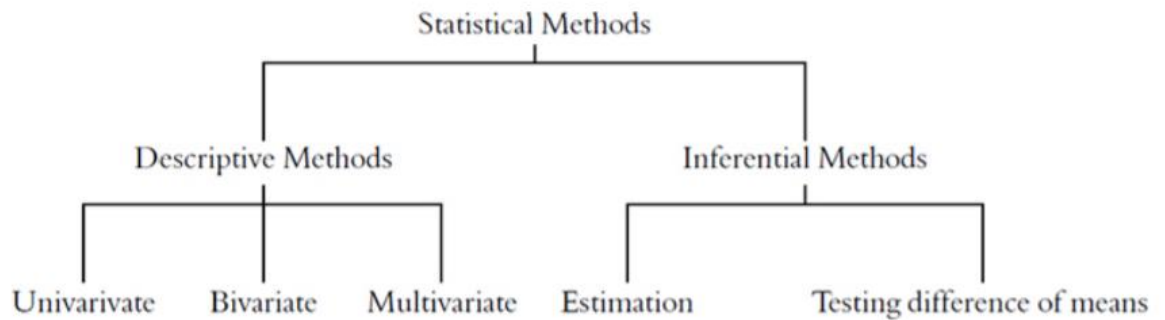


Figure 10. Methods that are used when analyzing quantitative data (Adapted from Singh 2015).

Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney test was used quite frequently during the analysis of results. Singh (2015, 168) explains that this kind of test is used to check whether two individualistic samples show a similar distribution. In this research, the Mann-Whitney test was used to show the significance of the differences between age groups. Additionally, several crosstabulations and correlations were created during the analysis of the data to compare and look at the differences and connections between respondents. When analyzing the results, the following variables were used to create correlations and cross-tabulation: country of residence, age, and gender of respondents.

Singh (2015, 145 – 147.) describes a correlation as a method that is frequently used to measure the connection between multiple variables. The correlation between the groups is found to be significant if, for example, variable X rises when variable Y also increases. Furthermore, the level of correlation can also be mentioned in the case it is not significant since this result can also be of importance. A correlation can be either negative or positive, which is indicated by the coefficient. It also describes if the connection between variables is substantial or poor. The general rule regarding the value of a correlation is that it a correlation is thought to be positive if the value of the coefficient is above 0.70, whereas a correlation that is negative should contain a value of approximately 0.20-0.40. The ordinal variables were analyzed using Spearman’s R method which assesses the connection between the variables. For example, the age of the respondents and the important factors when booking an accommodation. The values of a Spearman R measurement always vary between -1 and +1, the closer the number is to 0, the lower

chance of a correlation. Additionally, during the analysis of the results univariate analysis was used to create tables and charts. The data that is collected is mostly represented by using bar graphs and pie charts. However, the way that results were presented was dependant on the various variables and nature of the data that was collected. Bivariate analysis methods (e.g cross-tabulations) were used to explore the recurrence of the observations in a specific category and to examine the relationship between different variables (Singh 2015, 126 – 148).

The data from the online survey that was collected through the Webropol program has also been analyzed through Webropol's data reporting tool, as this was recommended by P. Saaranen (quantitative data lecturer at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences). The service provides several options to compare the data, e.g by creating crosstabulations and correlations. Additionally, the 'text mining' option was used to create several word webs to give the reader more visual insight into the answers that were given by the respondents in the open questions. Furthermore, the layout of the tables has been adjusted so that the answers are more readable. For example, the colours of the Likert scale bars were adjusted to the following: dark red (fully disagree), disagree (bright red), neutral (grey), agree (bright green), and fully agree (dark green).

At the end of the survey period, a total of 214 respondents had filled in the survey. However, the survey was only completed by 169 respondents. This is explainable, since some respondents have been automatically led to the end of the survey based on their answers to question 1 to 4. Additionally, some respondents may have left in the middle of filling in the survey out of disinterest and for that reason have not completed the survey fully.

## **5.2 Background of the participants**

By looking at the demographic data that was collected from respondents, most respondents that filled in the survey indicated that their country of residence is either the United Kingdom (34%, 69 respondents) or the Netherlands (24%, 50 respondents). Furthermore, there were 22 respondents (11%) that have indicated to live in China (including Hong Kong), 21 respondents (10%) living in Germany, and 11 respondents (5%) living in France. Furthermore, 16% of respondents indicated they were currently living in a different country by choosing 'other'. As a result, they were redirected to the end of the survey (Figure 11).

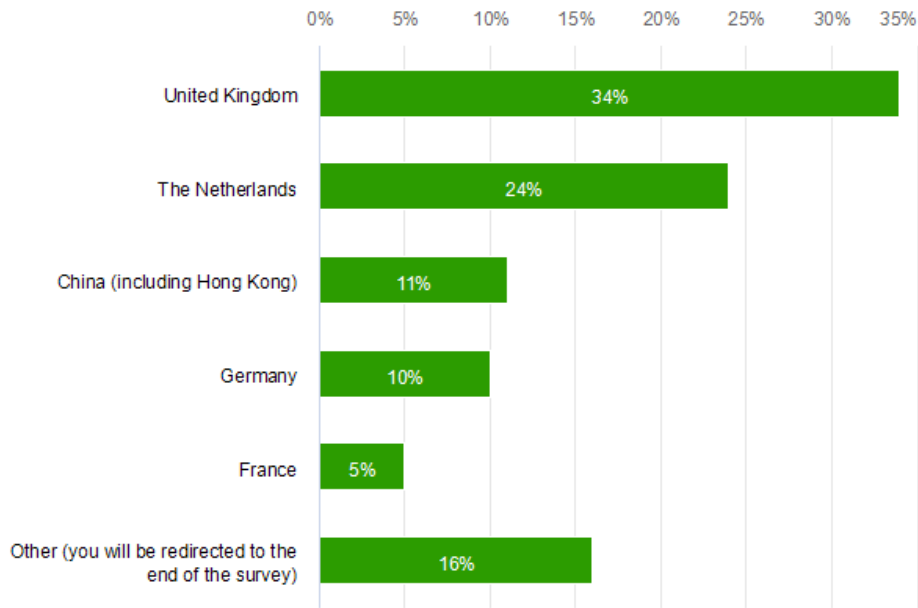


Figure 11. Visualization of country of residence of the respondents (n=206)

Furthermore, respondents were also asked to indicate their age. Most respondents that have filled in the online survey were in the age category of 30-39 (33%, 69 individuals) and 40-49 years old (26%, 56 individuals). 17% of respondents were in the age category of 20-29, 16% 50-59 and 7% of respondents were 60 years or older. Only one respondent indicated to be 19 or younger (Figure 12). Moreover, 75% of the respondents indicated their gender as 'female' and 24% as 'male'. Two respondents indicated they do not wish to specify their gender. Most respondents (84%) are either 'interested' or 'very interested' to travel to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination within the next 3 years (n=214).

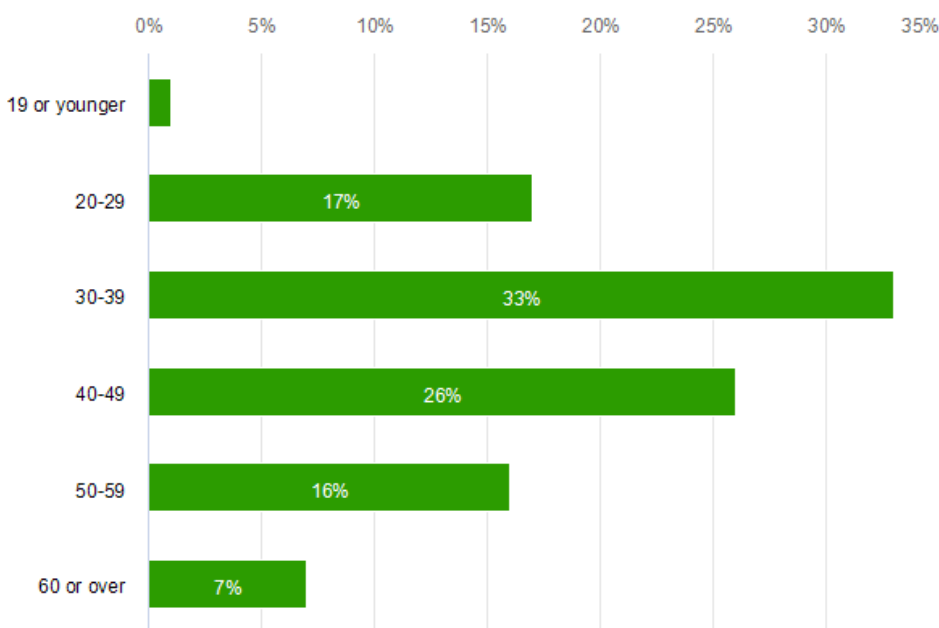


Figure 12. Age distribution of the respondents (n=214)



### 5.3 International tourists' travel behaviour post COVID-19

When looking at the type of accommodations that international leisure tourists are most likely to use when travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (in the upcoming 3 years), the most selected options were: cabins or cottages (75%), hotel (58%), and unique accommodations e.g. aurora hut or igloo (47%) (Figure 13). The accommodations that international leisure tourists are least likely to use post COVID-19 are hostels and campings.

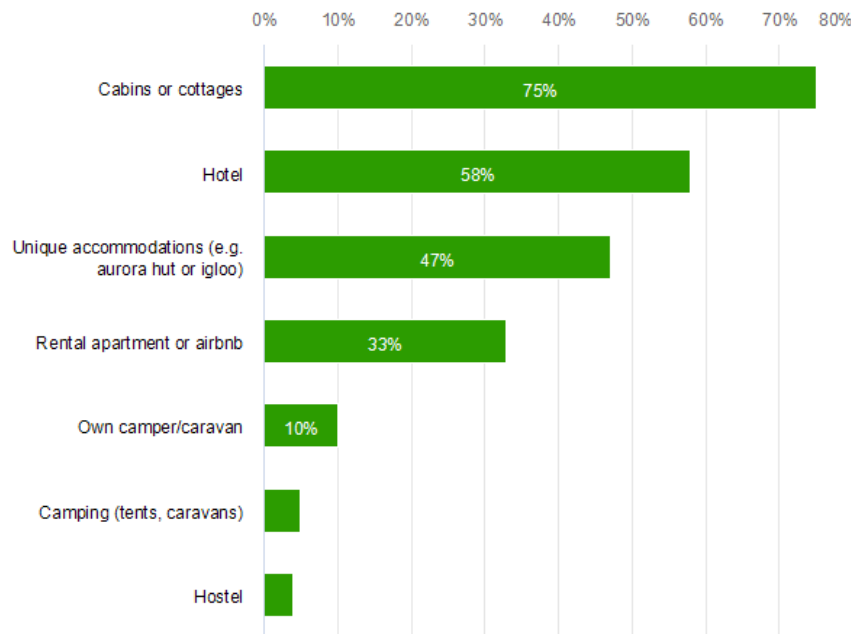


Figure 13. Choice of accommodation of international tourists post COVID-19 (n=169)

Respondents were asked if their preference regarding the type of accommodation has changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. 65% of respondents indicate that the pandemic did not have an effect on their choice regarding the type of accommodation they would use. 19% of respondents agreed or fully agreed that the pandemic did change their choice of accommodation, and 17% were neutral (n=167). Furthermore, the respondents that did indicate that their choice of accommodation is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, had the opportunity to shortly explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic had changed their preference for accommodations. The results of this question are shown in the word web below (Figure 14). This map is created automatically by Webropol using hierarchical clustering and Sammon mapping techniques. The word cloud shows the words that were most used and that are most likely to be connected. The colours in the word web indicate which words are often used together in the responses. A factor that was often mentioned was 'hygiene'. Several respondents mentioned the minimalization of contact and that they pay more attention to hygiene. Several respondents mentioned that

they prefer more isolated and smaller accommodations post COVID-19. One respondent mentions the following: 'I prefer to stay in cabins instead of hotels with lots of other people.'

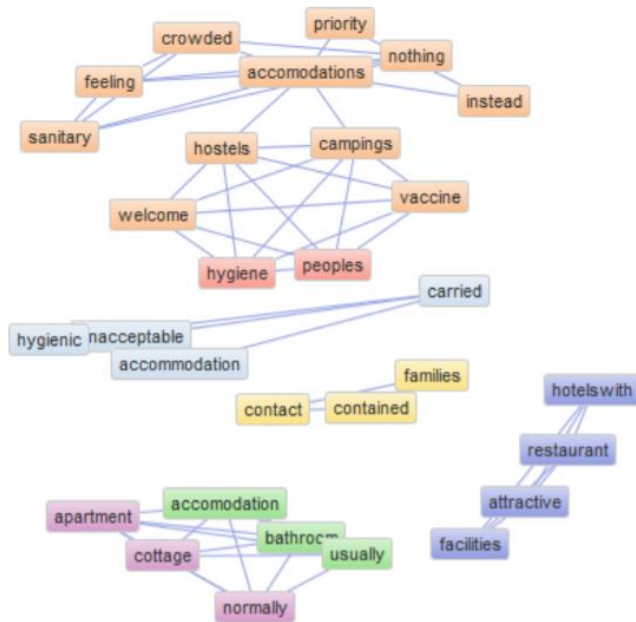


Figure 14. Word web of answers to the question: 'How did the COVID-19 pandemic change your preference for certain types of accommodations?'

Regarding the question about what kind of modes of transportation respondents find to be most safe from COVID-19, by far the most respondents (64%) indicated that they feel as if a rental car is a 'very safe' vehicle to use (Figure 15). The second most safe transportation method was taxi (22%) Furthermore, transportation by regular bus was found to be 'very unsafe' by 20% of the respondents. Additionally, travelling by train was also found to be 'very unsafe' by 12% of respondents.

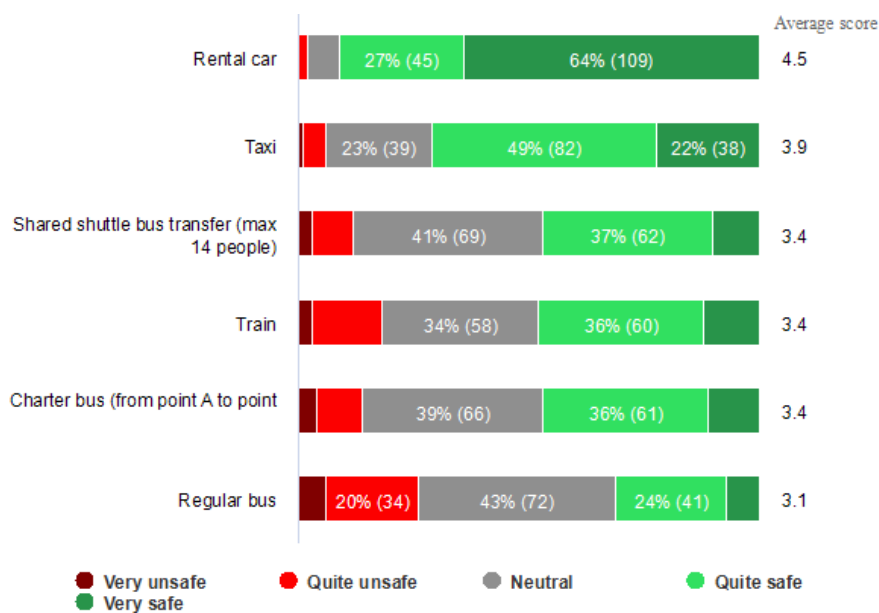


Figure 15. Safest mode of transportation to use during holiday post COVID-19 (n=169)

Most respondents (39%, n=66) indicated that they fully disagree with the statement: *'I am more interested in traveling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination now, in comparison to before the pandemic'* are not any more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, regarding the statement *'when choosing a holiday destination, I check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 before I make my decision'*, 28% of respondents (n=48) mentioned they *'fully agree'* and 34% of respondents (n=58) mentioned they *'quite agree'* (Figure 16).

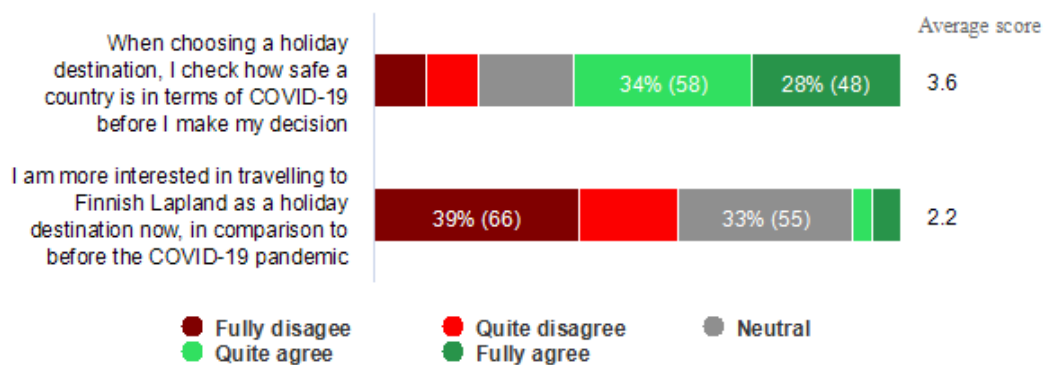


Figure 16. 62% of respondents check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 when choosing a destination (n=106)

Furthermore, a large respondents are more likely to travel more sustainably post COVID-19 than before the pandemic. For this question, respondents were able to indicate their answers on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being very unlikely and 5 very likely). The average score out of all responses was 3,3. 50% of respondents responded to this question with a score between 3 and 4.

Additionally, 25% of the responses indicated a score above 4. The respondents were also asked about the preferred length of their holiday to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19. The results show that the least preferred length is 1-3 days (n=6), and the most preferred length is 7-9 days (n=76) and 4-6 days (n=59). Moreover, 17% of respondents indicated they would prefer a holiday that lasts more than 9 days (n=28) (Figure 17).

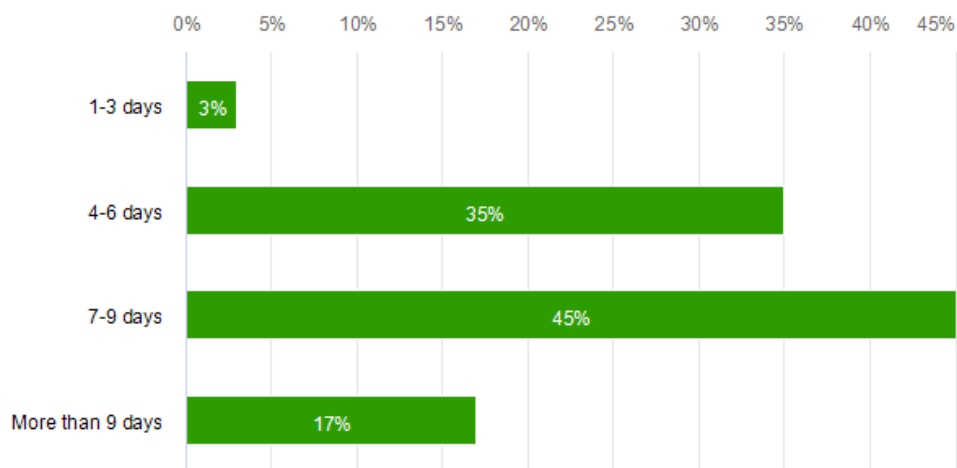


Figure 17. Preferred length of a holiday to Finnish Lapland according to respondents (n=153)

Additionally, the respondents were asked if they believe the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their travel behaviour. In total, more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> (29%, n=49) of respondents agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their travel behaviour, of which 13% (n=22) indicated the pandemic has changed the way they travel a lot. However, 43% (n=72) of respondents indicated they do not believe the pandemic has changed their travel behaviour. Moreover, 28% percent (n=48) of respondents indicated they were 'neutral' regarding this question (Figure 18).

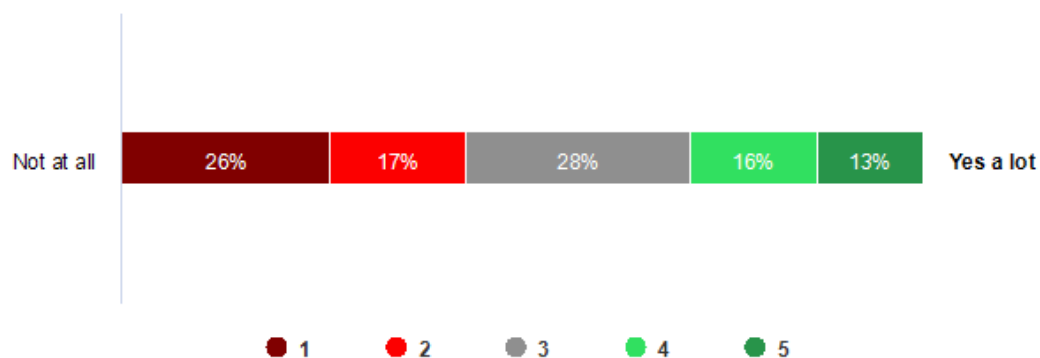


Figure 18. 29% of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their travel behaviour (n=169)

Another word map was created to see what words frequently appeared together in the responses and to see the connection between the words that were used by respondents. When they were asked how the respondents believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their travel behaviour, they mentioned they travel less frequently and are much more cautious regarding the destination they travel to when travelling. Furthermore, many

respondents mention that they prefer different kinds of transportation than before the pandemic. One respondent mentioned: *'I am much more aware of choosing travel options that minimise the need for close prolonged contact with other people'*. Outdoor dining is also mentioned multiple times. Another respondent mentioned that they now like travelling to places that are not too crowded and have activities outside more than before the COVID-19 pandemic. A word cloud was created which shows the most frequently used words in the answer. The larger the word in the word cloud is shown, the more frequently it is used in the answers that were given in the survey (Figure 19).

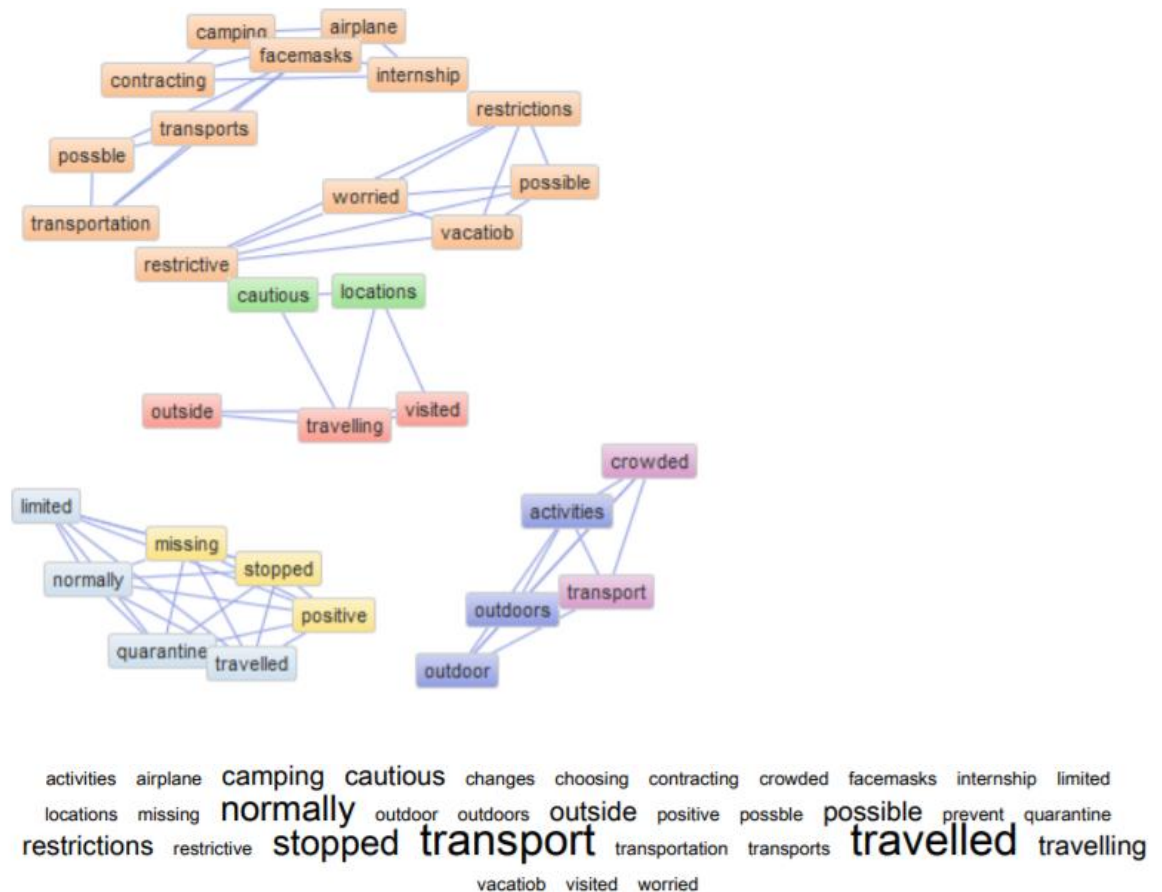


Figure 19. Word web and cloud – most given answers to ‘please explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your travel behaviour’

#### 5.4 International tourists’ needs regarding services post COVID-19

The following results refer to the needs of international leisure tourists regarding services that accommodations could offer to travellers. Firstly, respondents were asked how important they believe the following factors to be during the decision-making process when booking an accommodation (Figure 20). The result clearly indicates that the majority of respondents (44%, n=75) believe that a flexible refund policy is a very important factor

when booking an accommodation in the near future (upcoming 3 years). Furthermore, 31% of respondents (n=52) indicated that convenience during the booking process and about the same number of respondents is very important. Clear information about how the accommodation follows COVID-19 protocols was also quite valuable, as 63% of respondents mentioned they find this either 'quite important' or 'very important'.

The least important service that accommodations could offer during the booking process according to the respondents is the ability to chat or call the accommodation 24/7 to ask questions. Additionally, it is good to note that age did not affect the participants' answers to this question according to the Spearman K test (correlation of all variables is between -1 and +1, all the variables are near zero so there is no correlation).

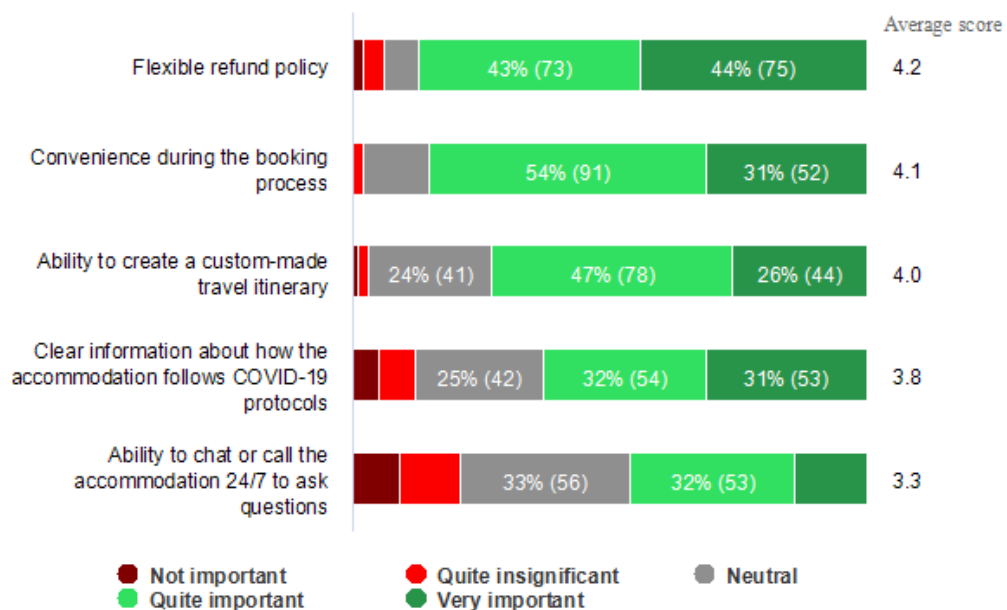


Figure 20. The most important factors when booking an accommodation in the near future (n=169)

According to the results of the survey, the top-5 activities post COVID-19 mostly consist of Northern lights, husky, reindeer activities, exploring local culture, and visiting natural parks (Appendix 5). There were no significant differences found between the gender of the participants and the type of activities they were interested in, apart from reindeer activities. Furthermore, there was a negative correlation regarding the activity 'cross-country', which indicated that younger persons are more interested in this activity. For the rest of the activities, there is no correlation between age and activity. Furthermore, a large number of respondents (70%) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has not at all changed the type of activities they are interested in. Only 6% of respondents do agree that the kind of activities they are interested in has changed because of the pandemic (n=168). These 6%

of respondents were asked about how this has changed, some of the answers that were given indicated that the type of activities are more important now, and that respondents try to avoid group activities more frequently in comparison to before the pandemic.

Moreover, the respondents answered a question regarding the importance of several COVID-19 measures when staying at an accommodation (Figure 21). Based on the results of this question, respondents thought that the most important measure accommodations should consider is to pay attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces (avg. score 3.9).

In total, 67% of respondents (n=97) indicated this is 'quite important' or 'very important'. The second most important measure according to respondents is the disinfection of rental equipment. In total, 100 respondents (68%) thought this is 'quite important' or 'very important'. The third measure that was most important is the availability of hand sanitizer dispensers inside the accommodation (59%, n=89). The three measures that are of least importance according to respondents are hotel staff social distancing from guests (avg. score 3.5), the usage of mouth masks by hotel staff (avg. score 3.5), and the offering of hygiene kits to guests (avg. score 3.1). It is good to note that there was a significant difference noted when analyzing the results of this question between female and male respondents, which indicated that respondents who have identified themselves as a 'female' would appreciate it more when the accommodation could offer a hygiene kit to their guests.



Figure 21. The most and least important COVID-19 measures according to respondents (n=168)

Additionally, there are no differences when comparing the answers of this question between individuals of 'younger' age to older age categories (e.g. 20-29 / 30-39, 20-29/ 40,49, 20-29 / 50-59 and 20-29 / 60 or over). However, there were differences when comparing the answers of older age groups. For instance, when comparing the results of individuals between 30-39 years of age and 60 years and over, it can be concluded that the last group finds it more important that hotel staff social distances from hotel guests (Appendix 6). Furthermore, when looking at the differences between answers of respondents in the age group of 40-49 and 60 years or over, it can be concluded that individuals that were 60 years or older find it more important that the accommodation pays extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces. Furthermore, there are also several differences between the answers of individuals in the age category 50-59 and 60 or over. For instance, individuals that indicated to be 60 years old and over believe it is more important that staff uses mouth masks than individuals that were between 50-59 years old. Furthermore, 27% of the respondents fully agreed that accommodations should keep paying attention to COVID-19 by offering preventive measures in the near future (upcoming 3 years). Additionally, 31% of respondents 'quite agreed' with this statement (n=169). It is good to note that there was a weak but significant positive correlation ( $p=0.014$ ) when analyzing this question using the variable regarding the age of the participants. For this reason, it can be assumed that the older the respondent is in age, the more important he/she believes it is that accommodations keep paying extra attention to COVID-19 by offering preventive measures in the upcoming 3 years. The majority of respondents (52%, n=88) of respondents indicated they fully agree with the following statement: 'accommodations should have a ready-made action plan that can be immediately implemented in the case that a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location'. Furthermore, 22% of respondents quite agreed with this statement and 20% of respondents indicated their opinion is neutral (Figure 22).

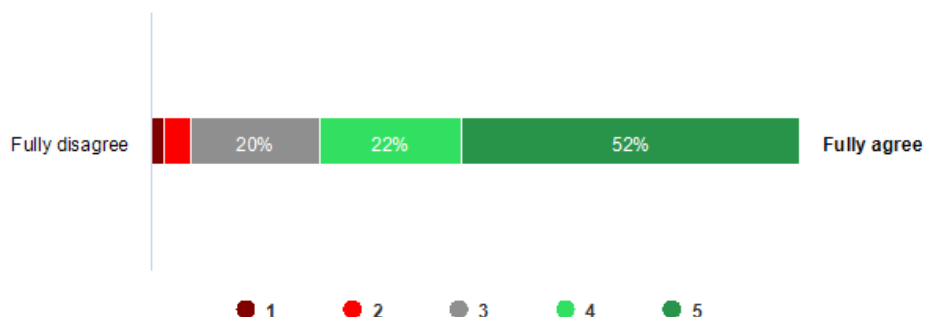


Figure 22. 74% of respondents 'quite agreed' or 'fully agreed' with the statement that accommodations should have a ready-made action plan that can be immediately implemented in the case that a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location (n=169)



## 5.5 Analysis of Dutch & UK market

24% of all respondents that participated in the online survey indicated that they were from the Netherlands (n=50) and 34% of respondents indicated their country of residence is the United Kingdom (n=69). Since most respondents that have participated in the survey have indicated that they are either from the Netherlands or the UK, an analysis was conducted to look specifically at the results and also the differences between these two counties.

By using the Mann-Whitney test it is possible to look at the differences between the United Kingdom (UK) & the Dutch market. There are some significant differences between individuals from the UK and Dutch individuals. For instance, UK respondents value a flexible refund policy more than Dutch individuals ( $p=0.006$ ). Additionally, 65% of UK respondents prefer accommodations such as hotels in comparison to 46% of Dutch individuals. 61% of the respondents from the Netherlands indicated that they prefer to stay in unique accommodations e.g. aurora hut or igloo, compared to 38% of UK citizens (Figure 24).

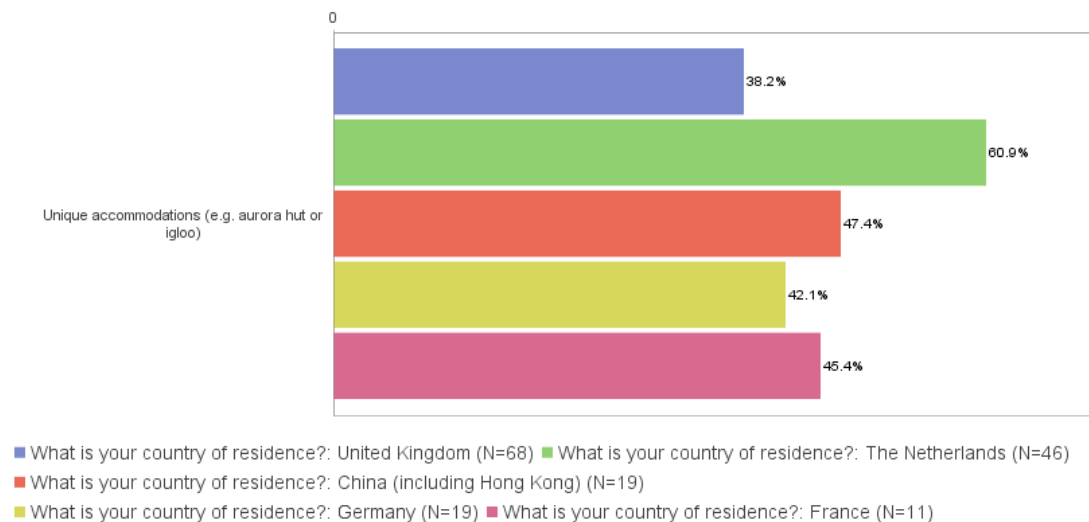


Figure 24. Differences between preference for unique accommodations

Additionally, there is a significant difference between the answers that were given from people from the Netherlands versus individuals from the UK regarding the preferred length of their holiday to Finnish Lapland in the near future ( $p=0.003$ ). When looking at statistics, 43% of individuals from the UK indicated that they would prefer to stay 4 to 6 days. In comparison, only 20% of Dutch respondents indicated that they would prefer to stay 4 to 6 days. Respondents from the Netherlands prefer their holiday to be longer, between 7-9 days in length (61%, n= 59). Looking at statistics, individuals from the UK have a higher preference for activities that are reindeer related compared to Dutch respondents

( $p=0.042$ ). However, Dutch respondents have a higher preference for activities such as snowshoeing ( $p=0.044$ ) and fat biking ( $p=0.038$ ) compared to respondents from the UK.

There are some differences between the Dutch and UK market. For example, in the importance of COVID-19 preventive measures between both markets. It was found that respondents from the Netherlands and UK value factors such as the availability of hand sanitizer dispensers and disinfection of rental equipment (e.g. ski) the most. However, it is worth noting that 91% of UK respondents and 80% of Dutch respondents have indicated that they also find it important when accommodations pay extra attention to the disinfection of public spaces and rooms post COVID-19 (Figure 23).

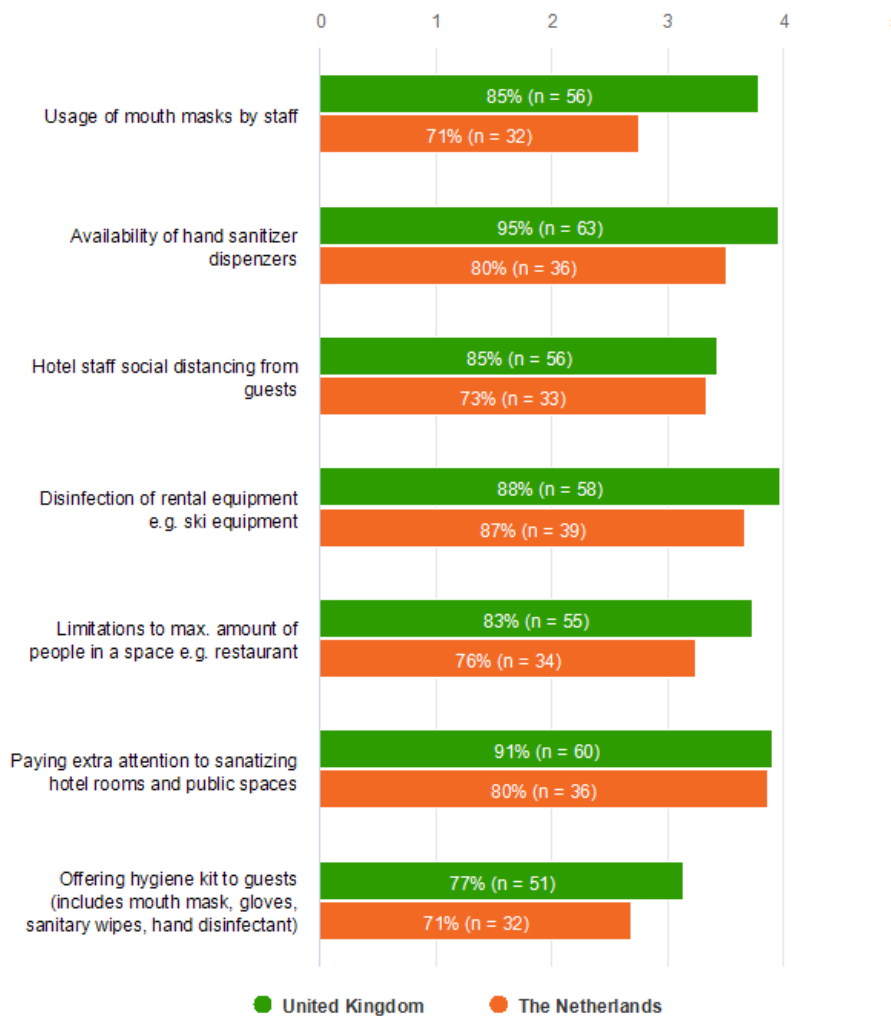


Figure 23. View of Dutch & UK respondents regarding the importance of COVID-19 preventive measures

This same result is also seen when using the Mann-Whitney test. This test proves that the beforementioned differences are significant. For instance, people from the UK value the usage of mouth masks by hotel staff more ( $p=0.001$ ) and limitations to the max. amount of

people in a space (e.g. restaurant) more than Dutch individuals ( $p= 0.050$ ) (Figure 25). Furthermore, individuals from the UK believe it is more important that accommodations pay extra attention to COVID-19 by offering preventive measures in the upcoming 3 years ( $p=0.015$ ).

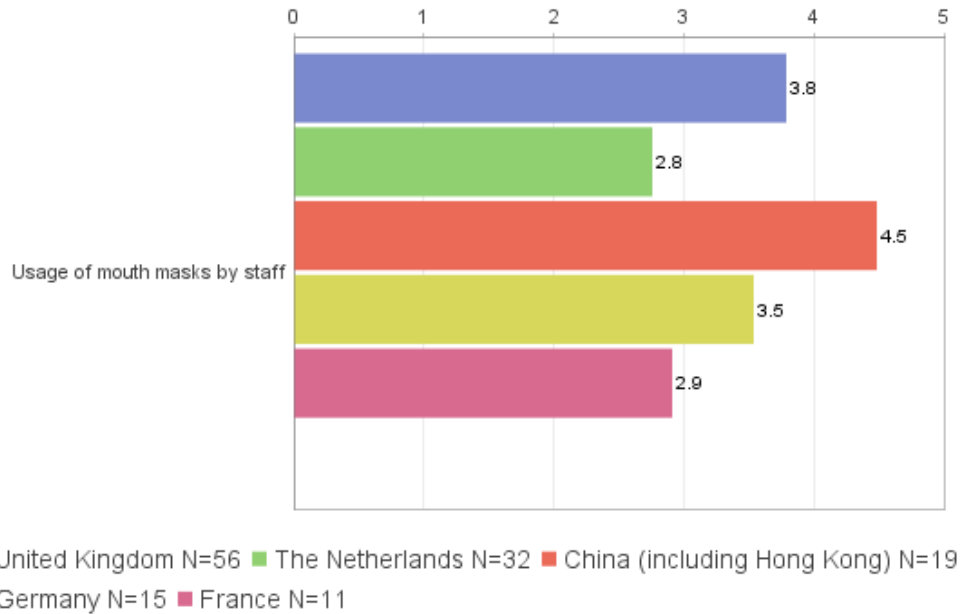


Figure 25. Differences between importance of usage of mouth masks according to country of residence of respondents

## 6 Discussion

In this chapter, both of the research questions that are previously described are answered and discussed with the help of the research results. Additionally, the most interesting and significant results are further explained and interpreted using some of the theories that were explained in the methodology chapter. Furthermore, the results are compared to the results of previous research that was analyzed during the global case study that was conducted in chapter 3 to see if results are similar or if they are different.

*RQ1: In what way has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists?*

The results of the research indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists in many ways. This already starts at the decision-making process before arriving at the destination. For instance, most of the respondents (62%) that participated in this research indicate that they check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 before they make their decision regarding the holiday destination. For this reason, the research supports the theory that was explained by Neuburger & Egger (2020, 1012.) regarding the fact that risk perception of travellers has a big impact on their travel behaviour. Neuburger & Egger also suggest that for this reason it is important that it is important to provide clear information to tourists regarding cancellation and refund policies.

Furthermore, 19% of all respondents mentioned that the pandemic affects their choice of accommodation. They are more aware of hygiene factors and the minimizing of social contacts during their holiday. This may indicate respondents prefer accommodations that are of smaller size and that offer the opportunity to isolate themselves from other guests. This supports the research that was conducted by Pappas & Glyptou (2021, 7 – 8.) that showed that respondents value factors such as hygiene and self-protection while booking an accommodation and try to evade situations in which a COVID-19 infection can occur.

Most respondents believe that using a rental car and/or taxi would be the safest mode of transportation to use during their holiday to Finnish Lapland. The modes of transportation that include sharing the space with other individuals are least popular, e.g. transportation by regular bus. This supports the research that was previously conducted by Li, Thi Hong Hai & Andres (2020, 1 – 5.) regarding the decrease in use of public transportation and increase in own means of transportation post COVID-19.

RQ2: What kind of services do international leisure tourists value when travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19?

As the data suggests, international tourists do have some specific needs that may be a result of the negative implications that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travelling. For instance, a flexible booking policy was the most important factor that respondents take into consideration when booking an accommodation. It is especially interesting to see that the respondents of this research believe this is the most important factor since Neuburger & Egger (2020, 7 – 8.) also suggest that it is important to provide clear information to tourists regarding cancellation and refunding policies to mitigate the risk perception of travellers of a destination in their research. Furthermore, the survey results show that the respondents have a preference to participate in outdoor activities also post COVID-19. The top-5 activities that respondents are most interested in post COVID-19 are northern light activities, husky activities, exploring local culture, visiting national parks, and snowmobiling which are all activities that mostly take place outdoors. However, when participants were asked if the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their preference for activities 70% of respondents mentioned it has not affected in any way. This may mean that these kinds of activities were also very popular among tourists in the period before COVID-19.

Additionally, the study demonstrates that the most important COVID-19 measures that accommodations could implement according to respondents are paying extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces, disinfection of rental equipment, and making sure there are enough hand sanitizer dispensers available inside the accommodation. Furthermore, a correlation was found between the age of participants and the importance of accommodations keeping COVID-19 measures in consideration for the future. Therefore, it is assumed that the older the respondent is in age, the more important he/she believes it is that accommodations keep paying extra attention to COVID-19 by offering preventive measures in the upcoming 3 years. This result supports the claims of the research that was conducted by Aebli, Volgger & Taplin (2021), as they suggested that hygiene factors play a larger role now and they also have a big impact on the level of motivation to travel of tourists (chapter 2.3.1). When comparing the results of this research with the various categories that are described in the Kano Model (1980) by N. Kano, one could argue that the needs of international leisure tourists regarding COVID-19 preventive measures in the near future fall under the category of 'expected needs'. International leisure tourists expect that accommodations will keep paying attention to COVID-19 in the upcoming years by maintaining preventive measures within their organisation. However, when looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) the needs of international

leisure tourists would be placed in the category 'safety and security', which may be logical since most needs of international tourists that were analyzed and included in this research are connected to COVID-19 prevention.

Lastly, it was very interesting to see that a very high majority of respondents (74%) agreed that accommodations should have a ready-made action plan in place that they can immediately implement in the case a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location. Even though most respondents have indicated that their travel behaviour is not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is interesting to see that they do find it important (and possibly even are expecting) that accommodations are well-prepared and ready to take action in case infection occurs.

## **7 Conclusions**

This research aimed to gather more knowledge and insights regarding the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19, to assist accommodations in Finnish Lapland with improving their business model in pandemic situations by creating a guidebook. The results of this research show that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the travel behaviour and needs of international leisure tourists in some aspects. For instance, they are more cautious of hygiene factors when booking an accommodation, and highly value services that accommodations can offer to mitigate the risk of travelling – such as flexible booking policies.

### **7.1 Theoretical contributions**

Even though the results of this research mostly agree with previously conducted research in other countries globally, this research contributes and is of additional value to the results that were previously found by other experts. The results of this research give more insight into international leisure tourists' expectations regarding their own travel behaviour post COVID-19 in the near future (2022-2025) specifically for the region of Finnish Lapland. Furthermore, this research is one of the first that investigated the travel behaviour & needs post COVID-19 of the top-5 most popular markets for the destination of Finnish Lapland. The results of this research were used to give three concrete recommendations for the accommodation industry, which are stated below and in the final guidebook (Appendix 7).

#### Top-3 recommendations for the accommodation industry

1. Create a 'COVID-19 action plan' that can be used in case infection occurs.
2. Provide clear information regarding cancellation & refund policies to potential guests.
3. Keep taking COVID-19 preventive measures into account post COVID-19.

### **7.2 Managerial contributions**

Overall, the final data contributes to a clearer understanding of travel behaviour and needs of international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025). Therefore, they should be taken into account when accommodations consider how to adjust their business model to pandemic situations. This research is very relevant to tourism organizations and associations such as LME, since

they could share the final guidebook with the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland through their own platforms (social media, website) or through workshops that they occasionally host for entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland. The recommendations that were mentioned in chapter 7.2 also contribute to the previous research that was conducted by LME regarding the post COVID-19 scenarios for Finnish Lapland, since they are specifically aimed at the accommodation industry.

### **7.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research**

Further research will need to be conducted to examine which elements should be included in the COVID-19 action plan that accommodations in Finnish Lapland can implement in the case of a COVID-19 infection. Additionally, future studies should consider focusing on only one target market instead of multiple. There was a lack of data on the specific markets during this research. Unfortunately, the results cannot be generalized for the Chinese, French, and German market since there was simply not enough respondents. Luckily, there were plenty of responses from respondents living in the Netherlands and UK so it was possible to analyze these two markets separately. This was very relevant information since the Dutch and UK market are of high importance in terms of tourism to Finnish Lapland. When conducting future research that focuses on analyzing the needs and travel behaviour of tourists living in one specific country, it will be possible to get more generalizable information. Additionally, the language of the survey should be taken into account for future studies. This is especially important since it is assumed that language barriers have had a large effect on the number of responses to the online survey during this research.

### **7.4 Creation of the guidebook for the accommodation industry**

Before creating the final guidebook (Appendix 7), a meeting with the commissioner was organized to discuss together what the final version of the guidebook should look like. For example, the guidebook should be easy to share, not too long in length, or complicated to read. This last point is especially important since it is crucial that the guidebook is easy to read for everyone regardless of their academic background. Additionally, the quote 'time is money' is very relevant in this industry which is another reason why the guidebook should not be too difficult to read. Furthermore, it was also discussed that the font that is used has to be readable. Additionally, to improve the readability various subheadings were added throughout the chapters. The final guidebook was created with help of an online tool called 'Flipsnack'. There were multiple reasons for using Flipsnack to design the guidebook. First of all, the tool is convenient to use and it is a simple solution to create your own guidebook in the Flipsnack Design Studio where you can choose between



various formats (e.g. brochure or tabloid). For the final product, a choice was made to go for a tabloid format (1632 x 1056 pixels) since it is fairly large and the text and images would be more readable. Personally, I also have some experience using Flipsnack and have edited various brochures by using Flipsnack in my previous work positions. Secondly, one of the features of Flipsnack is that it is also very user-friendly and easy to read through all of the pages. As a reader, it is very easy to zoom in and out of the text and to change pages. When changing pages, it looks exactly like folding a page in a brochure. Thirdly, the service is fully compatible on both computers and mobile devices as well. Furthermore, Flipsnack offers enough features to share the guidebook with others, e.g. by simply sharing the link. There is no need for users to download a PDF file to view the guidebook. And lastly, the layout of the guidebook can be fully customized to make it more appealing (font, icons, images).

The aim would be that the overall guidebook visually looks very appealing to read, professional and neat. Several images of Finnish Lapland were added, to make the appearance of the guidebook more appealing to the reader. All of the images that were used in the guidebook are fully copyright-free and were downloaded from either Unsplash or Pixabay. The logos of Haaga-Helia and LME were added on the main page to gain the reader's trust and make the guidebook visually more appealing. Both of the logos are clickable and lead to the official website of LME and/or Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. Additionally, more information about the publisher was added on the last page of the guidebook and a link was created to my personal LinkedIn profile. The main reason that this was done was so that readers are able to contact the researcher in case they have any questions regarding this research. Additionally, a clickable link was created that refers to this thesis document so that the reader is also able to read the full thesis research document on Theseus if they wish. The final guidebook for the accommodation industry in Finnish Lapland consists of 14 pages in total (including full-sized pages with images). The guidebook focuses on the most important conclusions and results of this research, and includes the following content:

- Page 1: Front page (including title)
- Page 2: List of contents
- Page 3: Introduction to the research & importance of the results
- Pages 4-5: Travel behaviour of international tourists post COVID-19
- Pages 6-8: International tourists needs regarding services post COVID-19
- Page 9: Interesting findings regarding UK & Dutch market
- Pages 10-15: Recommendations for accommodations – moving forward
- Pages 16-17: Information about the publisher

## 7.5 Reflection on the thesis process

At the start of January 2020, I started my journey as a Master's Degree student at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The first few months were not easy, especially since I emigrated from the Netherlands to Finland and I also had to acclimatize personally. After the first few months and some courses had passed, I decided to start writing my initial ideas for this thesis. At that time, the ideas that I had were not very clear yet and I felt as if I was a little lost in the ideas that I had. I decided that I would start to make my thesis topic more concrete by conducting desk research. This is where my interest started around the subject of COVID-19, and how it affected the tourism industry in Finnish Lapland. This thesis research was fully written during the COVID-19 pandemic which meant that the regulations were changing continuously and new updates were announced very frequently globally. Furthermore, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there were little to almost zero chances to meet up with other students and lecturers. Luckily, I did get the chance to attend several (online and face-to-face) thesis workshops that were offered by Haaga-Helia to keep my motivation high. This way I was able to share my own experiences with other students which have helped me immensely during my thesis process. I created this document in the summer of 2020, which meant that the thesis writing process had officially begun. The thesis writing process turned out to be a real rollercoaster ride, full of high ups and deep downs. At the start of writing my thesis, I was full of confidence that I would be able to finish my thesis at the end of January 2022. I had created a very clear planning, set personal deadlines for each phase of the thesis for myself. After several months, I concluded that the journey of writing a thesis is not always as smooth as expected. I had planned my entire thesis out while writing my thesis plan, but as it turns out things do not always go as planned.

However, from the challenges that I faced while writing this thesis I have learned to never give up and to always think of the opportunities and find creative solutions. The courses that I followed throughout my study at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences also helped me to get a much better understanding of certain concepts that are explained in this thesis. Personally, I am very proud of all of the learnings that I have gone through, not only while writing this thesis but also during these 1,5 years of studying at Haaga-Helia. Also, I am very grateful that I was able to present my findings to LME and present the final guidebook to them personally. I feel as if writing this thesis is my first step to a professional career in the tourism industry in Finland. It has certainly contributed to my personal and professional development and increased my knowledge of the industry. Lastly, I would like to end with a short quote that has inspired me throughout my thesis journey: *'Believe you can, and you're already halfway there.'* – Theodore Roosevelt

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Survey invitation



Chantal van Herwijnen

· 2 m · 🌐



Hi! 😊

Are you currently living in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China or the Netherlands and interested in travelling to the beautiful region of Finnish Lapland in the upcoming 3 years?

If your answer is yes, please consider helping me out with my thesis research by filling in this survey:

<https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/FA632CF28B1EF3AB>

My name is Chantal, and I am currently studying at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in the Master Degree Programme of Aviation and Tourism Business. At the moment, I am writing my thesis regarding the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19.

The survey has a maximum of 22 questions and will only take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is fully anonymous. If you have any questions or comments regarding the survey or about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you so much!

Administrators of this group, feel free to delete this post if this is not allowed on this channel. 😊



👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

## Appendix 2. Triggering the Facebook algorithm

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post and its comments. At the top, the post is by Sami Blom and 42 others, with 16 comments. Below the post name are icons for Like, Comment, and Share. A dropdown menu shows 'All comments'. The comments are as follows:

- Matt Allaker** (Done) - 1 like - 16 h ago. Comment: "Chantal van Herwijnen **Author** 🙌 Matt Allaker Thank you very much. I really appreciate your help. 😊" - 1 like - 16 h ago.
- Anja Stumps** (Done 😊) - 1 like - 15 h ago. Comment: "Chantal van Herwijnen **Author** 🙌 Anja Stumps Thanks so much to you and everyone else for your help with my research! You have really made my day. 😊" - 1 like - 15 h ago.
- Vivian Chaplin** (Anja Stumps done) - 1 like - 14 h ago. Comment: "Chantal van Herwijnen **Author** 🙌 Thanks very much for helping me with my research Vivian! You're amazing. 😊" - 1 like - 14 h ago.
- Ryan Mac Sweeney** (Done) - 1 like - 14 h ago. Comment: "Chantal van Herwijnen **Author** 🙌 Ryan Mac Sweeney thanks for your time and help! 😊" - 1 like - 13 h ago.

## Appendix 3. The online survey (using Webropol)



### **The needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19**

The needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists visiting Finnish Lapland post COVID-19

This research focuses on the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that are living in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China or the Netherlands and are interested in visiting Finnish Lapland in the near future (within the upcoming 3 years).

This survey is fully anonymous. All data will be only used for the purpose of this thesis research and will be deleted after the thesis has been published.

#### **1. What is your country of residence?**

- United Kingdom
- The Netherlands
- China
- Germany
- France
- Other (you will be redirected to the end of the survey)

Question rules

**What is your country of residence?**

**United Kingdom**

No option rules

**The Netherlands**

No option rules

**China**

No option rules

**Germany**

No option rules

**France**

No option rules

**Other (you will be redirected to the end of the survey)**

Rule: End survey

If option is selected End survey and redirect respondent to thank you page.

---

**2. What is your age?**

- 19 or younger
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or over

**3. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Other
- I do not want to specify

#### 4. Are you interested in traveling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination in the near future (within the next 3 years)?

When selecting 1 or 2 you are redirected to the end of the survey

	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Not at all interested</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Very interested</b>

##### Question rules

**Are you interested in traveling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination in the near future (within the next 3 years)?**

##### Not at all interested

**1**

Rule: End survey

If option is selected End survey and redirect respondent to thank you page.

---

**2**

Rule: End survey

If option is selected End survey and redirect respondent to thank you page.

---

**3**

No option rules

**4**

No option rules

**5**

No option rules

#### 5. Please rate how you would important the following factors are to you when booking a accommodation in the near future (upcoming 3 years)

	Not important	Quite insignificant	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Flexible refund policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience during the booking process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to chat or call the accommodation 24/7 to ask questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clear information about how the accommodation follows COVID-19 protocols	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to create a custom-made travel itinerary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. Which of the following accommodation types are you most likely to use when traveling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (in the upcoming 3 years)?**

Please select a maximum of 3.

- Cabins or cottages
- Hotel
- Camping (tents, caravans)
- Own camper/caravan
- Rental apartment or airbnb
- Hostel
- Unique accommodations (e.g. aurora hut or igloo)

**7. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed my preference for certain types of accommodations.**

	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Fully disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Fully agree</b>

Question rules

**The COVID-19 pandemic has changed my preference for certain types of accommodations.**

**Fully disagree**

**1**

No option rules

**2**

No option rules

**3**

No option rules

**4**

Rule: Show Question(s)

If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed your preference for certain types of accommodations

---

**5**

Rule: Show Question(s)

If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed your preference for certain types of accommodations

---

**8. Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed your preference for certain types of accommodations**


Question rules

**Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed your preference for certain types of accommodations**

**No question rules yet**

Question **The COVID-19 pandemic has changed my preference for certain types of accommodations.** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

Question **The COVID-19 pandemic has changed my preference for certain types of accommodations.** has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question



**9. How important are the following COVID-19 measures to you when staying at an accommodation?**

**Please rate on a scale from 1-5, 1 = not important, 5 = very important**



**10. Based on your opinion, how true is the following statement?**

**'Accommodations should have a ready-made action plan that can be immediately implemented in the case that a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location.'**

	1	2	3	4	5	
Fully disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Fully agree

**11. In your opinion, how important is it that accommodations keep paying extra attention to COVID-19 by offering preventive measures in the near future (upcoming 3 years)?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

**12. How interesting are the following activities to you when travelling to Finnish Lapland within the upcoming 3 years?**

	Not interesting	Quite uninteresting	Neutral	Quite interesting	Very interesting
<u>Adventure tourism</u>					
Husky activities e.g. safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reindeer activities e.g. safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowshoeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowmobiling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Northern light activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cross-country and other skiing activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fat bike cycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(Ice)fishing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>City tourism</u>					
Shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting museums	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
City guided tours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>Culinary or cultural tourism</u>					
Visit Lappish restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooking workshop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food tours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>Wellness, beauty &amp; health tourism</u>					
Sauna experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting spa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
yoga activities in nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<u>Nature tourism / Eco tourism</u>					
Visiting national parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Not interesting	Quite uninteresting	Neutral	Quite interesting	Very interesting
Exploring local culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Berry, herb and/or mushroom picking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, what? <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Has the type of activities you have been interested in changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Yes a lot

Question rules

**Has the type of activities you have been interested in changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Not at all**

**1**  
No option rules

**2**  
No option rules

**3**  
No option rules

**4**  
Rule: Show Question(s)  
If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the activities you are interested in

---

**5**  
Rule: Show Question(s)  
If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the activities you are interested in

---

**14. Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the activities you are interested in**


Question rules

Please explain in what way the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the activities you are interested in

No question rules yet

Question Has the type of activities you have been interested in changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic? has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question  
Question Has the type of activities you have been interested in changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic? has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

**15. In your opinion, how safe are the following modes of transport during a holiday?**

'Safe' in this question means safe from COVID-19.

	Very unsafe	Quite unsafe	Neutral	Quite safe	Very safe
Train	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regular bus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Charter bus (from point A to point B)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shared shuttle bus transfer (max 14 people)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rental car	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taxi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 16. Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your travel behaviour?

Travel behaviour refers to the way you travel. For example, your motivation to travel to a destination, the activities and/or modes of transportation that are used during your holiday

	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Not at all</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Yes a lot</b>

Question rules

### Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your travel behaviour?

Travel behaviour refers to the way you travel. For example, your motivation to travel to a destination, the activities and/or modes of transportation that are used during your holiday

#### Not at all

1

No option rules

2

No option rules

3

No option rules

4

Rule: Show Question(s)

If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your travel behaviour

---

5

Rule: Show Question(s)

If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your travel behaviour

---

### 17. Please explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your travel behaviour


Question rules

Please explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your travel behaviour

No question rules yet

Question **Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your travel behaviour?**Travel behaviour refers to the way you travel. For example, your motivation to travel to a destination, the activities and or modes of transportation that are used during your holiday has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

Question **Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your travel behaviour?**Travel behaviour refers to the way you travel. For example, your motivation to travel to a destination, the activities and or modes of transportation that are used during your holiday has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

### 18. In your opinion, how true are the following statements?

	Fully disagree	Quite disagree	Neutral	Quite agree	Fully agree
When choosing a holiday destination, I check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 before I make my decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination now, in comparison to before the COVID-19 pandemic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question rules

In your opinion, how true are the following statements?

**When choosing a holiday destination, I check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 before I make my decision**

**Fully disagree**  
No option rules

**Quite disagree**  
No option rules

**Neutral**  
No option rules

**Quite agree**  
No option rules

**Fully agree**  
No option rules

**I am more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland as a holiday destination now, in comparison to before the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Fully disagree**  
No option rules

**Quite disagree**  
No option rules

**Neutral**  
No option rules

**Quite agree**  
Rule: Show Question(s)  
If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain the reason why you are more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland now than before the COVID-19 pandemic

---

**Fully agree**  
Rule: Show Question(s)  
If option is selected Show Question(s) Please explain the reason why you are more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland now than before the COVID-19 pandemic

---



**19. Please explain the reason why you are more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland now than before the COVID-19 pandemic**


Question rules

Please explain the reason why you are more interested in travelling to Finnish Lapland now than before the COVID-19 pandemic

No question rules yet

Question In your opinion, how true are the following statements? has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

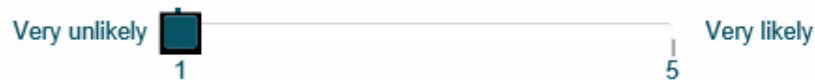
Question In your opinion, how true are the following statements? has *Show Question(s)* rule for this question

**20. What is the preferred length of your holiday to Finnish Lapland in the near future (within the upcoming 3 years)?**

- 1-3 days
- 4-6 days
- 7-9 days
- More than 9 days

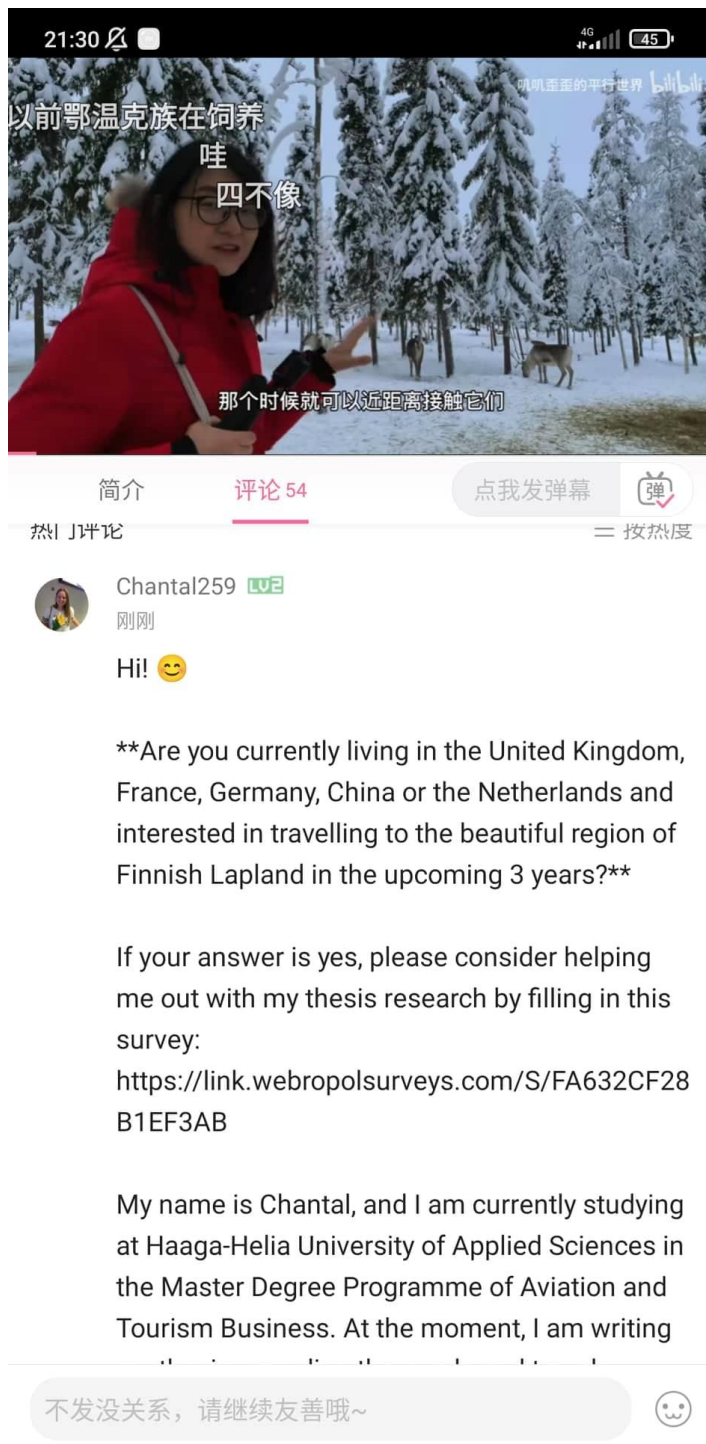
**21. To what extent do you believe that you will travel more sustainable post COVID-19, in comparison to before the pandemic?\***

\*Definition of sustainable tourism: having a positive impact on nature, society and the economy, leaving a low ecological footprint and honouring local cultures

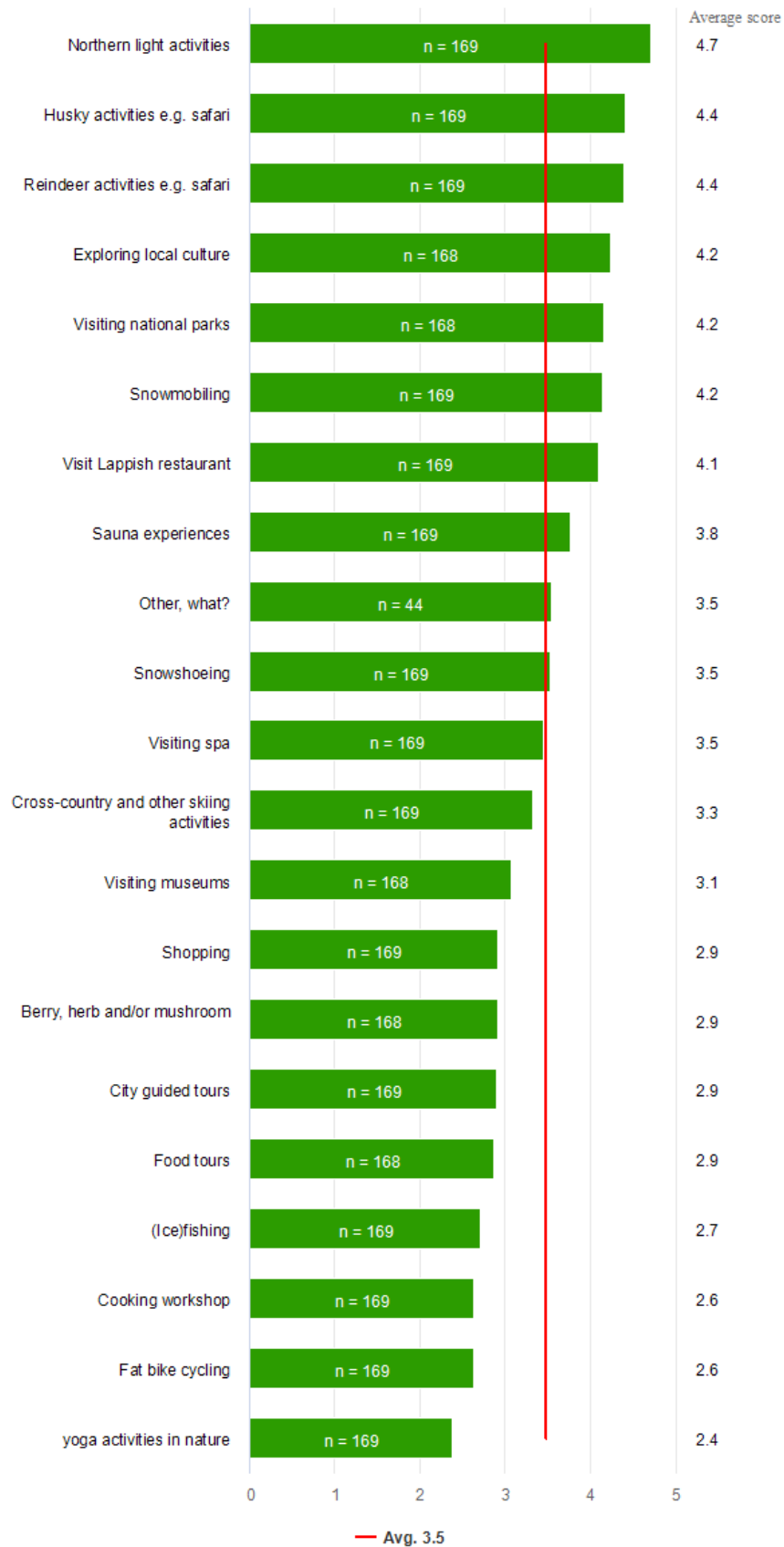


**22. If you have any questions or comments that are relevant to this research please leave them here**


#### Appendix 4. Screenshot of sharing the survey through the Chinese Bilibili platform



## Appendix 5. The most and least interesting activities according to respondents



## Appendix 6. Differences when comparing age groups

Q: How important are the following COVID-19 measures to you when staying at an accommodation? Please rate on a scale from 1-5, 1 = not important, 5 = very important (N = 166).

Mann Whitney Test. Red numbers indicate p value lower than 0.05 (5%)

Variables	30-39 / 40-49	30-39 / 50-59	30-39 / 60 or over	40-49 / 50-59	40-49 / 60 or over	50-59 / 60 or over
Usage of mouth masks by staff	-0.43 (p=0.664)	-0.95 (p=0.346)	-1.24 (p=0.233)	-0.72 (p=0.476)	-1.71 (p=0.090)	-2.22 (p=0.025)
Availability of hand sanitizer dispensers	-0.1 (p=0.920)	-1.8 (p=0.072)	-0.64 (p=0.538)	-1.6 (p=0.105)	-0.67 (p=0.518)	-1.71 (p=0.083)
Hotel staff social distancing from guests	-1.62 (p=0.106)	-1.21 (p=0.226)	-1.95 (p=0.050)	-0.32 (p=0.751)	-2.81 (p=0.004)	-2.72 (p=0.007)
Disinfection of rental equipment e.g. ski equipment	-0.1 (p=0.921)	-0.84 (p=0.407)	-0.51 (p=0.629)	-0.92 (p=0.366)	-0.75 (p=0.516)	-1.24 (p=0.242)
Limitations to max. amount of people in a space e.g. restaurant	-0.78 (p=0.435)	-1.06 (p=0.292)	-0.73 (p=0.490)	-0.44 (p=0.670)	-1.18 (p=0.271)	-1.45 (p=0.182)
Paying extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces	-2.22 (p=0.026)	-1.88 (p=0.063)	-0.92 (p=0.396)	-0.1 (p=0.921)	-2.08 (p=0.041)	-2 (p=0.055)
Offering hygiene kit to guests (includes mouth mask, gloves, sanitary wipes, hand disinfectant)	-0.8 (p=0.425)	-0.61 (p=0.548)	-0.47 (p=0.640)	-0.26 (p=0.796)	-0.02 (p=0.998)	-0.31 (p=0.776)

## **Appendix 7. Final guidebook for the accommodation industry**

The last version of the guidebook was published together with this thesis. See the final product one page below, or [click here to view it live on Flipsnack](#).



# TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR AND NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL LEISURE TOURISTS POST COVID-19

GUIDE FOR THE ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY IN FINNISH LAPLAND

## 3

### **Introduction**

Information about this research and why the research results are of importance for the accommodation industry

## 5

### **Travel behaviour post COVID-19**

Read more about the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that are interested in visiting the region of Finnish Lapland post COVID-19..

## 7

### **The needs of international tourists post COVID-19**

A description of the needs of international tourists regarding services post COVID-19.

## 9

### **Recommendations - Moving Forward**

This chapter focuses on the top 3 recommendations for the accommodation industry and how accommodations can increase customer satisfaction post COVID-19.

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### **About the publisher**

More information about the publisher of this document





## INTRODUCTION

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The aim of this research was to gather more knowledge and insights regarding the needs and travel behaviour of international leisure tourists that have an interest in travelling to Finnish Lapland post COVID-19 (2022-2025). The research focuses on the top-5 markets: UK, France, Germany, China and the Netherlands. Based on the thesis research that was conducted, three concrete recommendations for the accommodation industry are described and explained in this guidebook. The results of this research are relevant for accommodations in Finnish Lapland and can be used to improve their business model and increase customer satisfaction in pandemic situations.



# TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR AND NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL LEISURE TOURISTS POST COVID-19



Travel behaviour of international tourists

## **POST COVID-19**

The results of the research indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the travel behaviour of international leisure tourists in many ways.

This already starts at the decision-making process before arriving at the destination. For instance, most of the respondents (62%) that participated in this research indicate that they check how safe a country is in terms of COVID-19 before they make their decision regarding the holiday destination.

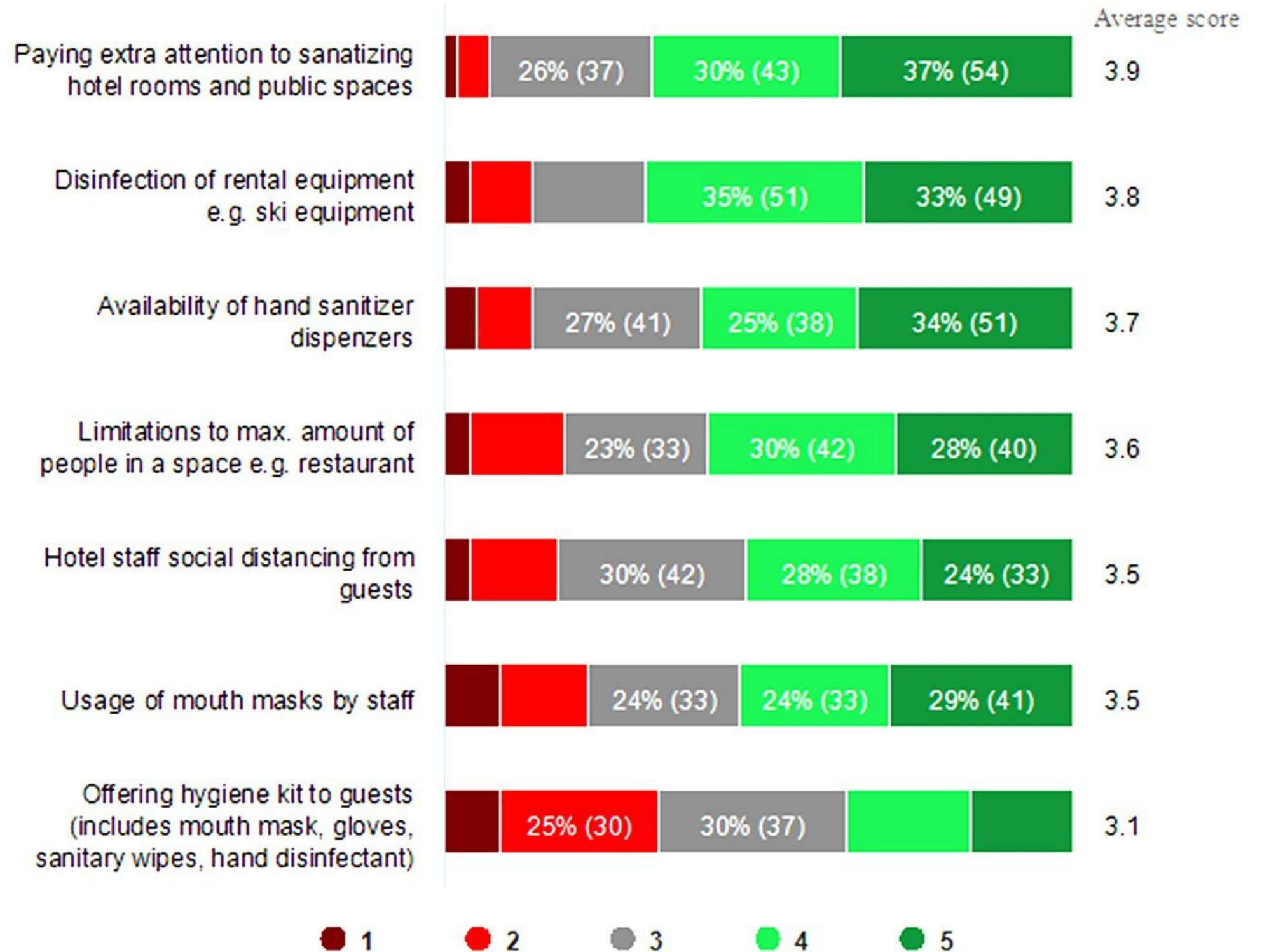
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# COVID-19 PREVENTIVE SERVICES

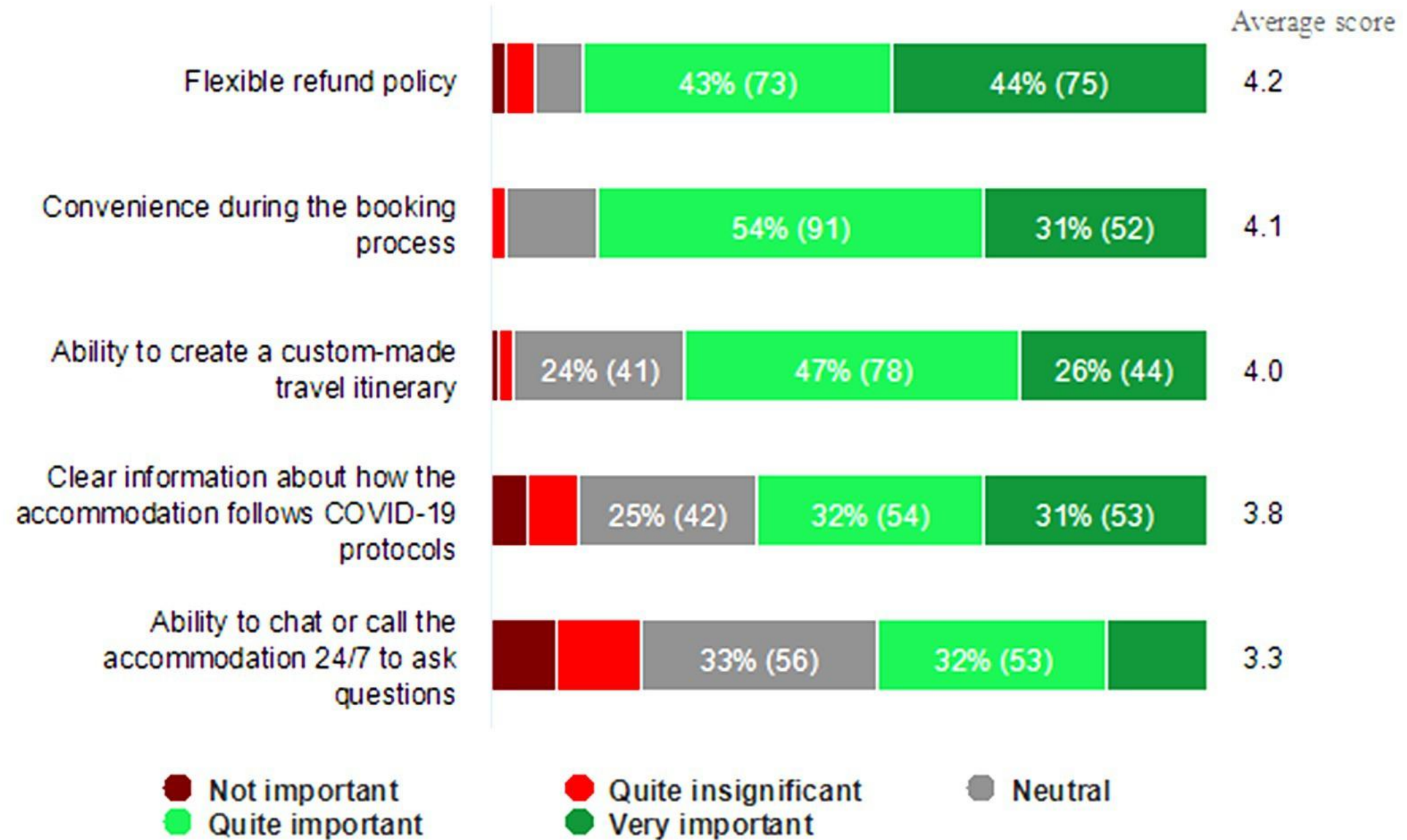


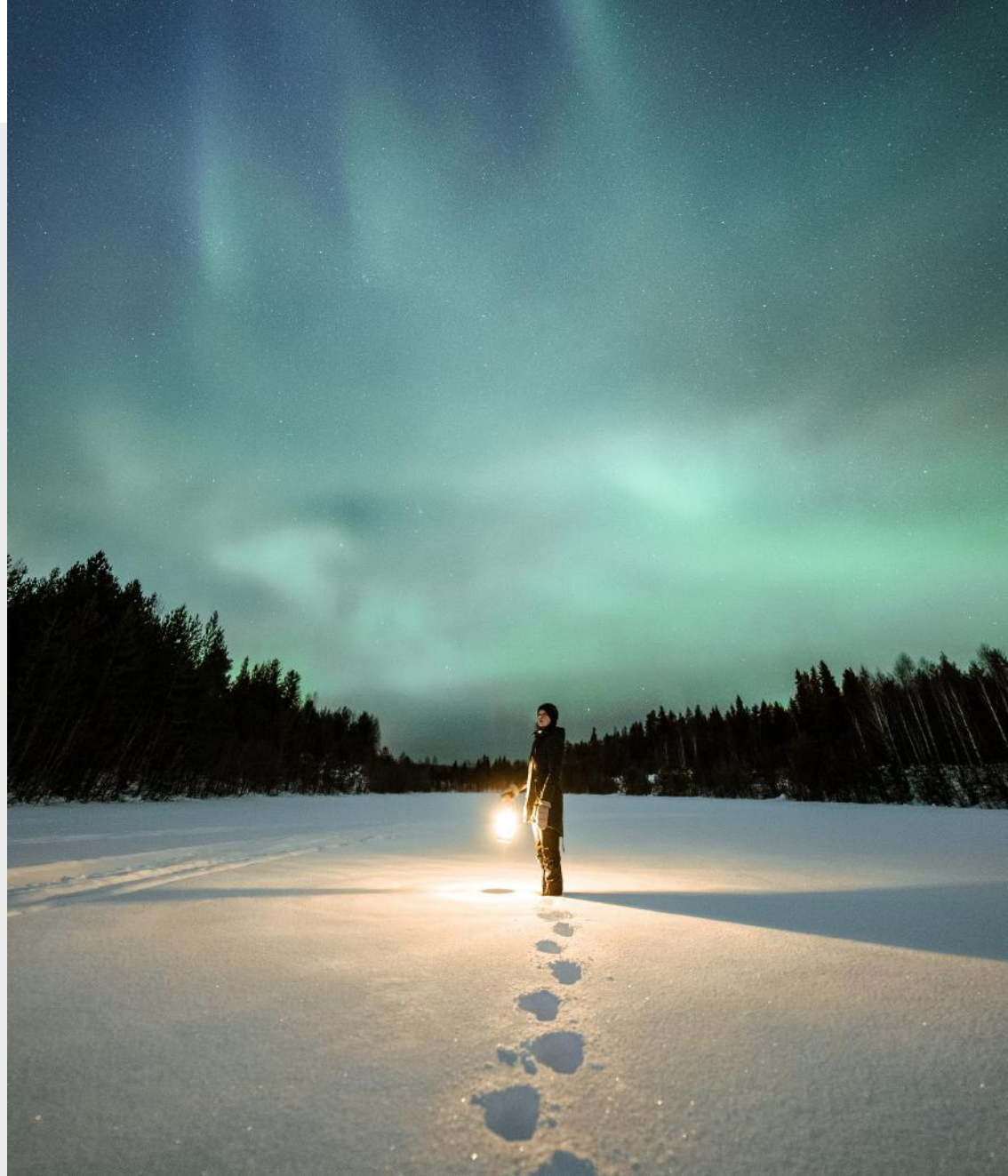
The most important COVID-19 preventive services that accommodations can offer to tourists is to pay extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces. In total, 67% of respondents indicated this is 'quite important' or 'very important'. The second most important measure according to respondents is the disinfection of rental equipment. In total, 68% of respondents thought this is 'quite important' or 'very important'. The third measure that was most important is the availability of hand sanitizer dispensers inside the accommodation.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF A FLEXIBLE REFUND POLICY

The results of this research clearly indicated that individuals that have participated value a flexible refund policy the most while booking an accommodation dpost COVID-19. In total, 44% of respondents indicated that they valued this service as 'very important' and 43% as 'important'. Additionally, convenience during the booking process and clear information regarding how the accommodation implements and follows COVID-19 protocols is also highly valued.





Needs of international tourists

## POST COVID-19



International tourists do have some specific needs that may be a result of the negative implications that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travelling. For instance, a flexible booking policy was the most important factor that respondents take into consideration when booking an accommodation. Furthermore, the survey results show that there respondents have a preference to participate in outdoor activities also post COVID-19.

The most important COVID-19 measures that accommodations could implement according to respondents are: paying extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces, disinfection of rental equipment, and make sure there are enough hand sanitizer dispensers available inside the accommodation. A very high number of respondents (74%) agreed that accommodations should have a ready-made action plan in place that they can immediately implement in the case a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location.



43% of individuals from the UK indicated that they would prefer to stay 4 to 6 days during their holiday post COVID-19. Respondents (61%) from the Netherlands prefer their holiday to be longer, between 7-9 days in length. Additionally, 65% of UK citizens prefer to use accommodations such as hotels post COVID-19 and 61% of the respondents from the Netherlands indicated that they prefer to stay in unique accommodations e.g. aurora hut or igloo post COVID-19 compared to 38% of UK citizens.

Respondents from the UK and the Netherlands value preventive measures such as hand sanitizer dispensers and disinfection of rental equipment the most. It is worth noting that 80% of Dutch respondents and 91% of UK respondents indicated that they find it important that accommodations keep paying extra attention to the disinfection of hotel rooms and public spaces post COVID-19.

HOW COVID-19 HAS CHANGED  
CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

## UK & DUTCH MARKET



# RECOMMENDATIONS - MOVING FORWARD

## COVID-19 ACTION PLAN

Based on the results of this research, a great majority of participants (74%) agreed that accommodations should have a ready-made action plan that they can implement immediately in case a COVID-19 infection occurs. The World Health Organization (WHO) has described some of the factors that can be taken into account while creating such action plan. More information can be found by clicking [here](#). This document (published by WHO) also provides other useful COVID-19 related information specifically for accommodations.

## PROVIDE CLEAR INFORMATION

In this research, respondents indicated that they value clear information regarding cancellation and refunding the most during the booking process post COVID-19. For this reason, accommodations should provide clear information regarding their cancellation and refund policies to potential customers, for example, by clearly indicating these on their website. If done correctly, providing clear information can help to mitigate the risk perception that tourists have regarding a destination. As a result, tourists may feel more safe to travel to Finnish Lapland.

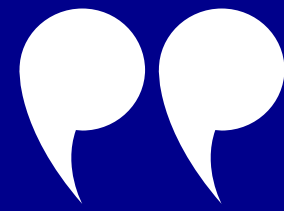
## COVID-19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Respondents in this research indicated that they value accommodations that implement certain COVID-19 preventive measures also post COVID-19. Therefore, it is especially important to keep the following three measures into consideration, also in the future:

1. Pay extra attention to sanitizing hotel rooms and public spaces
2. Disinfection of rental (e.g. ski) equipment
3. Personal hygiene - e.g. usage of hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the accommodation







Accommodations should have a ready-made action plan that can be immediately implemented in the case that a COVID-19 infection occurs at the location.

**74% of international leisure tourists**

Agreed or fully agreed with the above statement.



# PROVIDE CLEAR INFORMATION REGARDING CANCELLATION AND REFUNDING POLICIES

A flexible refund policy was considered to be the most important factor by international leisure tourists when booking an accommodation in the near future (2022-2025). Tourists are more aware of hygiene factors and the possibility to social distance from others within accommodations.

Over half of respondents indicated that they believe it is important that accommodations keep paying attention to COVID-19 preventive measures in the near future.



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