

MARKETING TRAVEL TO MILLENNIALS:

Is Social Media the Ticket?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brooke Dillon is a strategic communicator with over eight years of experience in the arts, education, and entertainment arenas. She received her undergraduate degree in Journalism/Mass Communications - Public Relations from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Currently the Communication Manager for Northrop at the University of Minnesota, Brooke oversees a variety of marketing, public relations, and advertising tasks. Prior to joining the Northrop team, Brooke worked in the University of Minnesota's central public relations office, for the Minnesota State Fair, Cannon River Winery, and spent two years in New York City playing a variety of "blink-and-you'll-miss-them" television and film roles ranging from Jane Fonda's assistant in the "Newsroom" to Leonardo DiCaprio's cousin in "The Wolf of Wall Street."

Brooke's professional passion lies in crisis communications/issues management and travel marketing - the latter being the impetus for this capstone project. When not strategically communicating, Brooke can be found honing her amateur photography skills through Instagram, chasing around her exuberant niece and nephew, or hopping on a plane, laying on a beach or otherwise attempting to cure her insatiable wanderlust.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millennials are a fickle, discerning, and demanding bunch, and as of April 2016, they are also the largest living generation. What does this mean? Well, it means that brands of all types must take note of the best way to target this group of spenders.

With competing companies, third-party booking websites, and mobile apps popping up everyday, travel brands should know how to most efficiently target and effectively influence this adventure-seeking demographic. This research helps to answer the question of whether or not social media is an effective avenue for marketing leisure travel to Millennials and, if so, what content is most engaging and persuasive.

An online survey reiterated that social media usage among 18-34 year olds is very high. Further, it showed that social media assists many Millennials in travel ideation and planning. In terms of advertising and social media, it showed that personal friends and family members' travel-related social posts are overwhelmingly more influential than traditional brand-driven advertising campaigns.

A focus group confirmed many of the survey's findings, and expanded upon the importance of the authenticity, genuineness, unbiased, and overall "realness" of fellow travelers' photos and social media posts. Millennials trust

their friends and family more than traditional marketing initiatives and professional travel advisors, and brands must take note.

Finally, a content analysis of two of Loews Hotels' social media accounts supported that vivid, engaging, un-polished, guest-generated image-based posts are most engaging to followers.

Taking this knowledge, coupled with the fact that Millennials' top criteria for travel decision-making relate to price and location, the following projects concludes with recommendations for brands to build social plans around third party and user-generated content, accompanied by exclusive deals and offerings for followers.

INTRODUCTION

With the economy rebounding at a healthy and consistent rate, and disposable income levels following suit, it's no wonder that leisure travel was a \$650 billion industry in 2015 – and that's within the United States alone. Even more telling is the fact that four out of five domestic trips taken last year were for leisure purposes. If those numbers aren't staggering enough, the United States also welcomed 75 million visitors from overseas last year (ustravel.org).

With the leisure travel industry roaring back to life and the technological and digital voraciousness of the world today, it's important to understand what marketing trends are most successful in attracting and engaging Millennial leisure travelers.

In April of 2016, Millennials surpassed Baby Boomers as being the largest living generation (Pew Research, 2016), and while they are more burdened by financial hardships, eight-out-of-10 say they have enough money to lead the lives they want or expect in the future (Pew Research, 2015).

Not surprisingly, these feelings and thoughts on life translate directly to this demographic's penchant for travel. Studies show that six-in-10 Millennials would rather spend money on experiences than materials things (ustravel.org, 2015). According to a 2015 study by Choice Hotels and the Center for

Generational Kinetics, 33% of Millennials would put off buying their dream house to go on their dream vacation. Perhaps more shocking and indicative of this generation's priorities, the study found that 12% of Millennials reported having quit a job to take a vacation.

From specific airlines to the hundreds of resorts and hotel chains vying for wanderlusting travelers, what channels and initiatives are most effective in marketing travel to this fickle yet important demographic? In this day and age, is digital - as opposed to the more expensive traditional advertising channels - the ticket? More specifically, can all the persuasion a Millennial needs in terms of travel be found on their smartphone in a simple 140-character tweet or a photo on Instagram? *Travel and Leisure Magazine* notes that "our smartphones, which serve as navigators, translators, itinerary managers and taxi summoners, will get us into fully booked restaurants... and our social media profiles will open doors and unlock deals at hotels."

With more competition and shrinking advertising and marketing budgets, leisure travel brands should know how to most effectively digitally target Millennials without obliterating their marketing budgets. The following paper seeks to identify how effective -- in terms of consumer engagement - social media is in marketing leisure travel to 18-34 year olds and further, what specific type of content is most engaging.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following literature review and primary research will attempt to answer the following research questions:

Q1: How effective -- in terms of consumer engagement -- is social media in marketing leisure travel to Millennials (18-34 year olds)?

Q2: What type of social media content is shown to be most engaging among consumers and Millennials, and most likely to positively influence travel purchasing decisions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Object Relations Theory

To begin collecting and distilling literature pertinent to the topic of effective digital travel marketing to Millennials, it is first important to begin with theories related to consumer motivations in general. Consumer Object Relations Theory explains the underlying impetus for, and drivers that influence, consumers' interaction and engagement with objects.

A 1988 study by Terrence Shimp and Thomas Madden formulated a conceptual framework of Consumer Object Relations Theory in relation to Robert Sternberg's 1986 Triangular Theory of Love. This research and its findings lay a general foundation that is helpful when trying to understand consumers' basic motivational premises.

The authors argued that consumer object relations are based on the same psychological processes as the act of loving another person. Both processes begin with liking (motivation), progress into yearning (emotion), and end with commitment/decision-making (cognition). This progression also mirrors the universally recognized 'sales funnel' - traditionally adopted for many marketing purposes - which moves from awareness to interest to decision to action.

Shimp and Madden's conceptual scheme is based on the view that these three common psychological processes (motivation, emotion, and cognition) interact in various combinations to determine the nature of consumers' relations with consumption objects. They go on to say, "consumers form relations with consumption objects (products, brands, stores, etc.), which range from feelings of antipathy, to slight fondness, all the way up to what would, in person-person relations, be love. The consumer-object counterpart to love is similar to the notion of extreme product enthusiasm." Therefore this research and its findings are applicable to marketing brands and products and, in turn, are applicable to the marketing of leisure travel in terms of increasing brand engagement and loyalty, from raising a consumer's awareness of a certain hotel or airline (motivating) to fully making them commit -- and hand their credit card over-- to the brand.

Millennial Travel Habits

Millennials are a generation of international and domestic travelers who yearn for adventure and it is important to look further into the research conducted in the past on their travel habits and behaviors. A 2013 study by Li, Li, and Hudson, entitled "The application of generational theory to tourism consumer behavior; An American perspective," examined the similarities and differences of American residents' international travel attitudes and behaviors

using generational analysis. Among other interesting findings, the authors noted that Millennials – or, “Generation Y” – have long been proclaimed the next big consumer-spending group after Baby Boomers, and that they are more active travelers than their older counterparts. Additionally, the authors go on to conclude that:

“There is a clear generational gap between the older and younger generations in their view towards professional advice. What this means for traditional travel intermediaries is that they are facing the challenge of winning the heart of the younger customers. Particularly, they are feeling the pressure from a new group of competitors – social media, as customers are increasingly relying on other customers’ recommendations and opinions (Li, Li & Hudson, pg. 161).”

With this knowledge, which points to the increasing importance of social media to Millennial travelers, it is important to next look into the literature surrounding the effects of social media as a marketing tool.

Social Media and Marketing

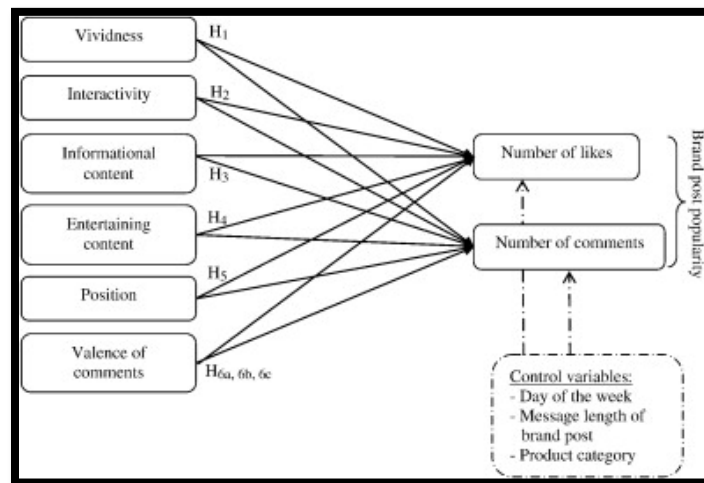
The concept of marketing brands via social media is not a new concept, but published literature is still rare. However, as Bagozzie and Dholakia note in their 2006 research on brand communities – which include social media sites –

consumers who become fans of brands on social media pages tend to be loyal and committed to the company, and are more open to receiving information about the brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

Another very interesting study conducted in 2012 and published in the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* focused on the determinants of brand popularity, including the number of likes and comments a brand social post received, what that said about the brand, and attempted to determine what the main determinants of brand post popularity were (De Vries, Gensler, Leeflang, 2012).

The results showed the determinants that had the most positive impact on a brand's social post popularity in terms of the number of 'likes' and comments were: (1) level of vividness (richness, i.e. photo or video as opposed to text-only), (2) amount of interactivity, (3) informative and/or entertaining content, and (4) a positive valence of user comments. The authors posit that these four attributes in particular have the greatest influence when it comes to a brand's social popularity. They also determined that these factors, paired with others, influence a difference in whether a follower 'likes' or comments on a post, as displayed below:

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (De Vries, Gensler, Leeflang, 2012)



Social Media and Travel Marketing

Focusing more specifically on utilizing social media to market travel, a 2010 study by Xiang and Gretzel pointed to the increasingly important and effective role social networking plays in the tourism industry, noting that “social media constitute(s) a substantial part of search results, indicating that search engines likely direct travelers to social media sites. This study confirms the growing importance of social media in the online tourism domain. It also provides evidence for challenges faced by traditional providers of travel-related information” (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

In terms of social media and travel-specific brand loyalty, a 2015 study on Greek travelers who used social media to make travel decisions or purchases noted that “a person may find out about a brand’s competence through direct usage or word-of-mouth communication - both are applicable

in the case of social media. If a person perceives that other people think that the company behind a social media brand is known to be fair and just, that person may feel secure in acquiring and using the company's brand; this leads to greater trust in that brand" (Christou, 2015). The study established that "a travel social media brand contributes directly to behavioral intention of brand loyalty," and points to a major attribute of social media: an interactive and third-party environment where brand loyalty and trust can flourish.

Additional marketing attributes the study noted social media should nurture and capitalize on are those of brand leaders and deals/discount offerings. The author notes that the tourism industry faces greater pressures as more customers become deal-loyal, and that companies should "make judicious use of key opinion leaders, who are viewed as authorities in specific areas, to speak on behalf of the company's social media brand" and assert their influence within the social media sphere.

Drilling down even further, a 2011 Italian study on social media and tourism websites investigated the effects of specific social media channels on travel consumers and their habits (Milano, Baggio, Piattelli, 2011). First noting that "online social networking websites and their effect on tourism is obviously rather important," the researchers looked at the effects Facebook and Twitter had on the popularity of Italian tourism websites. They posited that Italy's poor

employment of modern technologies could be a reason for a decline in Italy's tourism performance in the last years. The article goes on to encourage Italian tourism enterprises to rapidly adopt more favorable technical stances, and adopt these more advanced digital marketing initiatives.

Finally, a 2014 research study by Sumarian, et al., finitely points to what type of specific social media content is likely most effective. The researchers conclude: "Considering the massive and growing popularity of digital media, the varied use of picture-based social media tools such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter in promoting and marketing tourism destinations has been seen as the current trend in the tourism industry.

As one of the most used picture-based social media applications in the world, Instagram is seen as a trendy tool in digital tourism where snapshots and comments can be shared across all of one's social media channels within seconds and anybody could be 'the tourism expert' in expressing their likes and dislikes towards a place of interest" (Sumarian, et al., 2014).

The authors go on to include the additional impact of adding the specific latitude and longitude to an Instagram post, further informing followers of the destination's finite location. They conclude by saying that "the uniqueness and the art of snapping the picture can create a certain kind of emotion and feeling toward the destination. It's a personalized, instant

postcard. The balance of technology and human touch will lead to the success of the destination marketing and create good destination image for the tourism destination.”

Armed with this information and the fact that more than 65% of the United States’ population uses social networking (Pew Research Center), the following primary research seeks to further investigate how effective social media is in marketing leisure travel to Millennials, and furthermore, and what type of social media content is most engaging. The prediction is that the results will show social media is indeed more effective in engaging Millennial travel consumers as opposed to the more traditional marketing channels, and that third-party, visually-impactful content garners higher engagement, builds more brand loyalty, and has a higher potential to drive purchasing decisions.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Research Group: Online Survey

PREDICTIONS

1 - Millennials take more than one leisure trip a year, and spend a reasonable amount of money in the process, making this demographic one travel marketers must be aggressive in engaging.

2 - Social media is a place where Millennials gather travel ideas and tips.

3 - Third-party, guest-generated marketing and social media content is more effective in influencing ideation and purchasing decisions than traditional travel advertising channels.

METHOD

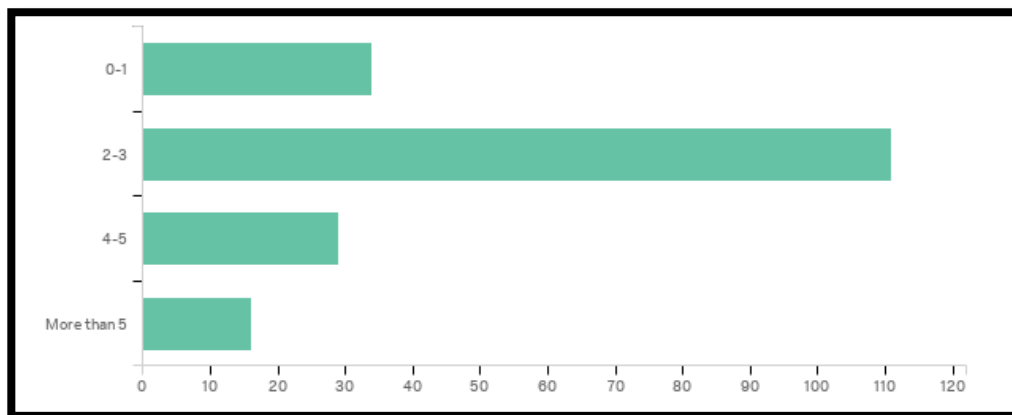
In order to learn more about Millennials' social media usage, travel preferences, travel booking habits, and thoughts on travel marketing initiative effectiveness, a 21-question survey (Appendix A) was distributed through Qualtrics to the primary researcher's personal network. Invitations to take the survey were both emailed to friends and family, and posted to social media accounts, with the request that anyone who takes the survey please forward on to five other Millennials. Respondents were required to be between the ages of 18 and 34. The survey was open from Thursday, July 7 through Tuesday, July 12, 2016. A total of 195 responses were submitted.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Within the “Millennial” age requirement for survey participants, roughly 75% (n=142) were between the ages of 25-34, while 25% were between the ages of 18-24. Full survey results can be found in Appendix B.

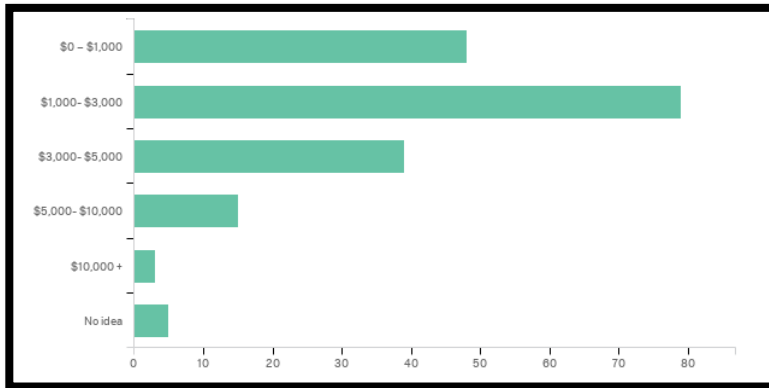
When asked about their leisure travel frequency (trips were defined as including one overnight stay), the majority (n=111) of those surveyed reported they take 2-3 trips a year on average. Sixteen respondents reported they take five or more trips year.

Figure 2: Survey response: “On average, how many leisure (non-business) trips do you take in a year?”



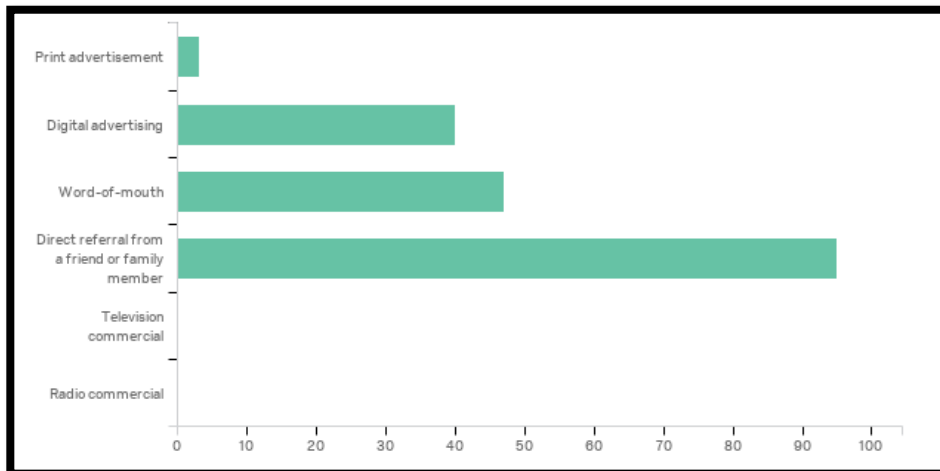
When asked how much, on average, in a year the respondent spends on leisure travel, 42% (n= 79) reported spending between \$1,000-\$3,000 annually, followed by 25% (n= 48) reporting they spend under \$1,000. On the high end, three respondents reported spending more than \$10,000 annually.

Figure 3: Survey response: "On average, how much money do you spend on leisure (non-business) in a year?"



When asked what has been most influential in helping the respondent decide where to travel, stay, and eat, the large majority (n= 95) said that a direct referral from a friend or family member was the most influential in terms of travel planning and decision-making. Word-of-mouth and digital advertising followed close behind with 47 and 40 respondents, respectively. In contrast, not a single respondent said that television commercials or radio advertisements have influenced their travel decisions.

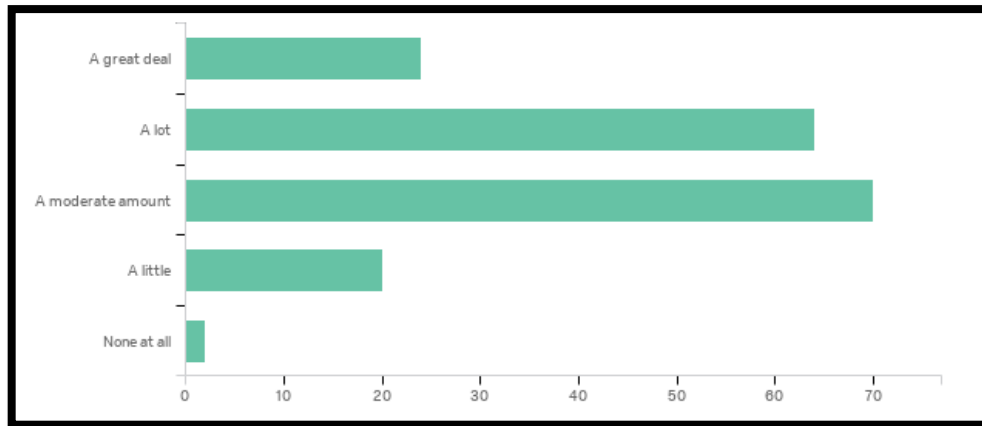
Figure 4: Survey response: "In the past, what has been the most influential in terms of helping you decide where to go/stay/eat, etc., when you're traveling?"



In terms of criteria and travel preferences, travel location, price, and available activities were the most important criteria when deciding on a travel destination. Similarly, when it came to booking accommodations (hotel, motel, lodging, etc.), price, location, and quality were the top criteria.

When asked if the respondent read third-party reviews when booking travel, 128 responded affirmatively, while only 4 respondents said they did not. However, the majority (n=70) said other travelers' reviews only *moderately* influence their travel planning.

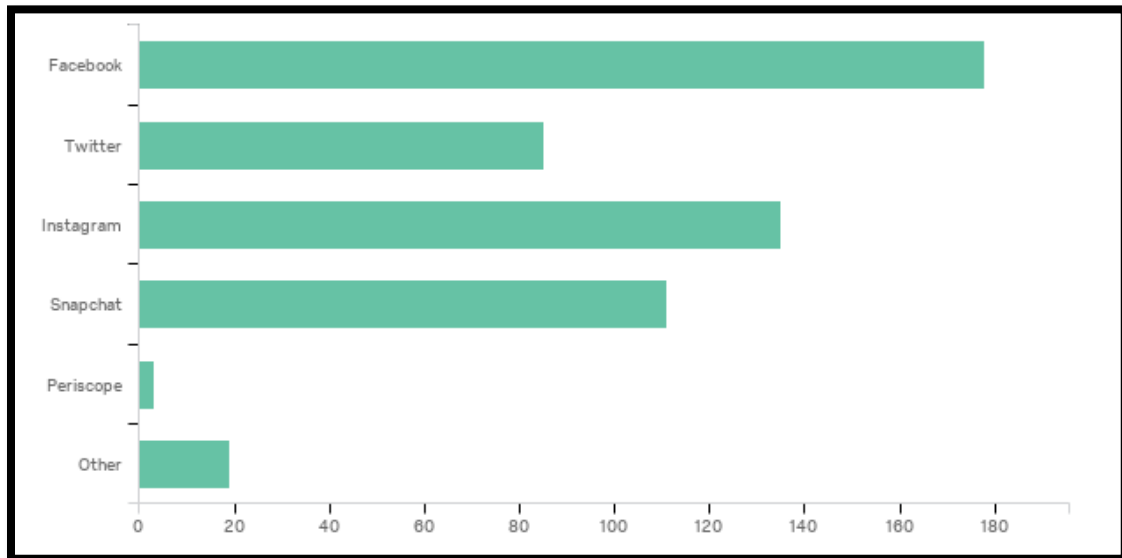
Figure 5: Survey response: "How much would you say other travelers' reviews influence your travel planning?"



The next portion of the survey sought to uncover both the social media usage habits of the sample, as well as information pertaining to travel-specific social media accounts and bloggers. In terms of general usage, 92% (n=165) of those surveyed said they use social media "very often" or "often." Only one

respondent said he/she never uses social media. Of those who used social media, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat were the channels used most frequently by the sample; with Facebook overwhelmingly (n=120) being named the channel the sample used most. Instagram was the second most used channel with 18% (n=33) of responses.

Figure 6: Survey response: "If you use social media, what channels do you use ? (Check all that apply)."



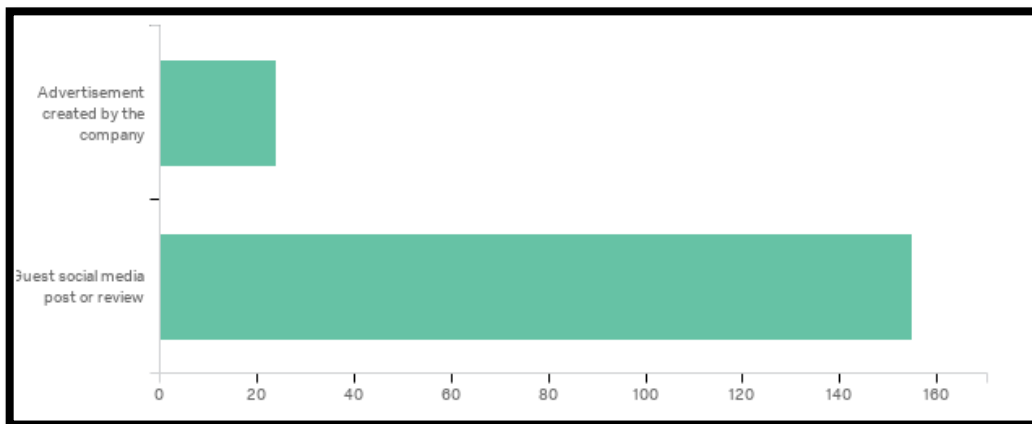
When asked more specifically about travel planning and social media, 101 of those respondents surveyed said they have used social media to help generate travel ideas or make travel plans. Forty-four percent (n=79) of those surveyed said they have booked a trip after seeing a friend or family member visit and post about the destination or hotel on social media. When asked if the

respondent currently has a travel-related app (e.g. Fly Delta app, AirBnB app, etc.) on their smartphone, 91 respondents said they did.

Although only 48 of those surveyed said they follow a travel blogger on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat, when asked why they follow this specific blogger, 23 respondents noted they follow for the beautiful photography. Fifteen of those respondents who follow a travel blogger said they followed for travel ideas, and nine followed to get specific travel tips.

Finally, respondents were asked about their attitudes towards advertisements/social media posts produced directly by a company and about third party or guest-created assets as it relates to trustworthiness. Nearly 87% (n= 155) said that they trust a social media post created by an actual guest more than an advertisement created and posted by the company.

Figure 7: Survey response: "In terms of advertising/marketing, which would you trust more? An advertisement created by the company, or an image posted to social media by an actual guest or third party?"



This survey yielded some very interesting and important results and findings. First, it reinforced the assumption that leisure travel is quite popular among Millennials; and with just over 70% of respondents stating they spend between \$1,000-\$10,000 a year on travel, this group is a demographic the leisure travel industry must be actively and aggressively targeting.

However, the sample showed that the traditional marketing channels of televised commercials and radio advertisements - traditionally the most expensive channels besides print - are not influencing travel-planning decisions. Instead, Millennial travel consumers are looking first to their friends and family members for recommendations, and then are looking to their computers, tablets, and smartphones where digital advertising, including social media, is grabbing their attention.

A second interesting finding was the information regarding reviews. While 97% of respondents said they look at other travelers' reviews before booking travel, only 13% reported that these reviews greatly influenced their travel planning. This points to an interesting view of the importance and persuasive power of other travelers' written words in regards to their feelings and experiences.

Seemingly in contrast to the countless statistics proclaiming Facebook is losing popularity among Millennials, with this sample, Facebook reigns

supreme. Perhaps not surprising is the fact Instagram was the second most popular social media channel. However, the fact that Twitter came in least popular among the “big four” (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat) channels was surprising.

As it pertains to travel, the fact that the majority of respondents said they have used social media to help them plan leisure travel is another significant insight, showing social media does have the power to sell and persuade – even when it comes to traditionally high-priced expenditures like leisure travel. Moreover, the fact that 44% of respondents (n=79) reported having *booked* a hotel or decided on a destination after seeing a friend or family member post about their own experiences or photos on social media shows this outlet has the power to drive consumers even further down the “sales funnel,” and lead consumers directly from decision to action.

The results uncovered when asking why respondents follow travel bloggers was also insightful. The majority follows for the photography and feeling of living vicariously through the blogger, pointing to the effectiveness of even simple pictures in raising awareness and interest in travel destinations and accommodations.

Finally, equally important to the data reinforcing the insight that friends, family, and word-of-mouth is more effective in piquing interest in travel

destinations and accommodations, were the results in reference to trust. With over 86% of respondents stating they trust a fellow traveler's social media post or review more than the hotel or destination's own advertisement, it would be wise for all leisure travel brands to incorporate these types of marketing initiatives into their Millennial-targeting plans.

Among the written submissions answering why respondents trusted third-party and actual guest posts more, the words "accuracy," "unbiased," "transparency," "honesty," and "authenticity" were used numerous times. One respondent noted that a third-party's post has "less bias, different motivation, and is not sales-focused" as compared to an advertisement coming directly from the company. Expanding upon that, another respondent said that a "real person's story is always more interesting and useful than a brand's."

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

One of the major limitations of this survey was the limited number of respondents surveyed. A larger survey pool would result in more specific and generalized results.

Secondly, the short time the survey was open for response collection also limited the potential number of responses analyzed.

With the exception of two or three surveys, all Millennials surveyed were from the United States. Further research could be done, specifically targeting

Millennials from around the world to get a more accurate picture and understanding of Millennial travel habits and attitudes as they pertain to marketing outside of the United States.

Research Study II: Focus Group

PREDICTIONS

- 1** - Participants will report taking at least one leisure trip a year.
- 2** - Social media channels will play a large role in where participants gather travel ideas and tips - especially social media accounts of family members and personal friends.
- 3** - Among the examples of travel advertising and social posts, the photos posted by real travelers will be more engaging and effective in piquing interest in the participants than those images created by the hotels/destinations and marketed through traditional channels.

METHOD

The goal of this focus group was to further build upon the information gained in the online survey, and expand upon the understanding of Millennial's travel planning habits, usage of social media as a tool for travel ideation, and their attitudes on different types of travel marketing. Eight Millennials ranging in age from 20 to 34 years old were invited to participate in the hour-long focus group via email. All eight were able to attend.

The focus group was held on Tuesday, July 12 at noon in Room 106 of Northrop at the University of Minnesota. Participants were provided with

information indicating the purpose of the study, the procedures, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study.

The Focus Group Discussion Guide (Appendix C) was used to guide the conversation. The first half of the discussion was centered on basic social media and travel planning-related questions. The second half of the focus group centered on specific images of hotels and social media posts that were provided to each participant.

The focus group lasted approximately one hour, with audio being recorded by the moderator's iPhone. The transcript (Appendix D) was analyzed to establish insights.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The initial questions posed to the group yielded answers that were consistent with the survey findings. First, all eight respondents said they take at least two to three leisure trips a year, approximately half of which are to locations outside of the United States. One participant said he takes six to seven leisure trips a year.

Next, the group was asked why they travel. This question was posed to get more of a sense why travel was important to this group. Responses included: "To get away," "to see the world," "to learn and experience things I

can't here at home," among others. One participant noted that he feels suffocated if he hasn't traveled somewhere in a while.

Planning and booking travel

Every participant noted that the first step they take in their travel planning process is asking friends and family members for suggestions on possible destinations, accommodations, restaurants, and activities. Two participants said they first pick a travel destination, and then use their Facebook followers as a resource, asking if any friends have been to a certain destination and, if so, what hotels or activities that friend would recommend. One participant and her husband take that information and then do further, more in-depth Internet research based on the recommendations they receive.

While the large majority said they gather ideas from seeing their friends' or family members' social media posts, five participants said they had been motivated to do further research on destinations and specific hotels and resorts after seeing their friends' travel photos. One respondent said, "When I see my friends posting gorgeous photos on Facebook and I see that they can afford to go to Vegas, that makes me want to go, too." Moreover, she continued to say that when she sees friends' vacation photos she wants to do what they did on vacation because she knows there is little risk since a friend went and enjoyed herself.

Interestingly, many of the participants noted that seeing friends' and family members' travel photos on social media instilled a feeling of jealousy in them, motivating them to start planning a trip of their own. One participant said the fear of missing out on what appeared to be a great time made her book an impromptu trip to Las Vegas with some friends.

In terms of travel booking habits, all participants said they booked travel online, with the majority using third-party sites such as Orbitz, Kayak, or AirBnb to book flights and accommodations. However, one participant said he only books his hotels rooms directly through the hotel's official website, as he feels the reservation is more secure, the hotel staff treats him better, and he has more of a chance of being offered a room upgrade.

Next, the group was asked if other travelers' (not personally known by the participant) reviews of destinations, airlines, or hotels influenced their travel decisions. The majority of respondents said reviews of hotels moderately influenced their accommodation decisions, but that traveler reviews of airlines did not. The primary criteria for them when booking flights was cost, and the group agreed that regardless of an airline's reputation, they would still book a flight on a notoriously subpar airline such as Spirit if it offered the best airfares.

Attitudes towards advertisements/social media posts

For the second half of the focus group, images of hotel and destination advertisements and social media posts were distributed to get an idea of what type of content was considered to be most engaging and influential to the participants.

The first image was a billboard ad for the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas. The advertising campaign was also featured in the print publications, and in digital advertising.

Figure 8: 2016 Cosmopolitan Hotel - Las Vegas billboard ad

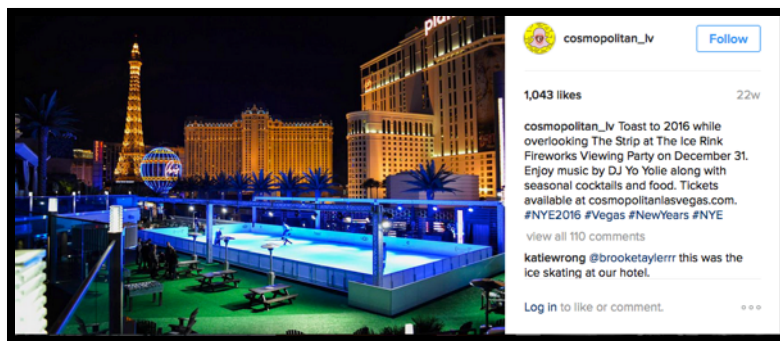


When asked about the participants' thoughts on the image and messaging, the responses ranged from "This is off-putting. This hotel looks like it's for rich people," to "Too staged. It looks completely fake," to "My husband worked on this campaign at his advertising agency. He hated it. He didn't even know what it meant." The overall reception of the ad was not positive, nor did it

make any of the participants want to research this hotel further, let alone book a room there. One member of the group said, "It feels very hetero-centered, so as a gay man, it's not at all for me. It has nothing to do with my life. "

Next the participants were shown a photo posted by the Cosmopolitan Hotel on their Instagram account.

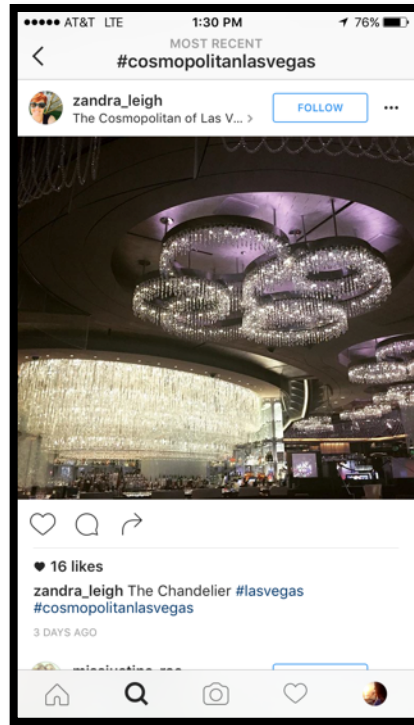
Figure 9: 2016 Cosmopolitan Hotel - Las Vegas Instagram post, April 2016



The participants responded more positively to this photo, noting it looked more "dreamy" than the previous advertisement and looks more like how they would expect Las Vegas to look and feel like. However, one participant remarked that the post's caption was far too long and un-engaging.

The group was then presented with an Instagram post of the Cosmopolitan Hotel bar. The author of the post was unknown to the participants.

Figure 10: 2016 Cosmopolitan Hotel - Las Vegas Instagram post by a hotel guest unknown to the participants



When asked what the group’s thoughts on this post was, the consensus was that the photo didn’t interest the group, as they didn’t know or have a connection to the person posting it.

Finally, the group was presented with an Instagram photo of the Cosmopolitan Hotel bar that was taken by the focus group moderator.

Figure 11: 2016 Cosmopolitan Hotel - Las Vegas Instagram post by a hotel guest known to the participants



The group agreed that this photo was more interesting than the photo by the previous photo by the unknown author in that since they knew the person who took this photo, they felt more connected and invested. One respondent noted that she follows this user's account and has been interested in her posts in the past, so she would naturally pay more attention to this photo and be interested in where it was taken. Another participant noted she liked the fun, short, and engaging caption with the champagne bottle emoji, and that the photo made her interested in drinking champagne at this specific bar.

Finally, the participants were asked to choose which photo was most engaging and most likely to pique their interest in the hotel and potentially lead them to researching the Cosmopolitan Hotel as a possible accommodation if they were to plan a trip to Las Vegas. The consensus was that the Instagram photo posted by the person they knew was the most influential because it made the hotel look accessible and more personal.

It was also noted by more than one member of the focus group that they rarely, if ever, follow actual brands on Facebook or Instagram. The participants said they don't want to be "sold to" on these channels, and they only rarely follow travel-related brands, or any brands for that matter, if they are offered discounts or deals.

Next, the group was given two photos used to advertise the Papagayo Four Seasons resort in Costa Rica. The first image was a screen shot taken from the resort's official webpage, while the other was an Instagram photo taken by a couple that stayed at the resort.

Figure 12: 2016 Papagayo Four Seasons resort homepage image

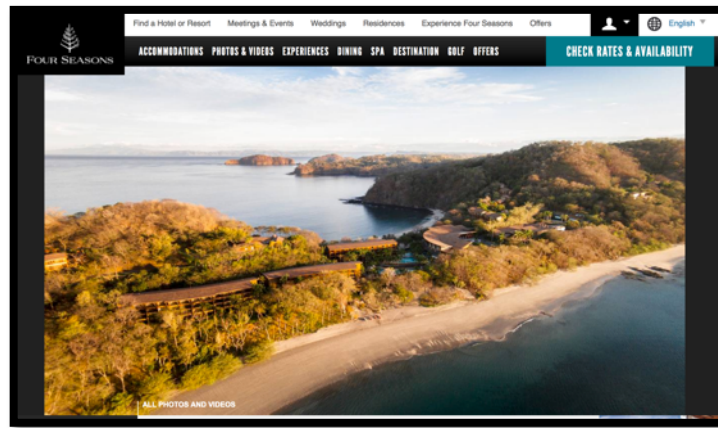


Figure 13: April 2016 Instagram post by travelers at the Papagayo Four Seasons resort



Similarly to the Cosmopolitan Hotel advertisements and social media posts, the focus group respondents reported the Instagram photo being more

engaging and influential because of the “realness” the people brought to the location. One respondent said that, “With the webpage photo, I already assume I can’t afford to stay there because I see the Four Seasons logo. It feels very bourgeoisie and makes me feel like I don’t belong. But in the Instagram post, these people look normal and look like me, so maybe I can afford it.”

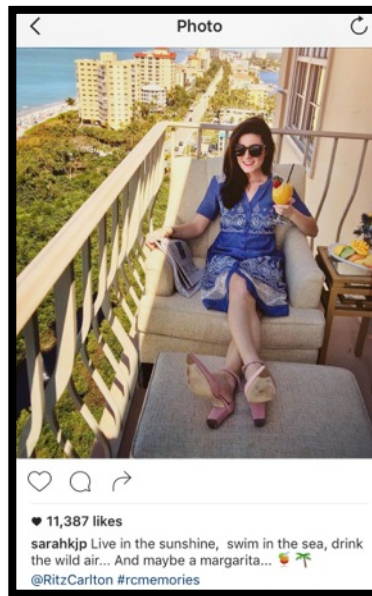
Another participant said, “This photo looks more welcoming and these people look like they could be my friends.”

Finally, the participants were presented with a print advertisement for the Ritz Carlton - Naples and an Instagram post also featuring the Ritz Carlton- Naples taken by an actual guest.

Figure 14: Ritz Carlton- Naples print ad



Figure 15: Ritz Carlton- Naples Instagram post by a traveler



In response to the print advertisement, the participants agreed it did little to increase their interest or motivation in learning more about the hotel, mainly because the hotel, location, and property were not even featured in the ad. One participant said the ad made the hotel look too expensive and pretentious for him. Another participant said that, like the Four Seasons website, he sees the name of the resort and already thinks it's too expensive so he would never consider staying there.

Conversely, the Instagram photo was "more relatable and real" to the participants. They noted they would be interested in learning more about the hotel and noted this photo made it seem "more attainable." The focus group

ended, interestingly, with one participant remarking: "I honestly don't know why people do print ads anymore."

This focus group was extremely informative for many reasons. It was concluded that these Millennials' travel ideation relies heavily on their social media channels, travel reviews by strangers only influence decision-making moderately and only for specific travel aspects (hotels more than airline), and that the participants strongly preferred real, relatable photos and advertisements over the more staged, polished photos seen in traditional marketing. All predictions were affirmed.

One of the most interesting insights gained was when a participant described how she views Instagram. Like the social media and travel-related literature noted, Instagram is like a depository of travel memories. The participant noted she looks at Instagram as her visual travel journal. She said that she has never sent or received an actual postcard in her life, but does think as travel-focused Instagram posts as instant postcards, offering her followers an update on where she's going and where she's been.

Another insight gained was the absolute importance of authenticity to this discerning generation. No longer are Millennials swayed by - or even attracted to - advertisements that are too curated or staged. As illustrated by this group's answers, they want real, trustworthy, and honest opinions on travel

from people they know. However, even that isn't what seals the deal on their travel-making decisions. Millennials are also after a good deal, so brands would be remiss to not offer exclusive discounts.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

As in all focus groups, the results cannot be generalized. Another limitation of this study is the possibility that participants did not actually express their true thoughts or were perhaps influenced by other, more vocal members of the group, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate results. Additionally, all members of the group worked for the same company, which could also have produced skewed results or inherent biases.

Moreover, the fact that the Instagram photo by the person familiar to the group was taken by the focus group facilitator could have swayed the results.

Additional research could look into the spending habits of these Millennials, and not just at their basic travel and social media habits to more specifically determine how effective certain advertising and social media posts are.

Research Study III: Content Analysis

PREDICTIONS

- 1** - Instagram sees much higher levels of engagement than Twitter.
- 2** - Image-driven posts are more engaging than static, text-based posts.
- 3** - Third-party content receives more engagement than content produced directly by a company (Loews Hotels).

METHOD

A content analysis of two of Loews Hotels' social media channels was employed on May 1. The goal of this content analysis was to see what type of content was being used, how engaged followers were, and what the overall response to the different content types were. Engagement levels of followers will help answer the original research questions of how effective social media is in marketing travel and what type of content is most engaging.

This specific hotel and resort brand, along with these two specific social channels, were chosen because Loews Hotels is very active on social media, has employed several social media campaigns - including one currently running called "Travel for Real" which leverages user-generated content -- and uses a good variety of content on its social channels.

One hundred of the brand's most recent content pieces on Twitter and Instagram were analyzed. For Twitter, the most recent 100 pieces of content

spanned the time period of April 27 through May 1. For Instagram, the most recent 100 pieces of content spanned the time period of March 23 through May 1. Loews Hotels' Twitter feed had 40,000 followers on the day of the analysis, and the brand's Instagram had 12,600 followers.

From this content analysis I used the following questions as criteria in my coding of each piece of content (Coding sheet: Appendix E) 1) What social platform was this content published on? 2) What type of content constitutes this post? 3) What is the primary subject/theme of the post? 4) Is the Loews Hotels' logo or name visible in the post itself? 5) Who is the original author of the post's content? 6) Is this post a part of the "Travel for Real" photo campaign? 7) How many 'likes' does the post have? 8) How many comments does the post have? 9) What is the overall tone of the comments?

Three separate coders analyzed each piece of content, input numerical counts into Qualtrics, and contributed to the final findings (Appendix E).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of the content analysis were interesting and bit surprising. First, when looking specifically at the findings resulting from analysis of the Twitter content, it was surprising to see how much content is published on the platform in a single day. With 100 posts spanning April 27 through May 1, Loews is publishing nearly 20 tweets a day. In terms of engagement, the vast

majority (97%) of posts had 0-20 likes, with only four posts garnering engagement in the form of comments.

In terms of content, the majority (80%) was a photo accompanied by some form of descriptive text. Twelve of the posts were text-only, four posts were videos, and three posts were determined to fall into the "other" category.

As for the theme or subject used in the posts, 32% of the posts focused on various aspects of the city in which Loews has properties. These posts have little or nothing to do with the actual resort, but rather give ideas of what local landmarks are popular, what restaurants and bars are trendy, and moreover give an overview of the travel "must dos" when visiting each city.

Next, content featuring the actual hotel property was used 26% of the time, and posts featuring food or drink -- either provided by a restaurant in the hotel, or one in the city -- rounded out the top three most popular types of content published to the Loews Hotels Twitter account. Only one post offered a deal or discount.

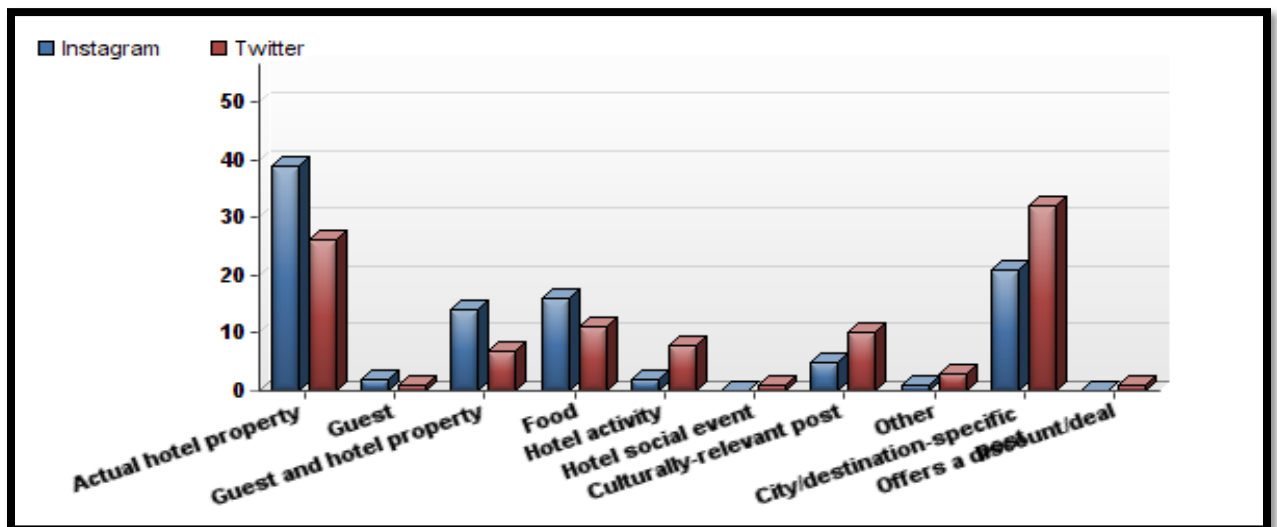
Like Twitter, the content published on Loews Hotel's Instagram account was overwhelmingly photo-based (96% of posts), with videos constituting the final 4% of content. However, unlike the hotel's Twitter account, only three Instagram posts were published in an average day. Also unlike the Twitter posts, Loews' Instagram saw extraordinarily high follower engagement. Forty-

five percent of Instagram posts received between 101-150 likes, with 16 posts receiving over 200 likes, and, on the opposite end of the spectrum, no posts receiving the lowest ranked number of likes (0-20).

Additionally, nearly all of the Instagram posts had comments, and with the exception of one where the guest was complaining about the food, they were all positive in nature.

In regards to content theme and subject, 39% of the content featured the actual hotel property, 21% featured city/destination-specific content, 16% featured food, 14% of the content featured both the guest and the hotel property, and 5% featured culturally relevant content. The full breakdown is presented below:

Figure 16: Content Analysis: What is the primary subject of the content?"

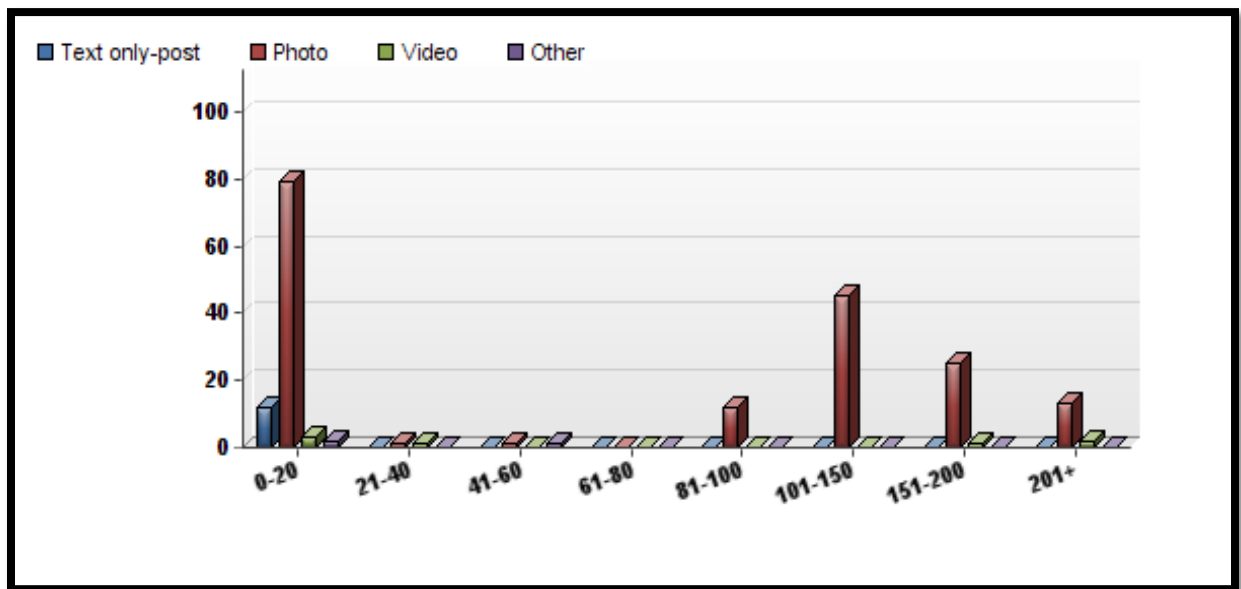


The majority of the content (85%) was authored by guests and re-posted by Loews. In contrast, the Twitter content was authored primarily by Loews Hotels, and only 23% was guest- or third party-generated.

With both the Twitter content and Instagram content, the “Travel for Real” campaign (which uses only guest-generated content) was not a content priority. The campaign was featured in the content only 28% of the time on Instagram, and 9% of the time on Twitter.

In terms of what content type was overall most popular in terms of number of likes and comments, content that was third-party generated and included a photo received the most engagement across the board, as illustrated below:

Figure 17: Content Analysis: “How many ‘likes’ does this post have?”



The results supported the prediction that social media can be effective in marketing to, and engaging, travel consumers. The results also supported the prediction that content of a pictorial nature garnered the most engagement.

One surprising result was the large disparity in engagement between the Instagram feed and the Twitter feed. With both channels featuring a large majority of pictorial content, it was assumed that both channels would show equivalent levels of engagement in the form of both likes and comments. However, it is clear that Instagram is the favored social media channel between the two platforms for Loews Hotels. There could be many reasons for this disparity, including the amount of posts published to each site each day, the posts' subject content, or the nature of the post itself, be it pictorial, text-only, or something altogether different. It could also be due to the different demographics each site has in terms of followers. These results show that Loews Hotels should re-evaluate their Twitter strategy, and perhaps do some research to determine the demographics of each site and what the followers are hoping to acquire from following the specific platform in order to improve the efficiency of the social site.

The results also show that third-party generated content is most engaging. This supports the research mentioned above by Christou (2015) in

that third-party endorsements, and other visitors proclaiming their feelings about the brand through a picture or post, is effective in influencing consumers and building brand loyalty and awareness. I would recommend that Loews Hotels more consistently utilize its "Travel for Real" campaign, which shares its guests' original photos and essentially turns its own visitors into brand ambassadors. This is both extremely cost-effective and transparent in the fact the photos are not enhanced, edited, or altered to change the hotel's reality.

Since social media is a very low-cost platform for users and brands, it provides a perfect opportunity to implement Shimp and Madden's (1988) basic consumer-object relations theory of getting a consumer to first like and get to know the brand through viewing photos. Next, the consumer may "like" or comment, showing a motivation to interact with the brand. By further throwing in an exclusive deal for the follower, or utilizing a well-known brand ambassador to represent the brand on social media, the consumer will be more greatly influenced to take the final step of commitment.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The major limitation of this study in regards to studying the effectiveness of social media in marketing travel to Millennials was that it was impossible to separate the Millennial followers from the other demographics that follow

Loews Hotels' social media accounts. Therefore, the results are skewed to the behaviors of the general follower pool.

The second limitation was that it only addressed two of the countless channels of social media. Facebook, Snapchat, Meerkat and other platforms could all present different results in terms of effectiveness and engagement levels. The third is that it only supports 'effectiveness' in terms of engagement, not actual transactions or sales.

This study paves the way for many avenues of future research. Important follow-up research would include what specific channels of social media are most effective (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, etc.) in marketing travel, how effective leveraging a specific brand ambassador -- whether that be a well-known travel blogger or celebrity -- would be for the brand, and whether social media marketing effectiveness is different between travel price points (backpacking, mid-range, luxury, etc.), among others.

Perhaps most importantly, further research should be conducted to determine whether this social media engagement actually leads to sales. Click-through rates, transactions, and ROI should all be investigated further. While the number of followers and engagement a brand has is important, at the end of the day, the buck stops with the actual sales figures.

CONCLUSION

At one point in time, social media was considered by many to be a fad -- a flash-in-the-pan technological creation that would soon go the way of the fax machine -- making way for the latest and greatest in digital advancements. However, as indicated by this research and scores more, social media is perhaps the one consistent social commonality among Millennials. While discerning, demanding, and notoriously fickle, Millennials grew up with social media, and as of now, there is no indication this generation is ready to abandon its social accounts.

More than any single print publication, television show, radio program, outdoor advertisement, or publicity event, social media is the unrivaled channel in reaching the largest generation.

As supported by the online survey and focus group results, social media is very effective in marketing travel to Millennials - if done in the correct way. Millennials use social media channels for many different reasons, but two things are guaranteed: 1) They are using social media to be informed and entertained, and 2) They are using social media to keep up with people they personally know. This information has great implications for travel marketers as they attempt to win over this generation, and their disposable incomes.

This information is also incredibly valuable to the traditionally older, luxury brands that will soon see their current clientele aging and taking leisure trips less often. Brands like the Ritz Carlton and Four Seasons must ensure they have lively, engaging, and, perhaps most importantly, accessible and welcoming social media profiles in order to capture this next generation of travelers.

As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. This couldn't be truer, especially in regard to marketing leisure travel to Millennials. In this hyper-digital world characterized by countless brands vying for the attention of attention spans that are at an all-time low, it's paramount that travel brands adopt strong digital and social marketing strategies. However, it is also important to note that not all social media content is equal. Millennials want to see what their friends and family members are doing in regards to travel. They want that immediate, built-in trust and assurance of quality that comes with a friend posting a beautiful vacation picture at the hotel he/she is staying. They want a realistic look into what they will be getting when they click "purchase" on Orbitz.com or AirBnb.com.

More so, the focus group results showed jealousy to be a large motivator to Millennials. The fear of missing out, the need to be competitive, or

seeing a friend take an amazing trip all helps travel brands move these consumers from the top of the sales funnel into action and conversion.

The survey results show that price is one of the top criteria for making travel-related decisions. In addition to leveraging image-driven, third-party social media content, brands must also be willing to offer exclusive and aggressive deals, discounts, and perks in order to fully capture a Millennial's attention and loyalty.

Traditional glossy photo shoots and catchy agency-generated hotel taglines do not sway Millennials. In fact, many times they are completely off-putting to Millennials – giving an air of superiority, exclusiveness, pretension, and inauthenticity.

Print and broadcast advertising is expensive, and as Xiang and Gretzel (2010) noted in their research, many traditional providers (like travel agents) face challenges of travel-related information – meaning it's digital and social marketing's time to shine.

Social media offers brands the opportunity not only to push their information to followers, but also to leverage their guests' own content, providing more realistic and relatable marketing assets to discerning Millennials.

Facebook and Instagram are essentially geographically boundless depositories of instant postcards and function as real-time travel journals. These instant snapshots -- complete with captions which amount to mini reviews -- have the potential to reach thousand of followers in seconds. Travel brands must be aggressive in leveraging this low-cost, highly influential marketing platform. These brands must get in front of Millennials with beautiful, vivid, envy-inducing, and motivating photos, start a conversation with followers, personalize their brand, allow brand loyalty to flourish, and then seal with deal with a discount or exclusive perk. After that, brands can buckle up and enjoy the ride.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In making recommendations for how Loews Hotels -- and travel brands' social media in general -- can better utilize their social accounts to more deeply and influentially engage Millennials, I would first recommend an overhaul of their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts, redefining the specific, unique purpose for each account. As the online survey and focus group results show, more respondents use Facebook than any other social media channel, so Facebook is still important. This is where Millennials go to catch up with their friends, see what family members are up to, and to gather travel-making ideas. Since Millennials want travel recommendations from people they personally know - and are more likely to make purchasing decisions directly after getting a recommendation from a friend or family member - Loews Facebook page should be used as a "travel journal" from their guests' point-of-view.

The majority (70%) of the content should be user-generated, un-retouched, realistic, vivid, and genuine photos with short, snappy captions. Content directly created and published by the hotel should constitute about 30% of the page's content. Loews should also pick some of the best third-party content its guests are tagging and posting, and turn these into Facebook ads that are targeted to that guests' personal Facebook network. An ad that is

served to a guest's friends saying "Your friend (insert first name) just posted this at Loews Ventana Resort!" should be accompanied by an exclusive offer, available for only a short time. This third-party generated, flash sale-inclusive marketing initiative would satisfy the major Millennial travel influencers. A personal friend posted the picture, adding to credibility and authenticity, and the hotel offered them a deal.

Similarly, the large majority (90%) of Loews Hotel's Instagram content should be guest-generated. By encouraging guests to tag friends and include searchable hashtags in their posts, Loews would exponentially increase the number of Instagram users who would see this content. Even holding a weekly drawing for guests that tag friends and use hashtags would be a low-cost incentive to spread the images and brand name of Loews Hotels throughout the social sphere. Flash sales should also be offered via Instagram.

Loews Hotels' Twitter feed does not currently see high levels of engagement. Since the survey showed that many Millennials use Twitter for checking up on news and current events, and many do not follow travel brands on this platform, less attention and fewer resources should be put into maintaining a robust Twitter presence. Currently, Loews Hotels offers Twitter followers the ability to book rooms directly through the platform. I think this a

great idea, and would recommend the hotel continue using Twitter in this conversion and customer service-based way.

A suggested social media content plan (for Facebook and Instagram) and consumer journey following both Shimp and Madden's (1988) Consumer Object Relations Model and the traditional sales funnel can be found on page 56.

In recommending more broad and over-arching digital strategies, I would recommend pushing a solid chunk of travel brand marketing budgets to leveraging less-contrived, more guest-generated marketing campaigns into the digital sphere. Targeting online, digital ads to Millennials on social media platforms, and throughout the Internet, will help to increase brand awareness.

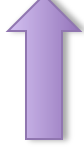
Furthermore, marketing flash sales and "limited-time only" discounts and perks -- especially on major digital sale days such Cyber Monday -- will help further grab the attention of Millennials.

LOEWS HOTELS' CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

SOCIAL MEDIA



= Shimp & Madden's Consumer Object Relations Model (1988)



= Tradition Sales Funnel

Desired Customer Mindset:

"That picture is so pretty! I wonder where that is." >>

"Someone I know had a great time. I want to go there, too!" >>

"They're offering me an exclusive deal! How can I turn it down?"

LIKING (Motivation)

YEARNING (Emotion)

DECISION-MAKING (Cognition)

AWARENESS

INTEREST

DECISION

ACTION

FACEBOOK

- * Incentivize Loews' guests to post their vacation photos to Loews' FB page, using basic, generic, searchable travel hashtags and tagging the hotel.
- * Encourage guests to post their photos to their personal accounts as well.

- * Next, have Loews' account pick photos posted by individuals with the largest followings to feature. Ask this Facebook user to tag 10 friends she'd like to send a "Facebook postcard" to essentially say, "Wish you were here! I'm having the best time at Loews!"

- * Automatically message each of the people the Facebook user tags, saying something to the extent of "Your friend (insert name) thinks you need a vacation! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and you'll be entered to win 3-night stay at any of our hotels!"

- * Award the winner their three-night stay, and post to Loews' FB account announcing the winner(s) and the hotel they chose to stay at. Encourage other followers to recommend their friends follow Loews' on social media channels for their change to win, take advantage of exclusive flash sales, etc.

- * Invite an up-and-coming travel blogger who has a following of 2,000+ followers to visit a Loews Hotel for a weekend, and post 4-5 envy-inducing pictures of the property, food, accommodations and available activities to their personal account.

- * Have this brand ambassador incorporate a mix of 10+ generic and specific travel-related hashtags and location markers into each post. Ask them to keep the captions short, snappy, and fun. The hashtags will make the photo searchable and viewable to the entire Instagram community.

- * Have the brand ambassador promo a special flash-sale/deal that will be made available ONLY to those people who like this picture, follow Loews' Hotels on Instagram, and visit the website to sign up for Loews' E-newsletter.

- * Offer an exclusive flash sale/discount/deal offer to those followers on Loews' Instagram account and to those who are new additions to the E-newsletter list. Limit the time the offer is available to 5 hours after the post is published/the e-newsletter offer is opened.

INSTAGRAM

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Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179-188.
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APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1: What is your age?

Q2: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q3: Do you have kids?

- Yes
- No
- If pets count, then yes

Q4: On average, how many leisure (non-business) trips do you take in a year?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 5+

Q5: On average, how much money do you spend on leisure travel in a year?

- \$500 - \$1,000
- 1,000- \$3,000
- \$3,000- \$5,000
- \$5,000- \$10,000
- \$10,000 +

Q6: In the past, what has been the most influential in terms of helping you decide where to go/stay/eat, etc. when you're traveling?

- Print advertisement
- Digital advertising
- Word-of-mouth
- Direct referral from a friend or family member
- Television commercial
- Radio commercial

Q7: How do you book the majority of your airline, hotel, and car reservations when traveling?

- In person (with a travel agent, etc.)
- Over the phone
- Online
 - Desktop computer
 - Mobile device

Q8: When booking an airline ticket, do you usually book directly with the airline, or through a third-party site like Orbitz, Kayak, Expedia, etc.

- Directly with the airline
- Through a third-party site
- It depends.

Why?

Q9: When booking a hotel, do you usually book directly with the hotel, or through a third-party site like Orbitz, Hotwire.com, Expedia, etc.

- Directly with the hotel
- Through a third-party site
- It depends.

Why?

Q10: What are your top three criteria when picking a travel destination?

- Weather
- Activities available
- Price
- Reviews
- Food
- Quality and availability of accommodations

Q11: What are your top three criteria when booking a hotel or lodging?

- Price
- Review
- Photos
- Location
- Safety

Q12: When booking traveling, do you read other traveler's reviews of the locations and/or accommodations?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

If yes, do you find yourself more trusting of the actual written review, or the traveler's photos?

Q13: Do you ever used social media to help you generate travel ideas or make travel plans?

- Yes
- No

Q14: Have you ever participated in a travel-related social media contest (for example, uploading a photo to Instagram with a specific hashtag to be entered into a drawing or contest)?

- Yes
- No

Q15: Do you currently have a travel-related app on your phone?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what app(s) is it?

Q16: Have you ever booked a trip to a destination or hotel after seeing one of your friends visit and post about it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat?

- Yes
- No

Q17: Do you follow any travel bloggers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat?

- Yes
- No

Q18: Do you follow any travel-related social media accounts (ie: specific hotels, airlines, etc.)?

- Yes

- No

If yes, why do you follow the account? What do you hope to get from it?

Q19: Have you ever been interested in learning more about a destination, hotel, or airline after seeing a celebrity post about it on social media?

- Yes

- No

Q20: If you were to book a last-minute trip for this up-coming weekend, what factor would MOST influence where you went and/or stayed?

- Location

- Available accommodations

- Price

- If a deal or discount was offered

- Additional value-added incentive (free meal, etc.)

Q21: In terms of advertising, which would you trust more? An advertisement created by the company, or an image posted to social media by an actual guest?

- Hotel ad

- Guest social media post

Why?

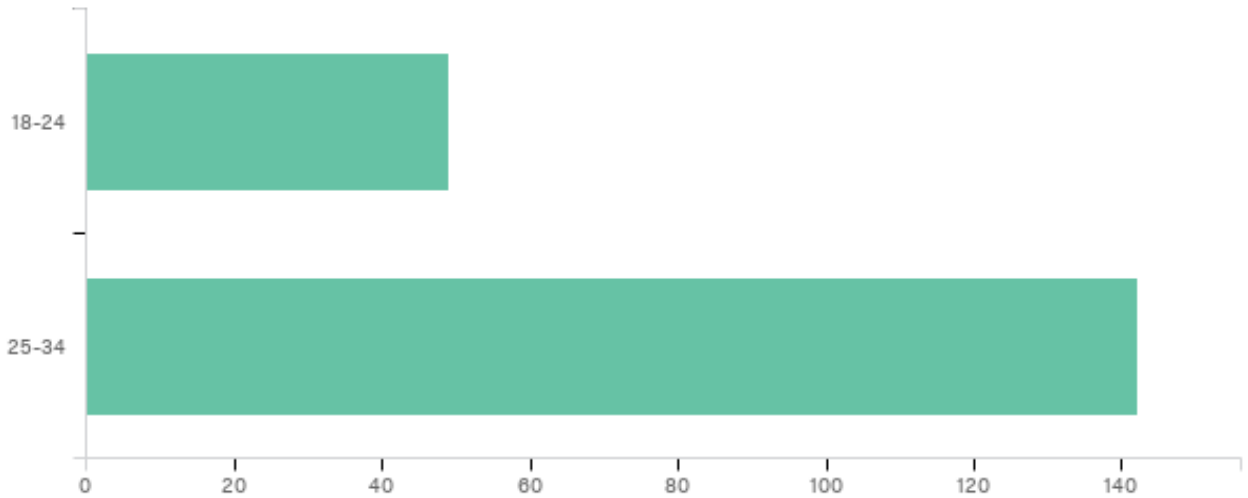
APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY REPORT

Default Report

Marketing Travel to Millennials: What's the ticket?

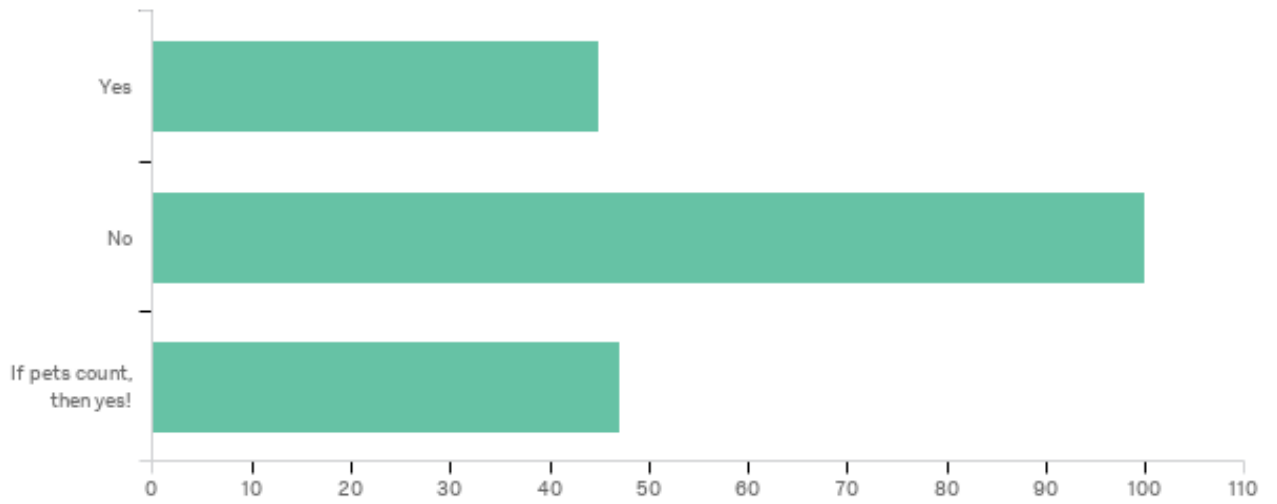
July 12th 2016, 6:16 pm CDT

Q1 - What is your age?



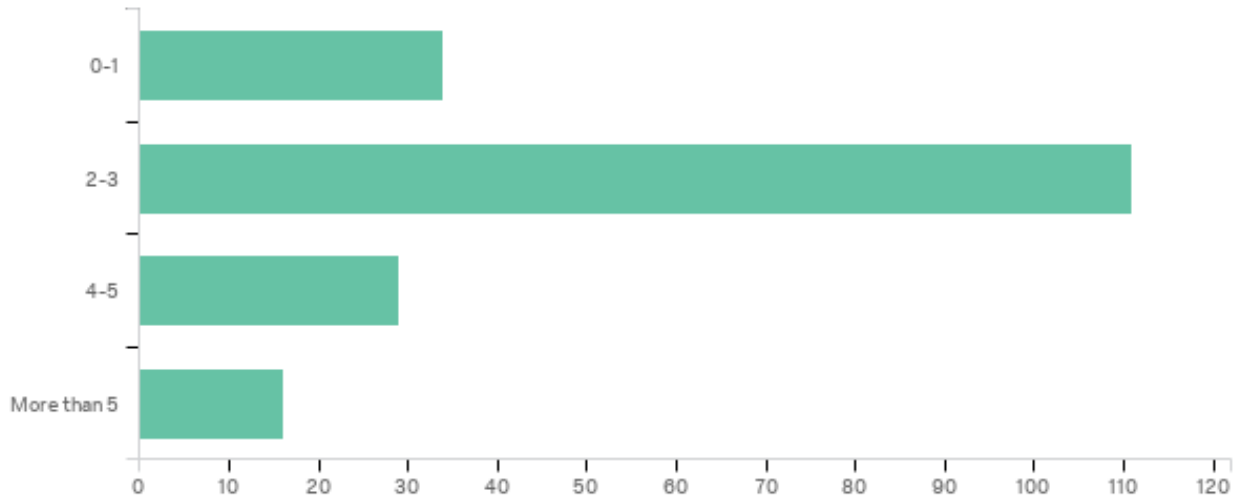
Answer	%	Count
18-24	25.52%	49
25-34	73.96%	142
Total	100%	191

Q2 - Do you have kids?



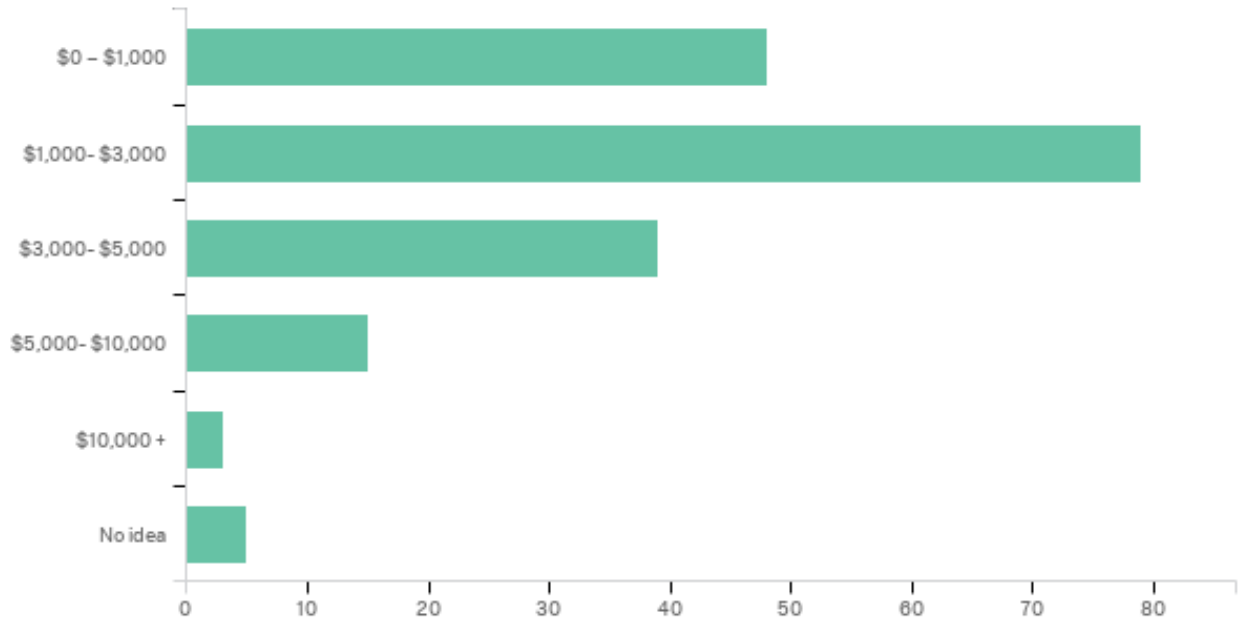
Answer	%	Count
Yes	23.44%	45
No	52.08%	100
If pets count, then yes!	24.48%	47
Total	100%	192

Q3 - On average, how many leisure (non-business) trips do you take in a year?



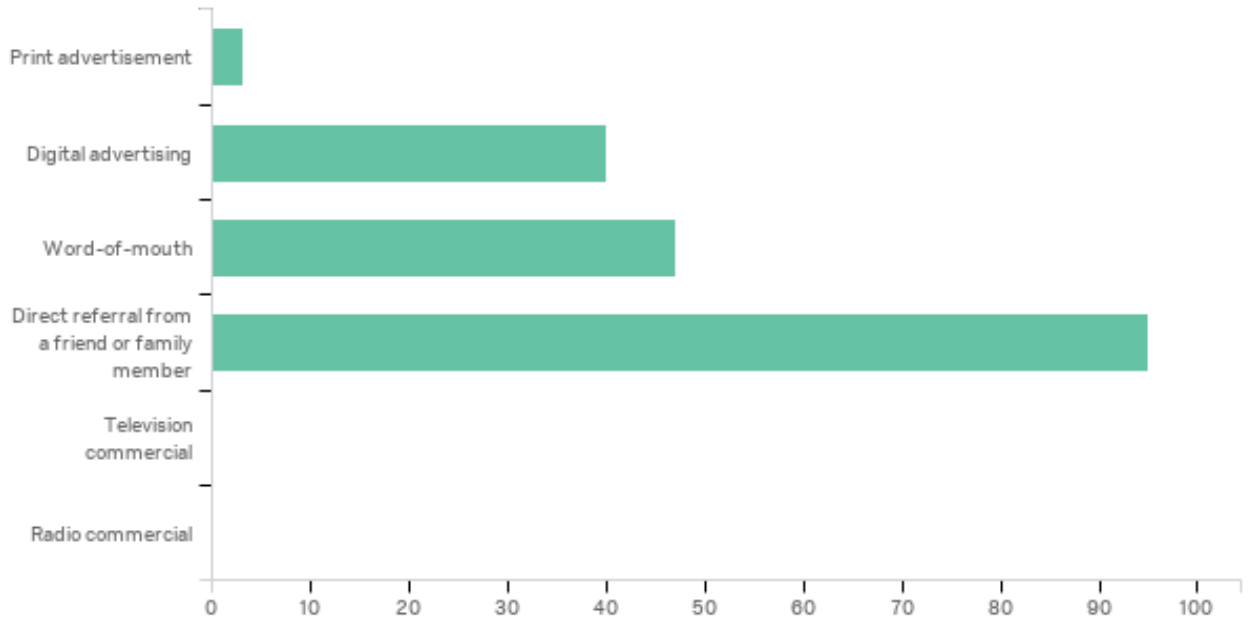
Answer	%	Count
0-1	17.89%	34
2-3	58.42%	111
4-5	15.26%	29
More than 5	8.42%	16
Total	100%	190

Q4 - On average, how much money do you spend on leisure travel in a year?



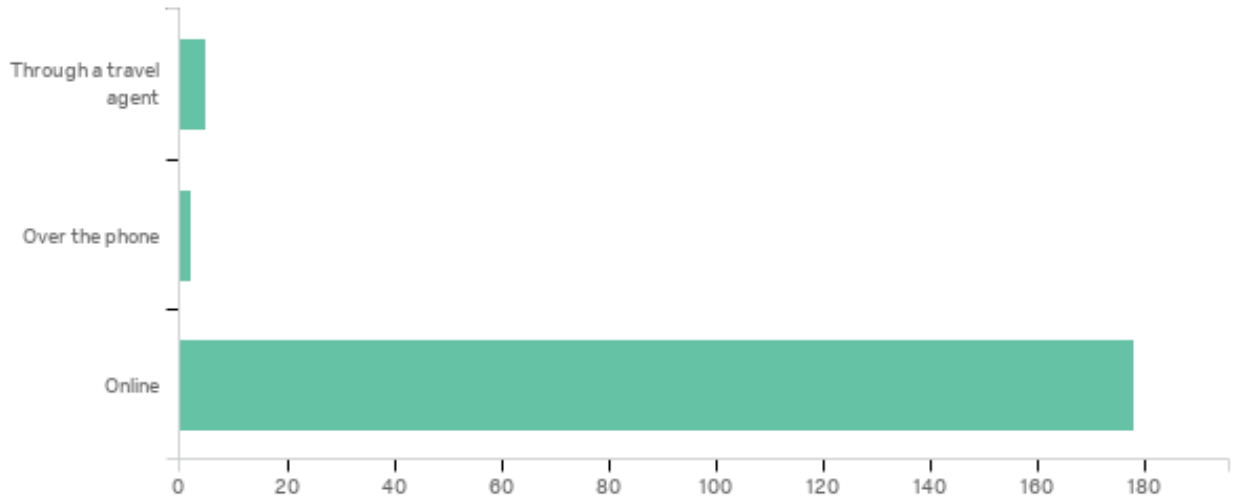
Answer	%	Count
\$0 - \$1,000	25.40%	48
\$1,000- \$3,000	41.80%	79
\$3,000- \$5,000	20.63%	39
\$5,000- \$10,000	7.94%	15
\$10,000 +	1.59%	3
No idea	2.65%	5
Total	100%	189

Q5 - In the past, what has been the most influential in terms of helping you decide where to go/stay/eat, etc. when you're traveling?



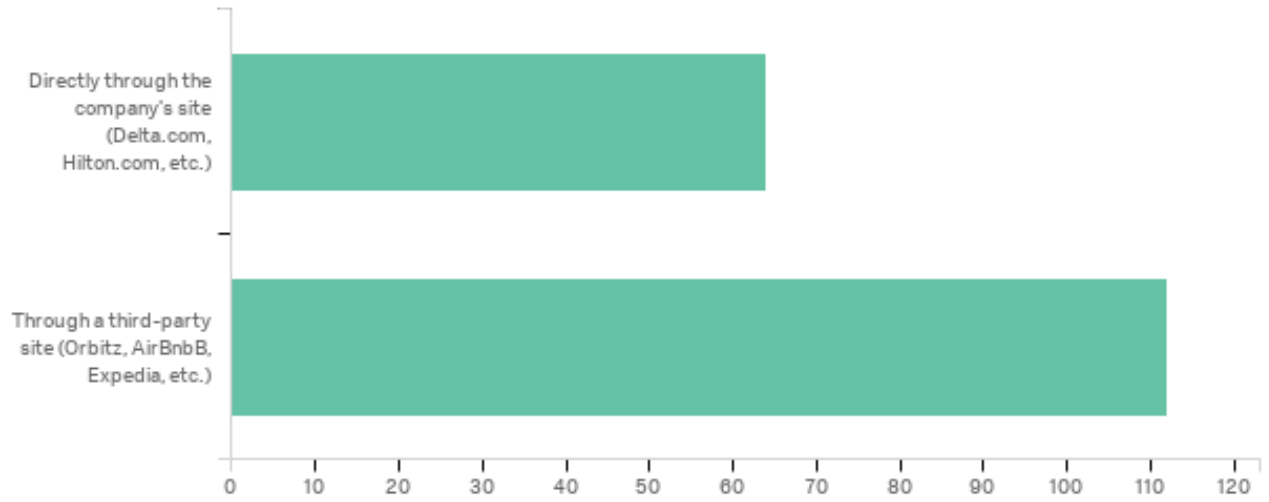
Answer	%	Count
Print advertisement	1.62%	3
Digital advertising	21.62%	40
Word-of-mouth	25.41%	47
Direct referral from a friend or family member	51.35%	95
Television commercial	0.00%	0
Radio commercial	0.00%	0
Total	100%	185

Q6 - How do you book the majority of your airline, hotel, and/or rental car reservations when traveling?



Answer	%	Count
Through a travel agent	2.70%	5
Over the phone	1.08%	2
Online	96.22%	178
Total	100%	185

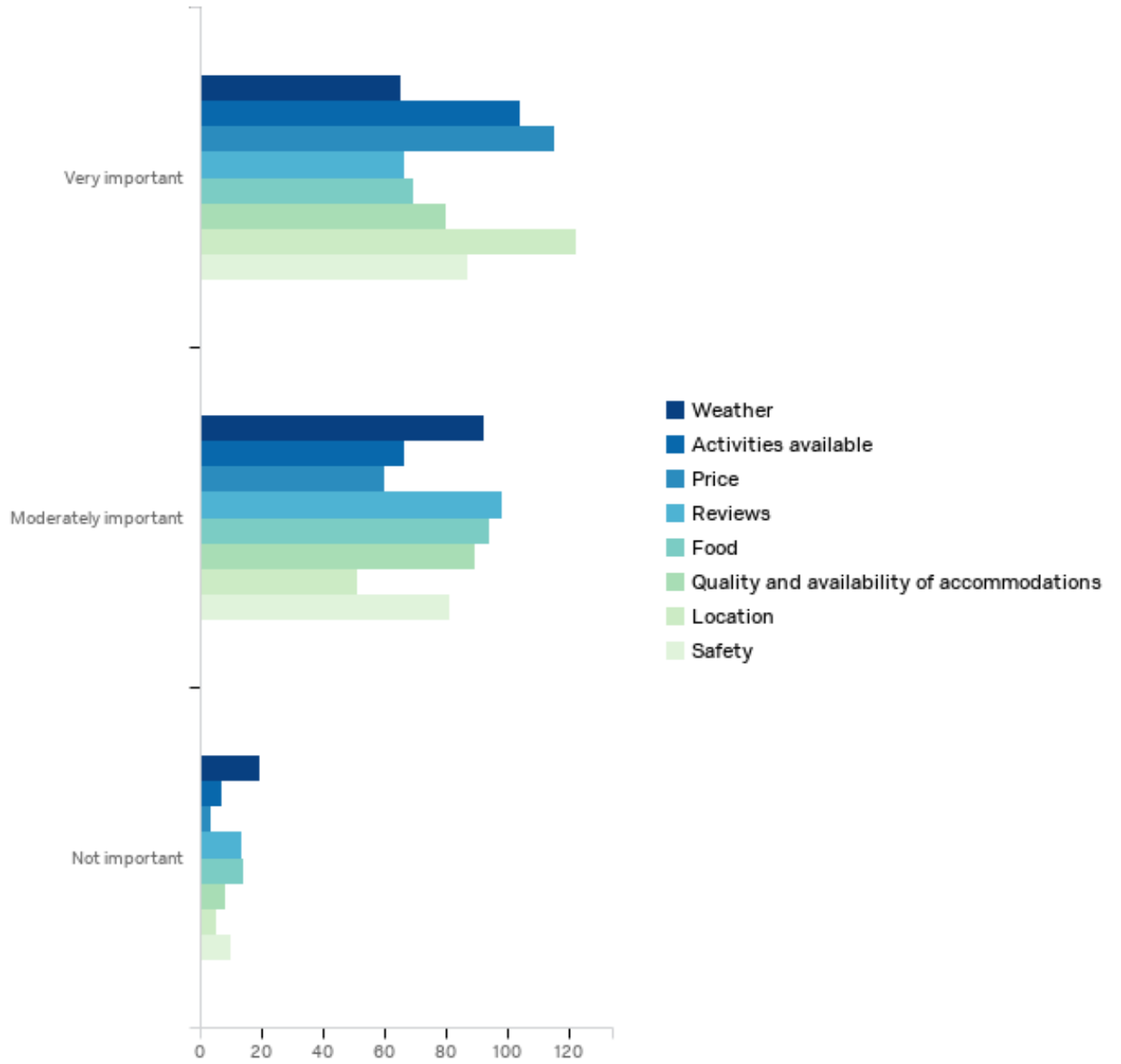
Q28 - What site do you usually book with?



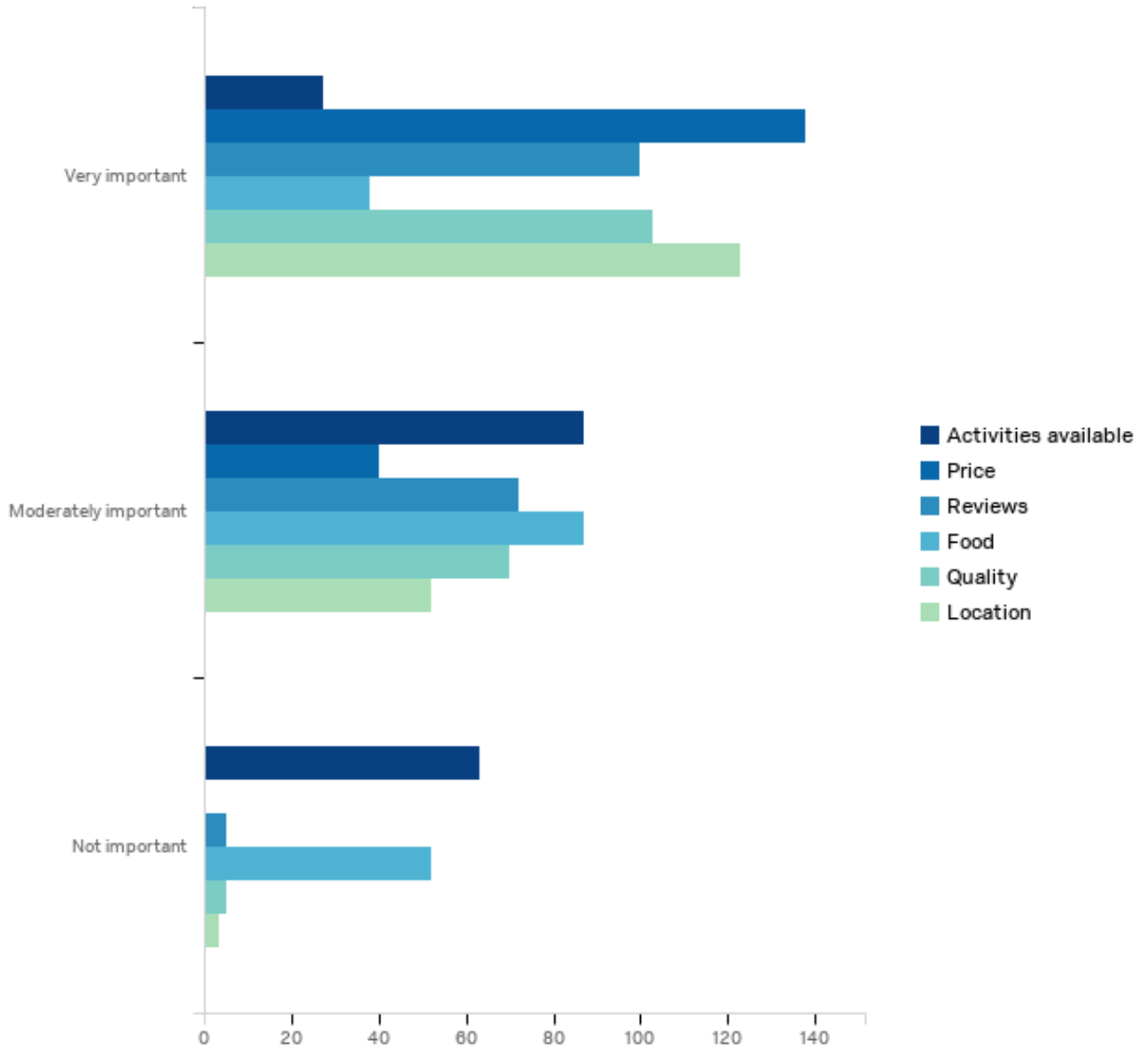
Answer	%	Count
Directly through the company's site (Delta.com, Hilton.com, etc.)	36.36%	64
Through a third-party site (Orbitz, AirBnbB, Expedia, etc.)	63.64%	112
Total	100%	176

Q10 - How important is each criteria when picking a travel destination?

Question	Very important		Moderately important		Not important		Total
Weather	36.93%	65	52.27%	92	10.80%	19	176
Activities available	58.76%	104	37.29%	66	3.95%	7	177
Price	64.61%	115	33.71%	60	1.69%	3	178
Reviews	37.29%	66	55.37%	98	7.34%	13	177
Food	38.98%	69	53.11%	94	7.91%	14	177
Quality and availability of accommodations	45.20%	80	50.28%	89	4.52%	8	177
Location	68.54%	122	28.65%	51	2.81%	5	178
Safety	48.88%	87	45.51%	81	5.62%	10	178



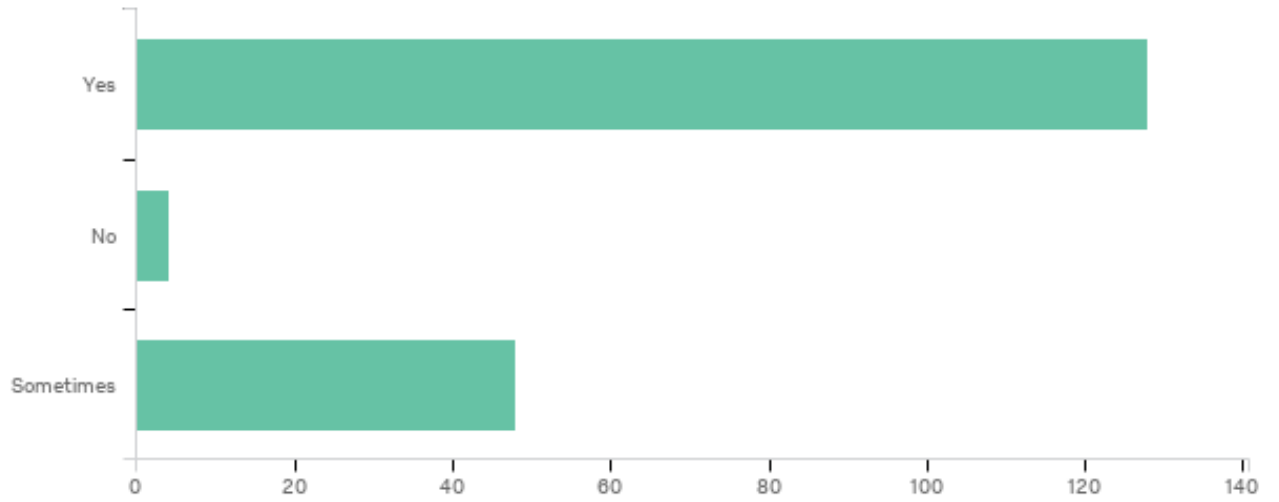
Q11 - How important is each criteria when booking a hotel or lodging?



Question	Very important		Moderately important		Not important		Total
Activities available	15.25%	27	49.15%	87	35.59%	63	177
Price	77.53%	138	22.47%	40	0.00%	0	178
Reviews	56.50%	100	40.68%	72	2.82%	5	177
Food	21.47%	38	49.15%	87	29.38%	52	177

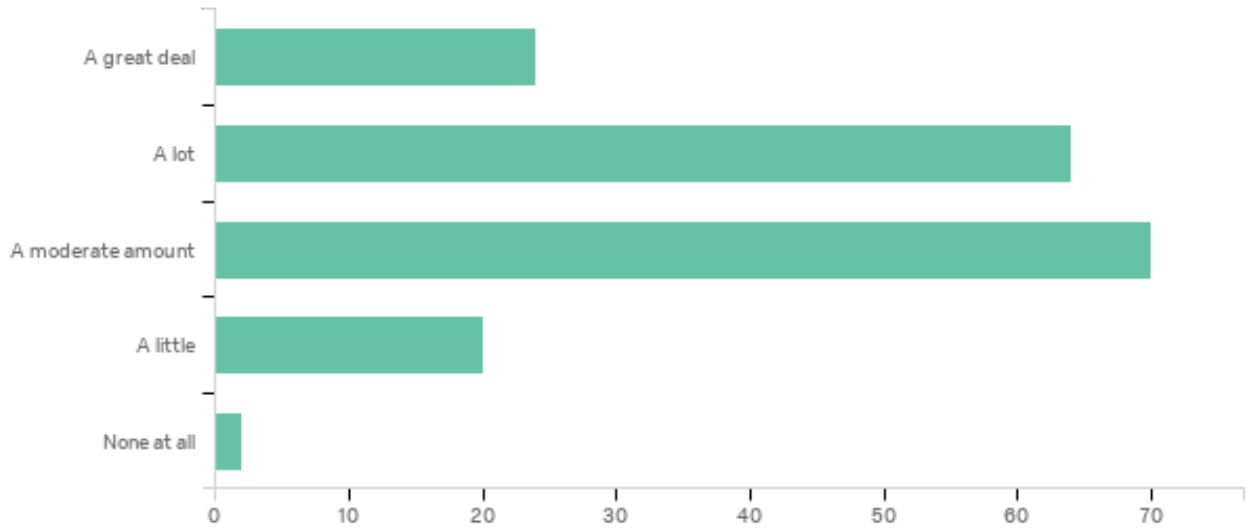
Quality	57.87%	103	39.33%	70	2.81%	5	178
Location	69.10%	123	29.21%	52	1.69%	3	178

Q12 - When booking travel, do you read other traveler's reviews of the locations and/or accommodations?



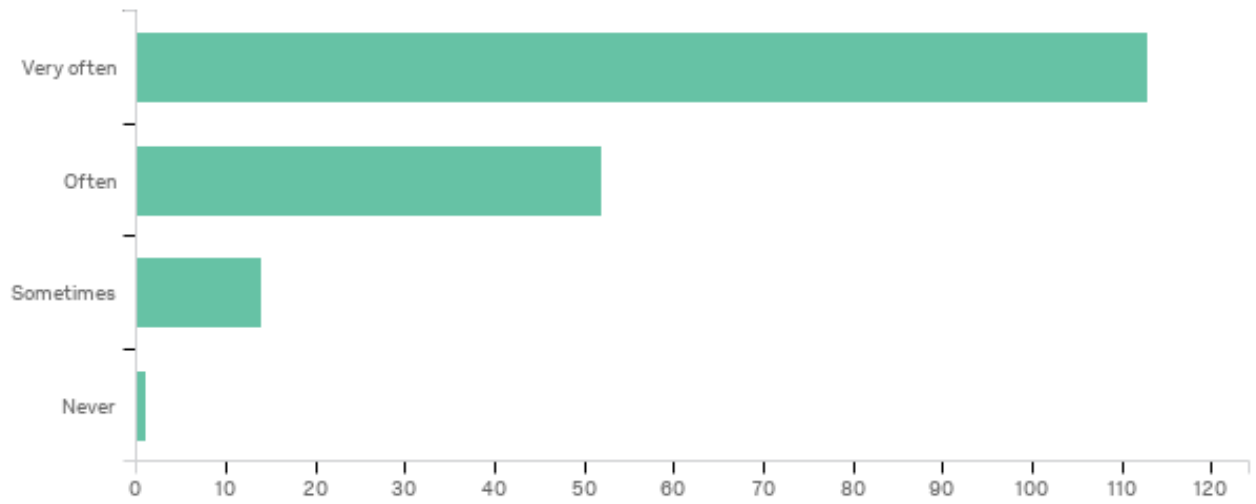
Answer	%	Count
Yes	71.11%	128
No	2.22%	4
Sometimes	26.67%	48
Total	100%	180

Q13 - How much would you say other travelers' reviews influence your travel planning?



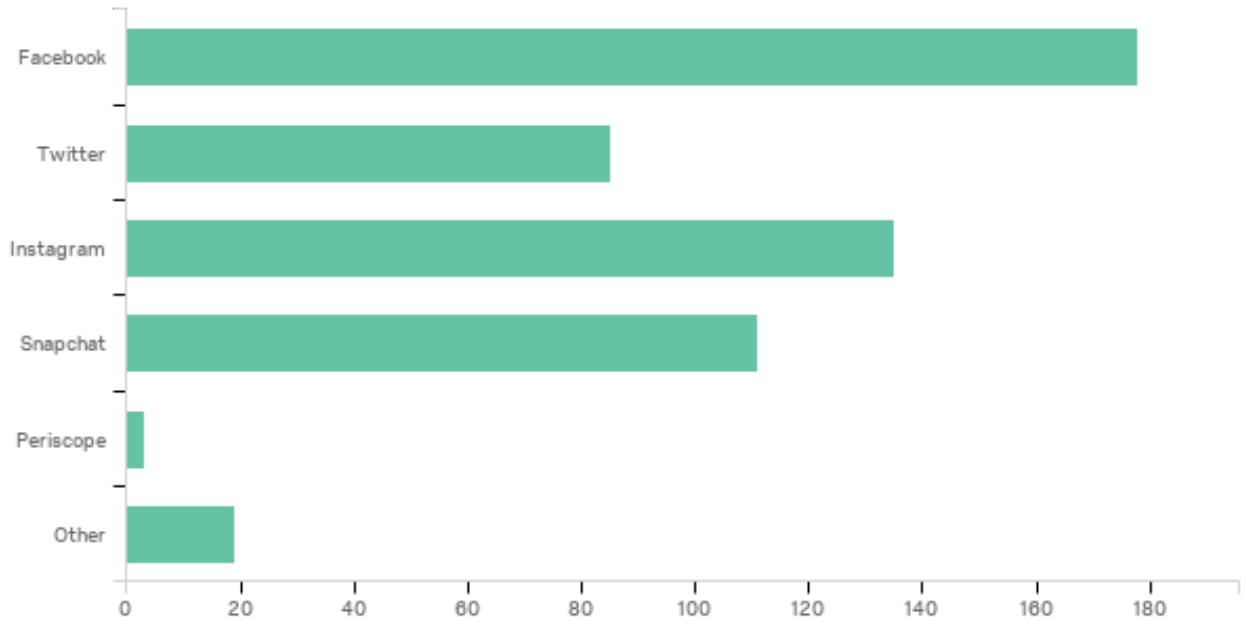
Answer	%	Count
A great deal	13.33%	24
A lot	35.56%	64
A moderate amount	38.89%	70
A little	11.11%	20
None at all	1.11%	2
Total	100%	180

Q14 - How often do you use social media?



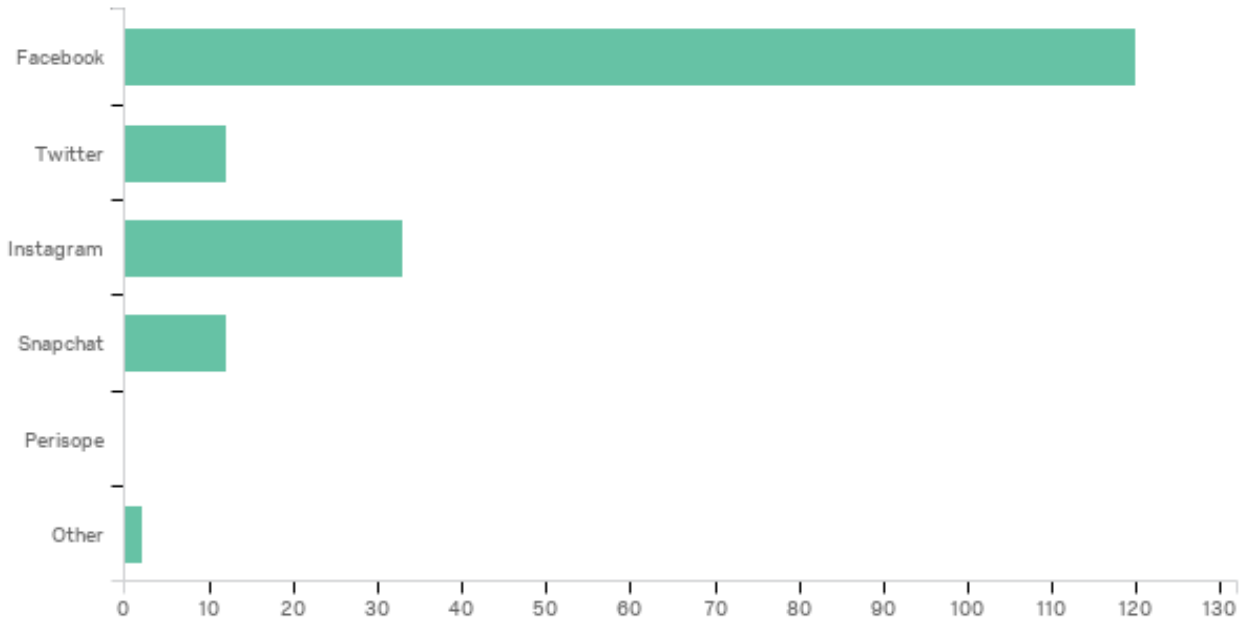
Answer	%	Count
Very often	62.78%	113
Often	28.89%	52
Sometimes	7.78%	14
Never	0.56%	1
Total	100%	180

Q15 - If you use social media, what social channels do you use (check all that apply)?



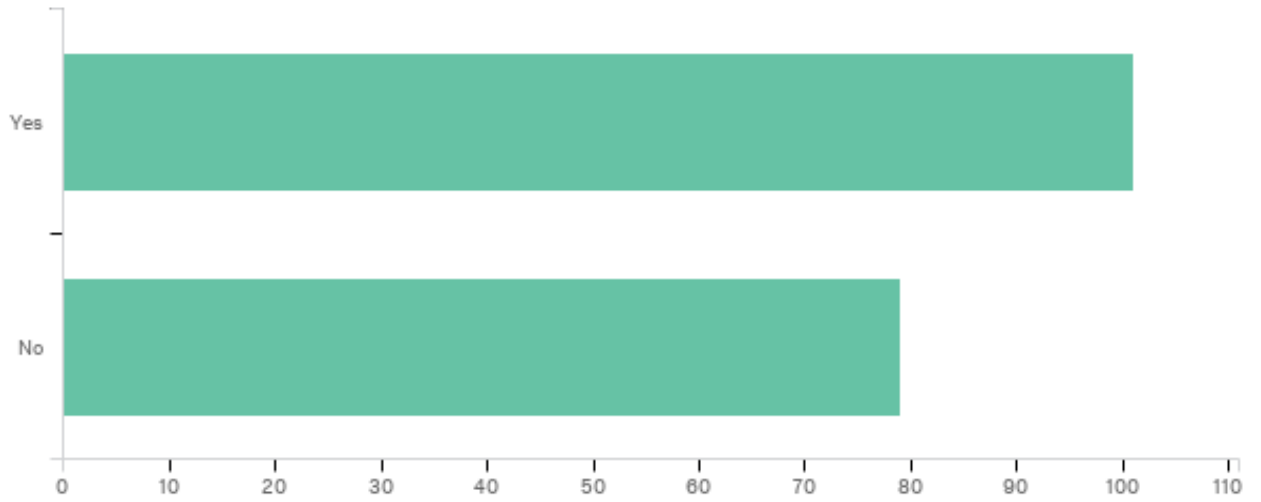
Answer	%	Count
Facebook	99.44%	178
Twitter	47.49%	85
Instagram	75.42%	135
Snapchat	62.01%	111
Periscope	1.68%	3
Other	10.61%	19

Q16 - What social site do you use the MOST?



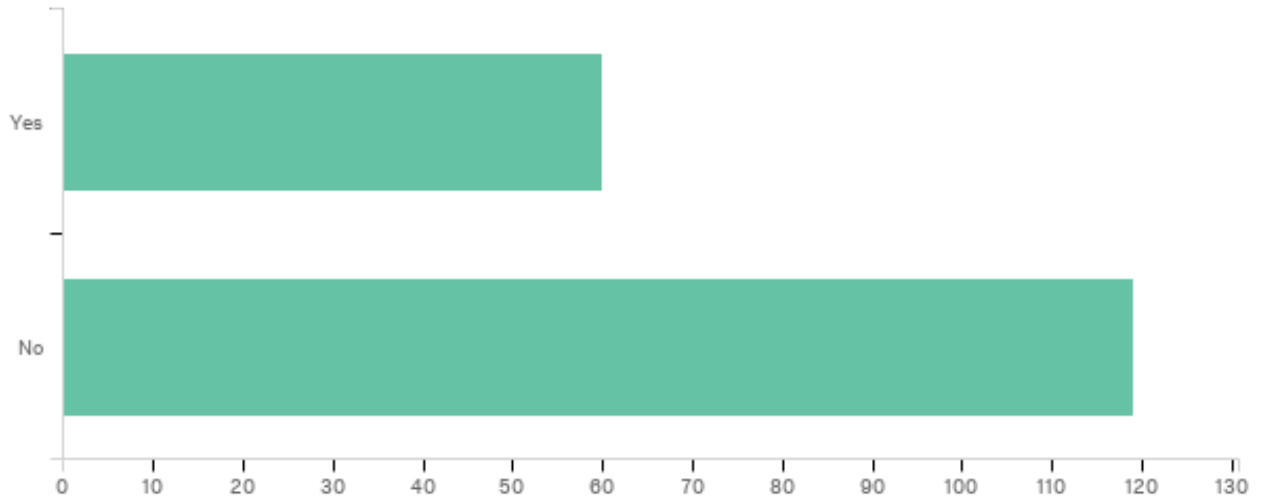
Answer	%	Count
Facebook	67.04%	120
Twitter	6.70%	12
Instagram	18.44%	33
Snapchat	6.70%	12
Periscope	0.00%	0
Other	1.12%	2
Total	100%	179

Q17 - Do you ever used social media to help generate travel ideas or make travel plans?



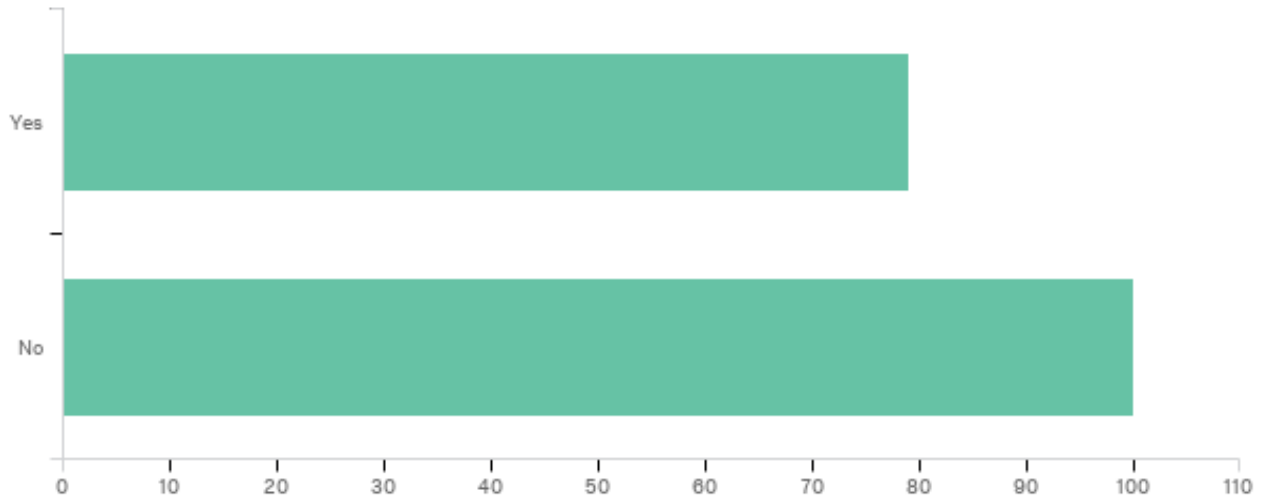
Answer	%	Count
Yes	56.11%	101
No	43.89%	79
Total	100%	180

Q18 - Have you ever been interested in learning more about a destination, hotel, or airline after seeing a celebrity post about it on social media?



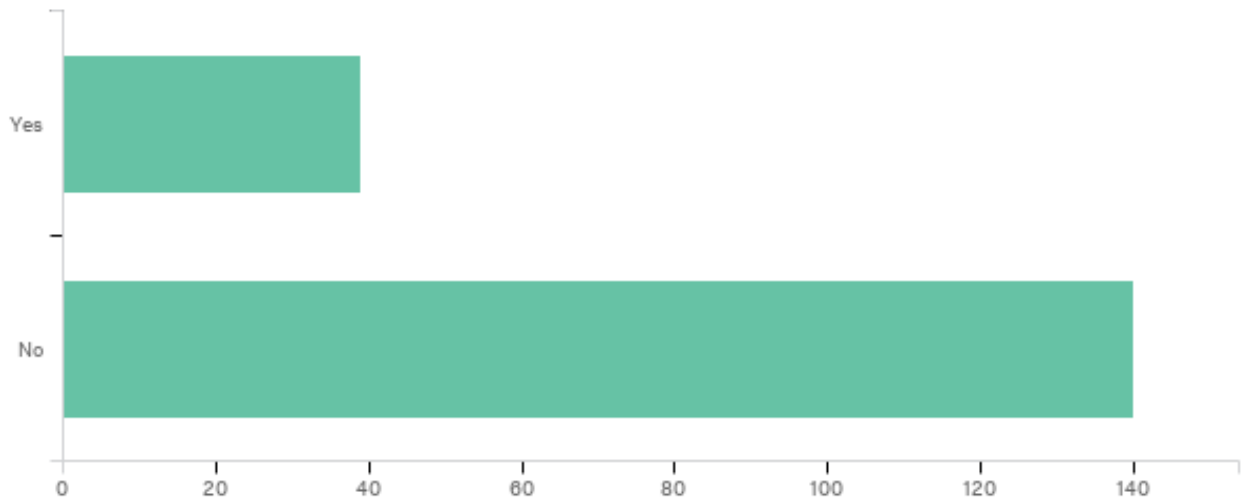
Answer	%	Count
Yes	33.52%	60
No	66.48%	119
Total	100%	179

Q19 - Have you ever booked a trip to a destination or hotel after seeing one of your friends or family members visit and post about it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat?



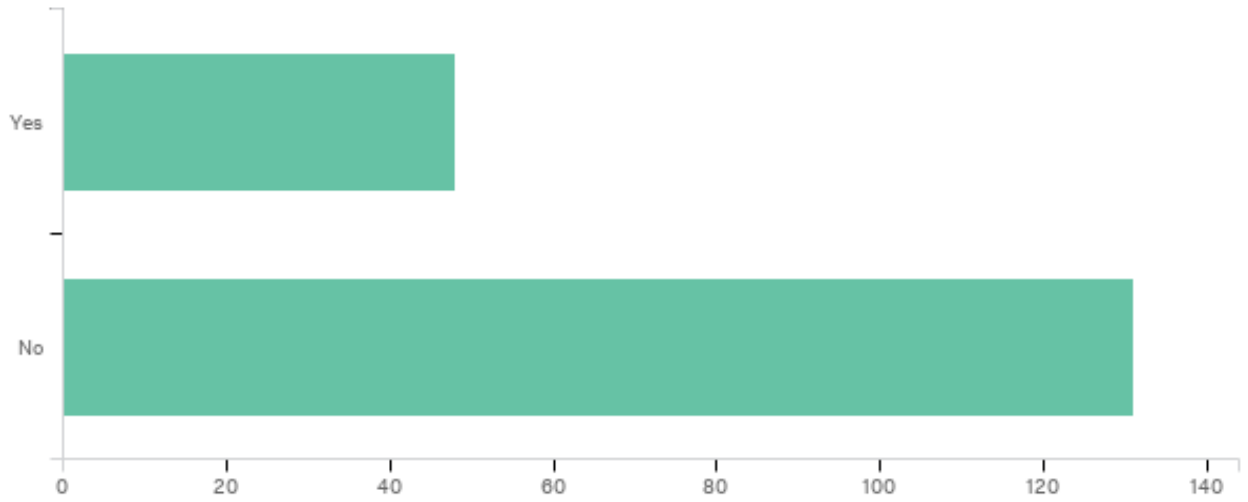
Answer	%	Count
Yes	44.13%	79
No	55.87%	100
Total	100%	179

Q20 - Have you ever participated in a travel-related social media contest (for example, uploading a photo to Instagram with a specific hashtag to be entered into a drawing or contest)?



Answer	%	Count
Yes	21.79%	39
No	78.21%	140
Total	100%	179

Q21 - Do you follow any travel bloggers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat?



Answer	%	Count
Yes	26.82%	48
No	73.18%	131
Total	100%	179

Q22 - If so, why do you follow this person?

If so, why do you follow this person?

I mostly follow bloggers on Instagram because they post interesting things that I may not see otherwise.

To see pictures of my favorite places/new places

Great photos; chance to learn more about other parts of the world.

For travel tips and to see photos.

Their pictures are pretty

Julia hengel

Beautiful photos

Recommendations, directions

Budget tip people

See pictures and get ideas

We have similar taste and interests.

Wanderlust

I like seeing photos of different destinations. I'm a foodie and like learning about different restaraunts. I have also been a travel blogger myself so I enjoy reading other people's work as well. Travel is one of my favorite things in the world.

Fun to see their pictures and get ideas of where to go next.

i mosy interested in seeing their photography (from an artistic angle).

To see pictures of interesting places and to dream of new travel destinations

I enjoy looking at their photos

Because they provide tips and information on traveling. Following them gives me ideas and inspiration for my own travels.

Pictures

I love seeing pictures from around the world on Instagram

Pretty pictures, captivating stories

I enjoy seeing their vacation photos

for travel inspiration as well as strategies (ie best time of year to visit certain locations, how to find cheap flights, etc)

I choose people with similar travel/experience tastes to get ideas of places we may

enjoy - and sometimes they giveaway free stuff :)

I love hearing about places I wouldn't have thought of traveling to before!

They give ideas as to what to do, what to see, where to eat, etc.

They blog about local destinations they visit that i may not have been to before.

Inspiration for activities

Vicarious entertainment

Learn about destinations and different cultures / interested in photography

Ideas on where to travel

He is from Australia and it reminds me of a trip I took there. He is also into adventure activities which interest me.

I follow mainly for the photos on instagram. I love to see pictures of the food on their travels as well as landscape photos.

Good tips and trip ideas, trust their opinion due to similar interests

Interesting to see what they do

Cool pictures

For beautiful photos

Beautiful pictures

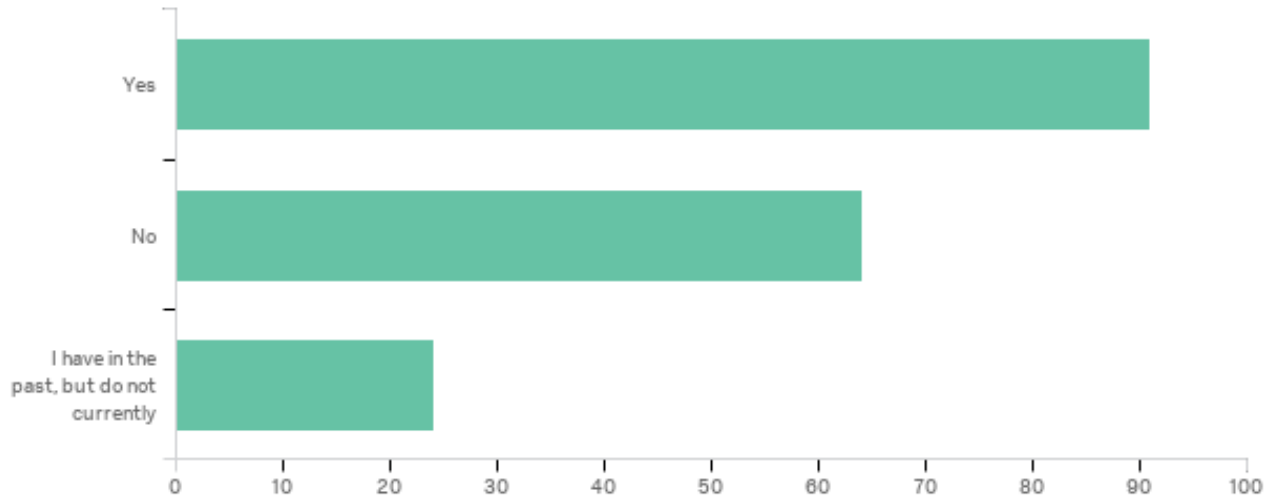
To see what it may be like to travel to a similar region

Beautiful photography

It's cool to see pictures and get ideas, even if it's only a wish list

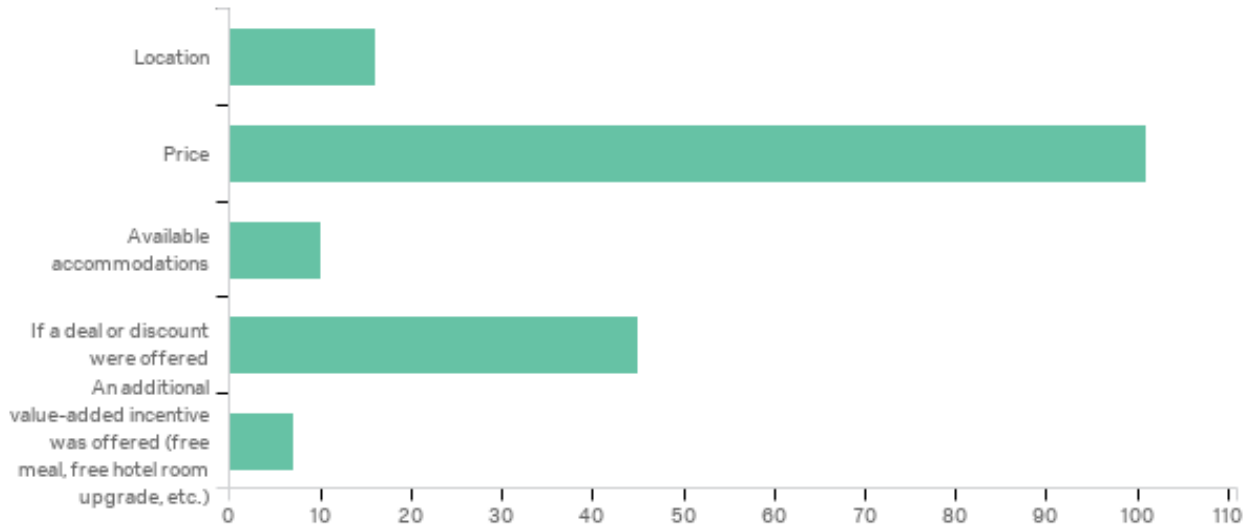
Interesting content, travel ideas, photography interest

**Q23 - Do you currently have a travel-related app on your phone?
(Examples: Delta app, Orbitz app, AirBnB app, etc.)**



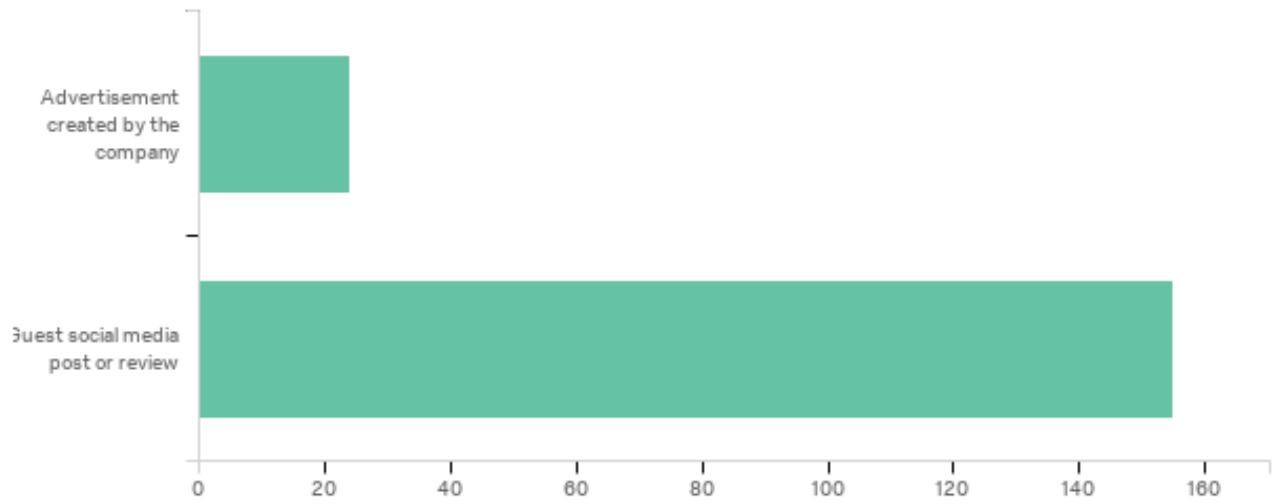
Answer	%	Count
Yes	50.84%	91
No	35.75%	64
I have in the past, but do not currently	13.41%	24
Total	100%	179

Q24 - If you were to book a last-minute trip for this up-coming weekend, what factor would MOST influence where you went and/or stayed?



Answer	%	Count
Location	8.94%	16
Price	56.42%	101
Available accommodations	5.59%	10
If a deal or discount were offered	25.14%	45
An additional value-added incentive was offered (free meal, free hotel room upgrade, etc.)	3.91%	7
Total	100%	179

Q25 - In terms of advertising, which would you trust more? An advertisement created by the company, or an image posted to social media by an actual guest?



Answer	%	Count
Advertisement created by the company	13.41%	24
Guest social media post or review	86.59%	155
Total	100%	179

Q26 - Briefly explain why you would trust the company's ad more.

Briefly explain why you would trust the company's ad more.

A particular person's experience may not represent the general experience.

I would know the ad/deal was real

Not all guests have the same view or experience.

I always feel like a random person's post is some sort of hack/catfish. At least if it's posted by the company I know what type of bias is being presented. With random strangers I have no idea. I feel like if I look at those types of posts too long, they'll somehow steal my credit card number :)

Accuracy

I know they are giving me the facts about their product, but I figure the celebrity would be getting paid anyway. So I prefer the polish of pictures the companies can afford.

Because the motivations are clear - they're promoting the location in an effort to get more customers. I sometimes question the motives or authenticity of third party branded content.

Directly from the source, don't have to worry about inaccuracies.

Many times people in reviews have different wants than myself and a different experience. We might not be excited about the same things so then they over sell or under sell the location. The company advertising tells what it had to offer along with pictures and I can take my best guess as to whether or not it's for me. When I went to the Grand Oasis Cancun, other passengers in my taxi to the resort said that they would not choose to stay there again. However, I loved my trip and thought it was an amazing trip. They had a different bias.

less chances of miscommunication

You're going to get the outlier opinion from the guest. Either really good or really bad.

Ethos

An image posted on facebook or social media seems contrived and deceitful. With a company's ad I know who it's coming from...it's more transparent.

I suspect someone would post an ad to get a discount. Their advertisement wouldn't reflect their experience

The information security part of my brain would be more likely to take the company's references and links as valid.

Less swayed by emotion, has to follow federal guidelines

I don't know the person doing the review.

Q27 - Briefly explain why you would trust a guest's social media image or review more.

Briefly explain why you would trust a guest's social media image or review...

It's a more more real/accurate description

I would think that they would be more likely to tell you about all aspects rather than just the good things. I would actually be a little wary of both, because the reviewer could have been paid to write a good review.

It shows what the place looks like IRL.

Honest feedback if their experience

Seems more authentic and genuine.

They have no agenda when posting. They don't make money off of their post

More honest!

Unbiased

In most cases the pictures are not photoshopped. I try and take an average of all guest reviews since many people review a place only when it's negative.

Because they experienced it first hand compared to th company trying to just sell their company.

Authenticity

Genuine review, not business

It's more realistic and not digitally altered for marketing purposes

There are normally more reviews through social media

They are less likely to have a hidden agenda... ie, there's no benefit to them if you visit this place

They're more likely to be unbiased

No false advertising

More authentic.

Based on actual experience

More authentic, less staged.

Actual experience and not getting paid to post it

I guess I assume it's more genuine (not paid for, but inspired by a legitimately good time)

A little more honest

More authentic

Companies tend to show the good side of their facility but it may not be seen by the average person.

More than likely not staged

Evidence of reality

Because it's less staged

Not just any guest but a friend or family member on my social media, if they loved the place I would believe them

The review is their actual opinion, they don't have anything to gain by posting an honest review. It just seems more genuine.

They have been there and experienced it, the company will make it look great at all angles to please all types of people

Review: they have experienced it

Motivation

It seems more genuine

I think guest's images or reviews are more honest. The company is obviously trying to sell their product to you. Guests tend to be sharing experiences with others.

I would not be sure if the review would be from the hotel environment, knowing how some things work, but in general I find user reviews more trustful.

A guest is more likely to not provide a biased opinion

No personal gain for the guest.

Because they are not paid for their review. It is more believable by an actual person vs. a company trying to bring people in.

I would presume that it was more authentic.

I think a guest can be more trusted because they have nothing to gain, assuming they haven't been compensated for their review.

A guest image or review is going to be more realistic as they're not trying to sell a business in posting.

More authentic and not paid to review it.

Personal experience

Many times the hotels photos are from when everything was brand new and not necessarily the most recent. It's hard to judge what the place will look like until you actually see it

I would think that typically, the guest's view would be less biased than the actual company's version. However, sometimes guest reviews can be misleading as you are not always sure if they are being too soft or too harsh.

They stayed at the location so can give a idea

In theory, the guest's review is reflective of the actual property versus the chain as a whole.

A guest would be impartial

It seems less curated, although I know this is changing as people receive sponsorship for their social media posts

Because of the supposed 3rd party opinion.

Guests are out for themselves, the hotel is only interested in making \$\$

Third party recommendations mean more- obviously a company is going to tell you everything is great always

Would be more accurate to my own experience there

Assuming it's not a paid posting the guest could be more honest about their experience.

Unbiased

It'd be real. And none of that paid blogger review shit. We can see right through it.

I can't confirm it's PR whereas with a company, obviously it is.

Hopefully less biased

Companies are far more likely to lie in order to get your business. A guest has nothing to gain from a good/bad review.

It wouldn't be posed but would be more authentic

I dont trust either on a site.

I believe that the view from the guest would give a better sense of how the experience was.

not retouched

They've actually experienced the vacation/hotel/activity/etc.

Because it is a peer rather than a corporation

Companies don't often give you 100% of the info needed to make an informed decision.

It appears more authentic and based in reality. It was a customer's actual experience rather than a corporate vision of what the experience is intended to be.

Unbiased - probably more recent

They are currently having the experience as it is, not necessarily as it is advertised

While they may be paid by the company to do the post, I naturally trust a written review more than a standard ad. I like to think the person doing the posting wouldn't post for something they hate.

Because they aren't gaining anything by posting.

The company is obviously going to say good things and only things that they want to advertise.

Less bias than a company promoting their profiting product.

Less incentive to lie

Any company can post a photo shopped image of their destination, but social media is more authentic and the social media user can capture the experience in a realistic way. Sure, they might put a filter on an image but they are going to share real experiences about the accommodations, activities, location, and customer service.

Because it came from the person's own volition rather than trying to make money

They are not trying to sell the product, they are posting about their true experience

Bias

Generally it isn't paid (though I suppose it could be) for by the company, so hopefully they don't have an agenda

First hand experience

less biased

Minimal editing. I know the person posting it.

A more independent source.

They are more likely to give a fair review because the incentive to fabricate how luxurious the hotel is, is far fewer than the company itself

Lived experience

no

The guest is likely to give a more honest view rather than an advertisement that was paid for to make the destination, hotel, or whatever more desirable.

I would want to hear from the perspective of someone who has been to that location, not an ad that could be sugar coated.

They have less to gain/lose and thus will be more honest. Usually.

They lived the experience

That will give me an authentic review of their experience.

It's usually more honest. A post created by the company is designed to weigh heavily on the positive and ignore the potential negatives.

I know it's authentic-- no fancy lighting or stylists. A guest's image is more likely to be what I will/would experience there.

More authentic; real opinion

They have no vested interest

They are not paid by the company and therefore likely to be more impartial

Trust their experience more than what a hotel is trying to market. Some hotels use outdated photos or photos that don't always depict the whole space.

Because they would probably give more of an unbiased opinion.

More accurate and less likely to be as staged

Oftentimes seems more authentic

They don't have sales goals. Honest.

Honesty, real people

Personal experience, not biased or influenced by making money.

Not as clearly biased

less bias, different motivation, not sales-focused

It feels more genuine

A true representation of the stay, rather than what a hotel wants you to think; other guests probably care about the same things as me

Guest reviews (hopefully) represent a non-biased user experience. Advertisements are inherently biased.

They may have a more honest review of the place versus a company that just wants you to stay there

A real person's story is always more interesting and useful than a brand's.

They have experienced it first hand and have no bias based on incentives

Less bias

Not biased

They don't have a vested interest in driving business to the hotel so they would be more likely to give an honest review/portrayal of the hotel.

It would be more independent from the company.

It comes from the real experience of someone who visited, not from a company or organization who is trying to make money.

Can read multiple reviews to get a general idea, i.e. You can exclude outliers

When the review comes from an actual guest, it gives more of a real opinion versus that of a corporate entity

Because ads from the company are going to always be positives/advantages to their company whereas people on social media honestly post about how they feel or experience something

Guests don't have a reason to stretch the truth, while the company does.

I know I'm getting the real deal and not a sweetened up version

Not as much censorship

It's more honest. They have been through experiences first hand

They're not actively trying to sell you on their own product

it doesn't matter to them if other people go, it's a non-biased post

Hopefully less biased

It would be less likely to have a bias or incentive for them to post about it.

They usually don't have anything to lose or gain by giving their opinion

Because they are not getting paid, so the review is likely more honest

They don't have as much at stake, I don't believe that the photo the company would be accurate

They already paid for their trip, so they can be honest about if it was worth it or not.

It's more honest

seems more authentic

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Q1: How often do you take a leisure trip? Where do you usually go?

Q2: How do you decide on location? Hotel/accommodation? Activities? Where do you go for travel-related information?

Q3: Do you use social media? For what purposes? How often? What channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)? Why, specifically, do you use these specific platforms you use?

Q4: Do your friends post travel pictures? How do you feel when you see those?

Q5: Have you ever been motivated to do further research on a certain destination or hotel/resort after seeing your friends' travel pictures?

Q6: Have you ever booked a trip based on friends' recommendations?

Q7: How much of an impact do other traveler reviews play in your travel-making decisions?

Q8: What is your vacation-booking process?

Q9: Please look at these images of the Las Vegas Cosmopolitan Hotel's outdoor advertising campaign (ADDENDUM A). What do you think? What are the first thoughts that come to mind?

Q9a: Now look at these social media posts featuring the Cosmopolitan Hotel. What do you think? What are the first thoughts that come to mind?

Q9b: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Cosmopolitan Hotel?

Q10: Please look at these images of the Four Seasons Papagayo Costa Rica resort. What does each image make you feel? What is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q10a: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Four Seasons Papagayo Resort or Costa Rica in general?

Q11: Please look at these images of the Ritz Carlton Hotel. What does each image make you feel? What is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q11a: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Four Ritz Carlton Hotel?

IMAGES

THE COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL LAS VEGAS

Figure 1: Brand created ad

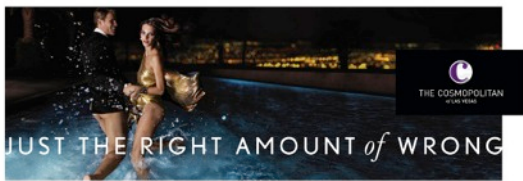


Figure 2: Brand Instagram post

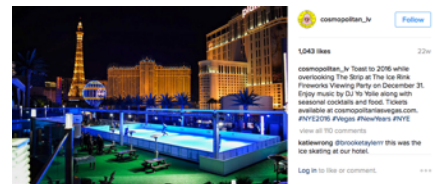
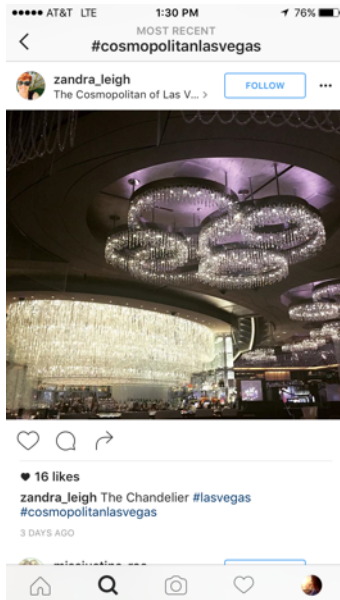


Figure 3: Instagram by unknown poster Figure 4: Instagram by known poster



FOUR SEASONS PAPAGAYO- COSTA RICA

Figure 5:

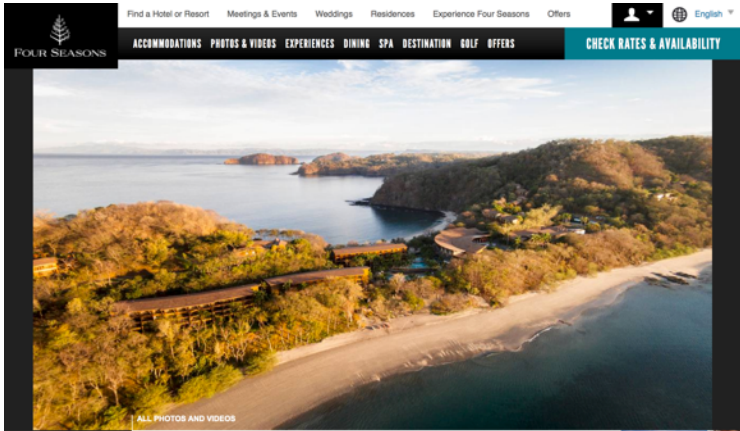


Figure 6:



THE RITZ CARLTON - NAPLES, FLORIDA

Figure 7:



Figure 8:



APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT

How often do you take a leisure trip? Where do you usually go?

- I usually take about 6 leisure trips a year. My parents pay if it's a family trip, and those are usually in the United States, like Colorado or North Carolina. I usually go abroad once a year.
- I take trips a couple times a year, mainly domestic.
- One - three domestic trips a year.
- Two to three trips a year. Once a year abroad. I've been to Australia and Ireland in the last two years.
- Four trips a year on average, ½ in US, ½ abroad.
- One to two a year, usually in the United States.
- Five to six smaller trips a year. All are in the United States.
- I travel Six to seven times a year. We try to go abroad once a year if it's to Mexico or on a cruise.

Why do you travel?

- To get away
- To see the world
- To learn new things.
- To experience things I can't here in the States.
- To hang out with friends.
- To eat new and different foods.
- To get away from the U.S.
- To not be at work.
- I feel deprived if I haven't traveled in awhile.

How do you decide on location? Hotel/accommodation? Activities?

- Price is always the deciding factor for me. I always think about a warm location, and what I'm looking for during that specific time of year in terms of a vacation. The time of year, what is a cheap, where is it hot if it's winter, etc. I research h online.
- I'm always trying to find someplace interesting. If I decide to go abroad I usually go somewhere new for me, but it's usually where other people I know have been.
- For domestic travel I always look for recommendation from people I personally know. For example, this year I went to Vegas and had some friends tell me I had to stay at a certain hotel or eat at a certain restaurant. For bigger

cities where a lot of my friends have been I ask them for their recommendations while travel planning.

- I have a list of places we want to hit. But we always start our decision-making process by asking what we want out of this specific vacation – do we want a relaxing time? If so, we're not going to go to NYC, instead we'll go to the desert. So, the location depends on what the purpose of getting away is for. First thing we do is ask our Facebook friends to give us recommendations of where to stay, what to eat, etc. Then we do interest research.

- If I see my friends on FB posting gorgeous photos, and see them affording Vegas, it makes me want to go, too.

- I ask friends that travel often – I usually want to do what they do – we know there is no risk because they've already been there.

- I usually go where my Parents want to go, otherwise I go with friends. I'll go if I know someone lives there. We used to travel to where my Grandparents lived.

- I always go places I feel connected to – I'm Irish so I wanted to go to Ireland, and I'm a huge Lord of the Rings fan, so we went to New Zealand.

Where do you go for travel-related information?

- Internet

-Friends

-Groupon

- Travel blogs – all blogs I follow have a travel component

- Friends' Instagram or Facebook pages

- Pinterest when I was researching Europe

- Lonely Planet or my family members

- I ask my fiancée because his mom is a flight attendant and he plans all of my trips.

- I usually don't plan much until I get there. I'll text friends that I know have been there for recommendations. I wait until a week or two before I go to book hotel and use the internet

Do you use social media? For what purposes? How often? What channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)? Why, specifically, do you use these specific platforms you use?

- All used social media multiple times a day.

- Multiple times day for everyone.

What channel (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) do you check the most?

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Facebook

What channel (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) do you post to the most?

- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Instagram
- Instagram
- Twitter/Snapchat
- Facebook

Why, specifically, do you use these specific platforms you use?

- Twitter is used for news, media, seeing what's going on, live events, breaking news, jokes, funny things.
- Instagram is more to look at cool photos, travel posts, events going on, images, nice restaurants, pictures of food.
- Facebook is for laughing at deadbeat friends, keeping up with old relatives, political posts, babies, entertainment, updates, to see what people are doing, to see what friends are doing, family updates.

Who do you follow on Instagram? How does the site make you feel?

Instagram

- mix of strangers,
- more people I don't know
- Instagram makes me feel like I want to get up and do something, and Facebook makes me feel like I want to lay down
- Instagram is more show-offy. You do something and post it to "show off." Not as "real" but you can curate your life to make it look wonderful.

Do your friends post travel pictures on social media? How do you feel when you see those?

- Yes, I feel depressed, annoyed, jealous, happy, and sometimes inspired.
- Inspired. It makes me want to go some place.
- It depends on my frame of mind - if I'm depressed and see someone traveling I get sad.
- my boyfriend sees someone, gets jealous, and proactive, makes plans, feels jealous doesn't like feeling jealous so he'll take action
- Depends on what they're posting - art and design - I like that, but I couldn't care less about lake cabins - So, it depends on my interests, some friends went to glamping in Colorado and I filed that away and will remember that. I want to do that some day.
- But when I post I feel braggy in a good way, proud, I feel cool and like I'm living my best life.
- Instagram is like - instant postcard
- I've never sent or received an actual postcard. Wow. That's crazy.
- Instagram becomes your own little travel journal and scrapbook,
- One of my friends posted EVERY picture of her trip and it annoyed me
- When I post something it's something weird or something beautiful and I want everyone else to know - not just to show people I'm here
- I wouldn't post just a scenery picture
- If it isn't good looking what's the point?

Have you ever been motivated to do further research on a certain destination or hotel/resort after seeing your friends' travel pictures?

- Yes
- Yes
- No
- Yes
- I'll see photos and then wonder how much it would cost, but doesn't mean I wouldn't even go there.
- I'm intrigued by how much people pay to go on certain trips.
- Yes
- No
- Yes

Have you ever booked a trip based on friends' recommendations?

- Yes
- No
- Yes - Costa Rica
- I've been pressured
- A friend or family member's recommendation may tip the scale, but I don't base the entire decision upon what they say.
- I'll decide where I wanna go and then see if I have friends who have recommendations, but I haven't booked based solely on their recommendation.
- We went to Mexico once and afterwards Jake's brother went and stayed in the same hotel based on our rec. And then another girl I don't even know messaged me on Facebook asking me about the hotel we went to and posted pictures of. She said I saw you went here, do you recommend this place?

How much of an impact do other traveler reviews play in your travel-making decisions?

- A lot if it's hotels
 - Flights no - airlines maybe; depends price
 - I don't read reviews on airlines.
 - If someone I knew told me not to fly Spirit I wouldn't - but not based on word-of-mouth.
- Even if I knew it was shitty I still would fly it because it is cheap.

What is your vacation-booking process?

- Book online
- Usually book third-party
- AirBnb
- Hotels through the hotel - more security - less likely to shove

Please look at these images of the Las Vegas Cosmopolitan Hotel's outdoor advertising campaign (ADDENDUM A). What do you think? What are the first thoughts that come to mind?

Q9a: Now look at these social media posts featuring the Cosmopolitan Hotel. What do you think? What are the first thoughts that come to mind?

Q9b: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Cosmopolitan Hotel?

BILLBOARD AD

- He's not wearing pants. What the hell?
- This ad is off-putting and, gross. This hotel looks like it's for rich people. Or hookers.
- Why would people wear this?
- It just looks dirty.
- My husband worked on this campaign at Fallon and he hated it - he didn't even now what it meant.
- I can't relate - I feel like it's meant for rich kids who want to do drugs in Vegas.
- Feels very hetero-centered, so as a gay man, it's not at all for me. It has nothing to do with my life.
- Not what I would do in Vegas.
- This is for rich people in a weird club.

SOCIAL POST by the Cosmopolitan Hotel

- Looks empty
- Looks tacky and super fake
- I like it.
- Looks like a mock-up.
- I like it better than the stupid ads.
- More dreamy than the ad.
- This looks like it's more for me.
- Looks like what I'd expect from Las Vegas.
- Lots of copy in the caption that's not engaging, I wouldn't read all of it.

STRANGER'S POST about the Cosmopolitan Hotel and Bar

- Doesn't mean anything to me.
- I would post this if I connected it to Sia's "Chandelier" song.
- I haven't been to Vegas, but I imaging there is a lot of this shit.
- I don't' feel anything.
- Looks empty, no people.
- I feel dead inside - not interesting.

PERSONAL FRIEND'S POST about the Cosmopolitan and Bar

- Feels fancy

- Knowing this is a bar makes it more interesting than just thinking it's a chandelier.
- I knew you, so I'm more interested.
- It looks like a movie set.
- I'm interested in your other posts so I'd likely pay more attention to this.
- The "Viva Las Vegas caption is light and fun
- I want to drink a couple of those.
- I love the emoji in the caption.

MOST ENGAGING/PERSUADING?

- Brooke's or the ice skating rink
- Yours is easier to say because you made it look personal – I would follow you, but I don't follow businesses.
- No one follows a travel brand on INSTAGRAM
- I follow travel brands on Twitter.
- I follow one travel brand on FB.
- I follow some travel businesses on Facebook and Instagram because they might post special deals, but I would unfollow if they never offered a deal.

Please look at these images of the Four Seasons Papagayo Costa Rica resort. What does each image make you feel? What is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q10a: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Four Seasons Papagayo Resort or Costa Rica in general?

FOUR SEASONS WEBSITE PHOTO

- It took me awhile to figure what/where the hotel is – and that it was even a photo highlighting a hotel.
- I have no idea what country this is in.
- This makes me want to go there.
- This makes me want to go to the country
- I don't like logo, and font differences of webpage, that's all I can look at and count it out. It sounds bourgeoisie. It makes me feel like I don't belong.
- This make me want to google Costa Rica and other, cheaper hotels.

TRAVEL INSTAGRAMER PHOTO

- Looks welcoming and those people look like they could be my friends.
- I like the more vibrant colors.

- You can figure out more about the island.
- These people look like normal people
- With the webpage I already know I can't afford this place, but with the people they look normal and like me so maybe I can afford it.
- It makes me want to go hike.

Please look at these images of the Ritz Carlton Hotel. What does each image make you feel? What is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q11a: Which images are more likely to influence you to research the Four Ritz Carlton Hotel?

MAGAZINE AD

- Ewww
- It looks like this is about a shark
- Why is it not showing the actual hotel or property?
- This could be anywhere
- It doesn't highlight the hotel
- It doesn't make me want to go more
- I know the name so I know I would NEVER go there - I already have the bias. Too expensive and precocious for me.
- Stupid plate
- No directly location.

REAL TRAVELER'S INSTAGRAM PHOTO

- Too much of the building - not enough of the beach.
- That view is amazing.
- I do like the drink featured.
- This makes me want to go there.
- I love the view.
- This is more real and relatable. I would like to go there.
- This seems more attainable.
- It shows more of the surrounding.

- I honestly don't know why people do print ads any more

Would you take advantage of a hotel, resort, or airline's flash sale?

- Yes
- Depends on the timing and discount
- If the deal was good enough

RESPONDENTS

F- 20

F-21

F-21

F-20

M-34

F-34

M- 27

F - 27

APPENDIX E: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEET

Coding sheet for Content Analysis: Looking at the most recent 100 pieces of content on Loews Hotels' Twitter Feed and Instagram Feed (Total content pieces: 200).

What platform?

- Twitter
- Instagram

Content type?

- Text only
- Photo
- Video
- Other

What is the main subject of the content?

- Actual hotel, hotel property, etc.
- Guest
- Guest and hotel, hotel property, etc.
- Food/drink
- Hotel social event
- Hotel activity
- Social event
- Culturally-relevant post
- City or destination-specific post
- Offers a discount or deal

Is the Loews name visible in the post?

- Yes
- No

Was this post a part of the Loews "Travel for Real" campaign? (Does it include the hashtag #travelforreal?)

Who is the original author of the content?

- Loews Hotels
- Guest - 'customer-generated'
- Other

How many likes does the social content have?

- 0-20
- 21-40
- 41-60
- 61-80
- 81-100
- 100-150
- 151-200
- 201 +

How many comments does the social content have?

- 0-20
- 21-40
- 41-60
- 61-80
- 81-100
- 100-150
- 151-200
- 201 +

What is the average tone of the comments?

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral
- Not applicable

Examples of Instagram content analyzed

Instagram

Search

Get the app Log in

loewshotels [FOLLOW](#)

loewshotels #TravelForReal Because nobody tells the story of Loews Hotels & Resorts better than you. www.loewshotels.com

3,906 posts 12.7k followers 2,240 following


The grid contains 12 images: 1. A man diving into a pool with a building in the background. 2. A dog standing in the ocean at sunset. 3. A person looking at an aquarium tank. 4. A sign that says 'LO & INSPIRE TELLING. OP: CHICAGO' with a drink. 5. A rooftop view with a picnic blanket and a bottle. 6. A hand holding an ice cream cone. 7. A hotel room with a bed and purple flowers. 8. Two women in a dark room with a play button overlay. 9. A city skyline with a rooftop pool. 10. A dark night sky. 11. Palm trees in front of a building. 12. A palm tree against a blue sky.

Examples of Twitter content analyzed

Home Moments Notifications Messages Search Twitter

Loews Hotels @Loews_Hotels 47.3K TWEETS 4,870 FOLLOWING 40K FOLLOWERS 14.9K LIKES Following

Loews Hotels @Loews_Hotels · May 1
Happy May Day! #Annapolis is busting with the #traditional May Baskets, @FirstSundayArts & more. #LoewsAnnapolis




1 5

Loews Hotels @Loews_Hotels · May 1
Mother's Day is a week away! Now-5/14 get a FREE \$25 gift card w/ purchase of a \$100 gift card at #LoewsChicago Spa.

1 2

Loews Hotels @Loews_Hotels · May 1
Cafecito poolside?! We didn't think paradise could get much better...till now. #LoewsMiami



APPENDIX F: CONTENT ANALYSIS RAW REPORT

Initial Report

Content Analysis - Loews Hotels

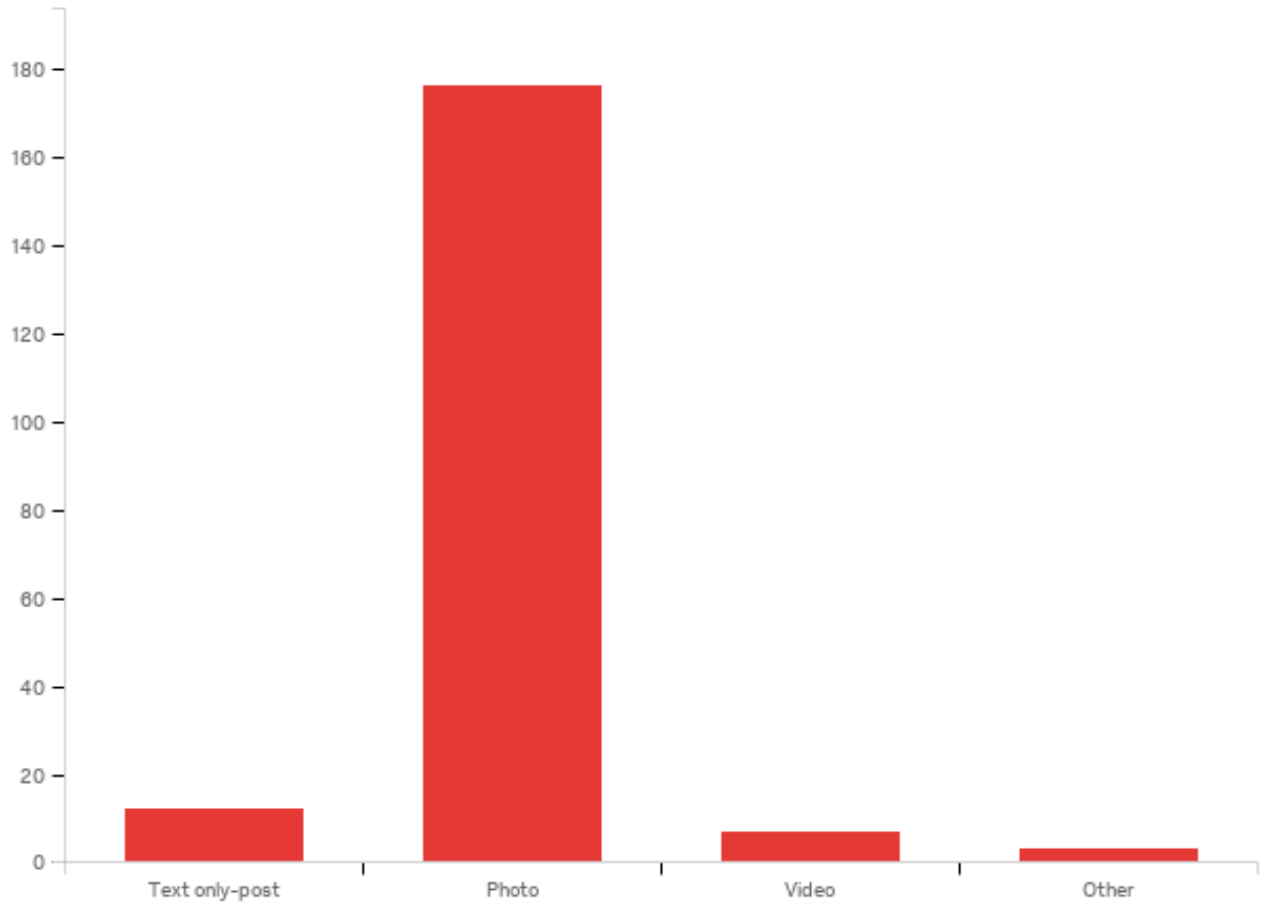
July 16th 2016, 12:34 pm CDT

Q1 - What social platform was content posted to?

Answer	%	Count
Instagram	50.00%	100
Twitter	50.00%	100
Total	100%	200

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
What social platform was content posted to?	1.00	2.00	1.50	0.50	0.25	200	100.00 %	100.00 %

Q2 - What was the primary content form?



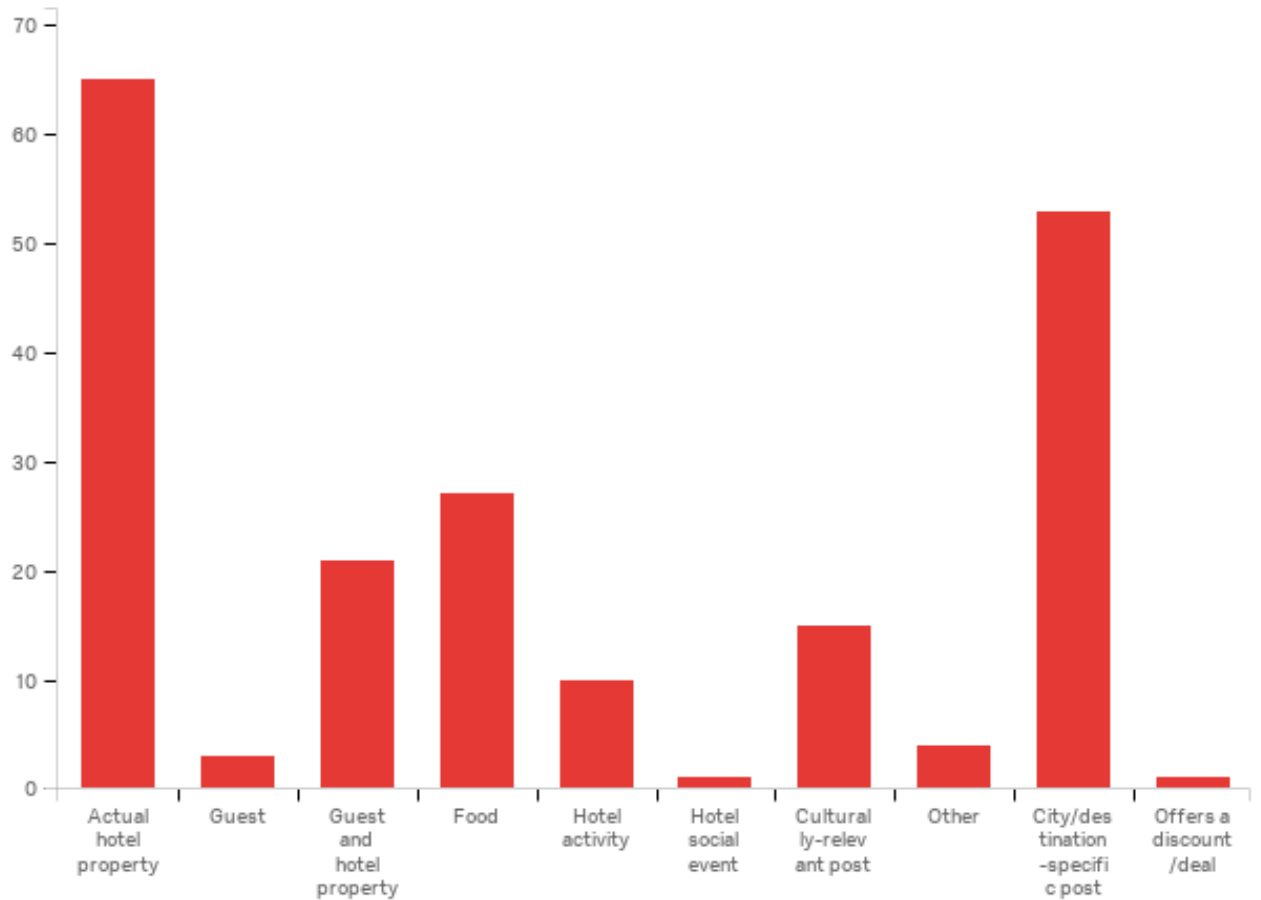
Answer	%	Count
Text only-post	6.06%	12
Photo	88.89%	176
Video	3.54%	7
Other	1.52%	3
Total	100%	198

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
What was the	1.00	4.00	2.01	0.40	0.16	198	98.48 %	93.94 %

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Q3 - What is the primary subject of the content?



Answer	%	Count
Actual hotel property	32.50%	65
Guest	1.50%	3
Guest and hotel property	10.50%	21
Food	13.50%	27
Hotel activity	5.00%	10
Hotel social event	0.50%	1
Culturally-relevant post	7.50%	15
Other	2.00%	4
City/destination-specific post	26.50%	53
Offers a discount/deal	0.50%	1

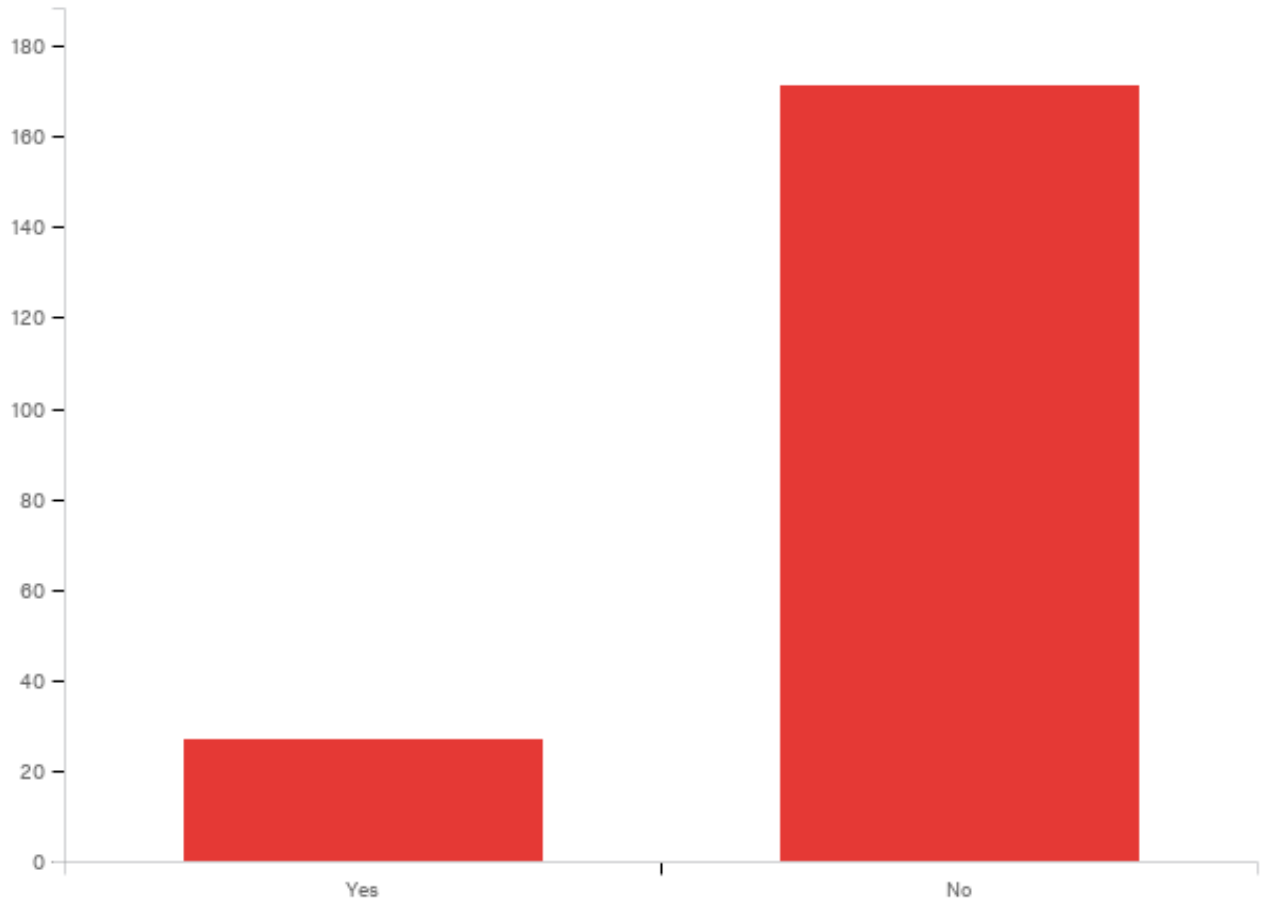
Total

100%

200

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
What is the primary subject of the content ?	1.00	10.00	4.61	3.25	10.59	200	44.50 %	29.00 %

Q4 - Is the Loews name visible in the post?



Answer	%	Count
Yes	13.64%	27
No	86.36%	171
Total	100%	198

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
Is the Loews name visible in	1.00	2.00	1.86	0.34	0.12	198	100.00 %	100.00 %

the
post?

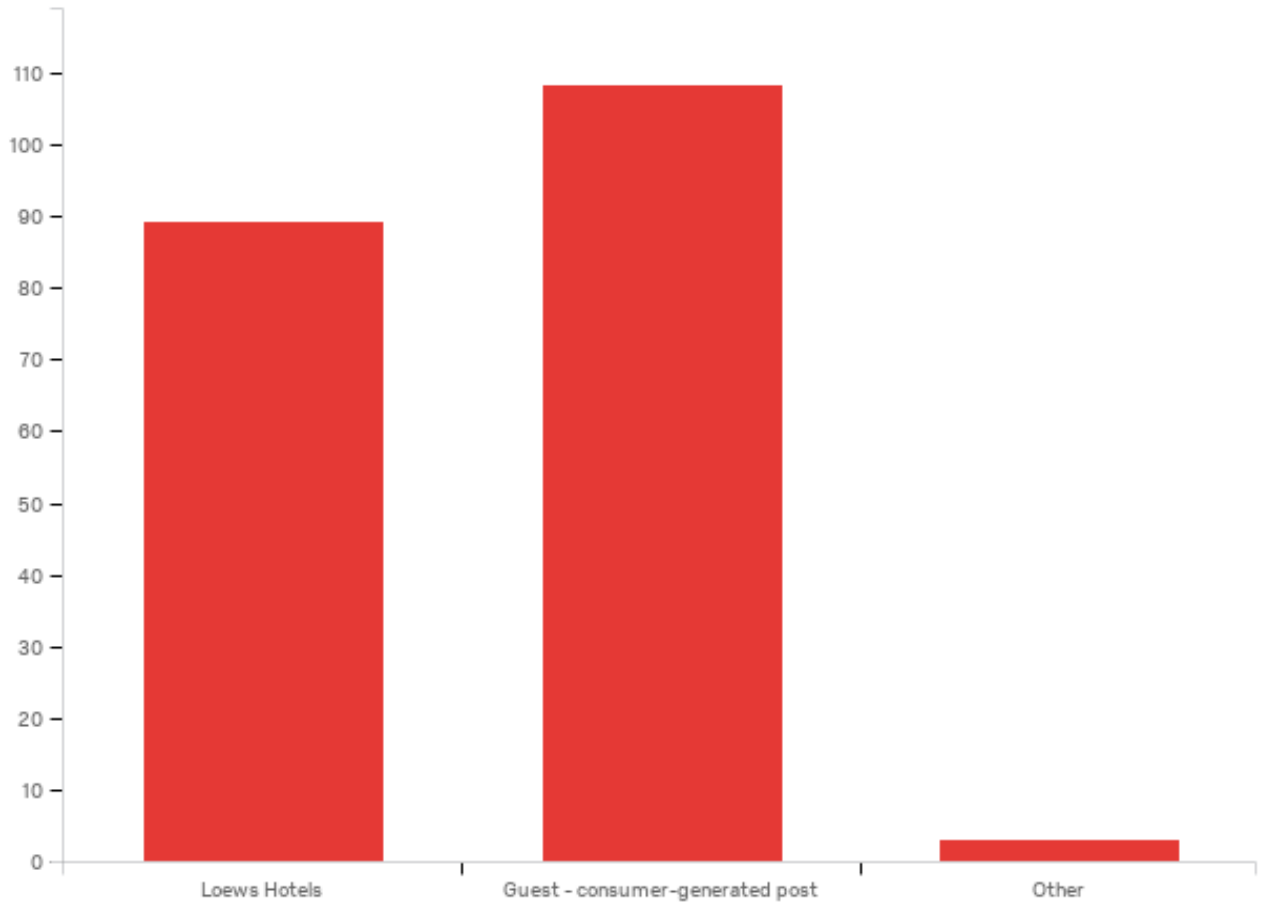


**Q9 - Was this post part of the Loews "Travel for Real" campaign?
(Included campaign hashtag?)**

Answer	%	Count
Yes	18.50%	37
No	81.50%	163
Total	100%	200

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
Was this post part of the Loews "Travel for Real" campaign? (Included campa...	1.00	2.00	1.81	0.39	0.15	200	100.00 %	100.00 %

Q5 - Who is the original author of the content?



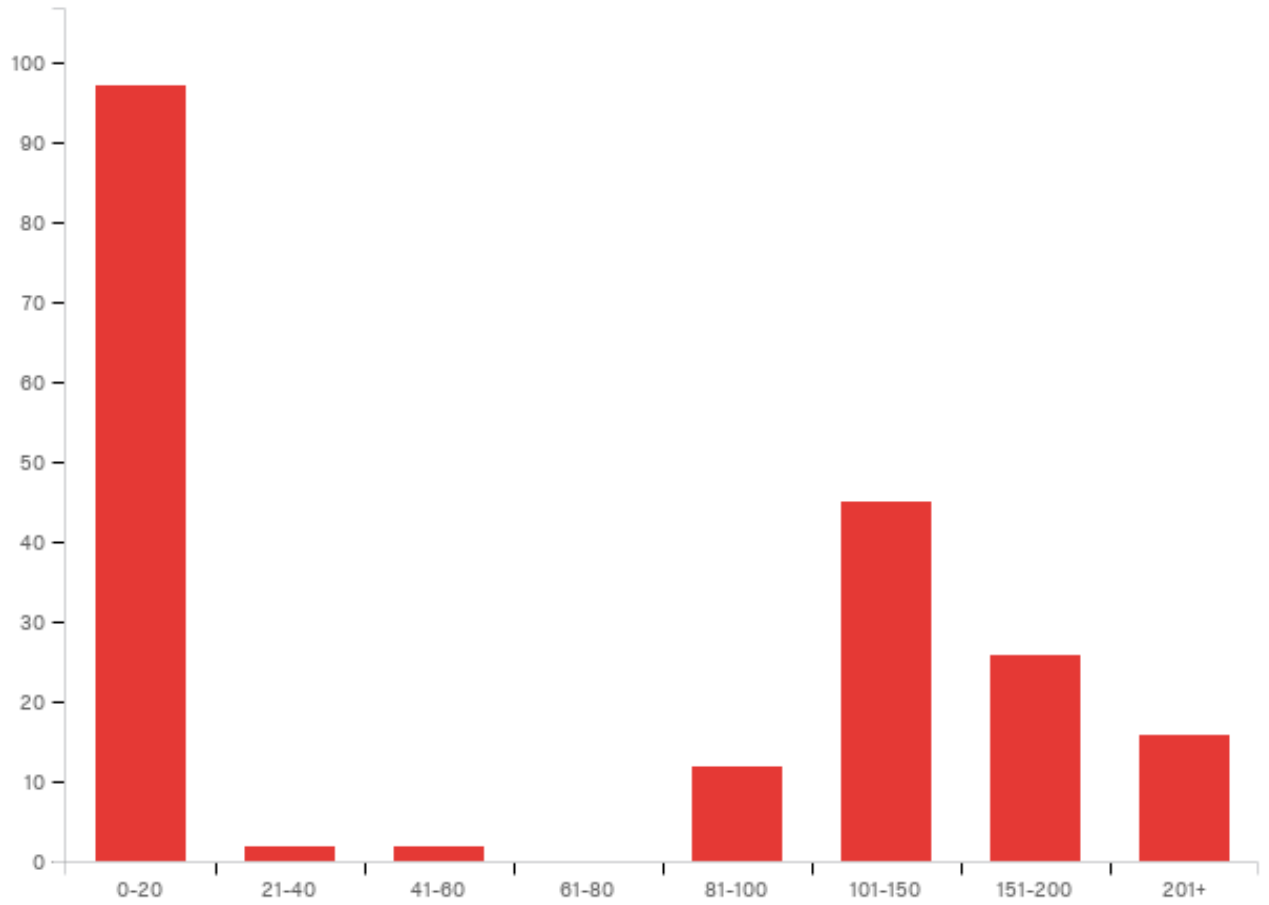
Answer	%	Count
Loews Hotels	44.50%	89
Guest - consumer-generated post	54.00%	108
Other	1.50%	3
Total	100%	200

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
Who is the original	1.00	3.00	1.57	0.52	0.28	200	100.00 %	100.00 %

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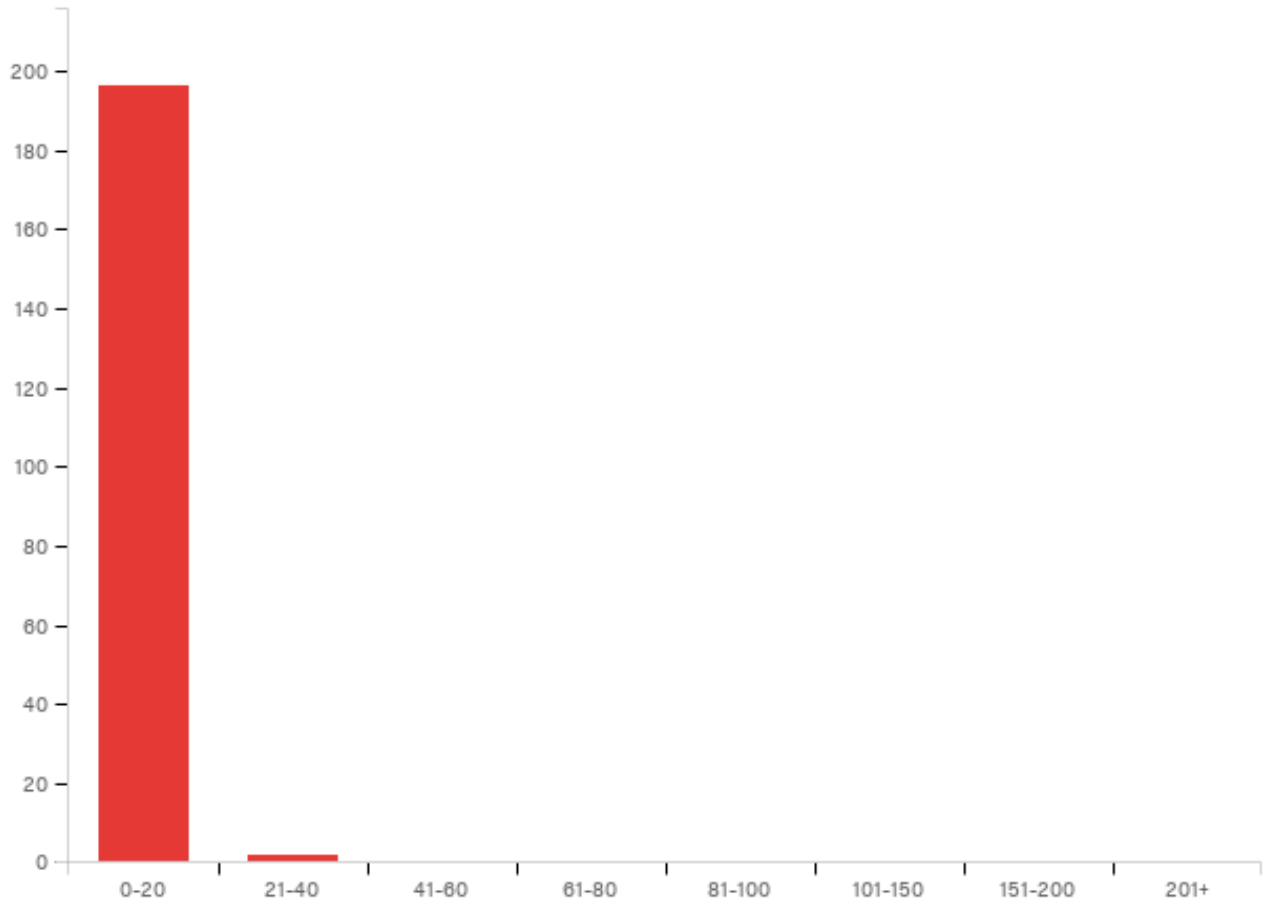
Q6 - How many likes does the post have?



Answer	%	Count
0-20	48.50%	97
21-40	1.00%	2
41-60	1.00%	2
61-80	0.00%	0
81-100	6.00%	12
101-150	22.50%	45
151-200	13.00%	26
201+	8.00%	16
Total	100%	200

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
How many likes does the post have ?	1.00	8.00	3.73	2.78	7.75	200	50.50 %	43.50 %

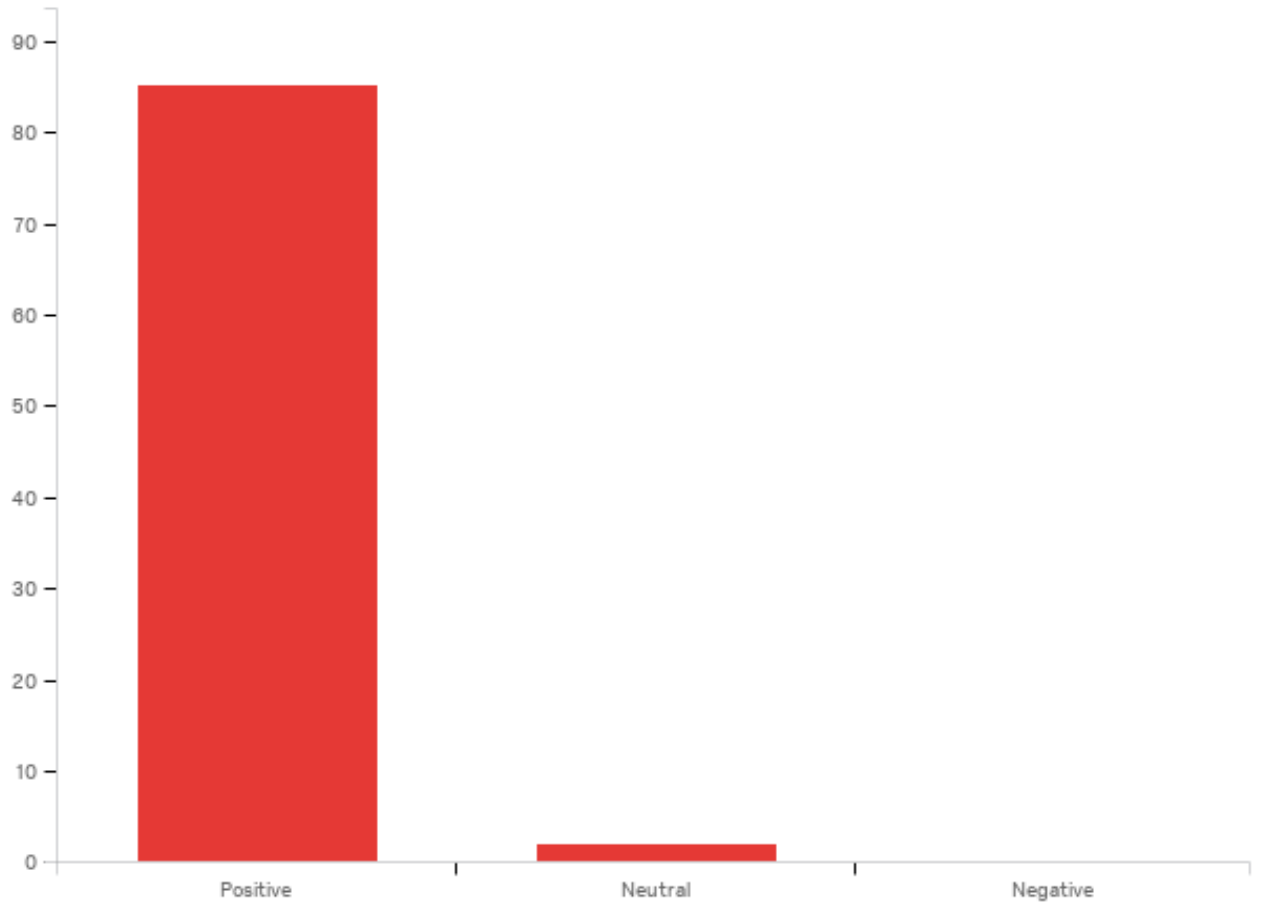
Q7 - How many comments does the post have?



Answer	%	Count
0-20	98.99%	196
21-40	1.01%	2
41-60	0.00%	0
61-80	0.00%	0
81-100	0.00%	0
101-150	0.00%	0
151-200	0.00%	0
201+	0.00%	0
Total	100%	198

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
How many comments does the post have?	1.00	2.00	1.01	0.10	0.01	198	100.00 %	0.00 %

Q8 - What is the average tone of the comments?



Answer	%	Count
Positive	97.70%	85
Neutral	2.30%	2
Negative	0.00%	0
Total	100%	87

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom Box	Top Box
What is the average tone of	1.00	2.00	1.02	0.15	0.02	87	100.00%	100.00%

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