

# Generation Y and their awareness of the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi

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#### **Abstract**



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The Santa Claus Village is one of the biggest tourism attractions in Northern Finland, and the city of Rovaniemi has been titled as the "Official Hometown of Santa Claus".

This thesis studies the level of knowledge of the Santa Claus Village and the affect the village has on the incoming tourism in the Rovaniemi. More specifically the focus is on the perceptions of different nationalities and generation Y, as in young adults with no children. The thesis was commissioned by Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing Ltd.

The theory part looks into the different aspects of effective destination band city branding. Furthermore the thesis discusses the possibilities and challenges of providing accurate service experiences for the more and more demanding and conscious modern day tourists.

The data was collected through an anonymous online questionnaire during a three-week-period in October and November 2015. Altogether 154 responses were gathered with four different language versions of the questionnaire.

The key findings suggest that there is a need for more advertising and visibility in the international markets for the Santa Claus Village. Roughly half of the respondents were aware of the existence of the Santa Claus Village Moreover, the reachability of Rovaniemi should also be underlined and the different possibilities for individual travellers not being a part of organised tours. Overall, it can be considered that there is still a need and possibilities for spreading the knowledge of the Santa Claus Village, keeping the Christmas spirit in mind.

## Keywords

Santa Claus, Santa Claus Village, Rovaniemi, Finland, destination branding, tourism, Generation Y

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#### 1 Introduction

Santa Claus is a character that touches people's hearts all around the world. He is known by many different names – Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas and Father Christmas to name a few - and though the details of the myth revolving around the character vary, the same basics can be found in the stories in most cultures. The brand of Santa Claus is one of the strongest in the world and has been said to have the value of over a trillion dollars.

Rovaniemi, a city in Northern Finland, has branded itself as the official hometown of Santa Claus. Along with the unique nature of the area, the tourism in the Lapland region is very much focused on the well-known Christmas character. The magic of Santa Claus is not only for children, but for all Christmas-minded people. Since the 1950's there has been a place in Rovaniemi where people from all over the world can meet the beloved white-bearded man and experience the magic of Christmas. Today the place is known as the Santa Claus Village, a tourist service destination that has a growing number of visitors year round.

The main aim of this thesis was to find out how Santa Claus and the existence of the Santa Claus Village affect the incoming tourism flow in Finland and more specifically in the city of Rovaniemi.

## 1.1 Research problem

"Defining a research problem is the fuel that drives the scientific process, and is the foundation of any research method and experimental design, from true experiment to case study." (Explorable, 2008-2015) The main problem to be discussed in this thesis was international tourists' knowledge of Santa Claus and how it affects their travelling to Finland. More specifically our target group was under 30 –year-old young adults without children, also referred to as 'Generation Y'. This age group was chosen to be the target as it was considered to be the category that the researchers had the best possibilities to get most answers from. The research questions included: Does Santa Claus affect Generation Y's decision to go to Rovaniemi? What kind of image does Generation Y have about Rovaniemi and the Santa Claus Village? Is Generation Y interested in visiting Rovaniemi in the future?

#### 1.2 Aims and objective

The aim was to find out how well tourists in the target group, under 30-year-olds without children, are familiar with the existence of Santa Claus in the Santa Claus Village in

Rovaniemi and how their knowledge affects their decision when choosing a travel destination in general, but also within Finland. Another goal was to find out the reasons for Generation Y not visiting Rovaniemi. The results of the research give beneficial information to the commissioner, Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd, on how the brand of Santa Claus and its attractiveness is perceived amongst the young adults of Generation Y. Therefore the objective was also to help our commissioner to develop their marketing plan and strategies for this target group. Eventually the goal was to make Santa Claus more known to tourists that come to Finland and increase the number of tourists in Rovaniemi.

## 1.3 Research approach and methods

Research methods are the ways of collecting information regarding a specific research topic. An online questionnaire was chosen as the most suitable method, as it was found to be the best way to reach the target audience with the resources of two students. The questionnaire combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches, emphasis on the latter. The target audience was reached mainly through Facebook connections of the researchers. The validity and reliability of the research had been ensured by carefully designing the questions and accurately and objectively handling and analysing the collected data.

#### 1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has been divided into six different chapters. The thesis starts with an introduction to the subject and the thesis. After the introduction the relevant theory on the subject of destination branding is presented. The third chapter presents the commissioner, the relationship between Santa Claus and Rovaniemi, continuing by elaborating the current situation of the brand and discussing the international competitors of the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi. Chapter number four presents the research approach and the methods used for this particular research. The fifth chapter discusses the key results and findings of the research and finally chapter six concludes the research and presents recommendations and suggestions for further development based on the results gathered through the research.

## 2 Destination branding

"One of the principal challenges facing many destinations is the need to differentiate themselves from competition with many of them offering very similar product offerings." (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan & Ranchhod 2009, 336.)

Branding a country is not a synonym for promoting tourism. While tourism promotion is definitely included in branding, it is a lot of other things as well. Branding includes for example inward investment, work immigration, promoting exports internationally and increasing international business of national companies. (Anholt 2010, 37.) One of the first steps in building a brand is establishing the destination's core values. The values should tell how relevant the brand is for consumers as well as how it compares to other destinations. The core values should be visible in the brand identity from photographs to colours, typography and the brand marque, creating a coherent entity. A successful brand should be credible, deliverable, differentiating, conveying powerful ideas, enthusing and resonating with the consumer. (Morgan & Pritchard 2010, 68.) The final goal of destination branding is to ensure that the visitor's experience of the place is positive and encourages visiting again. The trend of today is that differentiating with the so called hard factors, such as infrastructure and accessibility, becomes more difficult whereas the soft factors, such as heritage and people, are becoming more important for tourists. (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010, xxv)

The constant competition between nations to attract tourists, companies, talented people and finding markets for their exports push countries to manage and control their brands better. A marketing strategy is built on assessing the brand's image and how it compares to others. (Kotler & Gertner 2010, 45-46.)

As tourists seek more and more fulfilment and experiences into their lives rather than the traditional elements of a destination, such as accommodation and attractions, branding is possibly the most powerful marketing tool for destination marketers. As every destination claims to have the friendliest residents, unique nature and culture and as tourists are expecting high quality service and facilities, destinations need to differentiate themselves from the competitors more than ever. A successful brand has social, emotional and identity value to tourists. When people choose a destination, they are buying an emotional relationship. This is why the challenge of destination branding in the future "will be fought not over price but over hearts and minds". (Morgan & Pritchard 2010, 60-61.)

A rather unspoken aspect of destination branding is event tourism. Events can have a significant impact in a destination's brand and should be considered as co-operators in the branding process even though they will not be able to manage the destination marketing only by themselves. Events are often sought to destinations for the economic benefits and media value they bring. However, when chosen correctly, events can also play a role on improving and changing a destination's image. Different kind of events can be used to strengthen or alter certain parts of the destination's brand in favour of certain market segments. (Brown, Chalip, Jago & Mules 2010, 283-287.)

Budgeting is a notable challenge in destination branding. When compared to product or service branding, destination branding managers deal with minimum budgets, are vulnerable to political pressure amongst other external issues and have to take all the stakeholders into consideration. Yet, despite these limitations destination marketing organisations (DMO) need to market globally, competing not only with other destinations but other brands as well. (Morgan & Pritchard 2010, 62.)

#### 2.1 City branding

As urban tourism increases all the time and travelling is being made available for almost everyone by low cost airlines, it is crucial for cities to invest in branding. Usually cities concentrate on one of these two strategies: emphasizing material characteristics such as buildings and events or immaterial aspects such as stories and slogans. (Hospers 2011, 27.) Tourists seek for something unusual, something they would not experience back home. They visit sites that travel guides, brochures and blogs amongst many other media tell them to visit. City branding provides and distributes the city's image for tourists through all these different channels. City branders can therefore have an influence on what the tourists want to see. (Hospers 2011, 29.) Three main categories are listed as city's image carriers that attract tourists the most: the built environment, famous personalities and hallmark events, even though a city can have other image carriers than these three as well. (Ashworth 2009 in Hospers 2011, 29.) "If a city does not have imageable and scenic features, it will generally be hard to brand it." (Hospers 2011, 32.) It is possible to check the imageability of the city. What kind of physical objects does the city have? Are there celebrities, events or products that can be promoted on postcards and websites? Sites that can be photographed are crucial for a city's brand. (Hospers 2011, 32.)

"City branding requires partnership between key stakeholders who can effectively shape and, more importantly, implement a brand strategy." (Van Gelder 2011, 38.) An effective city brand partnership has several pillars it leans to. Inclusiveness and representativeness: all main stakeholders that can contribute in the shaping of the city must be included

and accepted as equals. Long-term commitment: development of a city brand can and will take years to fully bear fruit. Shared vision: all partners need to agree on the future vision of the city. Shared responsibility: all partners need to take equal responsibility in making the vision become reality. Trust: all partners should know each other's expectations of the process and any objectives should not be hidden. Hidden agendas destroy trust in partnership. Engagement: in addition to regular meetings, all partners should work on the brand in between meetings on their assigned sub-groups and projects. Communication: all partners communicate as one and understand other partners' perspectives. A unified partnership sends out strong signals to other audiences. Taking action and making investments: all partners must be ready to take 'on-brand' decisions and investments to help turn the wanted vision into reality. Evaluation: all partners must be ready to assess what has been done, what could be improved and what still needs to be done. (Van Gelder 2011, 39-42.)

Permanent residents of a certain city play an important role when branding the city. They represent the city's personality for tourists and visitors. Their recommendations and how they praise or complain about their home can have a significant effect in the decisions and perceptions of tourists. It is therefore fair to say that the residents can add value to the brand of their home city. (Insch 2011, 8.) When branding a city, the goals are much similar to those of the goals of product or service brands: creating loyalty and preference for the city amongst the several stakeholders the city wants to serve. (Insch 2011, 9.) The most important segments include for example investors, students, tourists and residents. These separate segments have all their own, different although sometimes overlapping interests in a city and need to be taken in consideration separately but at the same time create a brand that is coherent. However, the residents are often overlooked when building a brand that is attractive for tourists and other visitors even though it is them who create the city's social environment. Resident satisfaction is very important since it can either harm or improve the city brand. (Insch 2011, 9.)

The internet has made worldwide city branding more possible than ever. Consumers spend more time online and the amount of people using the internet is increasing all the time. This has also changed the way cities can and should advertise their brands. (Florek 2011, 82.) Website is a necessity in today's world when it comes to branding. Having a website raises awareness about the city and helps the customer to get familiar with it. It is, however, a rather passive tool for information distribution. Blogs have become a massive tool for spreading information from one individual to another. Lifestyle and travel blogs can have thousands of readers which gives them an opportunity to influence many people's opinions. Therefore it is important for the cities' marketing managers to have a relationship

with bloggers and encourage them to write positive reviews about the city. (Florek 2011, 84-86.) In addition to blogs, other social media platforms such as Facebook, TripAdvisor and Twitter are increasing their popularity as well. So many internet users visit social media sites every day that it is no wonder many companies and cities are focusing on being present online and designing a creative and effective branding campaign using social media. It is important for city managers to choose the right channels and analyse the online target markets for building a city brand online. It is also important to communicate with online customers via chat and posts etc. At the same time e-mail should not be completely abandoned, for it is a great way to distribute information directly at the target market. (Florek 2011, 88-90.)

A successful city brand can be defined as clear, distinctive and ambitious but realistic. It is based on the residents' values, attitudes and characteristics and reflects the city's skills, resources and capabilities. It adapts to serve several different segments and communicates successfully internally, as well as across several different media. Finally, a successful city brand is also consistent over time. (Middleton 2011, 20.) It must be, however, taken into consideration that societies change in time and the city branding should be a continuous process along the changing society. (Ooi 2011, 61.)

#### 2.2 Service experiences

More and more people want to have things that are 'extraordinary' in their lives. In tourism this means searching for unusual activities and unique destinations to visit. The consumption of experiential services is increasing as a result of this trend. (Scott, Laws & Boksberger 2010, 1.) The tourism industry and DMOs in particular have been criticized for focusing too much on the physical attributes of a destination and being slow on the experience-focused approach. (Morgan & Xu 2010, 120.) Experiences, however, are constantly happening for every individual and there are as many types of experiences as there are human beings. Experience economy aims to manage these experiences at a certain destination to be more valued by the consumer and thus benefitting the supplier as well. (Scott & al. 2010, 3.)

The nature of a tourist experience is very complex. The issues rise especially when identifying the experience, defining and measuring the components and how the experience changes according to every individual tourist. (Volo 2010, 16.) It is said that a tourist experience is a highly personal experience and cannot be accessed by anyone else than the person having the experience. (Volo 2010, 21.) Traditionally tourist experience is explained as a differentiation from one's everyday life and it is a whole composed by peak and supporting experiences. (Cohen 1972, 1979 & Quand and Wang 2004 in Volo 2010,

16.) Nowadays there are new types of experiences developing to the industry. These new activities include for example space tourism and virtual reality. (Volo 2010, 16.)

Service experiences can be classified in several different ways depending on the researcher. "This need to define experiences focuses the attention of the researcher and marketer on the ways in which travel services are lived and the deficiencies encountered." When designing an experience it is crucial to analyse the existing experiences. (Scott & al. 2010, 5.) Dube and Le Bel (2003) classify pleasurable experiences in four categories: sensory or physical pleasure, social pleasure, emotional pleasure and intellectual pleasure. (Dube and Le Bel 2003 in Scott & al. 2010, 4.) Tourism experience can also be categorized in four dimensions according to its accessibility, affective transformation, convenience and value. (Volo 2010, 17.)

It is important to realize the variability of an experience. This means that different kind of people engage themselves in different experiences, but also that "the same tourist activity can create different experiences in people within the same market segment." (Volo 2010, 17.) The same market segment can be for example backpackers.

One of the issues of tourism experiences is the difficulty of its measurement. How can an experience be measured and evaluated? The traditional study methods include for example surveys, travel diaries, interviews and observant participation. Recently new tools, such as videos, sensory devices and GPS systems, have been taken into use. Even though these methods are more expensive, they give valuable information on the visitors' mood, emotion and feelings. (Volo 2010, 17.)

A crucial point to take into consideration in tourism experiences is culture. "Culture provides cues regarding the rules of social conduct and expectations relative to the encounter; it serves as a frame of reference." (Hartman, Meyer & Scribner 2010, 101.) Experiencing different kind of situations in different cultures can broaden the customer's understanding on different cultures. However, whether a consumer finds the experience satisfying or not is based partly on cultural perspective. These different perspectives form a challenge to the suppliers as they need to satisfy their inter-cultural clients. It is important to understand the connection between cultural values and service expectations in order to create a positive service experience, which leads to consumer satisfaction and repeat purchases. (Hartman & al. 2010, 102.) A previous study explains that foreigners base their assumptions of a destination's service quality on their experiences in their home countries. When the expectations and reality do not match, the experience is associated with negativity. This incident is called 'culture shock' and it can be reflected for example in the contact

person, the physical environment or other service customers. (Stauss and Mang 1999 in Hartman & al. 2010, 101.)

When talking about the future of tourism experiences it is important (and especially interesting for this research) to study the travelling behaviour and visions of today's teenagers and students – 15-25-year-olds who will be the ones travelling in the future as well. (Morgan & Xu 2010, 119.) The results of a study conducted for British students reveal that for them, a "unique and memorable holiday experience" consists the importantly of social interaction. Those students who had had their most memorable holiday experiences in the Mediterranean countries still longed for further away destinations in the future. Therefore, even if one has had a memorable experience in the past, it does not exclude the wishing for other experiences elsewhere in the future. (Morgan & Xu 2010, 133.) The study also reveals that students want to go to a different place next for no other reason but simply because it is 'different'. There was no correlation to Maslow's theory of hierarchy. (Morgan & Xu 2010, 133.) 'Different' is, indeed, the key word when creating experiences for this generation in the future. (Morgan & Xu 2010, 134.)

There are three focus points when it comes to future research in the field of tourism experiences: the experience should be co-created by the customer and the supplier, the company and the brand should be connected to the customer's life via the experience and emphasizing the importance of experience-driven product design and marketing for the staff that interacts directly with the customer. (Scott & al. 2010, 9.)

#### 3 Rovaniemi and Santa Claus

This chapter concentrates on Rovaniemi and the commissioner of this thesis, Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. Basic information about the company and its function as well as their current branding strategy is presented. The previous studies conducted on the subject of Santa Claus and the image of Rovaniemi are also discussed. Further on general information and history about the Santa Claus Village situated in Rovaniemi is provided. The final part of this chapter gives insight on the competition between several Santa Claus themed attractions around the world.

#### 3.1 Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd

Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd was established in 2007 and it covers for the Rovaniemi and Ranua regions. The company employs seven year-round and a couple of seasonal employees. They have a separate unit called Rovaniemi Congresses that concentrates on meeting and event marketing and sales. The company also coordinates and commissions a joint marketing of 150 companies for the Rovaniemi region. These companies own 49% of Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. The rest (51%) is owned by the City of Rovaniemi. (Visit Rovaniemi, 2013)

Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd co-operates with many companies such as Visit Finland, The Regional Council of Lapland and Finnair as well as international actors. According to their website the company's tasks include strengthening the brand of Rovaniemi as the home town of Santa Claus, marketing Rovaniemi internationally as a tourist destination, raising Rovaniemi's profile in international media and producing tourist information services for Rovaniemi and Ranua. (Visit Rovaniemi, 2013)

Keeping the spirit of Christmas and Santa Claus alive by sharing and caring about each other, by being present, authentic, surprising and creative are listed as Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd's values. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010). The values are shown for example in the arctic nature of Rovaniemi, the hospitality of the residents of Lapland, Rovaniemi Design Week and the products of Lappset and all the residents of Rovaniemi. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010). The company is described as a "profitable, expert regional tourist organisation within Lapland and Finland". (Visit Rovaniemi, 2013)

#### 3.1.1 Branding background

"A brand is like a coal: the more people you have blowing on it the stronger it glows." (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010). In 2010 Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) started a campaign with several companies to brighten the Christmas image of Rovaniemi. They stated the goal in branding Rovaniemi to be to increase the city's visibility and competitiveness internationally, and therefore better the income in tourism and increase the wellness of the residents of Rovaniemi. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010). The companies from tourism, trade, sport and culture industries that were part of this branding campaign highlighted the previously mentioned values (presence, authenticity, caring, sharing, creativity and being surprising) as the most important elements of Rovaniemi's Christmas brand. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010).

The development of the city of Rovaniemi and its wellness in the future is tied to strong relationships with the outside world. These strong relationships are only possible if as many people as possible know about Rovaniemi and are interested in what the city has to offer. The main goal of Rovaniemi's brand development in 2010 is stated as follows: increasing the city's economic activity as well as the wellbeing of the residents of Rovaniemi. This goal includes attracting new residents to Rovaniemi, increasing tourism income and the employment rate, supporting local companies to export their services and promoting the Rovaniemi region for new businesses and investments. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010).

Rovaniemi has branded itself as the hometown of Santa Claus. Millions of people have strong, positive image and personal experiences about Christmas and this makes the theme of "The Official Hometown of Santa Claus" a great potential for the city of Rovaniemi. However, this potential has not been used to its full extent yet. Rovaniemi is rather unknown internationally and its image does not come across clearly for visitors and is even seen as outdated at times. In addition, the amount of competitors increases both nationally and internationally all the time. For these reasons it is important to create a strong, clear, meaningful and unique image for Rovaniemi to help reach the target groups. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010).

From 2010 onwards Rovaniemi Tourism Ltd and its co-operating companies have released many projects to strengthen the image of Rovaniemi as a Christmas city. These projects include for example sport events in line with the brand, Santa's speech in the Arctic Summit, elf guides, global opening of Christmas and many more. New projects must be developed in the future to maintain the active image of Rovaniemi's brand. (Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus (LEO) and Matkailun ja elämystuotannon klusteriohjelma (OSKE) (2010).

#### 3.1.2 Previous studies

To the researchers' knowledge, there are no studies as this done previously for Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. However, there are few researches available that include the topic of Santa Claus and the image of Rovaniemi.

Sarajärvi and Salminen discussed the Christmas image of Rovaniemi in 2010 in their bachelor's thesis. They conducted a quantitative online questionnaire for Finnish people on how they perceive the Christmas image of Rovaniemi, as well as how the values of creativity, caring and giving can be seen in the city. The results on the Christmas image were mostly positive. The main point of complaint amongst the respondents was that Christmas in Rovaniemi is too expensive. This was, however, explained by the overall high price level in Finland. Sarajärvi's and Salminen's research gives the opportunity to compare the results of international tourists' opinions of Rovaniemi and Santa Claus to Finnish people's opinions, even though it is not the main focus in this research.

Pretes (2006, 27) uses a theory of semiotic analysis (MacCannell 1989 in Pretes 2006, 27) when explaining the attractiveness of Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi. The theory suggests that each site consists of a marker or a signifier that sights or signifies the site to the tourist. The Santa Claus Village acts as a marker for the sight of the holiday of Christmas. Santa Claus, the individual, acts as a marker for the legend of Santa Claus. "Santa Claus and the Santa Claus Village are visual representations of abstract sights. By making the sight visible through its marker, the sight can become an object of consumption." (Pretes 2006, 28.) This is what has been done in Rovaniemi. Therefore tourists who visit the Santa Claus Village interact with 'Christmas' and 'Santa Claus' (Pretes 2006, 28). Visiting the Santa Claus Village in Lapland is also a nostalgic trip to childhood and enables the visitors to relive the magic of Christmas. (Pretes 2006, 29.) The challenges the Santa Claus Village will face in the future include how to maintain the site's magical and enchanted image while offering all the materialistic benefits that a tourist attraction has to provide. (Pretes 2006, 30.) "The success or failure of Finland's strategy lies in convincing

tourists that Lapland's Santa Claus is the 'original', and thus worth seeing." (Pretes 2006, 30.)

The subjects of Rovaniemi and Santa Claus are also discussed by Hall in his article. "Santa Claus and Christmas clearly have a powerful influence on consumer spending, including holiday decisions." (Hall 2008, 59-67.) His focus is on the brand of Santa Claus and place branding especially in northern latitudes. Lapland and Rovaniemi are praised for being greatly concentrated in Christmas related infrastructure, including Santa Claus. (Hall 2008, 59-67.) Santa tourism has indeed contributed to the regional economic development with millions of euros coming from the international charter flights to Lapland during the Christmas season. (Lähteenmäki 2006 & Halpern 2008 in Hall 2008, 59-67.) Even though the Finnish government and the main carrier, Finnair, are also supporting the idea of Santa tourism, the issue of competitiveness is still relevant. There are several Santa Claus tourism destinations within Lapland, which is jeopardising the uniqueness of the experience and affects also the destination choices of international travel companies. (Activities Abroad 2008 in Hall 2008, 59-67.) The changing climate is another subject to worry about especially for northern destinations. Snowy winters and the Christmas environment are no longer guaranteed every year. (Hall 2008, 59-67.) Rovaniemi is not differentiated enough in Finland which eventually causes problems internationally as well - the fact being that inside Europe several cities market themselves as "The Christmas City". (Hall 2008, 59-67.) Hall (2008) also mentions the several other cities around the world that promote themselves as the home of Santa Claus. The competition aspect will be discussed further in the end of this chapter.

#### 3.2 Santa Claus Village

The history of Santa Claus Village begins with the establishment of the Arctic Circle Cabin which was built to mark the polar circle. The Arctic Circle Cabin was first built by the then Governor of the county, Uuno Hannula, for the visit of Eleanor Roosevelt in 1950. This visit was the first event to attract a large number of visitors to the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi. In 1956 the City Tourist Board took over the management and development of the Arctic Circle Cabin as the activity had become regular and the tourist flow was unbearable during high season. New activities were added for visitors to enjoy along with crossing the polar circle and the area of the initial Arctic Circle Cabin kept on growing to the extent we now know as Santa Claus Village. Since its establishment, many distinguished guests have visited the Arctic Circle Cabin and Santa Claus Village. (Santa Claus Village)

Santa Claus Village is situated at the Arctic Circle, eight kilometres north from Rovaniemi. It comprehends an area consisting of several different services such as restaurants, a snowmobile park, reindeers and other Christmas and winter themed activities. Santa Claus is present at the Santa Claus Office for tourists to meet 365 days a year and the admission is free. (Visit Rovaniemi, 2013) The revenue of Santa Claus village in 2014 was almost two million euros. Santa Claus village employs approximately 20 employees. (YLE, 2015)

It is important to acknowledge that in addition to Santa Claus Office there are two different attractions in Rovaniemi in which it is also possible to meet Santa Claus. These are called Santa Park, located underground, and Santa's Holiday Village, which is the newest of the three. The other two Santas, however, are not present the whole year round. (Visit Rovaniemi, 2013; YLE, 2015)

## 3.3 Competition

Santa Claus has often been named as one of the best and strongest brands in the world (Cheuvront, 2010; Hainey, 2013; Hall, 2008; Hausman LLC, 2014). He is one of the most beloved mythical characters in both children's and adults' minds, and the brand is said to have the value of 1.6 trillion dollars. As it – or he – is such a valuable and well-known concept, it is obvious that there are several parties that attempt to utilise the image.

As stated earlier (in chapter 1), Rovaniemi has branded themselves as the official hometown of Santa Claus. However, Rovaniemi is far from being the only place or city to claim to be original home of the beloved man in a red suit. The main competition is located up north, as it is commonly believed – something that all of the competitors agree upon – that Santa Claus lives somewhere near the North Pole where the weather is cold and snowy.

At the same time as the location is one of the strongest supporters for the claim of Rovaniemi being the original home of Santa Claus, it is also one of the weaknesses. Finland is a small northern country with a little over 5 million people, not having such a wide international conspicuousness as some of its competitors. According to the Northern American tradition, Santa Claus lives on the North Pole in Canada. The US and Canada having together almost 350 million residents and a great impact on the other western countries regarding the popular culture, it has one of the strongest claims (Infoplease, 2011). The Canadian minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, officially declared Santa Claus to have a Canadian citizenship in 2008 (Toronto Sun, 2008).

One of the most known brands that utilises the reputation of Santa Claus is Coca Cola. The Coca Cola Company is an American company that is well known all over the world and has used Santa Claus in its adverts since the 1920s (The Coca Cola Company, 2012). According to Burn-Callander and Davidson's article on The Telegraph (2014), the Coca Cola Christmas television advertisement "Holidays Are Coming" was recently voted Britain's most loved Christmas ad of all time. The ad indeed features Santa Claus, but the traditional American version of him. The article states that Coca Cola and its ads have played a significant role in creating the image of Santa Claus he has today.

Hall (2008) discusses the relation between Santa Claus and place branding. The main focus is on countries in the northern parts of the world: Canada, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and the US (Table 1). Santa Claus is strongly associated with winter and cold, and Hall's table and competitors chosen for it emphasise that aspect. If comparing solely by the amount of letters received, according to Hall's table from 2008, the Canadian North Pole would have the strongest claim with over a million letters. Rovaniemi takes the second place and the first in Europe with over 500 0000 letters (Table 1). According to Simola's article, in 2013 the Finnish Santa Claus received most of the letter from Italy and the UK (Simola, 2013). The amount of the letters from Finnish children was only a fifth of the whole half a million. The Universal Postal Union UPU tells that the Canadian Santa on the North Pole received 1.1 million letters in over 30 different languages (UPU, 2010).

Table 1. Examples of Santa Claus related place branding (Hall, 2008)

Country	Location	websites	Christmas character / brand	Localisation message	Material evidence of brand
Canada	North Pole H0H 0H0 (official Canadian postal code for mail to Santa Claus)	http://canadapost.ca/santas- corner	Santa Claus (In English); Father Christmas (In French)	North Pole	More than 11,000 current and retired Canada Post employees referred to as the Postal Elves reply to the more than a million letters that are received and over 40,000 emails (Canada Post 2007)
Finland	Rovaniemi	http://www.posti.fi/postimerk-kikeskus/jpp/en_index.html (Santa Claus' main Post Office) http://www.santaclauslive.com/http://tourism.rovaniemi.fi/?deptid=6335 (tourism information service) http://www.santaclaus.fi/?deptid=14561 (A Fairytale of Christmas) (Rovaniemi Development Agency)	Santa Claus; 'Rovaniemi – the Christ- mas City'	The capital city of Lapland, Rovaniemi is a unique destination both with respect to location and services. Located where Lapland begins, you can cross the Arctic Circle, meet Santa Claus and enjoy the brightness of the summer nights or, in winter, admire the northern lights. Rovaniemi is an adventure in itself. The Arctic Circle is where you'll find Santa and his elves when they want to come out of their secret places and meet people. The magic of Christmas is reality here.	Santa Claus' Main Post Office received over half a million visitors and letters a year. (The Rovaniemi tourism website claims 700,000); Santa Park; Santa Claus Village
Finland	Turku	http://www.christmascity.com/ (Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Turku)	'Christmas city of Finland'	'The genuine atmosphere of the Turku Christmas City is based on the long traditions of the city' Turku the Christ- mas City of Finland, glows of warmth and traditions from the end of November and far in January'.	Christmas Street, festival events
Greenland	The North Pole (Greenland as gateway)	http://www.greenland.com/ (Official tourism and business sites of Greenland) http://www.santa.gl/	Santa Claus	'Regardless of which version of Santa Claus you believe in, however, there is only one thing you need to know – that Santa Claus lives in Greenland.'	Nuuk has Santa's post office and post box. (50,000 letters a year)
Iceland	Dimmuborgir in Myvatns- sveit	http://www.santaworld.is/	Santa Claus, Yule Lads	From time immemorial Santa Claus has lived at Dim- muborgir in Myvantssveit, carrying out his work of glad- dening young hearts of all ages over the Christmas peri- od. For many years now Santa has been answering let- ters from children, leaving gifts in their shoes and bring- ing people presents at Christmas. All this he has done from his home in Dimmuborgir'.	Christmas market, Santa Claus post office, Santa in residence from late November
Norway	Drøbak	http://www.julehus.no/ sak/000003.asp (Tregaarden's Christmas house)	Julenissen ('Christmas elf) also nisser	-	Julehuset (the Christmas House) (10 months a year), post office (20,000 letters a year)
Norway	Savalen	http://www.julenissen.no/ barnnisse.html	Julenissen ('Christmas elf) also nisser (gnomes)		Santa Street, Santa's house and workshop (seasonal); tours from UK with Activities Abroad
Sweden	Mora (Dalarna)	http://www.santaworld.se/	Santa Claus		Santa World – Tomteland (Year round)
USA	North Pole, Alaska (near Fairbanks)	http://www.northpolealaska. com/ http://www.northpolealaska. com/Theme-City/Welcome. html http://www.santaclaushouse. com/		Where the Spirit of Christmas lives Year round' Santa Calus is alo featured on the town's emblem When developed as a fully implemented theme city, we will enthusiastically say, "Santa has prepared a secret city, a romantic place, full of light and the magic of Christmas year-round. Come Visit North Pole, Alaska!"	Santa Claus House, 12m Santa statue, Santaland RV Park, San- ta's Suds Laubdromat, Post Of- fice, street banes all have Christmas themes (400,000 let- ters a year)
USA	Santa Claus, Indiana	http://www.santaclausmuseum. org/ http://www.legendaryplaces. org/ (Spencer County Visitor's Bureau and link to Post Office and other attractions)	Santa Claus Santa Claus and Abraham Lincoln (the county was his boyhood home) are used in the county's promotion	No mythological account of Christmas location given instead an historical account is provided, 'Come explore the history of our magical town; it's a great place to visit with free admission!' (Santa Claus Museum)  Santa Claus Post Office is located in the Kringle Plaza	Main road through town is known as the Christmas Boule- vard; Santa's Candy Castle; Santa Claus Museum; Holiday World; Santa's Lodge; Lake Ru- dolph Campground; Christmas Lake Village themed gated community; Post Office; volun- teers ensure that each child re- ceived a reply from Santa Claus (10,000 letters a year)

One of the most recent countries to enter the competition is China. An article on Clapway reported in 2014 that a new Santa Claus theme park was set to be built in Chengdu, China (Soriano, 2014). This is, however, not a straight competitor but rather an extension of the Finnish brand. The park will be built in collaboration with Santa Park Ltd., the company that has run the Santa Park in Rovaniemi since 1997. The Chinese theme park is awaited to attract more Chinese visitors to Finland and Rovaniemi, to the original Santa Park. Therefore the new competition is not necessarily for the Finnish Santa Claus but more for the Northern American one.

## 4 Research approach and methods

"Research methods – are the techniques or procedures used to collate and analyse data" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8)

According to Grix (2010), the key purposes of research methods are "to offer the researcher a way of gathering information or gaining insight into a particular issue" and "to enable another researcher to re-enact the first's endeavours by emulating the methods employed" (Grix, 2010, p. 32). It is important to choose the right method not only for the sake of making a clear research plan, but also to guarantee the validity of the results. When the research is done properly with the right methods and another researcher is able to conduct the same research with similar results, the results can be considered valid. However, as Cohen et al. (2011) underline in their book Research Methods in Education, the results can never be 100 percent valid.

#### 4.1 Qualitative and quantitative approaches

Most authors mention two main research approaches to collecting and analysing data: the qualitative method and the quantitative method. The differences between these two methods have been discussed vastly. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005), state the difference to be in the procedure and the two methods to be non-exclusive, whereas Hirsjärvi et al (2010) are careful not to explicitly differentiate the one from another but consider that measuring in principle involves both methods. The qualitative way is more about explorative, process oriented and gathered through observation and interpretation, whereas the quantitative method focuses on the facts, is result oriented and has a logical approach. A simplistic way of distinguishing the two methods is to say that qualitative data is collected through interviews and quantitative through surveys.

According to Dwyer et al. (2012), the quantitative method has lately become more and more popular in the field of tourism research. It is not only due to the globalisation of the industry and the demand for larger databases including quantitative data, but also because the stakeholders have become more aware and are valuing quantitative data and results more than before.

The ways to determine the validity of the results differ according to the method. Whereas quantitative results rely i.e. on controllability, replicability, generalizability, context-freedom and randomization of samples, the qualitative results need more abstract validation: catching the meanings and intentions, data presentation, the naturalness of the setting and inductive data analysing (Cohen et al., 2011).

Following the reasoning above and due to the nature of the research problem and sampling, the method of quantitative data collection was chosen for this particular research. Additionally, as it has been stated before, the two methods should be considered as complementary rather than exclusive, qualitative aspects may be added in the form of open ended questions.

#### 4.2 Data collection process

In the book Research Methods in Education by Cohen et al. (2011), online surveys and questionnaires are discussed quite thoroughly. The authors say that though surveys embedded into an email are more likely to have a higher response rate, questionnaires based on a website have a greater possibility to attract a higher number of participants overall, and are therefore more advisable.

Cohen et al. (2011) continue with pointing out the most important factor in designing the questionnaire structure to be the amount of respondents wanted. When the sample size gets bigger, the clearness and structured design become more important. With a smaller audience, the questionnaires can be less structured and more adjusted to the situation. Cohen et al. (2011) continue by stating that while the planning and setting up of the questionnaire may take a while, the data collected through a well-structured questionnaire can be rather easily and rapidly analysed.

To ensure the respondent's anonymity, no names are asked. Cohen et al. (2011) state by referring to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) that it is essential to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Therefore no names are to be asked, and the respondents should be identified i.e. with code numbers or aliases. Some specific details, such as the age group, gender and nationality of the respondent are asked to verify the respondent's belonging to the target group and therefore the validity of the answers. This is especially important as the answers will be collected online and in principle anybody can have access to the questionnaire.

Several authors (e.g. Cohen et al., 2011; Gay et al., 2007; Lavrakas, 2008) state the greatest mistake of questionnaires to be the length. According to Lavrakas (2008), the length, however, becomes significant only when the time it takes to fill in exceeds 20 minutes. The length of the questionnaire should be stated in the beginning of the questionnaire, when the respondent is first introduced to the subject. A long and time-consuming questionnaire could therefore already lower the respondent rate.

To make the questionnaire as effective as possible, the language resources of the researchers are utilized. This is furthermore to help the respondents understand and answer the questions as accurately as possible. The questionnaire is first finalised in English, and then translated to French, German and Spanish. Each version has been checked by a native speaker before publication of the questionnaire. The questionnaire has been tested by a group of students before the publication to avoid or possible misunderstandings in the questions and to ensure the functionality of the questionnaire platform.

The original questionnaire as well as all the different language versions can be found at the end of this thesis as attachment 1. The questions the questionnaire is looking for answers to are such as whether the generation Y, supposedly majority of which does not have children yet, is motivated to travel to a destination branded as a family resort. Furthermore, the questions explore the comparison of Rovaniemi and other cities in Finland.

As our target group consists of young adults, which are classified as generation Y and therefore digital natives by Beckendorff et al. (2000), they are comfortable and deeply involved with the online world. This is why we have found online questionnaire to be an appropriate and effective way to reach an adequate number or respondents. Furthermore, an online questionnaire is a rather economical way of collecting answers. As the researchers are students with limited resources and time, and the respondents are located in different countries, it is evident that a larger sample of respondents can be reached online than in person.

According to Carter and Levy (2010), in 2009 Facebook had over 250 million users, and in 2012 Facebook announced that it had more than one billion active users (Facebook, 2012). Noyes (2015) sums up the platform: 936 million daily users, the most common age group (29%) 25-34 year olds, average time spent at a time is 20 minutes. This is why the main distribution channel for the questionnaire will be Facebook. We both have international networks gained through student exchange periods and other stays abroad. However, Noyes (2015) also states that every 60 seconds there are 293 000 status updates, 136 photos uploaded and 510 comments posted on Facebook. One of the biggest challenges was therefore to gain the attention of the potential respondents, to stand out of the newsfeed. The distribution needed to be active throughout the data collection process, and both of the researchers were to be intent on collecting the adequate amount of responses by promoting the questionnaire amongst their networks.

#### 4.3 Data analysing process

The main tools that were used to create the questionnaire and to analyse the collected data were Webropol and SPSS. Both are tools that the researchers have previous experience with, from previous projects conducted at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. Webropol is a Finnish company that offers resources i.e. for online based questionnaires. According to Webropol's website, they have over 40 000 users in 2500 different organisations. SPSS, stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, is a software programme that is used for statistical analysis and has proven to be useful and user friendly when handling numerical data.

The data collection process took place between October 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 and November 5<sup>th</sup> 2015. During the period altogether 154 responses were collected. The collected data was then converted from Webropol to SPSS and the results analysed. The analysis will be discussed in the following chapter titled 'key results and discussion'.

## 4.4 Reliability and validity of the results

Finn et al. (2000) describe reliability to be about the consistency of the results and to which extent the research can later be repeated with similar findings. Reliable research results are not dependent on the date, the exact sample nor the researcher him/herself. Validity determines "whether a measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to measure" (Finn et al., 2000, p. 28). Furthermore, validity has to do with whether the results can be generalised to a larger population than the sampling.

Veal (2006) suggests that especially in the tourism industry researchers struggle with the validity of the results as the research is most often concerned with people's behaviour and attitudes and the information is gathered through people's own reports through surveys. The results are more dependent of the accuracy and honesty of the respondents and can therefore never the validity can never be as high as for example in natural sciences.

As the data collection was carried out by using an anonymous online questionnaire and never actually meeting the respondents, there is no possible way of being certain of the authenticity of the answers. However, the anonymity and distance to the respondents ensures the objectivity of the analysis and minimises the impact of the researchers own interpretation and reflection on the results.

In the case of a questionnaire, an important factor in determining whether the results are reliable is the formulation of the questions. Finn et al. (2000) state that a reliable question

is one that is specific, clear-worded and simple and eventually will obtain the same results from a person no matter the situation. By carefully wording the questionnaire the possibility of misunderstandings and ambiguity can be minimised. Furthermore, as in this case the questionnaire was translated to several languages, it was essential to have the translations proofread by native speakers to indicate any possible miscommunications.

## 5 Key results and discussion

Altogether 154 responses were gathered through questionnaires in four different languages. Most responses were gathered through the version in English with 68 % of all responses. The other response rates were French version with 18 %, German with 8 % and Spanish with 6 %. These are, however, not equivalent numbers to the division of the respondents' nationalities, which will be discussed in the following sections.

## 5.1 Demographics

Considering that our target group was generation Y, under 30-year-old young adults, we succeeded in reaching the right respondents rather well. 75 % of the respondents identified themselves to be in the age group of 19-30 years. 26 % of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 50, 6 % over 51 years and 2 % under 18.

There was not a great difference in the amount of male and female responses. 58 % of the respondents were female, 40 % male and 1 % did not want to specify their gender. The gender does not play a significant role in the analysis as it was not considered to as important characteristic as the age or nationality in this research.

Another characteristic defined previously when discussing the target group was the absence of children. As with the age group, this was also successfully reached by 92 % of the respondents not having under 18 year old children. Children over 18 years were not regarded to make a difference in this particular research, as the focus of the research was to identify whether the Santa Claus Village is an interesting destination for young adults with no children. Furthermore, our main target was under 30 year old who could not naturally have over 18 year old children.

For analysing purposes the nationalities were regrouped to the following subgroups: British, French, Spanish, Other European, North American, Asian and other. As the figure 1 below presents, the biggest percentage is 'Other European' with approximately 32 %. This group included respondents from all over Europe: Czech, Belgian, Austrian, Dutch, Italian, Slovakian and others. The second biggest respondent groups were French and Asian (ca. 14 % each). The Asian group again included different nationalities located in Asia and Middle East: Vietnamese, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and others. Other nationalities including such as Egyptians, New Zealanders, Turkish and others were around 12 % of all respondents. British and German respondent rates circled around 9 %. North American – Usa and Canada – were a bit over 6 % leaving Spanish with just over 3 %.

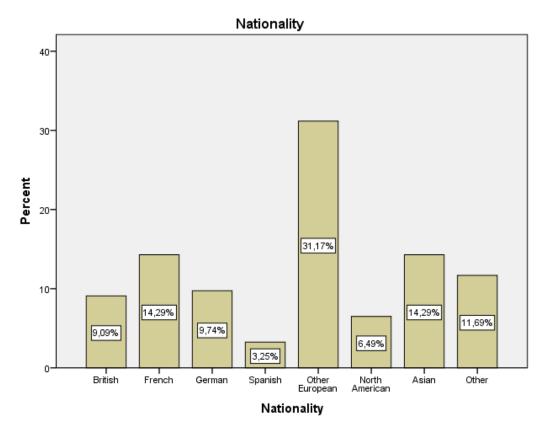


Figure 1. Nationality division of the respondents

For the purposes of this research, it was important to differentiate the responses gathered from the main target countries for the incoming tourism in Rovaniemi. Therefore the separate nationalities British, French, German and Spanish were chosen. When creating the nationality groups, the amount of responses from different nationalities was also taken into consideration and thus the biggest nationality groups were separated for their own groups.

In the following analysis and discussion, the focus will be on the difference of responses according to the different nationalities. This was found to be both most interesting, beneficial and suitable characteristic to analyse. The division of the nationality groups is rather equal, whereas the age division is greatly in the young adults' favour and would not therefore reflect accurate responses.

#### 5.2 Did you know that there is a Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland?

Among all of the respondents, the knowledge of Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi was divided rather evenly. Just over half of the respondents (55%) knew about the Santa Claus Village and 45% answered to not have known about the attraction. The statistics are shown in the figure 2 below. 22% of those who knew about the Santa Claus Village are classified as 'other Europeans' (including several different nationalities but excluding British, French, German and Spanish) and therefore they are most likely to know about

the Santa Claus Village. Approximately 10% and 8% of those who knew the village are French and Asian. As of those who answered to not have known about Santa Claus Village British (~6%), German (~6%) and others (~8%) hold the highest percentages with 'other Europeans' (~9%).

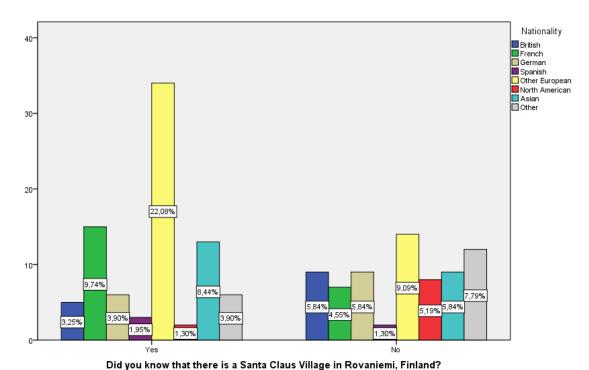


Figure 2. Knowledge of the Santa Claus Village within nationalities.

To give more detailed information about the differences between the nationalities, approximately 68% of French, 60% of Spanish, 70% of other Europeans and 59% of Asians knew that there is a Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi. However, around 64% of British, 60% of German, 80% of North American and 67% of other respondents did not know about the Santa Claus Village.

#### 5.3 Have you ever visited Rovaniemi, Finland?

Approximately 19% of all the respondents had visited Rovaniemi. The same percentage had visited other cities in Finland but not Rovaniemi. Most respondents, around 62% had never been to Finland.

Most British respondents (~71%) had never visited Finland. Around 21% of the British had visited Rovaniemi and 7% had been to other cities in Finland. As of the French respondents, approximately 36% had visited Rovaniemi and 9% other cities in Finland. 54% of the French respondents had not been to Finland. 20% of the German respondents had visited Rovaniemi. Approximately 13% had been to other cities and Finland and 67% had never

visited Finland. 40% of the Spanish respondents had been to Rovaniemi and 60% had never visited Finland. None of the Spanish respondents had visited other cities in Finland. Around 15% of other Europeans answered to have visited Rovaniemi, 31% had been to other cities in Finland and 54% had never been to Finland at all. None of the North American respondents had visited Rovaniemi or other cities in Finland. Approximately 14% of Asians had visited Rovaniemi, 36% had been to other cities and 50% had never visited Finland. Of other respondents 17% had visited Rovaniemi, 6% had visited other cities and 78% had never been to Finland.

#### 5.4 Reasons for visiting Rovaniemi

Those respondents who had visited Rovaniemi were given six options from which to choose the most important reasons for their visit. The options were: the visit was part of a package tour, the existence of Santa Claus Village, good experiences and recommendations from people who have visited Rovaniemi, interesting events and activities, availability of tourist information and other reasons. Figure 3 below demonstrates the findings for this question.

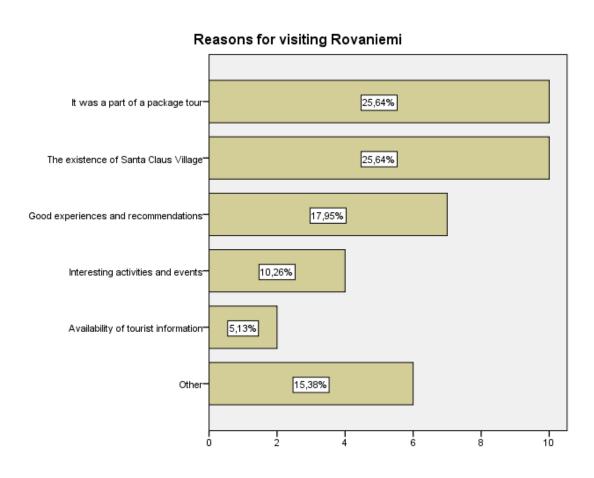


Figure 3. The most important reasons for visiting Rovaniemi.

The most common reasons for visiting Rovaniemi were the trip being a part of a package tour and to visit Santa Claus Village, both chosen by approximately 26% of the respondents. Good experiences and recommendations from people who had visited Rovaniemi was also an important reason as almost 18% chose this option as the most important reason for their visit. About 10% of the respondents chose interesting activities and events as the most important reason for their visit leaving the availability of tourist information as the least important reason with a bit over 5%. A little over 15% of the respondents chose other reasons as the most important for their visit. These reasons included for example seeing the northern lights and a university trip organised for Erasmus students.

## 5.5 Would you consider visiting Rovaniemi?

The respondents who had not visited Rovaniemi or other cities in Finland were asked whether or not they would consider visiting the town in the future. Over all the rates for visiting Rovaniemi in the future between different nationalities were rather high. About 70% of British, 58% of French, 80% of German, 100% of Spanish, 77% of other Europeans, 78% of North Americans, 91% of Asians and 93% of others would consider visiting Rovaniemi.

79 % of the respondents who had not been to Rovaniemi could see themselves visiting the city in the future. The rest, 21 %, would not consider visiting Rovaniemi. Figure 4 illustrates the main reasons for not being interested to visit the city, collected through and open-ended question.

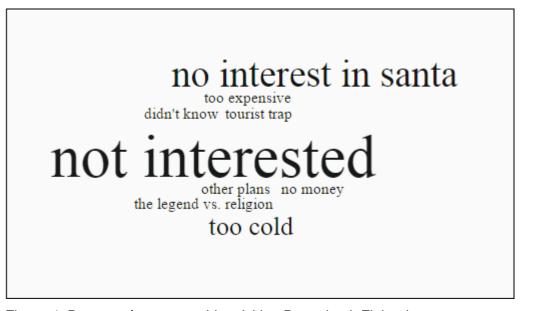


Figure 4. Reasons for not consider visiting Rovaniemi, Finland

The most common reason (30 % of all responses to this question) for not wanting to visit Rovaniemi was the general lack of interest in the city. 24 % of the responses presented the lack of interest in Santa Claus or a collision between their religious beliefs and the legend of Santa Claus. 12 % considered the climate in Rovaniemi to be too cold. Other responses included reasons such as no money or the destination being too expensive and a "tourist trap" and the lack of knowledge of Rovaniemi.

As for the respondents who had not visited Rovaniemi, but other cities in Finland, the reasons included mainly difficulties with the distance between Rovaniemi and southern Finland. Figure 5 presents the keywords of the responses to the reasons for not visiting Rovaniemi in particular.

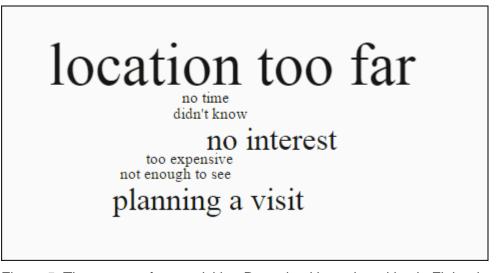


Figure 5. The reasons for not visiting Rovaniemi but other cities in Finland

Around 44 % of the responses stated the location of Rovaniemi to be too far away from the southern part of Finland and eventually to be too far and unreachable in general. 19 % of the responses expressed the reason for not visiting to be the lack of interest in the city and what it has to offer. 19 % of the respondents to this question revealed that they were interested and already planning a visit to Rovaniemi. Other reasons had to do with the lack of time, money and knowledge of the existence of Rovaniemi.

#### 5.6 Scale questions

The scale questions included statements about Rovaniemi and Santa Claus Village. Respondents were asked to choose the most suitable option according to them for each individual statement. The scale ranged from one to five where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=I don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. In the following sections we will

briefly comment on the general division of the opinions but mostly concentrate on analysing the results based on whether the respondents had visited Rovaniemi or not.

#### 5.6.1 Santa Claus is well known to all ages

Over 75% of all the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Santa Claus is well known to all ages.

Approximately 76% of the respondents that had visited Rovaniemi strongly agreed and 24% somewhat agreed with the statement that Santa Claus is well known to all ages. There was no great difference to those who had not visited Finland: around 76% strongly agreed while 23% somewhat agreed and 1% disagreed. The same trend continued among those who had not visited Rovaniemi but other cities in Finland: about 79% strongly agreed and 21% somewhat agreed.

#### 5.6.2 Enough information available about Santa Claus Village

Approximately 25% of all the respondents disagreed with there being enough information available while over 47% did not specify their opinion on the matter.

Availability of tourist information caused rather different results depending whether the respondent had visited Rovaniemi and Finland or not. Around 18% of those who had visited Rovaniemi agreed strongly there being enough information available about Santa Claus Village. 47% somewhat agreed and 35% disagreed. 27% of those who had visited other cities in Finland strongly agreed while 33% somewhat agreed and 40% disagreed. However, only 4% of those who had not visited Finland strongly agreed, 20% somewhat agreed while as many as 55% somewhat disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed.

## 5.6.3 Rovaniemi is easily accessible

Almost 65% of all the respondents did not know whether Rovaniemi is easily accessible or not. 11% of all disagreed somewhat while almost 18% somewhat agreed.

Most respondents (~67%) who had visited Rovaniemi agreed that the town is easily accessible. 19% of them strongly agreed while 14% disagreed. Those who had visited other cities in Finland agreed as well (~53%), while 6% of them agreed strongly and 6% disagreed. Again those who had not visited Finland at all disagreed the most: 19% strongly and 50% somewhat disagreed while 25% somewhat agreed and 6% strongly agreed. Figure 6 below presents the statistics.

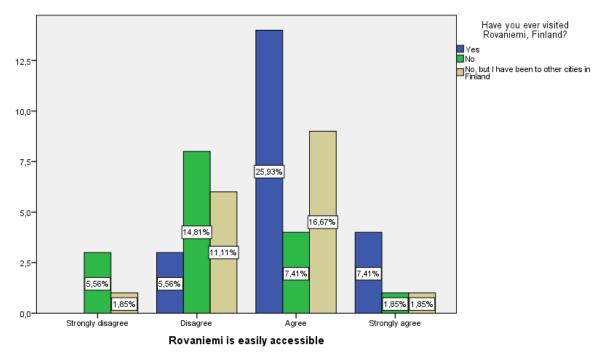


Figure 6. Scale question "Rovaniemi is easily accessible".

The figure 6 above demonstrates the percentages compared with all of the respondents combined.

#### 5.6.4 Santa Claus Village is well known

This question was available only for the respondents who took the questionnaire in French. Over 50% of all of the respondents somewhat agreed with the statement.

Most of the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi agreed strongly (~86%) while part of them (~14%) disagreed. The respondents who had not been to Finland somewhat agreed (~43%), somewhat disagreed (~36%) and strongly disagreed (~21%). All of those who had not been to Rovaniemi but other cities in Finland somewhat agreed with Santa Claus Village being well known.

#### 5.6.5 Santa Claus is often associated with Rovaniemi and Finland

Over 31% of all the respondents disagreed with the statement. Over 26% agreed and almost 25% did not know about the matter.

The results with Santa Claus being often associated with Rovaniemi and Finland were divided among the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi. 8% strongly disagreed and 36% somewhat disagreed while 32% somewhat agreed and 24% strongly agreed. The respondents who had not visited Finland disagreed with the statement. About 17% disagreed with the statement.

greed strongly and 51% somewhat disagreed. 30% respondents somewhat agreed while only 1% strongly agreed. Approximately 9% of those who had visited other cities in Finland disagreed strongly, 18% somewhat disagreed while 55% somewhat agreed and 18% strongly agreed Santa Claus being often associated with Rovaniemi and Finland.

#### 5.6.6 Santa Claus Village is interesting for young adults

Almost 40% of all the respondents did not know whether Santa Claus Village is interesting for young adults or not. Nearly 34% agreed and over 16% disagreed.

50% of those who had visited Rovaniemi agreed with Santa Claus being interesting for young adults. Around 17% agreed strongly while 33% disagreed. This time most of the respondents that had not visited Finland agreed with the statement as well. Around 60% somewhat agreed, 9% strongly agreed while 25% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. 50% of the respondents that had visited other cities in Finland somewhat agreed and 25% strongly agreed whereas 25% disagreed.

#### 5.6.7 Santa Claus Village offers good value for money

Over 73% of all respondents did not agree or disagree with the statement. However, over 12% did disagree and almost 10% agreed.

Approximately 57% of those respondents who had not visited Finland agreed that Santa Claus Village offers good value for money. 14% of them agreed strongly while 21% somewhat disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. Respondents who had visited other cities in Finland equally agreed and disagreed with approximately 38% for both options. However, 25% also agreed strongly.

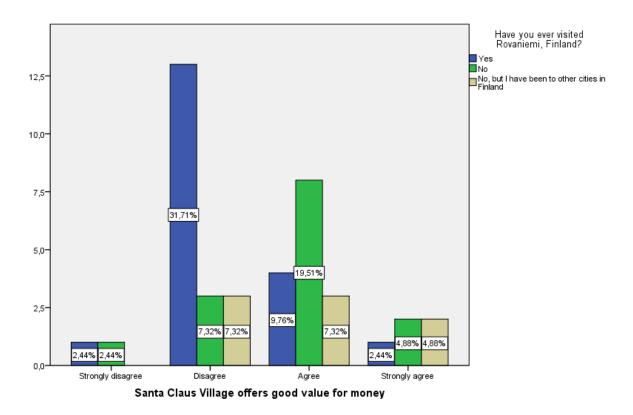


Figure 7. Scale question "Santa Claus Village offers good value for money".

Interestingly, only approximately 5% of the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi agreed with Santa Claus Village offering good value for money. 21% of them somewhat agreed while as much as 68% somewhat disagreed and 5% disagreed strongly. The figure 7 above demonstrates the percentages compared with all of the respondents combined.

## 5.7 Other Santa Claus Destinations

Most respondents (95% of all combined) had not visited other Santa Claus destinations. 2% of other Europeans, 5% of Asians, 40% North Americans and 11% of other respondents said to have visited some other Santa Claus destination. British, French, German and Spanish respondents have not visited any other Santa Claus destination.

The other Santa Claus destinations the respondents had visited were located in USA (43 % of respondents), Russia, Norway, Brazil and Denmark.

#### 5.8 What would make you want to visit Santa Claus Village in the future?

In the last question the respondents were asked to indicate what would make them consider visiting the Santa Claus Village in the future. Figure 8 illustrates the different ideas of what the respondents thought would make the destination more attractive.



Figure 8. What would make the respondents want to visit Santa Claus Village in the future

The most common reason that would make the respondents want to visit the Santa Claus Village was children. 16 % of the respondents wrote that they could easily consider taking their future children to visit Santa Clays in Rovaniemi. More advertising of the Village was mentioned by 14 % of the respondents. An overall interest in the magic of Christmas and the possibility to visit Santa Claus intrigued 14 % of the respondents. The fourth most frequent keyword was 'cheaper' with 10 % of the respondents saying that more affordable prices would make the Village a more attractive destination. Better accessibility, to both the Santa Claus Village and Rovaniemi in general, was mentioned by 6 % of the respondents. 6 % also stated that more activities near and inside the Village would make the visit worth the while.

Other reasons that would make the respondents willing to visit the Village included for example curiosity and accompanying like-minded friends, to see the northern lights, combining the visit with a trip nearby Rovaniemi, free entrance and fulfilling a childhood dream. 4 % stated that they had no interest in visiting the Santa Claus Village.

#### 6 Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter concludes the results of our research. We also offer few suggestions and recommendations for the commissioner to consider regarding further research on the subject.

#### 6.1 Summarizing conclusions and recommendations to the commissioner

Over 150 respondents from countries around the world took part in the questionnaire. French, Spanish, other European and Asian respondents were most likely to have known about the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi. British, Germans, North Americans and other nationalities were less aware of the village. Approximately 21% of the British respondents, 36% of French respondents, 20% of German respondents, 40% of Spanish respondents, 15% of other Europeans, 14% of Asians and 17% of other nationalities had visited Rovaniemi. None of the North American respondents had visited Rovaniemi.

The most important reason for visiting Rovaniemi was that the trip was part of a package tour. In the future it could be taken into consideration how to market Santa Claus Village also for individual travellers. However, many respondents chose Santa Claus Village being the most important reason for their visit.

Over 50% of all nationality groups would consider visiting Rovaniemi in the future. This means that the image of Rovaniemi and Santa Claus Village is rather good. Those respondents who had not visited Finland and would not consider visiting in the future gave following reasons for their opinion: Rovaniemi being too cold, too expensive and not being interested in the city of Rovaniemi or Santa Claus. These reasons are of course, to some extent, aspects that cannot be affected. The respondents who had visited other cities in Finland but not Rovaniemi gave somewhat same reasons for not considering visiting Rovaniemi in the future. However, the issue of the location of Rovaniemi was highlighted with this group. The same issue was brought up in the scale question 'Rovaniemi is easily accessible': Most respondents who had visited Rovaniemi or other cities in Finland agreed that the town is easily accessible while almost 70% of those who had not visited Finland at all disagreed the most. This could be merely due to lack of knowledge. More visible marketing of the air routes to and from Rovaniemi could help to brighten the image that Rovaniemi is not after all that difficult to reach.

Over half of the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi or other cities in Finland agreed with there being enough information available about Rovaniemi, while less than 25% of those who had not visited Finland at all agreed. Therefore there seems to be enough in-

formation for those who come to Finland but a lack of marketing on international websites, guides and other kinds of information platforms.

Over 50% of the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi or other cities in Finland agreed with Santa Claus being often associated with Rovaniemi and Finland. However, almost 70% of the respondents who had not visited Finland disagreed with the statement. This could be due to competing Santa Claus destinations which gain more publicity. Indeed, when asked which other Santa Claus destinations the respondents had visited, the locations in the United States were the ones brought up most frequently.

Over 55% of those respondents who had visited other cities in Finland or not visited Finland at all agreed that Santa Claus Village offers good value for money. Interestingly, less than 30% of the respondents who had visited Rovaniemi agreed with the statement. This could reflect on the fact that the prices are too high for the current activities available or that there are not enough things to experience for the current price.

When asked what would make the respondents consider visiting Rovaniemi in the future, many wished for more activities and for the village to be cheaper. This matches with the results of the scale question 'Santa Claus Village offers good value for money'. One of the other most common responses was to visit with future kids even though in the scale question 'Santa Claus Village is interesting for young adults' most of the respondents agreed with the statement regardless of having visited Finland or Rovaniemi before. Many stated they would like to see more advertising of the village. This issue has been brought up in other questions, as well, and effective international marketing would naturally increase the knowledge about the Santa Claus Village. Finally, another common response was to meet Santa Claus and experience the magic of Christmas. It is important to attract these people to travel to Rovaniemi and to spread the word. After all, the magic of Christmas is what Santa Claus Village is all about.

### 6.2 Further research

There is still need for further research, especially when targeting the generation Y as travellers. The following topics and areas, based on the outcomes and issues discussed in this research and thesis, are suggested for further research.

- 1. What kind of activities and services the generation Y would see adding value to the Santa Claus Village. What do they want to do and see?
- 2. How to reach the modern day travellers of generation Y? Is social media the best channel and how could the marketing on that end be developed to raise awareness and spread information about the Santa Claus Village?

- 3. Researching and analysing the competitors' marketing strategies is there something that could be implemented also in the marketing of the 'Official Hometown of Santa Claus'?
- 4. A wider research with a bigger sampling of this same type of research would give more reliable results. Targeting a specific nationality group and focusing on their generation Y's wants and needs on the other hand would give a clearer picture of a specific target country.

### 6.3 Reliability and validity

The key concepts and theory of reliability and validity of a research has been discussed earlier in this thesis in the chapter Research approach and methods.

Although the sample was rather small with 150 respondents, there are some aspects that can, with caution, be generalised to a bigger population. For example the opinions and experiences gathered for the group 'Other Europeans' with around 30 % of the respondents could be somewhat considered to represent the situation of knowledge, whereas the amount of Spanish respondents being only 3 % makes it impossible to be generalised to the whole nationality.

Due to humane error, the French version of the questionnaire had an extra statement in the scale question. Therefore the statement "Santa Claus Village is well known" cannot be generalised to the whole respondents or a bigger sample, and even to the French only with caution.

As stated earlier, the biggest problem with these kinds of surveys is the dependency on the honesty and accuracy of the respondents' answers. This applies to this particular research as well. However, the answers gathered through for example the open-ended questions were rather vague and showed repetitiveness with certain keywords. Thus it can be considered that when repeated, the overall results would be very similar to the ones gathered in this particular research.

As for validity, the results did provide answers to the original questions and thus "measured what they were supposed to measure". The meaning of the questionnaire was to determine the level of knowledge of the Santa Claus Village, more specifically within different nationalities and the age group of generation Y. Both of these aspects were fulfilled with respondents of over 60 different nationalities and the majority of respondents (75%) fitting in the age group of 19-30.

Overall, the research could be considered to be repeatable with similar results. The results are not dependent on time or the researchers, as the data would project the same results also when analysed by a different researcher.

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## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

# **Questionnaire in English**

# How does Santa Claus affect the incoming tourism in Finland?

This questionnaire is part of a bachelor's thesis of two tourism students from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland. The thesis is commissioned by Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. The aim of this questionnaire and the thesis is to find out how the brand of Santa Claus affects the incoming tourism in the city of Rovaniemi, Finland.

The gathered information are handled confidentially and will only be used for this thesis. The analysed results can later be found on www.theseus.fi. Answering the questionnaire takes only 5 minutes. We appreciate your contribution!

Tiia Nordström & Hanna Saarinen

Degree Programme in Tourism

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

- 1. Age\* a. Under 18
  - b. 19-30
  - c. 31-50
  - d. 51+
- Gender\* a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Do not want to specify
- 3. Nationality\*
- 4. I have children under 18\*
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5. Did you know that there is a Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland?\*
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 6. Have you ever visited Rovaniemi in Finland?\*
  - a. Yes → jump to question 7
  - b. No  $\rightarrow$  Would you consider visiting Rovaniemi?  $\rightarrow$  Why not?
  - c. Not Rovaniemi, but I have been to other cities in Finland → Why not in Rovaniemi?
- 7. What were the most important reasons for your visit?
  - a. The existence of Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi
  - b. It was a part of a package tour
  - c. Availability of tourist information about Rovaniemi
  - d. Interesting activities and events in Rovaniemi
  - e. Good experiences from people who have visited Rovaniemi
  - f. Other

8. Choose the most suitable option\*

		Strongly disagree	Disa- gree	I don't know	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Santa Claus is well known to all ages					
2	There is enough information availa-					
	ble about Santa Claus Village					
3	Rovaniemi is easily accessible					
4	Santa Claus is often associated with					
	Rovaniemi and Finland					
5	Santa Claus Village is interesting for					
	young adults					
6	Santa Claus Village offers good val-					
	ue for money					

- 9. Have you been to other Santa Claus destinations?\*
  a. Yes → Where?

  - b. No
- 10. What would make you want to visit Santa Claus Village in the future?\*
- 11. Any comments?

#### **Questionnaire in French**

#### Comment le Père Noël affecte-il le tourisme réceptif en Finlande ?

Cette enquête fait partie d'un mémoire de deux étudiants de l'université Haaga-Helia de Sciences Appliqués en Finlande. L'enquête est commissionnée par Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. Avec cette enquête nous essaierons de mieux comprendre comment le Père Noël affecte-t-il le tourisme réceptif à Rovaniemi en Finlande.

L'information collecté par cette enquête est gérée confidentiellement et sera utilisé seulement pour notre mémoire. L'analyse et les résultats seront accessibles plus tard sur www.theseus.fi. Les questions ne prennent que 5 minutes à répondre. Merci pour votre contribution !

Tiia Nordström & Hanna Saarinen

Degree Programme in Tourism

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

- 1. Age a. Moins de 18
  - b. 19-30
  - c. 31-50
  - d. 51+
- 2. Sexe a. Femme
  - b. Homme
  - c. Je ne veux pas spécifier
- 3. Nationalité\*
- 4. Avez-vous des enfants qui ont moins de 18 ans?\*
  - a. Oui
  - b. Non
- 5. Saviez-vous qu'il existe un village du Père Noël à Rovaniemi en Finlande?\*
  - a. Oui
  - b. Non
- 6. Avez-vous jamais visité Rovaniemi en Finlande?\*
  - a. Oui
  - b. Non → Seriez-vous intéressé d'y aller? → Pourquoi pas?
  - c. Non, mais j'ai visité d'autres villes en Finlande → Pourquoi pas à Rovaniemi?
- 7. Pour quelles raisons avez-vous visité Rovaniemi?
  - a. Pour la présence du Village du Père Noël à Rovaniemi

- b. La visite faisait partie d'un voyage organisé (=package tour ?)
- c. Suite à des informations touristiques sur la ville de Rovaniemi
- d. Pour les activités et événements intéressants organisés à Rovaniemi
- e. Grâce à des avis positifs sur des expériences de personnes ayant visité Rovaniemi
- f. Autres raisons
- 8. Choisissez l'option la plus raisonnable selon vous\*

		Compléte- ment en désaccord	En désac- cord	Pas d'opi nion	D'acc ord	Complé- tement d'accord
1	Le Père Noël est connu par tout le monde					
2	En général vous avez trouvé assez					
	d'information sur le village du Père Noël à					
	Rovaniemi					
3	Rovaniemi est facilement accessible					
4	Le village du Père Noël est bien connu					
5	Le Père Noël est souvent lié avec la ville					
	de Rovaniemi et la Finlande					
6	Le village du Père Noël est intéressant					
	pour les jeunes adultes					
7	Le village du Père Noël offre un bon rap-					
	port qualité prix					

9. Avez-vous visité les autres villages du Père No	oei.	eı	ı	!
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- a. Oui → Lesquels ou lequel?
- b. Non
- 10. Qu'est-ce qui vous donnera envie de visiter le village du Père Noël dans le futur?\*
- 11. Commentaires

#### **Questionnaire in German**

#### Wie der Weihnachtsmann beeinflusst den Tourismus in Finnland

Dieser Fragebogen ist ein Teil der Dissertation von zwei Tourismus Studentinnen aus Haaga-Helia Fachhochschule in Finnland. Der Auftraggeber die Dissertation ist Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd. Das Ziel dieses Fragebogens ist herauszufinden, wie die Marke von der Weinachtsmann beeinflusst der Tourismus in der Stadt Rovaniemi, Finnland.

Die gesammelten Informationen werden vertraulich behandelt und werden nur für diese Dissertation verwendet werden. Sie können die Resultate an www.theseus.fi später zu finden. Beantwortung des Fragebogens dauert nur ca. 5 Minuten. Vielen Dank!

Tiia Nordström & Hanna Saarinen Degree Programme in Tourism Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

- 1. Alter \* a. Unter 18 Jahre
  - b. 19-30
  - c. 31-50
  - d. 51+
- Geschlecht\* a. Frau
  - b. Mann
  - c. Ich will nicht angeben
- Nationalität\*
- 4. Ich habe unter 18-jährige Kinder\*
  - a. Ja
  - b. Nein
- 5. Haben Sie gewusst, dass es ein Werkstattdorf des Weinachstmannes in Rovaniemi, Finnland, gibt?\*
  - a. Ja
  - b. Nein
- Haben Sie Rovaniemi in Finnland besucht?\*
  - a. Ja
  - b. Nein → Könnten Sie sich jemals Rovaniemi zu besuchen denken?
  - c. Nein, aber ich habe eine andere Stadt in Finnland besucht → Warum nicht Rovaniemi?
- 7. Was waren die wichtigsten Gründe für Ihren Besuch? \*
  - a. Es gibt ein Werkstattdorf des Weinachstmannes in Rovaniemi
  - b. Es war ein Teil einer Pauschalreise

  - c. Es gibt viel Information über Rovaniemid. Interessante Aktivitäten und Veranstaltungen in Rovaniemi
  - e. Gute Erfahrungen von Menschen, die Rovaniemi besucht haben
  - Anderes

8. Wählen Sie die Alternativ, das am besten Ihre Meinung beschreibt\*

		Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Weiß ich nicht	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
1	Der Weihnachtsmann ist für alle Alters-					
	klassen bekannter					
2	Es gibt genug Information über das					
	Werkstattdorf des Weihnachtsmannes					
3	Rovaniemi ist leicht erreichbar					
4	Weihnachtsmann ist oft mit Rovaniemi					
	und Finnland assoziiert					
5	Junge Erwachsene interessieren sich					
	für das Werkstattdorf des Weihnachts-					
	mannes					
6	Das Werkstattdorf des Weihnachts-					
	mannes bietet ein gutes Preis-					
	Leistungsverhältnis					

- 9. Haben Sie anderen Weinachtsmann-destinationen besucht?\*
  - a. Ja → Wo?
  - b. Nein
- 10. Was würde Ihnen den Werkstattdorf des Weihnachtsmannes in der Zukunft zu besuchen wollen machen?\*
- 11. Weitere Kommentare?

# **Questionnaire in Spanish**

### ¿Cómo afecta Papá Noel al turismo que llega a Finlandia?

Esta encuesta es una parte de una tesis de dos estudiantes en licenciatura de turismo de Haaga-Helia, Universidad de Sciencias Aplicadas de Finlandia. La tesis es comisionada por Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltda. El objetivo de esta encuesta y de la tesis es descubrir como la marca de Papa Noel afecta a las llegadas del área de turismo en la ciudad de Rovaniemi, Finlandia.

La información recogida se utilizará solamente para la tesis y todas las respuestas se tratarán en una manera segura y respetuosa. Los resultados analizados se pueden después encontrar en www.theseus.fi. Para responder a esta encuesta se tomará sólo 5 minutos. ¡Se agradece mucho su co-operación!

Tiia Nordström & Hanna Saarinen

Degree Programme in Tourism

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

- 1. Edad\* a. Por debajo de 18
  - b. 19-30 c. 31-50 d. 51+
- 2. Género\* a. Mujer b. Hombre
  - c. Prefiero no especificar
- 3. Nacionalidad\*
- 4. ¿Tiene hijos menores de edad?\*
  - a. Si
  - b. No
- 5. ¿Sabías que hay un pueblo de Papa Noel en Rovaniemi, Finlandia?\*
  - a. Si
  - b. No
- 6. ¿Ha estado previamente en Rovaniemi, Finlandia?\*
  - a. Si
  - b. No → ¿Consideraría ir? → ¿Por qué no?
  - c. No, pero he estado en otras ciudades de finlandesas → ¿Por qué no Rovaniemi?
- 7. ¿Cuáles eran las razones más importantes de su visita?
  - a. Visitar el pueblo de Papa Noel en Rovaniemi
  - b. Fue una parte de un paquete turístico
  - c. La disponibilidad de la información turística de Rovaniemi
  - d. Actividades y eventos interesantes en Rovaniemi
  - e. Buenas experiencias de las personas quienes ya habían visitado Rovaniemi
  - f. Otras razones

8.	Fliia I	a o	nción	más	adecu	ıada*
o.		u u	POIOII	mu	aacot	Juuu

		- Fuer- temente en desacu erdo	- Desa cuer do	– No Io sé	- Bas- tante de acue rdo	- Com ple- ta- men- te de acue rdo
1	Papá Noel es bien conocido en					
	todos los rangos de edad					
2	Hay suficiente información dispo-					
	nible sobre el Pueblo de Papa Noel					
3	Es fácil de acceder a Rovaniemi					
4	A Papa Noel se puede relacionar					
	muchas veces con Rovaniemi y con					
	Finlandia					
5	El Pueblo de Papa Noel es intere-					
	sante para los adultos jóvenes					
6	El Pueblo de Papa Noel ofrece					
	buena relación entre la calidad y					
	precio					

- 9. ¿Ha estado en alguna otra Santa Claus destino?\*
  - a. Si ¿Dónde?
  - b. No
- 10. ¿Cuáles razones le harían a visitar el Pueblo de Papa Noel en el futuro?\*
- 11. Comentarios