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**Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel  
inspiration**

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I, Olga Kovach, declare it, that the dissertation hereby submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Tourism management and Hospitality Management at the Budapest Business School has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. This thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research; it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged. I understand that my thesis may be made available to the public.

Olga Kovach 

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## **1. Introduction**

In our era of social media, Internet and easy access to any kind of information tremendous number of global opportunities appears. It would be hard to imagine how life could be different a few decades ago, however the Internet and social media possibilities took a very big niche in every day live. People's day-to-day activities have been transforming more and more into digital form. We work, co-operate, relax and look for the leisure entertainments online. There is a big scientific discussion about the Internet penetration phenomenon, anyways, there is no doubt we have to accept a big influence of it. In our research we have analyzed the topic of "Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration".

Talking about Instagram, its popularity is growing exponentially. It could be explained by the fact that the primarily information representation is carried out in a form of pictures or short videos, which demonstrates the main message and conveys the whole meaning. What is more, it is also well-known that the human brain works on the basis of images and associations. That is why it is much easier for a person to perceive information in the shape of graphics and videos than to read long texts. The simplicity of perception makes this social network interesting for a large number of Internet users. The number of Instagram followers is growing constantly. It would be even risky not to use such a "live" platform not only for sharing some personal momentous, but the platform could be easily adopted for one's business development, sales and brands promotion. A large industry of SMM services has been created not to lose any of the Instagram tools offered for its users.

So why are we studying Instagram as one of the points in our research and not any other social media platform? Such a rhetorical question has quite an obvious answer. More and more people become the users of this social media because of the list of reasons: firstly, this social media is a very stylish place. It is not just a posting of photos and videos, but this service allows you to share elegant pictures through photo editors. Moreover, it helps you to raise the publicity and your popularity if needed. In addition, the simple and convenient functionality is highly appreciated by the audience. Convenient and comfortable interface, uncomplicated usage of a profile, sharing photos or videos that do not require any special skills just for the simple feed watching. Moreover, hashtags today helps in finding the desired content and target audience. Instagram is also very useful in brand promotion. It is the easiest and most effective way to promote a personal page, brand, product or service on social networks.

Another side of our scientific research topic is the psychological influence of social media on people's minds. Originally invented for virtual communication, free calls and instant

messaging social media platforms turned into a huge phenomenon, taking a large amount of its users' time. Sometimes it can even look like social media and especially Instagram, which turned out to be one of the most "cruel" time-thief, substituted the reality. That is why the psychological influence of social media is rather dramatic and could even be dangerous for some of the cases.

And the third point in our research conduction is the Instagram psychological influence on the tourism issue. Certainly, before the Coved-19 pandemic has started tourism used to be one of the most developing business areas. New hotel constructions, restaurant opening, airbnb and booking.com services were taking turns day by day. Hopefully, sooner or later life can be back to normal and tourism as one of the major activities will be in force again. Taking into consideration the fact, that Instagram has already become one of the main marketing platforms where people not only share their experiences but also provoke others to think they could travel the same places and observe the same views, we decided also to check how strong the influence of Instagram travel posts on the followers' travel inspiration is.

We esteem the relevance of our scientific work "Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration on a high level. The growing demand on psychological help especially wide spread among the younger generation (people in their twenties and thirties) provokes booming popularity of such specialists. People are eager to learn about their personalities, character features, inner borders, types of behavior and family patterns. People are keen on working to get rid of their childhood traumas and improve personalities. The "psychological fashion" is making its huge steps in our modern human society, so that it could attract high interest of the audience towards our paper, related to psychological field. Nevertheless, we are examining not only the mental sides of Instagram influence but considering the social media platform as one of the tools in tourism inspiration and a sort of its development. Even though this period of pandemics has reduced travelling opportunities to the minimal level, people are still waiting for life to be back to normal and to start doing the trips again. From the first sight, the connection between Instagram and travel intentions looks strong enough, consequently we decided to check our assumption in the research paper. The work relevance relates to people motives of travel content consumption. Below in our research we have revealed a strong influence of journey posts on people's travel intentions and holiday plans.

What is more, the most important research questions we were trying to answer were the following: "Can we consider Instagram as the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of the university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with

the average financial situation who have just started their career?” “How strong is the impact of Instagram on its users’ travelling desire?” “And what kind of psychological effect does Instagram travel content provoke in our target audience’s minds?”

The novelty of our paper work is considered to be the combination of the topics “Psychology”, “Social media”, “Instagram”, “Tourism”, “Travel inspiration”, “Virtual influence on the reality” and so on. Numerous researchers about the above issues have been conducted, however there is still no scientific paper which would include all of them into one holistic scientific work and that what encouraged us to start the implementation.

We suppose our research to become a summary of the interaction of issues “Instagram”, “Social media psychology”, “Travel inspiration”. Being more specific, we need to mention that we as the researches were going to confirm or deny the hypothesis that Instagram is the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their career. Along with this statement, we also intended to find out how strong the impact of Instagram on its users’ travelling desire was, and what kind of psychological effect Instagram travel content provoked in the users’ minds?

The scientific significance of our research consists of a new interpretation of existing data or selection of materials that have not been used previously along with using statistical methods that were not previously used in this area of study. In addition to this, we would like to show the audience how strong the connection between all of the above mention topics might be, emphasizing in the meantime possible future research opportunities and development of the issues in a more detailed, in-depth and immersed way. One of the opportunities for our work outcome is to turn it into a scientific basis for further researches.

Onwards, it is also necessary to specify the subject and the object for our research. The object is Social media users’ psychological patterns, when the subject has been determined as Instagram users’ travel inspiration based on social media psychology.

The aim of our research is to reveal the connection between the our target audience’s travel inspiration caused by Instagram travel content and to analyze what kind of emotions and feelings are experienced by them when scrolling the Instagram feed with travel bloggers’ posts.

The objectives of our research are the following:

1. To reveal and analyze side effects, which Instagram might cause, such as psychological pressure, honesty and transparency;
2. Decompose the causes of dramatic difference between Instagram pictures and reality;
3. To discuss the decision making process of a tourism customer;

4. To raise up the phenomenon of bloggers and see the root reasons of their popularity;
5. To examine who the people following bloggers are, and what makes them subscribe the blogs;
6. To identify the Instagram tools, which make blogs readable, popular and tradable;
7. To release Instagram trends for better understanding how not to be old-fashioned in the most developing social media;
8. To follow the influence of social media on travel experience tendency.

The Social media influence on its users' behaviour is rather a wide topic, which has been researching by scientists over the past decade. People all around the world are concerned about the effect caused by Instagram penetration into our every-day activities and human behavioural changes, provoked by social media dependence. I am strongly sure that complex and timely issue analysis might help to prevent potential future disasters concerning humans' mental health and psychological stability. What is more, it is hard not to notice the spreading demand for the services of psychologists and support centers. Permanent rush and deadlines lead to the appearance of various kinds of health problems. We believe that there is always a way to avoid those by being aware of the primary challenges' roots.

In a certain prospect, we may suppose our research to be one of the steps towards world problem solutions. In the meantime, the tourism is experiencing hard times nowadays; however, hopefully, we will get the industry back to normal. By that time, we need to understand better, how Instagram tools work for the audience for more effective usage of in the tourism field. Thereby, we are analyzing the Instagram users' behavior regarding their tourism choice below in our questionnaire analysis part.

Before starting the practical part of our research namely conducting the questionnaire to find out the answers for all of our listed research questions, we needed to refer to the theoretical background. For better understanding the issue of psychological pressure and social media addiction and our day-to-day life as well as tourism destination choice and decision-making process we had to review some scientific papers related to these fields of studying. Firstly, we started to examine the question about some Instagram side effects, which might appear after the overuse of this social media. In that particular chapter of our literature review part we have discussed various conducted researches results, raising up the issue of social media effects on human's psycho. In most of the cases, the results turned out to be rather negative. Many of respondents reported they were experiencing the increased level of anxiety and feelings of social isolation and depression higher compared to normal indicators. They have also identified



fear of missing out as one of the most common issues. A big number of people were afraid of being left without a mobile phone. Then we appealed to the process of decision making among the customers in tourism.

Afterwards we investigated the phenomenon of bloggers and the issue of their popularity. Confessing the fact that more and more people tend to stop watching TV because of considering it as a low-quality media, the audience of bloggers is rising. People tend to trust them as those “journalists of our era” feel more responsibility for the information they share. Publishing false facts immediately brings them the loss of the followers. As there are too many intelligent and educated people reading blogs, so there are too high chances to be revealed by posting nonsense and lose all of the followers. Moreover, we were also talking about blogging as a huge industry comparable with any other type of businesses, which can bring money, joy, self-realization and satisfaction.

In our study we have also managed to consider the main Instagram tools, which make a blog readable, popular and tradable. The most popular recommendations were the following: the experts were emphasizing the importance of usage a personal profile photo, not a logo, to keep the information in the profile header updated, trying to stick to the particular topic or niche when sharing the posts, to be open with the followers and engage them as much as possible into the blog content. It was also mentioned to remember that certain criticism might occur, however it should not stop bloggers from sharing live content and focus on storytelling.

In addition to this, we have touched the subject of Instagram trends. How not to be old-fashioned in the most developing social media. The articles and papers were saying that Instagram users are expected to focus on Instagram stories as the backbone of influencer marketing, as long as Reels usage and Instagram Live to live on are supposed to rise. What is more, In-app shopping, TikTok, Twitter and GIF content are trending, carousel posts and IGTV take center stages and others.

And obviously as one of the main point of our scientific paper is about travelling aspect we have also devoted a considerable part of the research to the influence of social media on travel experience. It was curious to see the results of already existed surveys before conducting our own questionnaire. After analyzing some of the researches, we found out that around 40% of international tourists travel with smartphones, which have access to the Internet and e-mail; and 40% of smartphone users apply them to get directional information; 26% of tourists and 34% of business travelers need smartphones to change hotel and other services bookings while traveling and many other interesting facts that we discussed in a literature part.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the practical part of our research work. Eager to find the answers for our research questions we decided to conduct our own survey. In the form of questionnaire we have made a google form consisted of 28 questions regarding our thesis topic to collect our audience opinions and experiences. After summarizing the results of 314 filled forms, we came up to the certain points and conclusions, which are significant for our research hypothesis that Instagram is the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their career.

To summarize our introduction part, we need to say that we tried to make our research “Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users’ travel inspiration” as objective as possible constantly searching for the information in various sources and referring to the opinions of competent experts. We truly believe that our research paper will become a genuine work in the scientific world and will be a helpful source for some future development opportunities not only for the international scientist, but also for different people all around the world.

#### **4. Literature review**

In the year of 2021 Internet and social media platforms have become an essential part of our everyday lives. It seems to be obvious, however the changes related to the penetration of the devices into human lives are dramatic. Now we can not even imagine a day without checking the emails, messengers, likes and followers. And day by day digital routine replaces the reality. In other words, the digitalization becomes our reality.

In our paper devoted to social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users travel inspiration we are mostly going to speak about Instagram as one of the biggest players on the social media market, its effect on tourism industry. We analyzed Instagram as the platform which was created in 2010 from the prospective of its transformation. Created as an application for editing pictures after several years it has turned into a giant niche, a place in the e-world, where every user takes their own advantage. There are several types of users in the Instagram (FRISON, EGGERMONT, 2017). Some people are just following their friends and family members to stay in touch with them or celebrities they look up to; some of the users are eager to express themselves to share their experience or to rise their self-esteem gaining likes and social approval. Others consider Instagram to be a source of educational, inspirational or just entertaining information. Meanwhile for some people Instagram is a working place. It is a great opportunity to sell products and services, promote your business or find new clients. Nowadays people search for job or internships on Instagram, buy clothes and order cakes, learn languages and book tickets. We analyzed the types of Instagram users more precisely in the following paragraphs. Demand creates supply that is why Instagram today is a huge market place along with personal blogs and diaries (HARUN ET AL. 2020).

Tourism is a very special niche in the world of Instagram. A huge number of users have their accounts in order to look for information about interesting places, attractions and travel tips. In addition to this, they also enjoy keeping a virtual diary full of memories and stories about their journeys.

Here are some Instagram travel statistic facts from the article about Instagram business and branding strategies on social media (LATIFFA, SAFIEE, 2015):

- 67% of people search on Instagram for information about interesting places they could visit;
- 95% of users believe that Instagram allows them to discover new cultures and interesting people;
- 7 out of 10 accounts they follow are brand accounts.

The influence of social media - social networks, travel blogs and forums - is growing every year. The statistics introduced in the research “Social networks as a tool for promoting travel services” by DILYARA AMET-USTAEVA (2019) shows that more than 25% of the respondents said that social networks have an influence on their opinion while choosing a place to go and type of residence. For 75% of respondents, social channels are the main source of tourist information. The choice of potential tourists is influenced by stories, vivid photographs, reviews and other content (informational content of the site) initiated by other users. At the same time, almost 50% of survey participants trust the stories and reviews of other travelers. Social media is a part of interactive media, one of the communication channels for both individual users (tourists) and entire corporations and companies (travel agencies, companies). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognizes the important role of social media in tourism. Tourists and businessmen use smartphones and tablets to find information or share opinions about their place of stay.

#### **4.1 Instagram and its side effects: psychological pressure, honesty and transparency: dramatic difference between pictures and reality**

More than three billion people use social networks, that is around 40% of the world's population. Every day we post tweets, shoot stories on Instagram, watch videos on YouTube, reply to friends in messengers. We keep our phone in hand all days long and as a result, there is less and less live communication in our life, the frequency of page updates is higher, and for some reasons our mood is worse. We tried to analyze why it happens and how not to get bogged down in a whirlpool of likes and reposts.

Social media is not a reality. But it is quite difficult to establish the borders where the virtual “seems to be” turns into the true life. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube have already become our "second passport". HR and security services check our accounts when applying for a job, geographical tags show locations, and our subscriptions present users' interests and hobbies (RIDGWAY, CLAYTON, 2016). Why do people need to show up their very personal aspects? Scientists suppose that our ego played an important role here. In the statistics data of the article “Life in the era of Instagram. How does social media affect our psyche?” (PAVLUCHENKO, 2018) researchers showed that people devoted about 40% of all their conversations to talking about themselves. And on the Internet, these numbers multiply up to 80%. The gap is huge and very understandable. In an offline conversation, we have almost no time to monitor our gestures, body language and think about what to say and how. The situation is the opposite on social media. There is unlimited scope for finalizing statements and pictures,

it helps a lot to position yourself in the way you want, there are no limits for perfect self-presentation. Can also be curious the fact that according to psychologists, the emotions we get from viewing our own profile on Instagram or Facebook increase our self-esteem.

However, for every plus there is a minus and the British Royal Society of Health named Instagram as the worst social network for the human psyche. It was proven by the research carried out by Status of Mind with 1,500 young people aged 14 to 24 years (MATT KERAHER, 2019). Respondents who actively used social networks showed out the increased level of anxiety and feelings of social isolation and depression. Moreover, they identified FoMo (fear of missing out) as one of the most common issues. The fear of missing something interesting and important, accompanied by chronic nervous tension. By the way, more than half of people in the UK are afraid of being left without a mobile phone, and 67% monitor their devices even when there are no notifications. Only one of the five social networks included in the survey received positive reviews. It was YouTube. Twitter took the second position, according to the loyal effect on mental health. The third position was taken by Facebook, followed by Snapchat. In addition to ranking networks, MATT KERAHER, author of the Status Of Mind report in his paper (2019) also drew attention to the fact that mental health depends on the time spent there. Being online for more than two hours per day increases the likelihood of mental health problems.

Instagram might be especially dangerous for people who are more prone to the factor of comparing themselves with others. Let's be honest: there is always someone smarter, richer, more beautiful than us, who has more friends and more interesting work. The Instagram feed is endless. No one will go into details about the fact that they travel to the paradise islands through cheap trip service, the sports car in the picture does not really belong to them and expensive restaurants, which he often visits are sponsored by the employer for corporate events (PITTMAN, REICH, 2016). Social media is not a place where the audience is honest. People are not eager to share tears, lack of material goods and poor health. Of course, if it is not a challenge. Comparison is a sort of a trap. Scientists argue that any comparison of yourself with others is unhealthy for the psyche. Another interesting study showed how respondents rated their feelings by comparing themselves to those they knew (LUP ET AL, 2015). They experienced positive feelings if they bypassed them according to certain criteria and were upset if they lagged behind. A similar test was carried out on the network. In the online world, both types of comparisons have proven to make people feel worse, increase of depressive symptoms and a sense of social isolation.

We all have to remember that Instagram is a big fiction. And those who forget that can easily become victims. A good example of that is Lisette Calveiro. New York post shared her sad story, where the lady was trying to lead an Instagram-worthy life (GOLLAYAN, 2018). Inspired by the seductively beautiful life and earnings of bloggers on Instagram, the girl moved from Miami to New York, got a credit card and healed as a celebrity. Lisette's profile was full of pictures, where she was wearing designer outfits, parties became an integral part of her life, as well as travel once a month. However, the experience did not bring the desired subscribers and popularity in monetary terms to the would-be blogger. And as a result, she got a debt of 10,000 dollars and had to come back home with shame. Maybe it is better to use your resources more rationally and strive to become better than yourself but not others.

The statistics says that on average we access the device 150 times a day. It is not even surprising, because the smartphone wakes us up in the morning and almost 80% of people start using the device while lying in bed. About 60% of people check social networks right after they opened their eyes in the morning, consoling themselves with the fact that they help their brain to wake UP (LIN ET AL. 2015). Sounds terrific. Scientists have not come to a consensus yet, that Internet addiction is a real threat to humanity, along with alcoholism. But there is already direct evidence. Nottingham Trent University has conducted research on the psychological characteristics of people actively using social networks. The results were disappointing: they neglected their personal lives in favor of Facebook and Instagram, their mental processes were inhibited, and everything else, the picture was complemented by frequent mood swings and escapism. Along with a complete rejection of the Internet surfing, the respondents experienced a real withdrawal syndrome, comparable to drug withdrawal (PONTES ET AL. 2018). No doubts, that social media as a way to stay in touch with our friends from different cities and even countries is precious. However, here is a paradox, which another experiment has shown: the more we are online, the more social isolation we feel. The researchers observed respondents using Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Vine, Snapchat, and Reddit. As a result, the more time the person spent on these sites, the more they felt lonely (KELES ET AL. 2019). And since frequent isolation is fraught with health problems (including early death) and the psyche in particular, it is important not to forget about the real communication. It is way more mentally healthy and safe. And there are even some treatment programs called Digital Detox. Such a course at the American Center for Combating Internet Addiction will cost you about \$ 14,000. Anyways sometimes Digital Detox might not be a farce, but a necessity. And by the way, it is not compulsory to spend \$ 14,000, it is quite possible to find cheaper and easier ways like digital

starvation, which is very similar to fasting days for the digestive system. It might be almost impossible to remember the last time you spent 24 hours without a device for. On weekdays, this can be difficult to implement, but choosing one day off for digital starvation is quite realistic.

The research “Six ways social media negatively affects your mental health” introduced by the journal “Independent” (BARR, 2020) says that watching perfectly filtered photos that appear on Instagram on a regular basis destroys humans’ self-esteem. Comparing yourself with ideal (as it seems to be on Instagram) lives of others’ has a damaging effect. Secondly, face-to-face communication is being replaced by the rectangular screens, where we just observe our friends’ digital facades than their real-life personas. Memories we share on social media are also distorted, as Instagram posts hardly ever reflect the reality. Next, social media and Instagram in particular often steal our sleeping time. Lots of people check them before they go to bed, as a result problems with “dozing off” appear. In addition to this, the attention span suffers a lot. And there is a real threat that is why we need to start to be worried about our brain capacity and concentration capability. Finally, Instagram ruins out mental health provoking anxiety and depression. The fear of missing out is improving.

On the contrary, the research conducted by SHAOHAI JIANG (2020) about the effects of Instagram use, social comparison, and self-esteem on social anxiety in Singapore has shown the opposite results. The author says that Instagram use did not directly increase social anxiety. Instead, social comparison, a proximal outcome, and self-esteem, an intermediate outcome played mediating roles, supporting the complete mediation effects. This finding provides important theoretical and practical implications for the design of health campaigns and education in this digital era to enhance the positive effect of social media on health and emotional well-being. It is a very curious conclusion on the background of the controversial facts, which say how harmful and even dangerous online addiction might be. Anyways, we should take into account the geographical location of the conducted survey. Singapore might have different approach about the social media issue.

These opposite points of view witness the complexity of the question we have risen. And we were trying to bring into our thesis as many prospectives as possible. Remember that social media was not created to make us feel depressed. It is always safer for your psychological balance not to compare yourself with others and show your private life less. Facebook, Instagram and Youtube are great helpers in communicating with friends and performing some work processes.

## **4.2 Decision Making of Tourism Customer**

Decision making is one of the fundamental cognitive processes of human beings (Wang, 2004, 2007) that is widely used in determining rational, heuristic, and intuitive selections in complex scientific, engineering, economical, and management situations, as well as in almost each procedure of daily life. Since decision making is a basic mental process, it occurs every few seconds in the thinking courses of human mind consciously or subconsciously. Consumer decision-making research has grown exponentially during the past three decades. Theories such as the expected utility theory (NEUMANN & MORGENSTERN, 1947), prospect theory (KAHNEMAN & TVERSKY, 1972), regret theory (BELL, 1982); satisfying theory (SIMON, 1956); The theory of reasoned action (AJZEN & FISHBEIN, 1980) and its derivative theory of planned behavior (AJZEN, 1985, 1987) have been developed and tested in a variety of contexts. The range of contexts (e.g., well-defined to ill-defined choice situations) within which these decision-making theories are used is too broad to specifically deal within a single manuscript. A particular theory is likely to explain a specific aspect of an individual's decision in a given context. Multiple decision theories when used together are likely to explain a wider range of decision behavior across an expanded range of contexts. So far, however, no single unifying theory has emerged across disciplines to describe, explain, or predict consumer decisions, and it seems unlikely that individual decision processes fit neatly into a single decision theory.

The most fundamental decisions made by tourism customer are where to travel, whether to travel, what to do, when to travel, how long to stay and how much to spend. While destination marketers have a strong interest in how tourism customers make all of these decision, the most significant of these concerns where to travel; that is, the choice of destination. A tourist may decide initially that they wish to visit a particular destination and then, having made that decision, they may then set about deciding what type of experience they wish to create for themselves during their visit. An important role in choosing a destination is played by the mental image a tourist has about a particular area, which takes into account the interests, the beliefs, and the attitudes of that person, but is influenced by the common mental and public image of the destination (OBENOUR ET AL. 2005). According to DAN (1981), to choose a destination, tourists are pushed by their needs and wants, then are influenced by destinations' attributes to make a decision of where they will go on vacation. Therefore, destination attributes are very important for a destination to be successful in attracting more tourists. Woodside and LYSONSKI (1989) developed a general model of the destination choice process, which recognised the central role of perceptions and preferences. Their model suggests that the destination chosen for a vacation is the outcome of a series of explicit and implicit decisions,



which progress from an initial state of destination awareness conditions from which particular destination preferences arise and a travel intention is formed.

### **4.3 Bloggers. Why they are popular and who the people following them are**

Looking at the Instagram business from the other side of the issue, we tried to examine the reasons why social media users follow certain bloggers, why they read tons of text, meanwhile Instagram is considered to be a “picture place”. Some times ago professional SMM managers claimed that no one read long posts on Instagram and only visuals and grid were important But hundreds of thousands Instagram users all around the world still keep on writing long texts which garner tons of comments and lively discussions. Not only bloggers are text lovers, but their subscribers are too. Demand creates supply, let us emphasize it again. A while ago, Instagram introduced quick emoji comments to stimulate user engagement. The interface designers assumed that since people go to Instagram only for the sake of pictures, they are lazy to leave text comments. But things turned out to be opposite. People enjoy typing words of support, answer the questions or jokes.

So we came to the conclusion that people still love to talk. There might be a reason in a fact that we all need to express ourselves, we want to discuss things and take part in any kind of negotiations. The question is about Instagram. Why not Facebook, which is much better developed for text posts and long discussions? The journalist AKSENOV of the Russian portal RBK came to the following conclusion. In the article “Why are the text bogs so popular?” he claimed that Instagram had a less toxic and more friendly atmosphere, there was an opportunity to isolate oneself from politics and social problems. Why do not we call it “cozy Instagram”, as long as staying on Facebook can lead to high pressure (AKSENOV, 2019).

There is one more factor why people perceive pictures with text much more friendly than pictures without text. Designers suggest that a lot of people are more conscious about meanings, not forms. In any visual message, they look for it. Sometimes even not taking into account the low quality of the picture (HAMMAR ET AL. 2018). In addition to this, marketers working with mass audience often choose images which are pretty far from being perfect. They believe that crooked, oblique, random shots are more likely to attract attention and make you to read the text of the advertisement. This aesthetics is now being rethought by some fashion brands like Balenciaga, for instance. The audience is extremely important for the author. As soon as you start making content it makes you want to be recognized by your readers.

But who are those followers and why they spend their time online, reading thoughts and opinions of people they might not even know in person? YI-TING HUANG AND SHENG-FANG

SU, the authors of the article “Motives for Instagram Use and Topics of Interest among Young Adults” (2018) after the 307 valid questionnaires were obtained came to the conclusion that the motives for Instagram use were mostly to look at posts, particularly involving social interaction and diversion motives. The level of agreement expressed toward motives for creating posts was lower. Gender, professional training background, and level of addiction to Instagram all exert influence on motives for Instagram use. The research framework was based on the issue of smartphone addiction. They used 27 question divided into five topics as social interaction, diversion, documentation, creativity and self-promotion. After some examinations and observations the researchers came to some classifications of the Instagram users. ENIA KULISH, the author of the article “Why do people read blogs and how to attract an audience?” (2015) has highlighted the following positions:

- 1) The first group of readers are just friends, acquaintances and relatives of the author. Normally, there are not so many of them, but it is the most powerful sector of blog-followers. They visit it regularly, share the posts and leave comments. Let us say it is the blog’s nuclear.
- 2) The second sort of the followers are people coming to the blog in order to learn something, get new knowledge or skills. It is applicable for educational, health or media blogs. Think about language-learning accounts or some pages of doctors or journalists. The target audience of them is a certain group of people keen on the topic or engaged into the problem. They come for information, lessons, workshops, articles and researches.
- 3) Another group of Instagram follower consider this social media as the tool of gaining very personal aims, like winning lotteries, free tickets and goods. Searching for these very selfish purposes is quite common for beauty bloggers or celebrities.
- 4) Next kind of instagram users is very typical for magazine accounts or the places rising up controversial topics with a dozen possible opinions. Readers there are actively involved in the dialogue as they want to talk and express themselves and tell personal stories and opinions.
- 5) Some people are just looking for the opportunity to assert themselves. This category is waiting for "scandals, intrigues, investigations", provocative materials that play off people with diametrically opposed views on life.
- 6) The next type of the audience are people who are interested in promoting their own blogs. They subscribe only to get their own advantage of you as their follower
- 7) No doubt, a huge part of the Instagram users are just people looking for some interesting content to fill their free time with scrolling their feed full of worthy posts. They might be just bored so do not better consider them to be your loyal fans. Just like background TV noise, blogs are also often read as a kind of information noise. Anyway this group of people could be

the main audience of top bloggers. In addition to this, we can also add that the higher the level of intelligence the better a person feels and recognizes any kind of insincerity, manipulation, and disinformation. That is why users are carefully choosing the sources, the Instagram accounts, which they can trust, where they receive news and opinions from.

The Internet invention has dramatically changed our everyday life, however, there is still a chance to stay out of date only because of that endless number of information sources. The most obvious example is people who do not watch TV anymore. Why? It is simply a low quality media. Those people read certain sources they trust. There can be a few Instagram accounts or particular blogs they rely on. EVGENIY TSAREV in the article about resource trust or why people read blogs (2019) says that at the same time, people mostly tend to trust well-known newspapers, magazines or TV news. These media are supposed to be reliable and trustworthy because of their level of popularity and legitimacy. However, it might not always be that simple as it seems to be. Often mass media is controlled and regulated by the government and the things are represented in a way different from the reality. Moreover, it is always good to have a variety of sources to look at the issue from other perspectives not to be biased. Bloggers feel more responsibility for the information they post. Publishing false facts immediately brings them the loss of the followers. There are too many intelligent and educated people reading blogs, and our modern world of mouth will definitely bring bad fame to Instagram liars. Unlike TV channels, newspapers or magazines, especially large ones, take almost no responsibility for the material they publish. Everything is rather impersonal.

In the scientific investigation on the role of trust and what makes bloggers share knowledge? The authors SANGMI CHAI AND MINKYUN KIM (2010) claim that blogging as a collaborative work environment is considered to be a useful knowledge sharing platform, which definitely worth public's attention in the modern world. Based on an analysis of results from the 485 survey respondents, the research found that there is the positive relationship between bloggers' trust and their knowledge sharing practices. This study explores trust in multiple dimensions including economy-based trust, trust in bloggers, and trust in the Internet and trust in blog providers.

Blogs have become very popular with the development of Internet technologies, when everyone has free access to the Internet. Today it is not just an opportunity to share your thoughts with other people, it is an opportunity to earn money on what you love and gain great popularity. Even for quite young people it is possible to become millionaires. Monetizing blogs can generate decent income. All you need is to publish interesting and catchy content on a regular basis. A media portal "Active traffic" in the article devoted to the topic of blogs

(PERMYAKOV, 2020) believes that having a large number of subscribers makes the blogger the object of attention for advertisers. Blogger advertising (hidden or open) is a separate area of Internet marketing. In terms of effectiveness, this promotion method is not inferior to context, SEO and SMM, which in turn are considered the best ways to promote on the Web. By the way, there are other ways to earn being a blogger: you can do advertising within or outside the content as well as get some donations. Therefore, the answer to the question: "who does need blogs?" is simple – everyone. Anyone who wants to make money, become popular or just share their thoughts with others. In conclusion to this part, we have to say that blogging today is a huge industry comparable with any other type of businesses, which can bring money, joy, self-realization and satisfaction with the things you are working with. Being active, honest and interesting for others is the key to success.

#### **4.4 The instagram tools. Things, which make your blog readable, popular and tradable**

Huge demand for opinions and social approval, growing number of audience and followers creates certain rules for Instagram bloggers. It does not really matter what kind of blog you have or read, all of the authors want to stay updated to remain popular and have high rates. So what does make some accounts demanded? What is the secret of popularity and success? How do some people earn millions on their Instagram pages? Content is crucial, that is true, however there are some more tools to rise your popularity up. A school of Internet marketing "My academy" in the article "How to Become Popular on Instagram: 20 Tips from Top Bloggers" (KONDRATIEV, 2020) has chosen the most important trends and tools in order to make your Instagram account more popular and tradable. First of all, bloggers have to remember to make their account personalized. Using a real profile photo, not a picture from Internet, as faceless accounts are not relevant. Each blogger needs to upload their live photos, talk about themselves and their thoughts. People follow an individual as a brand – becoming a brand, an Instagram blog can bring profit. A profile photo should stand out against the background, attract the eye and be remembered, art sketching is possible.

People come to Instagram not only in order to sell or buy goods, but also for entertainment and communication. They want to see your face and recognize your personality behind your account. Show them the person, not the logo and company. Personalize your brand.

Also remember to update the information in the profile header. It is your Internet passport, which can consequently be an important argument for a potential subscriber. Use keywords to make it easier to find you, write USP, structure all brand information, break into blocks and

highlight facts with emoji. Furthermore, it could be better to switch into a business account. It looks attractive and immediately explains users what content they can expect from you. However, one of the biggest advantages of using a business account is the statistics checking possibility. A blogger is primarily a journalist and copywriter telling stories about their lives. Studying, working, weddings, travelling, hobbies – all of the above mentioned topics could be sources of inspiration for subscribers. And even staying at home can be curious as we all saw last year. We have to admit that it is almost impossible to start a unique blog topic, as there are already a number of competitors in each sphere. It is extremely important for authors to create the content they are truly passionate about. The audience is a very intelligent system which can feel the mood between the lines.

Choosing a blog topic is crucial to understand your target audience and create posts that will be of interest to them. Stay true: doing something you love is both exciting and motivating. (ARGYROU ET AL. 2018).

Openness is vital for blogger if they want to establish a good relationship with the target audience on Instagram. The most important thing is vulnerability and honesty. Transparency helps to connect with your audience. Be prepared for criticism is also psychologically important for bloggers. Experts recommend to remember some basic rules for working with negative, which include being calm and polite no matter how awful the comment was left. Showing the respect of the audience. Even if the author knows they are wrong, their reaction will be indicative. Staying honest and keeping the brand and name: the blogger is a pro in their business. Staying tuned and answering promptly: the sooner the question or issue will be closed, the less likely the problem is to escalate. Being positive making up a positive image of the Instagram profile: publish a selection of positive reviews, thank your customers (subscribers). Rather make live content. You might remember the boom of "magic" on the Instagram around two years ago: unicorns appeared, the grass was painted pink, sparkles were added, and the most unrealistic pictures were created. It does not work anymore, as people today want to see the reality, but not photoshop pictures with unbelievable filters. Emphasising live content, real photos with minimal processing (SÁNCHEZ-COBARRO ET AL. 2020). Illusion does not inspire at all. Ordinary people are able to become idols of more than one thousand people, but the demand for those bathing in luxury has fallen. By the way, storytelling is one of the more popular content formats. It rises interest of subscribers, help them to get to know you better as the author, awake the desire to respond to the post with a comment or tell their stories in response. Bloggers often use such tools for discussion as:

- 10 facts about you, two of which are wrong;

- Your success story with ups and downs;
- Asking for advice from subscribers;
- Sharing your biggest failure – it will attract your audience and at the same time will bring you closer to it.

What is more, Instagram stories have become very important tool along with the main feed (VÁZQUEZ-HERRERO ET AL. 2019). Many subscribers like to watch stories even more, as they see a lively and real picture there. Shoot your real life, involve users in the events that happen in your place, arrange polls, ask subscribers for opinions. Engaging subscribers to feel connected. Readers need to be interested in your life and respond to posts. Before posting, think about what kind of reaction you want to get from those who see your message. If you want more likes just ask subscribers to double-click on the photo or directly ask them to like it if they liked the post. Are you waiting for comments? Try asking a question. Do you want subscribers to follow the link in your profile bio? Tell them what they will find interesting there. The greater your reach, the better word of mouth works and the more likely you are to get featured. This gives an influx of new subscribers. (RICHARDSON ET AL. 2013). Have you read comments from bloggers? You must have noticed how, when new publications are released, a group of users actively comments and likes each other. Do not also forget about contests with gifts. Participants go to your contest post on Instagram and mark friends, put hashtags, smiles, and you, choose the winners at random. What works for free: whether it's a candy box, a marketing book, a beauty box or a phone. Polls are also an effective type of content that helps to establish a connection between the brand and the audience, to find out their opinion on the activities of the brand. In the future, this will help improve the product or service. Through polls, you get important information and show customers that you are interested in their opinion. Surveys allow you to identify the expectations and needs of the audience - helps with planning new posts and developing products or products. Use hashtags as well. You can use no more than 30 pieces in one post and it is better to write a separate comment under the post. Hashtags should correspond to the post, do not use the most popular ones - these are updated every 2-3 seconds.

- High-frequency: more than 100,000 mentions;
- Mid-frequency: more than 50,000 mentions;
- Low frequency: up to 50,000 mentions;
- Hashtags for navigating your account.

Whether you are ready to ask for engagement or not, be ready to respond to it.

After posting a post, respond quickly to comments. When followers see you are online and respond to comments, they are much more likely to engage. Like and comment on the posts of your friends and subscribers. The more you interact with people on Instagram, the more reciprocity you can expect from your audience (TIGGEMANN, M., & BARBATO, I. 2018). Also, the more credible the relationship, the more likely it is to be approved by the Instagram algorithm. Arrange days when subscribers can ask you questions through a special form in Stories. This will bring you closer to your audience and will definitely increase your popularity. Do not hesitate to follow some basic rules for creating a visual:

- Photos must match in colour, shade and filter;
- Similar photos should not follow each other;
- Either go to the line in parallel through one line, or diagonally;
- Dark photos should not stand next to dark;
- Similar to black and light.

Coming up with rubrics might work good. Headings are topics that appear on a blog regularly. For example: study, work, family, hobbies, news, etc. You do not need to be an expert: learn to sing, dance, speak English with your subscribers. The good thing about viral content is that they start sharing it with friends and it appears in the recommended one. Try trending masks or a challenge. Bloggers have to learn how to maintain the balance and not to go overboard with sponsored content. Even if you find suitable partners, there is a limit to the amount of sponsored content that the audience is willing to put up with. Too many ads in the account not only test the patience of your audience, but can also reduce your credibility in the eyes of brands (EVANS ET AL. 2017). When a blogger makes ads for all brands, it is highly likely that he is not very aware of it and his audience will also notice this.

In conclusion, the most popular and successful bloggers highly recommend to turn off your digital business sometimes. Even if you are a famous Instagram blogger, there is life outside of social media. In addition to this, the more you live “real life,” the easier it will be to create relevant, engaging content and connect with your audience, who also live most of their lives offline and do not get instant feedback.

#### **4.5 Instagram trends. How not to be old-fashioned in the most developing social media**

The variety of blogs on the Internet is extremely wide. Every blogger is looking for some unique techniques and tools to become outstanding in this market of Instagram accounts and to attract as many followers as possible. A big amount of subscribers is a good sign for advertisers, consequently a source to get some benefits for bloggers. Additionally, we have to

notice that certainly, trends are changing within the time, and staying updated is crucial in this world of digital life. However, we tried to summarize some top trends for Instagram account in the first quarter of 2021. The platform “Social media today” in their article “10 Instagram Trends You Need to Know in 2021” says that one of the leaders in the Instagram world would remain Instagram stories (2020). They are still precious as it is a literate background of influencer marketing. The reason of its popularity is simple: these are true pictures from every day life. They are trustworthy, funny, can be awkward or even ridiculous sometimes. That what audience need to feel a part of the author’s life. Second things second, the researchers suppose that the usage of Reels will rise. These are short videos very similar to the ones on TikTok. Users can record and edit together 15 to 30-second video clips, set to music and share them. What is more, Instagram live to live on will keep gaining its popularity. A mid-term conclusion of the “universal Instagram success secret” might be the trend of being natural (TIGGEMANN, M., & ANDERBERG, I., 2019). The audience can not stand artificial luxury views being pretended to be day-to day reality. People like to observe something they can trust and that is why live videos is a perfect tool. You may notice that during pandemics 2020 lots of celebrities were performing online alone or together with their colleagues. In-app shopping trending is a huge competitor for the giant online shopping players as Ebay, amazon, AliExpress and others. People are moving to Instagram with all their needs such as buying goods and services. Each year we can see new sales accounts, and Instagram marketing is taking turns (LI, Y., & XIE, Y., 2019). Instagram’s explore tab is also one of the tools to Improve your account. It is made up of photos, videos, stories and of course products. They are all tailored for each user based on the statistics of the people you follow or the posts you like, according to Instagram. In other words, it is an endless scroll of accounts you might want to follow, posts you might want to like, and products you might want to buy. More than half of Instagram users check out the Explore page every month. (That’s about 500 million people, according to the latest Instagram statistics.) So, what, exactly, does the feed show people? That’s decided by the Instagram algorithm, which considers things like:

- Posts that people you follow have liked;
- Posts with high engagement;
- Accounts similar to ones you already follow.

TikTok, Twitter, and GIF content trending and the use of branded AR filters. Wowsome marketing research (DUBEY, 2020) says that reach and engagement are two of the main components of any successful marketing campaign. Because before planning your campaign you need to know where your target audience is: places they visit, media they consume, people



they follow, their tastes and preferences and so on. You may have the best content, but if you don't plan well to reach your target group, your marketing content won't meet its purpose.

Anyway digital media consumption was on the rise with increasing Internet and smartphone penetration and due to Coronavirus pandemic, the number of hours an average user spends has now grown by manifolds. Focusing on social media, reports say 87% rise in usage. Not only more people are joining social media society but they also spend more time. And that could be a sign for brands to get more visibility and to convert business strategy in these tough times. The report says that 80% of Instagram users follow at least one business page, which means that people want to follow the brands they are interested in.

For instance, "We MakeUp", the Italian cosmetics brand was one of the first movers who started experimenting with the Facebook AR ads. Their goal was to find new prospective customers and generate sales. For this purpose, they created an AR filter that allowed users to try-on different shades of its lipstick, find their perfect match and make the purchase right away. The ad-creative involved a video that demonstrated the filter's use encouraging users to try the filter for themselves. The campaign had a huge success with in sales when compared to video-only ads. Another example of Coca-Cola came up with a Christmas offering for its Instagram followers. The beverage brand used its brand mascot, a Polar bear, holding a Coke bottle and sporting a branded scarf while dancing in your living room. The campaign was a festival hit and users clicked pictures posing with the polar bear. Purina, Nestle's petcare company, created a photo frame based filter around a Dog show event that it sponsored. The filter featured paparazzi sound effects and promoted the pet care brand along with promoting its dog show event. That is how it helps promoting.

Carousel posts to continue trending are one of the most versatile tools you can use to achieve your business goals.

With a good creative strategy, you can boost engagement levels, increase brand loyalty, and even drive product sales! Instagram marketing platform "Later" in its article "11 Creative Ways to Use Instagram Carousel Posts for Your Business" (WARREN, 2021) says that carousel posts are a great way to share more pics, close-ups, and variations with your audience, allowing you to showcase your new product in all of its glory. And you don't just have to introduce a physical product to capitalize on the value of carousels. We can also use carousel posts to jump into the details of our technical product releases. Whatever your product, carousel posts provide a great opportunity for you to celebrate the details of your new product with your audience.

Instagram's social cause feature was extremely popular in 2020 due to pandemic. And Instagram marketing platform "Later" in its article "NEW: Host a Personal Fundraiser on

Instagram!” says that According to Instagram statistics, more than \$65 million has been raised for causes related to COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement last year — from raising money for medical equipment to funding educational resources (THOMAS, 2020).

Previously, if you wanted to raise money on Instagram, you could use the donation sticker in your Instagram Stories or raise funds on an Instagram Live — specifically for nonprofits and charities. However, with the new fundraising feature, you can now raise money even for a personal cause. IGTV as one of the most powerful Instagram tools takes centre stage as it is a great alternative to traditional TV or even YouTube.

In conclusion to this part devoted to speaking about Instagram trends, we have to say that it is very important to stay updated not to become old-fashioned with this developing trends of online media platforms.

#### **4.6 The influence of social media on travel experience**

Instagram has become incredibly popular and there is no need to prove its importance and power. The influence on people’s minds, their choices and preferences is obvious and tourism is not an exception. DILYARA AMET-USTAEVA in her research “Social networks as a tool for promoting travel services” (2019) says that the World Travel Monitor study conducted by UNWTO had showed the following:

- 40% of international tourists travel with smartphones, which, among other convenient functions, have access to the Internet and e-mail;
- 40% of smartphone users apply them to get directional information;
- 26% of tourists and 34% of business travelers need smartphones to change hotel and other services bookings while traveling.

More than a third of international travelers use smartphones to access social networks – they post content on their blogs, on Facebook pages, share photos on Twitter or Instagram while they are on a trip. The research “Characterizing the location of tourist images in cities. Differences in user-generated images (Instagram), official tourist brochures and travel guides” conducted to reveal the most effective tool of tourism information spreading between official tourist brochures, travel guides and user-generated content (Instagram) showed a partial overlap between the pictures shared on Instagram and locations promoted by official tourist brochures and travel guides. The author DANIEL PAÛL I AGUSTÍ concluded that it provided useful insights for applications of social media into future geographical and image management research (PAÛL I AGUSTÍ, D., 2018). Most often, social media includes: social networks (for

example, MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn), blogs (for example, Blogger, Live Journal) and microblogging (for example, Twitter), forums, review sites, photo hosting (for example, Picasa, Flickr) and video hosting (for example, YouTube) and others. All social media have certain properties that determine their characteristics and specifics. First of all, this is the possibility of communication between users and the exchange of various kinds of content, which is the basis for the development of the information society and an indicator that characterizes the speed of communication between one user and another. In addition, social media have the properties of communication, mobility, accessibility, versatility. In the scientific research “Beyond User Gaze: How Instagram Creates Tourism Destination Brand?” (FATANTI, M. N., & SUYADNYA, I. W., 2015) the authors proved that Instagram provides a complete communication facilities, from tourism branding to user generated content photography. They claim that Instagram has a significant value for promoting tourism site and creating brand destination through photography.

The researchers SALEH SHUQAIR AND PHILIP CRAGG in their article “The immediate impact of instagram posts on changing the viewers’ perceptions towards travel destinations” worked on the issue of impact of User- Generated- Contents (UGC) in forms of Instagram images on changing the viewer’s perceptions towards a travel destination. Scientists came to the conclusion that the Instagram posts were effective in changing the viewers' perceptions and it could influence viewers’ behavioral intentions during the pre-visitation stage (2017). Social networks allow people to form a community, increase customer loyalty to a tourism company or a specific tourism product, allow you to create targeted mailing and thereby apply the principle of targeting in the marketing of travel services, and also provide wide coverage audiences with a positive image (through posts and likes). Another research “The influence of Instagram on consumers’ travel planning and destination choice” (TERTTUNEN, 2017) showed that along with family members and friends’ recommendations while planning the travel tour people pay high attention to the information they search for online in particular on Instagram. This social media is considered to be one of the most powerful instruments in tourism marketing and travel managers would rather not underestimate this tool. People having Instagram accounts find the user-generated content as a trustworthy source of important information related to their demand. Meanwhile pictures shared by others also remain important for the Instagram user as a potential tourist. To sum up these research findings, we need to say that majority of people value visual aspects in travel planning and nowadays Instagram has all the chances to turn into a great marketing tool.

However, these improvements have various affects on our social media routine as well. One of the brightest, from our point of view, is a new Instagram tourism vocabulary, which included certain words mostly spread in a virtual world of travelers, Besides, it might be also quite predictable to have all of those words being used even in our normal life. Day by day tourism transformations are coming into force even from a language prospective.

The Internet journal compiled a vocabulary of terms that characterize the life of a modern Instagram traveler and the phenomenon of overtourism itself and we tried to analyza and interpret it applying to the article “Influential post identification on Instagram through caption and hashtag analysis” by BENYAMIN BASHARI AND EHSAN FAZL-ERSI (2020).

*Overtourism – excessive influx of tourists.*

Overtourism or an excessive influx of visitors to certain tourist zones, is not a new phenomenon, caused not only by the Instagram. Even before the emergence of the social network, the tourist infrastructure of some cities ceased to meet the requirements of the increased number of tourists. Amsterdam, Barcelona, Galapagos, Everest, Taj Mahal, Machu Picchu and many other super popular locations have long been included in the list of 12 places to visit. With the development of travel blogging, less hackneyed objects have come under threat. After all, ordinary excursions to tourist attractions are no longer interesting for instagram travellers, they try to open untouched sights.

*Travelgram - travel Instagram.*

In 2010, at the dawn of its existence, Instagram was completely different. It was conceived as a geolocation social network, the main function of which is to allow users to check in in different places. However, then the creators abandoned this idea in favor of the ability to easily and quickly share photos. There was a time when it was not possible to geotag an app at all.

Now it is impossible to imagine Instagram without geolocation. And #travelgram is the most popular hashtag on the social network, with 104.5 million posts on it. Millennials often go on trips solely to place a proud grid under their photos.

*Instatravel - Instagram travel.*

The second most popular hashtag on the social network is #instatravel, with 90.5 million publications. Being a simple tourist in the era of instagram is already out of fashion. Now everyone is trying to become an Instagram traveler, an explorer of unexplored paths that only the locals know about. However, any locations are no longer unexplored very quickly: it is worth showing them on Instagram with the appropriate hashtag.

*Geotagging - travel by geotagging.*

The millennial generation is choosing vacation spots in a new way. Previously, when planning a vacation, we were guided by personal preferences: to see architecture, learn history, soak up the beach. Now tourism called geotagging is in vogue: we look for directions for a trip using geolocation marks on Instagram.

*Instagrammable Place - Instagram place.*

According to research, many Instagram users may go on vacation solely to take a photo in a trendy location. There is also a special term for this phenomenon - instagrammable place, the “place of power” of Instagram users, which guarantees a massive influx of followers.

*Selfie Generation.*

The selfies generation in the context of tourism is interesting primarily for its new experience of the natural world. Millennials want to be involved - they go on car tours in reserves, take pictures of themselves with the backdrop of untouched landscapes, join fire brigades to extinguish fires in forests, pitch tents and save wild animals. But unity with nature does not mean rejection of the Internet: all actions are recorded in detail for a page on the social network. Dots of popular geotags in the near future may add to the list of places affected by overtourism. If you do not want to become a part of the problem, you can always visit no less significant and very similar, but much less popular place.

## **5. Research methodology**

In the next part of our scientific work called “Research methodology” we have discussed about the best appropriate method for conducting our research, which could be the most useful and effective in the solution finding process. To start with, we needed to return to the research questions we raised in the beginning of the paper. Those issues forced us to initiate the research itself, consequently, those must be landmarks guiding us as the scientists throughout the whole proceeding. The research questions were the following:

- 1) Can we consider Instagram as the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of the university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their career?
- 2) How strong is the impact of Instagram on its users’ travelling desire?
- 3) What kind of psychological effect does Instagram travel content provoke in our target audience’s minds?

After analyzing and choosing the research method, we concluded that for the questions we mentioned above as our research landmarks, questionnaire could be the best and the most powerful option for the scientific idea implementation. The target audience we were mostly planning to rely on and get the absolute majority of the answers from students, young people and fresh graduates in the beginning of their career path with the average financial situation. Our target group was coming from Russia, however, we have managed to collect the forms filled out by 314 respondents from all around the world: China, India, France, Italy, Hungary, USA, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Laos, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco and others. Big number of participants was extremely important for us in order to make an objective conclusion and see the global situation image.

Talking about the survey (opinion poll) as a method of sociological research, we should briefly explain how this tool worked and why it was selected as our main instrument. Sociological survey is one of the most common ways to collect the necessary information in modern sociology and marketing. It is necessary to note that the research questions we have risen above are empirical, which means that our respondents have to rely on their own experiences or direct observation when answering those. This fact brings us to the point that running an empirical research has to be based on the empirical methods as well. According to the theory related to empirical researches, the scientists themselves have to propose certain assumptions or a hypothesis before. Depending on the results of the experiment, the theories on which the hypotheses and predictions were made on can be confirmed or refuted. Our survey “Social

media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration" aimed to collect and obtain primary empirical information, opinions, knowledge and social facts that make up the subject of research. Certainly, for every plus there is a minus, and trying to stay as objective as possible we have also decided to examine all kinds of limitations along with advantages which could the method of survey bring to our research results. Questioning in psychology is being used to obtain psychological information, and sociological and demographic data play only an auxiliary role over there. The contact between the interviewer and the respondent during the questionnaire is minimized. The questionnaire survey allows the most rigid follow-up to the planned research plan, since the question-answer procedure is strictly regulated by it.

There are the following advantages of the questionnaire method:

- 1) Firstly, it allows to attract a significant number of respondents to the research;
- 2) In addition to this, questionnaire allows to receive information from a large number of people in a short period of time;
- 3) There is also the ability to carry out computer processing of information;
- 4) Anonymous survey almost guarantees that you can get more truthful and open statements;
- 5) Standardization is a plus due to the fact that all respondents are asked the same questions with the same answer options;
- 6) Simplicity is also important since it is not necessary to visit respondents, you can share the poll online. There is no need to involve highly qualified professionals;
- 7) The possibility of in-depth analysis, due to the use of successive clarifying questions can be also taken as an advantage of the questionnaire method.

However, we should not ignore certain disadvantages of it as well:

- 1) Dependence on representativeness of choice, truthfulness of responses, dispersion of elements in the total sample and sampling design;
- 2) Influence of subjective factors such as unwillingness to give truthful answers, haste and thoughtlessness of answers;
- 3) dependence of the quality of the information received on the respondents' questionnaire text perception, as well as on its accuracy and attentiveness.

Our survey consisted of 28 questions. All of them were relevant to the topics of our research "Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration". We conducted a questionnaire asking about travelling itself, its connection to Instagram and social media sharing, the sources of inspiration and content posting. However, to make sure we were

examining the group of people we intended to focus on we have also added the questions about the gender, age, level of education, the country of origin and financial situation of our participants in the final part of our survey.

Building up the form, we made efforts to make all of the questions be logical and separate. Certainly, we tried to avoid using special terms and rare, obscure words just so they could be easily answered by anyone. One of the challenging issues was keeping the questions short not to make people frightened of its length. Especially realizing the fact that a survey of 28 questions was already a time-consuming event for our respondents. Moreover, we have also accompanied some of the questions by an explanation, for example: “If you have a chance to visit an iconic attraction (e.g. Eiffel Tower), are you more likely to share that content than any everyday momentum of your life?” for a complete understanding of the issue. In addition to this, we managed to make up specific, not abstract questions, not to make our participants feel confused or embarrassed. The wording of the question prevented us from getting formulaic or unacceptable answers. Needless to say, the language we applied in the survey was formal and polite, not expressive or defiant, which could be considered as disrespect towards our respondents.

We applied both opened and closed questions since it was necessary due to different questions’ wording and forms. Closed questions, which involved an answer from a list were yes-no and multiple choice questions, providing more than two options. Data received from closed questions is easy to process and analyze. We had the following examples in our survey: “Do you have a personal Instagram account?”, “Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts?”, “How many tourist destinations or attractions have you visited because you had seen them on Instagram?” (numbers as the options were offered), “How often do you share your holiday pictures on Instagram?” (options such as “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, “regularly”, “every time I go travel I do share my pictures”, “I am not an Instagram user” were offered). Nevertheless, one of the disadvantages of such questions forms might be the risk of answers’ thoughtlessness, random choice or even the respondent's automatism.

Open-ended (unstructured) questions allow the researchers to reveal the dynamics of opinions, assessments, sentiments, value orientations, etc. For example: “Have you ever paid extra to visit an attraction/destination just so that it can be shared on Instagram? If so, where?” However, when processing open-ended questions, it could be challenging to give to the answers the form of the table; there also could be problems with the lack of answers, the expressed opinions and assessments may be associated with some kind of comparative framework unknown to the researchers in general. In any case, we tried to focus on subjective questions



to get the respondents' attitude towards the issues we examined and to understand some patterns in our target group's behavior in certain situations.

A few more words to say about our survey participants. As we have already mentioned above, our target audience was young people, students or fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation mostly coming from Russia. The absolute majority had their higher education degree. We managed to collect 314 responses sent by people from all around the world. 77% of our participants were women and that was our only limitation, which we could not do anything with. However, our research is considered to be as much objective as possible and we were doing our best in order to avoid any other sorts of confines. The survey conduction took place online since we used a virtual platform "Google forms" for collecting the responses. Trying to spread the form throughout the maximum number of channels, we shared the link on social media attracting the attention of the audience from there. Personally, I posted the link on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn profiles and Vkontakte as long as shared it with my friends, colleagues, family and acquaintances. It took us 14 days to reach 314 respondents and close the form for the further analysis process. After we have managed to collect numerous responses, the process of received answers analysis has started. The responses from google forms have been transformed into the excel sheet for easier interpretation of some of the questions' results.

Along with diagrams, which were perfect for seeing the percentage shares within the closed-ended questions we also needed to interpret the opinions left in the sections of free answers. It was always a pleasure to see people sharing their thoughts despite the fact it was more time-consuming, consequently it was especially precious for us as the researchers. In general we were analyzing the responses received, comparing them with literature review finds, our own experiences and other possible interpretations of the issues. In conclusion, we should note that making our survey analysis as complex as possible we tried to implement all of the available sources and opinions and give the shape of a complex form for the questionnaire and the results we got.

## **6. Results**

After working on our literature review part and analyzing the scientific papers over there, we came to the point, where we should conduct our own research and find the answers for our research questions we raised up in the very beginning of the working process. The most important item is to agree or disagree with the statement that Instagram can be considered as one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of the university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their careers. Meanwhile our aim is to analyze also, how strong the impact of Instagram on its users' travelling desire is; and what kind of psychological effect Instagram travel content provokes in our target audience's minds.

We were planning to find the solutions of such issues asking participants 28 various questions, where they could share their own experiences and thoughts with us. Most of the respondents were coming from Russia; however, we got the forms filled in by people from all around the world. In general, we managed to reach out 314 respondents. Below we are introducing all of the questions from the survey, statistical data analysis and our assumptions and deductions based on the answers we received from our 314 participants.

### **6.1 Mapping Instagram use**

According to our questionnaire results, we figured out that almost 95% of people had their personal Instagram accounts. We emphasized the word "personal" in the sentence, as we were not going to take into consideration business or any kind of corporate accounts, kept for some professional or other reasons. The number 95% means that mostly all of our respondents are the target group, which we were searching for to reach the proper number of participants for our research about Instagram influence.

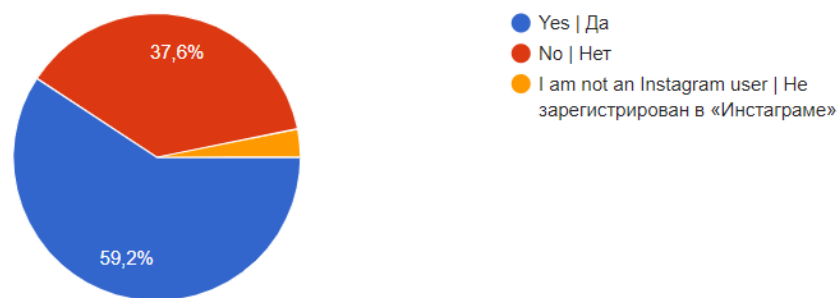
Almost 60% of respondents do follow Instagram travel accounts. Other 37% do not, and around 3% just do not have a personal Instagram account. 60% means that more than a half of the people we reached out are interested in travel content. It also proves that we have managed to co-operate with the target audience for our research completion. The niche of travel content on Instagram is rather deep and widely introduced by different sorts of information: posts for reading, videos and pictures. As it is commonly believed, demand creates supply, and the growing number of travel bloggers only proves that people are eager to share their experiences with the audience as long as others are ready to consume it. The choice of Instagram blogs is huge, however at least 60% of people follow travel bloggers. It is quite a considerable number

for only one niche. 37% of the respondents which do not follow Instagram travel accounts are might be people who are just not excited about trips and traveling and do not see any sense in reading such kind of blogs.

Figure 1: Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts?

Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts? | Подписаны ли вы на блоги о путешествиях в «Инстаграме»?

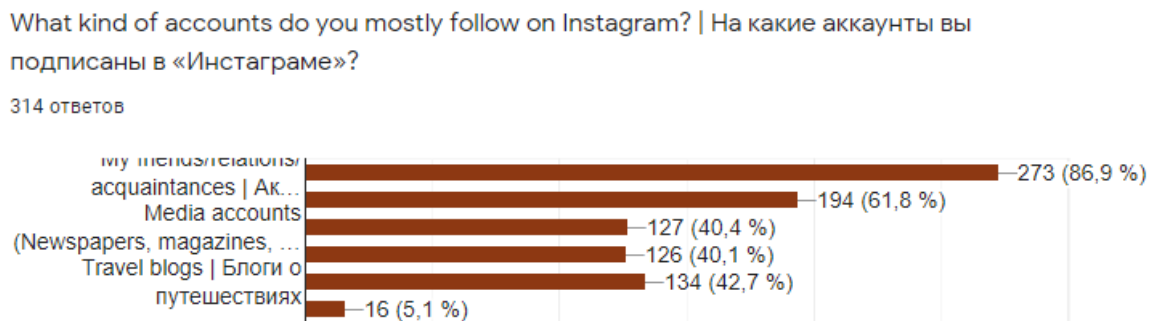
314 ответов



For the multiple choice question where people could chose more than 1 answer about what kind of accounts the respondents mostly follow on Instagram. As we can see 87% of people reported that they were following their friends, relations and acquaintances' accounts. That might be quite obvious as having personal account presumes having your close people in the list of subscriptions. There is also an unspoken rule about following people you might not be that keen on, but still have to follow out of courtesy. 61% of respondents claimed that they were following famous people and celebrities' accounts. Instagram makes us feel closer to the ones we look up on. It brings benefits both for the super stars as it raises their publicity and the influence and for the followers who are just enjoying the feeling of observing the famous people's lives. 40% respondents were subscribed on media accounts such as newspapers or magazines as it looks like to be more and more wide spreading when media are publishing their materials on social media along with their official web page or even paper edition if they still in force. Instagram accounts are easy to reach, fast to "consume", chose and build your own priority. Around 40% of our audience were also into educational accounts, which include languages learning pages, literacy, books recommendations, reviews and other things to explore. From such point of view, where we compared different kinds of content followed by Instagram users, travel blogs took 42% of the respondents. The number is relatively as big as the number of media and educational accounts' followers.

In addition to this, a numerous exclusive options appeared in the section “others” such as recipes, lifestyle blogs, fashion, hiking and sports, beauty and cooking, cinematography industry, politics, games and art, tech and maternity leave blogs. From the one hand, we can group them all under the “entertainment” or “educational accounts” as all of those were mentioned above, however it always clarifies what exactly people are looking for, what they spend their time on and why they sacrifice their precious leisure on certain things. For me as a researcher, it was valuable and helpful to see the real picture of Instagram most consumed content and not the abstract words.

Figure 2: What kind of accounts do you mostly follow on Instagram?



## 6.2 Instagram influence on its users' inspiration and travel experiences

Regarding the question about travel inspiration, which Instagram might cause, we decided to use the scale to ask the respondent to evaluate their travel inspiration provoked by this social media platform on the 7 levels rate. Big share of the audience (around 53%) gave a medium grade to the inspiration they are experiencing because of Instagram influence. However, almost 20% appraised their intentions with the highest rate, which means that every fifth person is affected by social media when thinking of a travel destination or attraction. Despite the fact that this number is not extremely big, we can still prove that there are people who experience strong influence of Instagram. Consequently, it confirms our hypothesis about the psychological tool of social media travel inspiration existence. Overall, we identified 14% only who measured their idea to travel pretty low. It also brings us to the point where we can literally see the acknowledgement of how individual each person's psychology is. We also have to note that people of different age categories, countries and level of their education took part in the research, which provided us this variety of answers.

The question about “How could you evaluate your desire to travel caused by the Instagram travel bloggers on a scale from 1 to 7?” is pretty much the same as the previous question about

“How much travel blogs inspire respondents to explore the world”. However, there is a little difference in the “inspiration to travel” and “desire to travel” word meanings. The second one has a sense of a real action provoking. The desire is something you are eager to do: to go traveling and explore the world. From the linguistics point of view, we rather call it as the readiness to implement intentions into reality, into the action. Meanwhile the word “inspiration” has more emotional shade of meaning. It makes you feel something you would love to try and does not strictly forces or expects you to start doing that straight away. Once a person is inspired means, there is a thought-provoking issue in the mind, which does not necessary means it would come into implementation.

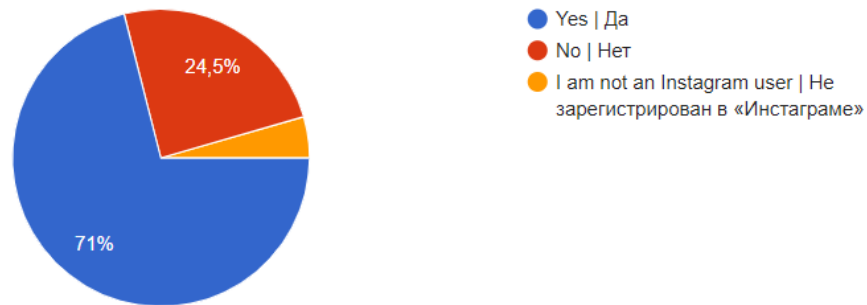
However, the results we got in this question are pretty much similar to the previous diagram. Considerable share of the respondents (45%) also estimated their desire as medium, which means they somewhat have a sort of desire which is not powerful enough to make them say a confident “yes”. There is about 21% of respondents with a strong positive answer and that is quite relevant to the previous question result, where every fifth person was affected by social media when thinking of a travel destination or attraction.

Asking the question about thinking of visiting a touristic place seen on Instagram, we were expecting to get the majority of positive responds. Since we have already discovered that 60% of participants had followed Instagram travel blogs we got 71% people answered “yes”. It is quite interesting as it also means that even people not following Instagram travel bloggers are still affected by their content. It might be possible via information spreading and sharing or even instant post showing up in the Instagram's search feature. 25% of the respondents have never decided to visit a destination or an attraction because they saw it on Instagram and 4% were not the Instagram users.

Figure 3: Has it ever happened before that you had decided to visit a destination or an attraction because you saw it on Instagram?

Has it ever happened before that you had decided to visit a destination or an attraction because you saw it on Instagram? | Хотели ли вы когда-либо посетить какое-то туристическое место после того, как увидели пост о нем в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



Specifying the destination, our respondents decided to visit after they saw it on Instagram we received a big variety of places. We also tried to group the responses into several categories.

The first one is “Iconic places” included the most famous attractions in the world, which could also be named as “over-touristic destinations” before the COVID-19 pandemic started. The most repetitive answers were the following: Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Switzerland, Bahamas, Rimini, Florence, Lake Como and other places in Italy, Austria, Berlin, Paris, Giza pyramids in Egypt, Maldives, Amsterdam, Greece, Bali, Prague, Cappadocia, Portugal, Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco, Machu Picchu, Great Britain, USA, Saint Petersburg, Lake Baikal, Istanbul and others.

We also noted some more specific and even exotic destinations, which are not that wide spread as the ones above. These were Ural Bali, Wild Siberia. North Pole, the Lighthouse in Crimea, Tourist route of Ermak, African tribes and Kenya. Rainbow Mountains in South America, Teide National Park, Lake Bled, Hallstatt in Austria, National Park Krka in Croatia, Novi Sad in Serbia and many more.

We also received plenty of places neither iconic nor very special and decided to name such group as “general tourist destinations”. It includes different places in Hungary like Budapest, Tata, Szelim cave, Esztergom; Kamchatka, Caucasus, Abkhazia, Crimea and other regions in Russia, Seychelles, Kazakhstan, Romance mountains, Baku, Iceland, mountains and rivers of Finland, Singapore, Norwegian falls and Irish trails, India, Canada, Asian countries, Georgia, Norway, Denmark, Peru, Japan, Karelia, Cambodia and Cuba.

Analysing the range of places all around the world that were picked by the survey participants we should emphasise again, how random the responses were. Along with some “top” destinations like Paris or Amsterdam, which were visited by millions of tourists, we were also quite surprised seeing the names we have never met before. Consequently, it means that Instagram promotes not only something well known, but also a bunch of new and uncharted spots.

For the question about if any of the respondents ever managed to visit a tourist destination because they saw it on Instagram we put the emphasis on the word “managed” compare to the question above where we just were wondering if they ever experienced the willingness to go. Thinking is a way far from the real action; however, the inspiration does not mean the implementation. Anyways we would like to see the difference.

Moreover, eventually we got almost the opposite statistics: 60% of the survey participants have never visited any of the places they ever saw on Instagram. Such a conclusion confirms our thoughts about that being inspired does not always lead people to act. Nevertheless, there might be weighty reasons, which stop Instagram users from implementing their dream travelling. First of all, it could be the cost. We have also figured out that 54% of our respondents have the overage financial situation. Travelling suspects you to have some extra money for that, that is why the money might be one of the biggest issues in such case. What is more, from the list of the places above we can also see a lot of exotic destinations like the North Pole or New Zealand. These spots are rather far from the most of the audience we examined. Our target audience group are students or fresh graduates in their twenties who mostly come from Russia or Hungary. Geographically these countries are very far from Kenia or Singapore, as long as visiting “iconic places” might also be quite pricy for students. Another reason could be the fear of leaving the comfort zone, as we always suppose Instagram pictures as something unrealistic, hardly reachable and even impossible to access. On the contrary, we received 35% of positive answers. People were saying that they did manage to visit some places after some Instagram posts. Every third person from our target audience group could make it. This fact makes you to believe into the growing power of Instagram promotion and its influence on travel destination choices. The other 15% were not Instagram users.

Asking about which places did those 35% managed to visit we got a huge variety of places. There were both countries and cities, natural resource places and certain buildings, constructions, cafes and hotels. These were the following Earth spots: Thailand, Iran, France, Jordan, Atlantis, Bahamas, Tata, Pannonhalma, Lilafured, Esztergom in Hungary, Japan, Krasnaya Polyana, Paris, Kaliningrad, Cyprus, USA, Barcelona, Sochi, Saint Petersburg,

Vietnam, Austria, Crimea, Pamukkale, Poland, Italy, Moscow, Curacao, Peterhof, Palawan, Nizhny Novgorod, Armenia, Finland, Greece, Australia, “Friends Forever” cafe in Moscow, Mexico, Valencia, Serbia, Montenegro, Abkhazia, Sochi, lakes and mountains of the Southern Urals, Dubai, Burj Khalifa, Burano, Venice, Faro, Portugal, Seychelles, Catherine Palace, Cappadocia, United States, Georgia, Iceland, Holland, Egypt, Pink beach in Crimea, Gai Kodzor Winery, Teletskoe lake, Mount Kazbek, Puerto Rico, Costa Brava, Spain.

One of the most repetitive destination was Lisbon in Portugal. Several people mentioned it as the place they managed to visit after seeing the post on Instagram. The popular ones were also Cappadocia in Turkey, Austria and Paris, which are famous to be the Instagram-worthy places. We should also note that along with well-known destinations like Dubai or Greece there were also very exotic locations such as Palawan Island or Iceland. Instagram provokes people to explore unknown and quite difficult to reach sites. It was also very precious when people shared their experiences saying that they were encouraged to hit diverse spots all around the world from museums, cafes and showrooms to a wall with graffiti and a special doorknob. It showed us how meaningful Instagram tourism promotion could be, when people travelling to certain places not only to show up there and take a picture, but also searching for some particular shapes and details, which they were excited about in the very beginning. One of the respondents has also added that she felt a bit irritated seeing others visiting places she has already been to before. She was complaining about others “stealing” her locations and that was making her feel to come back there again!

There was also a curious comment from one of the participant reported that they were searching for some nearby places to visit in the country they currently lived. So that there was no need to travel abroad or go far, if there was a possibility to explore the neighbourhood, especially because there were worthy places. Some of the people told that due to Instagram they managed to find some very special locations such as “streets for photographs” in the Czech Republic and Germany. Instagram contributed some of the respondents to discover new ski resorts which they did not visit before. To sum up this question, we should conclude that there were a plenty of destinations “opened” and visited by the respondents after facing with them on Instagram. For the question about the number of tourist destinations visited by the respondents after they had seen the Instagram post about places we got 28% of people who managed to visit at least 1 or 2 “Instagram locations”. 19% of respondents have been to 3-5 spots, 7% checked around 7-12 destinations and only around 3% or 9 people visited more than 12 places. This statistics is showing us that around half of the respondents could travel to the Instagram-worthy destinations 5 times maximum. That high number of visitors means that a lot of places attract



tourist via social media. From the other hand, we can even blame Instagram in over-tourism issue (before the pandemic had started of course).

We also had an option “more than 30”, which was picked up by only one respondent. To be honest, such a choice was offered for the sake of the experiment; however, we actually did not even expect any user that much addicted to travelling and its Instagram involvement. On the contrary, we also needed to be as objective as possible regarding our respondents and their answers to foresee any possible outcome. It might not also look very attractive that in most of the questions we were supposed to add the option “I am not the Instagram user”, as there are still some. Each response was important and valuable for the research that is why we wanted to keep the survey neat and unprejudiced.

For the question about travel recommendation sources, which our respondents mostly rely on when planning their trip the most popular option turned out to be “I check where to go on the Internet”. Almost 66% of our participants have chosen such a respond. It looks to be obvious that in year 2021 Internet is what we all rely on no matter what kind of questions have been raised. An endless number of websites, forums, and articles full of billions of opinions make people feel that there is a solution of every issue on the net. Consequently, we tend to search for the information online.

The second popular respond was “My friends/ relations/ acquaintances’ advice”, which collected 59% of positive answers. The option is also quite wide, as we can follow our close people’s account online as well. And it does not make any difference if the advice were given by the friend in person or somebody just could see it in a shape of Instagram post. That how we should divide active and passive pieces of advice. No need to argue with the fact that our closest social circle has the biggest influence on decisions we make. Unconsciously people are more likely to choose something they are already familiar with rather than new and unknown. Hence, customers’ behavior is not easy to rule and control as there are more powerful tools such as our friends or relatives’ opinions. Travel websites (like Trip Advisor, Booking.com, etc.) are used by 39% of the respondents. We can suggest, that such websites are supposed to be reliable sources of touristic information. People suppose them to have only useful and trustworthy data, full of relevant statistics and competent comments unlike random forums or anything else. The details there are checked by professionals and cannot mislead users. That what all the people hope to see there. They are quite right too; however, travel websites might not be that much updated and “live”, as the information on social media. This answer was picked up by almost the same amount of people. 40% of respondents confirmed that they were checking social media (different blogs, hashtags, and groups) before travelling. We can see that

social media content is an important source of relevant and actual information and pretty big number of people take it into consideration. The least selectable option was travel agencies, which are losing their popularity day by day especially in our century of information accessibility, variety of accommodation booking possibilities and so on. People are becoming more and more independent and flexible regarding the travel issues, so that there is no such demand of travel agencies on a market anymore. Along with offered options, our respondents shared their individual sources of information, which were not mentioned before. Books and TV programs have been mentioned together with video games, what was quite surprising.

Asking our respondents about paying extra to visit an attraction or a destination just so that it can be shared on Instagram, we did not expect to get a big number of positive responses; however, it was extremely curious to know what people are ready to pay for when it comes to travelling.

Overall, we got 89% of negative responds, which means that people are not likely to spend anything extra just for the sake of Instagram. The money issue often becomes one of the most reasonable sides when making decisions. Remembering the fact that most of our participants were students, fresh graduates and young people in their twenties with the overage financial situation, we as researchers should keep it in mind and realize that the answer “no” for the question about paying extra is more expected. In the meantime, 6% of our respondents had such experiences and kindly shared it with us in our research. Despite the fact that the positive number of 6% is pretty low, compare to negative 89% it shows us that there are still people who do it. Personally, I would suppose, that a few years ago the number of people doing that could be even smaller, as Instagram “fashion” and trends are developing and taking more and more shares of our lives. Looking at the presence of “yes” answers, we can prove that Instagram provokes people to spend their money and encourages them to do things they might not implement without it. We can only guess, what kind of pattern will appear in this issue, however it looks like it becomes harder and harder to look outstanding with pictures and posts on Instagram over time. Therefore, it makes people search for some unknown and extraordinary locations to show up bright places to their audience. It could be especially challenging for Instagram bloggers whose work is to share unique content constantly. Having 8% of our respondent with up to 10000 followers, we could suppose that they could be the ones acting such way. Trying to catch exceptional content along with picturesque sceneries people go to extremes.

The question specifying the place where our respondents paid extra just so it could be shared on Instagram revealed the following answers. The vineyards of Saint Emilion, Madame

Tussauds museum in Vienna, Lake Como, a haunted castle, suspension bridge in Crimea, Egypt, Santorini, Museum of photography in Saint Petersburg, a private helicopter tour around the Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, a private jet journey to Berlin, travelling from Tokyo to Kyoto by shinkansen high speed train in business class. The most repetitive options were Turkey, Sochi and Crimea. Since the majority of our respondents come from Russia such choices can be easily explained, as all of these directions are the main touristic destinations for Russian travellers. To find something unique, people had to pay more than usual, as taking an extraordinary and creative picture, which would look outstanding on Instagram feed, might be rather challenging. We should also note that people confessed that in some cases they decided to pay extra not because of unstoppable desire to show off on Instagram, but basically to satisfy personal needs and excitement, where Instagram sharing was a kind of a “side effect”. In addition to this, people were even complaining how costly those services were. For example, the price of the trip from Tokyo to Kyoto by shinkansen high-speed train in business class cost the same as a flight ticket from Moscow to Tokyo. Sharing such content on social media also brings a feeling of satisfaction and pride. Demonstrating others how much you enjoy travelling makes you look like a travel expert eager to spend a fortune on your journeys. From the other hand, it should also raise the feeling of being an explorer: not everyone can afford such pricy ways of leisure, so that you feel like you are educating your audience and even making them feel jealous. Even though people tend to learn how to manage their finances. It often happens because of the willingness to travel, which might occur especially after posting some extremely exciting pictures such as a helicopter tour in Rio or a suspension bridge in Crimea. Preferences are very wide and different; however travelling remains one of the most enjoyable somewhat entertaining.

Asking our respondents if they take pictures/videos of the places visited (regardless of sharing) we got 53% participants answered “always”. It does not really matter if they would like to keep it for their memories or to show their friends, people are recording the events with their cameras. Especially now, when everyone has a smartphone with the possibility to shoot some good quality videos and pictures, it became much easier.

25% of the participants reported that they did it often. Not every time, however it still happens regularly. I believe that sometimes people travelling are deeply involved into the current moment, so they can even forget about taking pictures and even more so sharing them on social media. It is definitely more important and precious to be right here in the “moment” than thinking about high quality shots and cool pictures.

14% of the respondents take pictures/videos of the places visited sometimes. There could be rather various reasons. Either the locations people travelling to are not worth taking pictures there, or they just do not feel like doing it if their cameras are not good enough, or they are not used to doing it so much and that is why it can easily slip their minds. Another way if those people are not Instagram users they are not that much addicted to taking pictures in general, so that they do it more rarely than those who have personal Instagram account. It is also important to notice that taking pictures is absolutely creative activity, which strongly depends on the personal mood. 6% of the respondents said they took pictures when travelling rarely and 1% reported they never did that.

To sum up this question, we should say that absolute majority do take pictures or videos when travelling regardless of sharing them on social media. It means that most of our respondents suppose these activities to be an essential part of travelling, exploring new places visited in the world. For those who do not tend to record their travel movements the idea of being present “right here right now” might seem more important.

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has a dramatic influence on all spheres of our lives, especially tourism. Due to the fact, that people are not able to travel that much as it was before, the travelling content on media has also been experiencing certain forms of changes. We have asked our respondents to share their thoughts about the impact of the pandemic on Instagram’s traveling content. As long as the participant could choose as many options as they wanted, we have also left an empty gap for those who would have something extra to say.

The biggest number of respondents took the alternative “There is way less traveling content on Instagram now”. 38% noticed that on their Instagram feed. That is fair enough, since the borders are closed and even domestic travelling is not that easy to implement anymore. The hotel rooms bookings, the opportunity to eat out or to visit some travel attractions e.g. castles, museums and doing other activities are experiencing challenging times these days and what prevents people from travelling. Consequently, there are less occasions to post travel content on Instagram. In such cases we have foreseen the option “I feel people tend to share content from their previous trips” which was chosen by 27% of our participants. Trying to find the reason of such a big number of supportive responds, we came to the idea, that people could do it by default. Unconsciously implying Instagram as a place for sharing bright life moments especially the ones from travelling they keep sharing them even though they are not actual anymore. It could be also a kind of nostalgic mood, when users enjoy remembering past moments and share them with their audience. In the meantime, 36% noticed that there is mostly domestic tourism traveling content on Instagram feed, which also quite obvious after borders

were closed for tourism purposes. Nevertheless, it seems like people rediscovered inner destinations and found new places to travel even though they might be less exciting than going somewhere abroad. From the other hand, that could also never happen that people would check those local trips if they had other choices.

17% noted that travel content has been replaced by other kinds of it; however, 25% of the respondents have not noticed any difference at all. One of the participants in the field left for individual answers also added that international tourism is still in force for those countries, between those, the restrictions are not very tight. However, there are way more posts about domestic trips in the places where the world tourism is still impossible. Another participant mentioned the repetitive posts and pictures from the same places, which are currently shared by some travel bloggers. In addition to this, for some of the people from our survey the situation seems to look better again: after the recession, everything returns back to normal. In other words, we can certainly say that the pandemic changed even the Instagram representing feed, which proves one more time that travel content takes a big share in the whole statistic of Instagram posts related topics. However, people started to search for other sources of travel content and found the solution in domestic travels.

### **6.3 Motivational and emotional background of Instagram following and sharing**

Regarding the “emotional part” of our research, we decided to offer some options for the respondents to choose, what kind of feeling they usually experience while watching somebody’s holiday pictures on Instagram. The participants could pick more than one answer, however we kept the field “If other, please specify”. In the question itself, we emphasized that the research was totally anonymous to make our audience feel free to tell anything they really meet inside.

For the first option offered “Happy for others they are enjoying their lives” we got 46% of confirming responds. So that almost a half of the people from our target group experienced some positive feelings towards the others. We can only guess how honest this answer could be, nevertheless we were conducting an anonymous questionnaire, and consequently there was no point for our respondents to try to look better than they really are.

For the second option “Feel jealous”, we got 11% of people reporting such a feeling. From the scientific point of view, I was very grateful to see the respondents choosing such an item, as for me as a researcher, it is very precious, when people are ready to share something, which is considered to be not very disingenuous. Feeling jealousy might occur because of the

impossibility to do the same, or it may be provoked by realizing the fact others have more exciting life, than I do. In addition to this, life dissatisfaction might also be raised.

Coming to the next alternative “Feel irritated because I have to work/study only” is quite close to the feeling of jealousy, but we still differentiated them. 10% of responses have appeared here. We should also connect it with our target audience main fields of occupation: 70% of our respondents are either full-time employees or students, and might also make them challenging to travel freely. 20% of people feel offended that they are not able to go for trips. This palette of feelings helps us to understand deeper what kind of emotions our respondents have while watching somebody’s holiday pictures on Instagram. The reason of such experience can be life dissatisfaction again. Feeling of how huge the desire to travel is experienced by 46% of the respondents: almost the same number as those who reported that they were happy for other travellers. This option was the most popular in this question and it confirmed our hypothesis, that Instagram has huge influence on other people’s minds in case of travel inspiration. 46% of people guaranteed they were excited about travelling after they saw somebody’s post on social media, which make them feel eager to organize their own trips and see the world around. The sense of being warm and toasty, because the full of danger world and thinking that it was always safer to stay home was felt by 2,5% of respondents. According to the results, such an alternative was chosen mostly by female participants. They are quite right, that travelling is full of suddenness and surprises, in the same time, it is always stressful to leave your comfort zone and be ready to face any sort of difficulties. Though, the opportunity to challenge yourself might be one of the travel advantages for others who enjoy exploring the world and look for solutions once they are forced to do that. The option “Feel motivated: it raises my intention to organize a trip for myself” was chosen by 40% of the respondents. Instagram has proved one more time the fact that this social media plays a big role in tourism inspiration and users’ intention to travel. Picturesque sceneries shared on Instagram provoke some kind of “hunger for those who plays the part of the Instagram “audience” and forces those people to take an active position in the “Instagram-travel” performance. The question is taken for the research on purpose. From the very beginning, we suspected such outcome as one of the most anticipated thereby we got the strong approval of our expectations. 19% reported they were feeling grateful: Instagram allows them to explore the world lying on a sofa. Moreover, it is difficult to disagree, as one of the greatest options of the era of social media is education all around us. Certainly, there are plenty of disadvantages and controversial sides of this point; anyways there is a high chance to learn things via your media account. 61 people approved appreciated it.

We also received a bunch of individual answers such as “Enjoying beautiful views” or “Wondering what nonsense people share sometimes”. Another meaningful response worth our attention is “Depends on the post. If it is interesting, unique or educational then I appreciate it, if it is just to show off then I feel irritated”. Not everyone is looking for other people’s lives reports, so that it is more precious if there is a certain meaning in posts. Moreover we have also noted some controversial combinations of responses such as some people picked up both “Happy for others they are enjoying their lives” and “Feel jealous” which is rather interesting how various emotions can be at the same time. Of for instance, “Feel how huge my desire to travel is went together with “Feel indifferent”.

For the question about the regularity of posting pictures on Instagram, we got a very colorful diagram. The responses turned out to be very different so that we cannot even notice any tendency in the answers.

21% of people reported that they were sharing pictures every time they went on holidays. It means that every fifth person prefers to show others how their vacation looks like, where they go and what they do there. According to the researches we examined in our literature review part, it is psychologically proven that posting pictures on Instagram is nothing else but building a virtual image of their lives. Users tend to share the content, which represents those leading bright, meaningful and interesting lives. They want to make an impression and show others how captivating their days are. Even if it is not true (most probably). 17% of respondents said they posted pictures on Instagram often or regularly. These are quite neutral answers, as they do not suppose anything, which would oblige people to explain why they do it or not. Sharing or not might depend on different factors such as mood or place or even weather and other circumstances. The alternative “sometimes” was picked up by 27% of the respondents. It is the most popular answer for this request; however, it is not very different from the rest numbers. 19% share their holiday pictures rarely and only 10% of the participants said they never do it at all. To conclude, we should note that most of the answers were positive. Even though the regularity is different, we can still say with certainty that people do share their holiday content on Instagram. Only 10% reported they do not do it, meanwhile the absolute majority confirmed the fact that Instagram is essential tool regarding modern travelling. Nowadays, Instagram, as it was also highlighted in our literature review part, helps us to improve our self-esteem and gain some social recognition. We are judged by our social media account, content we post and thoughts we share there. Instagram profile gives us first impression about a person, as it has already become a necessary factor of our social beings. It means that it is not a surprise at all that most people do share their lives moments, despite the fact no one forces them to do it.

Asking about the motivation that makes people share their pictures on social media we got the following statistics: 65% of our participants responded that their main goal was to save bright life moments in their account for memories. It sounds as the Instagram account might serve as a photo album for its users. The analogy is clear: even before the era of digitalization and social media, people mostly took pictures when only some important things happened in their lives. The same here: we are more likely to post something bright and significant for us than for others. This option turned out to be the most popular – 204 persons have chosen that. It means that it reflects to their emotional and sensitive level of personality since people do not keep the educational information on their personal social media accounts, they tend to save memorable moments, important events and close people who are important for them. Every fourth person (25% of the respondents) reported that they just wanted to show others what they were doing. It may also be called as a “social approval”. To make a better image of our lives we tend to show off to look nice. Nowadays it is very trendy to lead a healthy lifestyle, do sports, eat healthy food and spend quality time with your near and dear. In addition, that what people tend to share with others: “Look! I am in the gym! I am eating broccoli! I am cooking gluten-free lactose-free sugar-free cheesecake! Look how great I am!” From the one hand, you do not have to show everything what is going on in your life, but from the other perspective, people want to do it sharing mostly nice sides of it.

However, only 9% of the participants admitted that posting pictures on Instagram is nothing else but making a perfect life image. Instagram account is a “face” of a person. First impression we get about somebody often comes from social media accounts that is why people do care about how their page looks like even if it is not that much honest. 8% of the participants are following the rule: “If you didn’t post, it never happened”. It is somewhat close to the idea of “digital photo album”, where we save something we would like to keep and tell these stories. From my point of view, it has even become a joke among girls when they get flowers: if you are given a bouquet, it means that you have to post it. Can sound a bit ridiculous, nevertheless, it can be already considered as a trend. Posting pictures helps to raise the self-esteem of 13% respondents. That is where an egoistic part of human being comes into force. It is great pleasure to see that some of the people are brave enough to admit such a fact and accept it. According to previous scientific works, which we have mentioned in our literature review part before, scrolling a personal account pictures brings the sense of satisfaction and self-confidence. Such leisure is really useful for raising humans’ self-esteem. It makes people feel important and even valuable. Along with the realizing, that people post only pictures they like or approve they cannot help enjoying watching them afterwards. 10% of the respondents said they just wanted



to be honest with their audience and share everything what is happening with them. That could be mostly relevant for some bloggers with a big number of the followers; nevertheless, it is also possible among people with a medium number of the followers. It can be a certain Instagram behavior model, a type of social media representing or one of the ways of staying in touch with close friends or family members. Another popular answer, which was picked up by 44% is “I want to share my emotions with others”, which is very typical for humans as social beings to express their emotions and any sorts of impressions. People need to talk, even virtually. And Instagram is one of the channels. We have also received some “extra” individual answers, where people were saying that they would like to show others something how they see some certain things, or they were happy to share some beautiful things they noticed. Some of the people were keeping work or travel diaries.

In the meantime, reaction can also be very different. Depending on the feelings experienced by the user, their willingness to react may also vary. Imagine: being excited and impressed by the content on Instagram feed most probably will encourage users to “like” the post, send it to their friends or even share on Instagram stories, however if you feel irritated by something you have just seen it will not make you do the same things mentioned above. Alternatively, it might occur with some kind of negative connotation to ridicule and provoke indignation.

That what we were also examining among our audience. Asking people took part in our survey about how they reacted on travel content of bloggers/vloggers? The absolute majority picked up an option “like”. This is one of the basic alternatives offered by social platform Instagram. One of the easiest, the most reachable and expressive. Moreover, Instagram users even compete and compare themselves with others depending on the likes they collect. Instagram bloggers often ask their audience to click on this button to help the content to be “On top” in the search engines and gain as many followers as possible. Instagram likes is the unit measure of popularity and profit. Somehow or other, we are coming to the point where Instagram is one of the income sources, so that likes should not be underestimated.

25% of the respondents reported that they did not react anyhow. It means that every fourth person on Instagram is just a passive content consumer. I believe one more research is needed to answer the question why people do not react anyhow to something they follow on media. The content they watch is not random or viral and they personally chose what to see in their feed. Sometimes people just do not want others to see what they like, read and what kind of information they are keen on, so that just in order to keep the sense of privacy and keep your own interests in secret. From the other point of view, some people are trying to save their precious time not to waste some extra seconds on useless button clicking. Thirdly, some of the

users do not react anyhow because they are not used to it. They never respond virtually on anything in their feed because they even do not suspect that others are waiting for it. Especially those who never share their own posts.

22% said that they were saving the content they liked on their device or account. It may mean that they are planning to keep it for future purposes such as more detailed reading or learning something new relevant to that content or even planning to do something, what might be connected with saved post. 17% of the respondents reported that they shared the content with their friends. This option is very important socially as people as human beings need to share their emotions with others to get the feeling of community and the sense of being listened and understood by others. It is valuable for the human psycho to share emotions and experience its variety with others just to satisfy the basic needs. 11% of our participants mentioned that they also commented on posts they liked. Personally, I suppose such actions to be one of the most considerable as you are showing up with your reaction socially. Where everyone can see your opinion, agree or argue with you, support or start discussion. Comments are also precious for the author of the post as they lift it up in the feed for more people to pay attention to it. 15% said they made screenshots, which is quite similar to saving posts on your device, and 12% were also making notes in case the post was useful for them.

One of the respondents admitted he was just “watching the post”; another one was literally “getting information for granted”. Such sayings confirm the guess of passing content consuming where people are just observing what is happening around. One of the participant has also specified that she liked the post only in case it was shared by her friends, so that they could be pleased with her reaction. Actually, it makes huge sense as we have already seen before that most of the users follow their friends or relatives’ accounts so such kind of support called “Instagram ethic” is almost obligatory.

For the question about sharing an iconic attraction rather than any everyday momentum of life on Instagram, the most of our respondents have answered a very confident “yes” – 70%.

Talking about the travel inspiration caused by Instagram it can even look compulsory to show the others where you are and what you are doing. Once you saw the picture of Eiffel Tower and eventually managed to reach it and make your own selfie there, most probably people feel something as if they have to share it and they are followers are waiting for them to post it. From the other hand, there is also a question about sharing unique and exclusive posts. Going to iconic attraction or a destination can easily become a perfect cause for it. Often such trips are pretty pricy and not a lot of people can afford them, which means not everyone has pictures from those locations. Why not to share such sights even though everyone knows how the Eiffel

Tower looks like. On the contrary, paying attention to the fact that iconic places are well known and recognizable and learned fully, people would not share it on their Instagram account, thinking that it does not bring any educational or very specific information for their followers. And 10% of our respondents would not do it either. Travelling to the iconic places might be just a “tick” in your own to-do list and not a reason to post a photo from there. In addition to this, people keep saying they would rather share the iconic location on social media would also like to save it for memories and keep it as a bright life moment.

The option “indifferent” has been chosen by 20% of the participants, so that they are not sure if they would share or not. Keeping an Instagram diary in most of the cases is very emotional leisure, which often depends on the mood, people around and just a daily situation. That is why it is quite understandable why people cannot certainly decide. Moreover, taking a worthy picture or video is not easy every time.

#### **6.4 Personal data of the respondents**

Coming to the questions about our audience, we have to note that we managed to collect 314 responses, which is quite a big number. The absolute majority of our respondents were women – 77% and 23% – men. 55% of the participants are between 18 and 25 years old, and 24% are aged 26-35 years old. We would like to emphasise that our target audience were students and/or young people in their twenties, fresh graduates, who have just started their careers.

We were lucky enough to get participants from all over the world. Living in Hungary and doing an international program makes it much easier to reach out different cultures and nationalities. We received answers from people coming from the USA, Morocco, India, France, Ukraine, Egypt, Hungary, India, Brazil, Azerbaijan, China, Jordan, Syria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Laos, Vietnam, Mexico, Tunisia, Belarus and Armenia. Certainly most of the respondents were Russians, since I come from there.

41% of the respondents were full-time employees, 8% were part-time employees 28% – students and around 9% were self-employed people. 8% of the audience were on their maternity leave and around 3% were unemployed. 55% of the respondents reported that they had an average financial situation. That is quite predictable as a lot of people from our research are students or just fresh graduates. 22% have somewhat better than the average financial situation, while 15% reported that their level is a bit lower than the average. We did not have many “extreme answers”. So that 4% had a situation a lot better than the average regarding their finances, in the meantime 2% had a lot lower than the average situation.

Mostly our respondents have a high level of education: 41% of them have a bachelor degree and 35% are masters. 3% have a PhD diploma, 9% graduated from college and 10% have secondary school diploma.

14% of the participants have less than 100 followers on their Instagram account, 48% are followed by 100-499 people, 22% have 500-999 followers, and 8% of our respondents have more than 1000 followers, but less than 10 000 people following. Which is the maximum number, reached in our research. On the contrary, it was also important for us to know how many subscriptions our respondents have for clear understanding the picture of their Instagram demand. It turned out that 55% follow from 100 to 499 accounts, 18% have less than 100 subscriptions. 13% of our respondents follow 500-999 Instagram blogs and only around 6% follow more than 1000 accounts, but less than 9999. We should also note that in all of the above-mentioned questions we had to add an option “I am not an Instagram user” to get fair statistical data.

Summarizing the results and analysis, we got after conducted the questionnaire, which was filled out by 314 people we came to the following conclusion. Instagram can be definitely considered as one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention. According to some above mentioned questions’ results, we can clearly see that the majority of people (59%) do follow Instagram travel blogs, which have quite strong influence on their tourism intentions, destination choices and general motivation to explore the world. Visual content provokes people to visit places they have never been before or come back to some destinations again because of the Instagram vibes. In addition to this, some of the respondents have also admitted they had spent some extra money for the sake of visiting Instagram-worthy places.

Talking about the impact of Instagram on its users’ travelling desire we can surely say that it is very powerful and confirm the statement with the questionnaire results. 71% of our respondents would like to visit certain places they saw on Instagram before, 46% of the participants said that every time they saw travel content on their feed they felt how huge their desire to travel was. The emotional effect caused by Instagram travel blogs is both positive and negative. 46% of people were saying they were happy for others they could enjoy their lives. Participants experienced some sorts of motivation and being grateful to learn the world via Instagram. However, we should not also ignore a big percentage of people who felt jealousy (10%), irritation (10%), offense (20%) and indifference (12%). Eventually, there are both positive and negative effects caused by Instagram travel feed.

## 7. Conclusion

Rising up the topic about “Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users’ travel inspiration” we could realize from the very beginning, that it was rather a challenging issue for making a master thesis dissertation. Despite the fact, that this topic was very actual, modern, up-to date and attracted wide interests and attention, we had to accept that it still remains quite new and uncharted. What is more, the issue of social media needs to be studied constantly, as long as it is growing and developing faster than any kind of a research could be conducted. However, we decided to challenge our scientific capabilities and tried to implement the plan into reality. Regarding the part of our research devoted to the psychological aspects, we need to note, that it was actually one of the biggest both attractions and challenges. Nowadays people have high level of interest about psychological issues, concerns, inner borders and mental tools. This topic is one of the most popular among young generation who are eager to learn about themselves. From the other hand, we had to be as cautious and objective as possible, not to face the confrontation from our audience who could already be considered as real experts. In addition to this, coming to the topic of tourism and its development via Instagram, we have also risked to face storm of people’s indignation because of the pandemic situation. Nevertheless, we insisted on the research conduction as all of the above mentioned questions remain important niches of our life and there is a huge demand in scientific researches regarding these topics.

Our main goal was to find the answers to the following research questions:

Can we consider Instagram as the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of the university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their career? How strong is the impact of Instagram on its users’ travelling desire? And what kind of psychological effect does Instagram travel content provoke in our target audience’s minds?

These questions could not be researched by only the theoretical background of our paper work. Obviously, we were interested in finding our own target audience to conduct our own investigation and observation and to share the experience we would receive with the world for potential future scientific opportunities. The research questions we have risen up were our main motivators while working on the whole paper. We appealed and addressed back to them every time we had any sort of concerns and doubts. Research questions kept us toned and posted during the entire process of project making and were our primary research points.

In the literature review part we examined the issue of Instagram and its side effects: psychological pressure, honesty and transparency: dramatic difference between pictures and reality. Apart from the fact that people devoted huge amount of time on social media including Instagram, we have also proved by the scientific researches, conducted by other scientists that they also neglected their personal lives in favor of Instagram, their mental processes were inhibited and the picture was complemented by frequent mood swings and escapism. Along with a complete rejection of the Internet surfing, the respondents experienced a real withdrawal syndrome, comparable to drug withdrawal.

After discussion the issue of decision making process in general and among tourism customers in particular we have also paid special attention to the phenomenon of bloggers and their popularity. Demand creates supply, that is why bloggers tend to make outstanding and even exclusive content to attract as many followers as possible, who come by the attraction of curious posts, whereas bloggers themselves are motivated by money earnings. Monetizing blogs can generate decent income. All you need is to publish interesting and catchy content on a regular basis. Having a large number of subscribers makes the blogger the object of attention for advertisers. Blogger advertising is a separate area of Internet marketing. In terms of effectiveness, this promotion method is not inferior to context, SEO and SMM, which in turn are considered the best ways to promote on the Web.

We have also talked through the Instagram tools. Things, which make your blog readable, popular and tradable and Instagram trends, the hooks, which prevent bloggers from being old-fashioned in the most developing social media. Such as authentic content, world problems, as for the majority of Instagram users, this is not just a social network for communication, but a way to declare their position in relation to the ecology of the planet, social projects, and culture. Influencers matter: iconic personalities have a big impact on Instagram users. Hashtags will remain at the peak of their search interests. Stories will be further developed: advertising costs for this tool are growing exponentially. The development of the Instagram shopping service will allow making purchases without leaving the social network. Text content along with drag and drop part of TikTok functionality will also remain popular.

In the literature review part we have also proved that Instagram provided a complete communication facilities, from tourism branding to user generated content photography. Instagram has a significant value for promoting tourism site and creating brand destination through photography. According to the scientific researches, the Instagram posts were effective in changing the travelers' perceptions and it could influence viewers' behavioural intentions during the pre-visitation stage.

After analyzing the theoretical background, we have started our survey conduction. It was necessary for us to see how our audience would reflect on the questions we would raise up and what type of answers and statistical data might appear. Obviously, we tried to predict the potential results, however it was difficult to plan any sort of the outcome, as it would all depend on our participants' opinions. Anyways, we have managed to collect 314 responses filled out by the target audience we intended to work with in the very beginning. University students and fresh graduates (mostly coming from Russia) in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their careers were our nuclear research audience. We have also mentioned the limitation we could not have an influence on: 77% of our respondents were female participants. It is neither good, nor bad; however, we just had to accept this fact.

We offered them to take part in the scientific survey consisted of 28 questions related to our topic "Social media psychology and its influence on instagram users' travel inspiration". Our participants were suggested to share their opinion about the issues of Instagram as a social media platform itself (Do you have a personal Instagram account? How often do you share your holiday pictures on Instagram? Why? What is the motivation behind it? What kind of accounts do you mostly follow on Instagram?). We have also asked the audience about their view on Instagram influence on the users' travel inspiration (Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts? Have you ever managed to visit a tourist destination because you saw it on Instagram? How many tourist destinations or attractions have you visited because you had seen them on Instagram? Have you ever paid extra to visit an attraction/destination just so that it could be shared on Instagram? In your opinion, what is the impact of the pandemic on Instagram's traveling content?). And we have touched the emotional part of it (Which emotions do you usually experience while watching somebody's holiday pictures on Instagram? How much do travel blogs inspire you to explore the world? How do you react on travel content of bloggers/vloggers? If you have a chance to visit an iconic attraction (e.g. Eiffel Tower), are you more likely to share that content than any everyday momentum of your life?) and others.

Definitely we needed to analyze and compare the results we received in the questionnaire with the scientific observations we had studied in the literature review part. In most of the points we covered the opinions were quite similar and close to each other. The absolute majority was interested in travel blogs and consider them both as informational and educational sources and channels of inspiration, which was proved by 71% of positive responses when people reported they had decided to visit a destination or an attraction because they had seen it on Instagram. In the meantime, the emotional background turned out to be rather colorful. While watching the feed full of travel content people experienced different

shades of the emotions: happiness, jealousy, irritation, boredom, offence, inspiration, safety, motivation, indifference and other. From the other hand, mostly people who posted pictures or videos on Instagram wanted to save bright life moments over there, show what they were doing to their followers and share their emotions with others. However, some of the respondents have also admitted that posting pictures on Instagram helped them to raise their self-esteem. Perfect life image making was also important for them. There were also people in our survey who paid extra to visit an attraction/destination just so that it could be shared on Instagram. Moreover, we have figured out that the most common reaction on travel content along with “likes” and comments were saving the information in the account or device, along with no reaction at all. Every fourth person reported that they did not react on posts anyhow. A curious question was about visiting an iconic attraction (e.g. Eiffel Tower), where 70% of the participants said they were more likely to share that content than any other everyday momentum of their life.

Thereby our research “Social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users’ travel inspiration” has scientifically proved the importance of the phenomenon of Instagram in the niche of tourism. We could see how huge the influence of it might be on the users’ travel inspiration choice and how far it has already stepped into our everyday life. According to the conducted research, we can confirm our hypothesis that Instagram can be considered as the one of the main tools in tourism destination choice and travel intention of the university students and fresh graduates in their twenties with the average financial situation who have just started their careers. Individually, it was a big pleasure for me as a researcher to work on the issue of Instagram and psychological, social and tourism related aspects. These fields closely correspond to my personal interests and preferences. I had a big desire to research and develop such topics, consequently I am very glad to become a part of a huge scientific field covering modern social media concerns and experiences.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize the theoretical and practical perspectives of our research. The results of our survey paper work might have strong influence on tourism development sphere in general. Having better understanding of humans’ psycho and motives it would be easier to generate the social media content and provide valuable information for their users. Regarding the practical recommendations based on our research results we came up to the following ideas. As long as the absolute majority of our respondents are following Instagram travel accounts, we would strongly recommend service providers and product developers to pay special attention to this social platform, since it has strong influence on their target audience. People watching blogs are the ones, who travel providers are looking for to sell their products and increase profit, consequently it is necessary to raise up the quality level



of travel content and always keep in mind that Instagram has already become one of the strongest marketing tools and essential instrument in travel services sales. Moreover, 71% of the participants reported that they have decided to visit the destination after they had seen it on Instagram. The number is significant, so that we should confirm one more time the importance of Instagram influence on destination developers' professional landmarks. Since the Instagram is "the place of pictures", the content creators have to take into consideration the quality of the pictures they upload in order to make people eager to visit certain places. Moreover, it might also work for the destination developers. Instagram-worthy pictures have taken a large niche, so that the demand on photos taking especially for posting on social media is rising. It may also become a new point in the tourism service providing. Photo zones construction could attract more visitors for the tourist attraction. It is already working for Cappadocia site. Numerous respondents in our research were saying that they wanted to travel there because of the view they saw on Instagram. What is more, uncharted places are taking turns of popularity. Iconic attractions remain wanted, nevertheless people tend to look for something unique and discover new places and locations, which are not highly popular among the Instagram audience yet. It is a certain psychological reason of such a phenomenon: human beings need to feel important; they are enjoying the feeling of being the world explorers. Consequently, from the tour operators' point of view, it could bring another point for the "uncharted tours" development and some sort of "new places discovering" tour packages. From the theoretical point of view, we can confidently assert our paper to be unique and essential as it contains wide variety of scientific opinions related to our topic, which are combined together.

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## 9. Annex

### Questionnaire: social media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration

Dear respondent!

My name is Olga Kovach and I am a graduate master student of Budapest Business School. I kindly ask you to fill in this questionnaire to become a part of my scientific research about Social Media psychology and its influence on Instagram users' travel inspiration. The survey is absolutely anonymous and takes around 5 minutes to complete.

In case you have questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact me via

[olgakovach1812@gmail.com](mailto:olgakovach1812@gmail.com).

Thank you for your participation!

Уважаемый респондент!

Меня зовут Ольга Ковач, я студентка Будапештской Школы Бизнеса. Прошу вас принять участие в социологическом опросе, который является частью моей диссертации на тему «Психология социальных сетей и ее влияние на туристический выбор пользователя Инстаграма». Опрос анонимный и занимает около 5 минут. Если у вас возникнут какие-либо вопросы по заполнению анкеты, буду рада ответить на них по адресу электронной почты: [olgakovach1812@gmail.com](mailto:olgakovach1812@gmail.com)

Спасибо за участие!

- 1) Do you have a personal Instagram account? Есть ли у вас личный аккаунт в «Инстаграме»?  
Yes Да  
No Нет
- 2) Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts? Подписаны ли вы на блоги о путешествиях в «Инстаграме»?  
Yes Да  
No Нет  
I am not an Instagram user Не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»
- 3) What kind of accounts do you mostly follow on Instagram? На какие аккаунты вы подписаны в «Инстаграме»?  
My friends/relations/acquaintances | Аккаунты моих друзей/родственников/знакомых  
Famous people, celebrities Аккаунты знаменитых, успешных людей  
Media accounts (Newspapers, magazines etc) Медиа блоги (газеты, журналы и т.д.)  
Educational accounts Образовательные аккаунты  
Travel blogs Блоги о путешествиях  
Other, please specify Другое, пожалуйста, укажите: \_\_\_\_\_  
I am not an Instagram user Не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»
- 4) On a scale from 1 to 7 how much do travel blogs inspire you to explore the world?  
Насколько сильно по шкале от 1 до 7 тревел-блоги вдохновляют вас на путешествия?  
1 - Do not inspire at all Не вдохновляют совсем  
2 - Almost do not inspire Почти не вдохновляют  
3 - Somewhat inspire Скорее не вдохновляют, чем вдохновляют  
4- Neither inspire nor do not inspire Не могу дать определенный ответ  
5 - Somewhat inspire В некоторой степени вдохновляют  
6- Mostly inspire Вдохновляют  
7 – Inspire a lot Сильно вдохновляют



5) On a scale from 1 to 7 how could you evaluate your desire to travel caused by the Instagram travel bloggers? По шкале от 1 до 7 как бы вы оценили ваше желание путешествовать, вызванное тревел-блогами в «Инстаграме»?

1 - Do not have any desire at all Никакого желания нет вообще

2 – Very low desire Почти нет желания

3 – Quite low desire Есть небольшое желание путешествовать

4 - Medium Среднее

5 – Bigger than average Выше среднего

6 – Quite strong desire Достаточно сильное желание

7 - Very strong desire Очень хочется путешествовать, глядя на посты в «Инстаграме»

6) Has it ever happened before that you had decided to visit a destination or an attraction because you saw it on Instagram?

Хотели ли вы когда-либо посетить какое-то туристическое место после того, как увидели пост о нем в «Инстаграме»?

Yes Да

No Нет

I am not an Instagram user Не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

7) If so, which one? Если да, какое?

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Have you ever managed to visit a tourist destination because you saw it on Instagram?

Удавалось ли вам когда-либо посетить туристическое место после того, как вы увидели пост о нем в «Инстаграме»?

Yes Да

No Нет

I am not an Instagram user Не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

9) If so, which one? Если да, какое?

\_\_\_\_\_

10) How many tourist destinations or attractions have you visited because you had seen them on Instagram? Сколько туристических направлений/ достопримечательностей вам удалось посетить после того, как вы увидели посты о них в «Инстаграме»?

1-2

3-5

6-12

12-30

>30

I am not an Instagram user Не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

11) Which emotions do you usually experience while watching somebody's holiday pictures on Instagram? (Note that the research is totally anonymous)

Какие эмоции вы обычно испытываете, когда видите в ленте «Инсаграма» фотографии других людей из отпуска? (опрос анонимный)

Happy for others they are enjoying their lives Радуюсь, что кто-то наслаждается жизнью

Feel jealous Завидую

Feel irritated because I have to work/study only Раздражает, что мне приходится только работать/учиться

Feel offended that I am not travelling Обидно, что путешествую не я

Feel how huge my desire to travel is Чувствую, насколько велико мое желание путешествовать

Feel warm and toasty: the world is full of danger. It is always safer to stay home Чувствую себя в тепле и уюте: мир полон опасностей. Всегда безопаснее оставаться дома.

Feel motivated: it raises my intention to organize a trip for myself Путешествия других людей мотивируют меня организовать свое собственное

Feel indifferent Мне все равно

Feel grateful: Instagram allows me to explore the world lying on my sofa! Я благодарен «Инстаграму» за то, что у меня есть возможность познавать мир, лежа на диване

Other (specify) Другое (укажите) \_\_\_\_\_

I am not an Instagram user Я не зарегистрирован в «Инсаграме»

12) How often do you share your holiday pictures on Instagram? Как часто вы делитесь в «Инстаграме» фотографиями из отпуска?

Never Никогда

Rarely Редко

Sometimes Иногда

Often Часто

Regularly Регулярно

Every time I go travel I do share my pictures Выкладываю посты из каждой поездки

I am not an Instagram user Я не зарегистрирован в «Инсаграме»

13) Why? What is the motivation behind it? Почему? Что вас мотивирует?

I want to save bright life moments in my account for memories Хочу сохранить в своем аккаунте яркие моменты жизни на память

I want others to see what I am doing Хочу, чтобы другие видели, что происходит в моей жизни

I want to make a perfect image of my life on Instagram Хочу создать красивую картинку своей жизни в «Инстаграме»

I follow the rule: "If you didn't post, it never happened" Придерживаюсь правила: «Не выложил – не было»

Posting pictures helps me to raise my self-esteem Это поднимает мою самооценку

I am honest with my audience: I should post everything that happens to me Хочу оставаться честным с моими подписчиками и делиться всем, что происходит

I want to share my emotions with others Мне хочется делиться эмоциями с другими

I do not share my holiday pictures on Instagram Я не выкладываю фотографии из отпуска в «Инстаграм»

Other, please specify Другое, пожалуйста, укажите: \_\_\_\_\_

14) When planning your trip, which travel recommendations sources do you rely on the most? Когда вы планируете путешествие, к каким рекомендациям больше всего прислушиваетесь?

My friends/ relations/ acquaintances' advice Советы моих

друзей/родственников/знакомых

Travel websites (like TripAdvisor, Booking.com etc) Туристические сайты (TripAdvisor, Booking.com и др.)

Travel agencies Туристические агентства

I check where to go on the Internet Самостоятельно ищу информацию в Интернете

I check social media (blogs, hashtags, groups...) Ищу информацию в социальных сетях (группы, блоги, теги...)

15) Have you ever paid extra to visit an attraction/destination just so that it can be shared on Instagram? Платили вы когда-нибудь сверх нормы за поездку в какое-либо туристическое место ради того, чтобы поделиться снимком оттуда в «Инстаграме»?

Yes Да

No Нет

I am not an Instagram user Я не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

16) If so, where? Если да, где это было?

\_\_\_\_\_

17) How do you react on travel content of bloggers/vloggers? Как вы откликаетесь на посты о путешествиях в социальных сетях?

I do not react anyhow Никак

Like Ставлю лайки

Share Делюсь с друзьями

Comment Комментирую

Save on my device/account Скачиваю/ сохраняю

Make a screenshot Делаю снимки экрана

Make some notes Выписываю интересную информацию

18) If you have a chance to visit an iconic attraction (e.g. Eiffel Tower), are you more likely to share that content than any everyday momentum of your life? Если у вас есть шанс посетить культовую достопримечательность (например, Эйфелеву башню), поделитесь ли вы этим контентом с большей вероятностью, чем каким-либо повседневным событием вашей жизни?

Yes Да

Indifferent Не могу сказать определенно

No Нет

19) Do you take pictures/videos of the places visited (regardless of sharing) Делаете ли вы фото/видео, отправляясь в путешествие (в независимости от того, выкладываете вы это в сеть или нет)?

Never Никогда

Rarely Редко

Sometimes Иногда

Often Часто

Always Всегда

20) In your opinion, what is the impact of the pandemic on Instagram's traveling content?

На ваш взгляд, как ситуация с пандемией сказалась на тревел-контенте в «Инстаграме»?

I have not noticed any difference Не заметил больших изменений

There is way less traveling content on Instagram now Стало намного меньше постов о путешествиях

There is mostly domestic tourism traveling content В основном вижу посты о внутреннем туризме

I feel people tend to share content from their previous trips Замечаю, что пользователи «Инстаграма» все чаще делятся фото/ видео из старых поездок

Looks like travel content has been replaced by other kinds of it Замечаю, что тревел-контент постепенно вытесняется постами на другие темы

Other, please specify Другое, пожалуйста, укажите \_\_\_\_\_

21) Your gender Укажите ваш пол

Male Мужской

Female Женский

22) You age Укажите ваш возраст

<18

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

>56

23) Which country do you come from? Из какой вы страны?

\_\_\_\_\_

24) What is your employment status? Статус занятости

Full-time employee Полная занятость

Part-time employee Частичная занятость

Self-employed Частный предприниматель

Unemployed Безработный

On maternity leave В декретном отпуске

Pensioner Пенсионер

Student Студент

25) How would you describe your overall financial situation? Ваше финансовое положение

- It is a lot better than the average. Намного выше среднего
- It is somewhat better than the average. Выше среднего
- It is average. Среднее
- It is somewhat the average. Ниже среднего
- It is way below the average. Намного ниже среднего

26) What is your educational level? Ваш уровень образования

Secondary school diploma Среднее общее образование

College diploma Среднее профессиональное образование

Bachelor's degree Бакалавриат

Master's degree Магистратура/Специалитет

PhD Аспирантура/ Докторантура

27) How many followers do you have on Instagram? Сколько у вас подписчиков в «Инстаграме»?

<100

100 – 499

500 – 999

1000-9 999

10 000 – 40 000

41 000 – 100 000

>100 000

I am not an Instagram user Я не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

28) How many accounts do you follow on Instagram? Сколько у вас подписок в «Инстаграме»?

<100

100 – 499

500 – 999

1000 – 9 999

10 000 – 40 000

41 000 – 100 000

>100 000

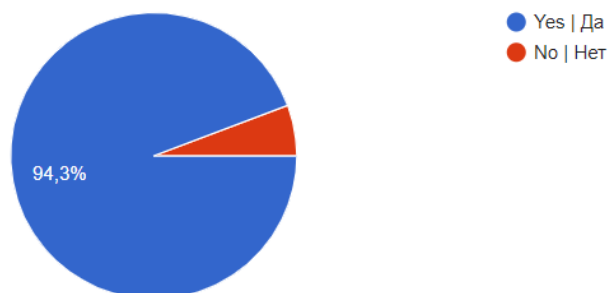
I am not an Instagram user Я не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»



## Questionnaire results based on the received answers

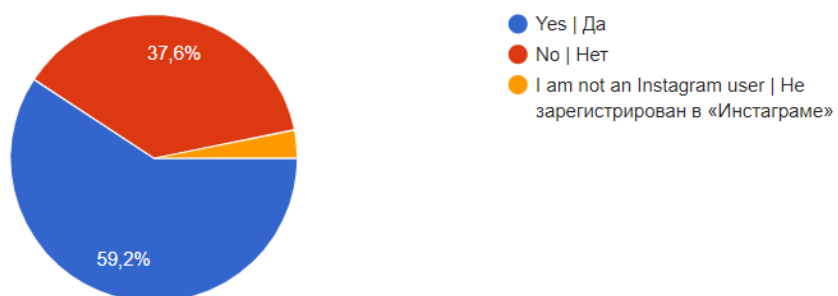
Do you have a personal Instagram account? | Есть ли у вас личный аккаунт в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



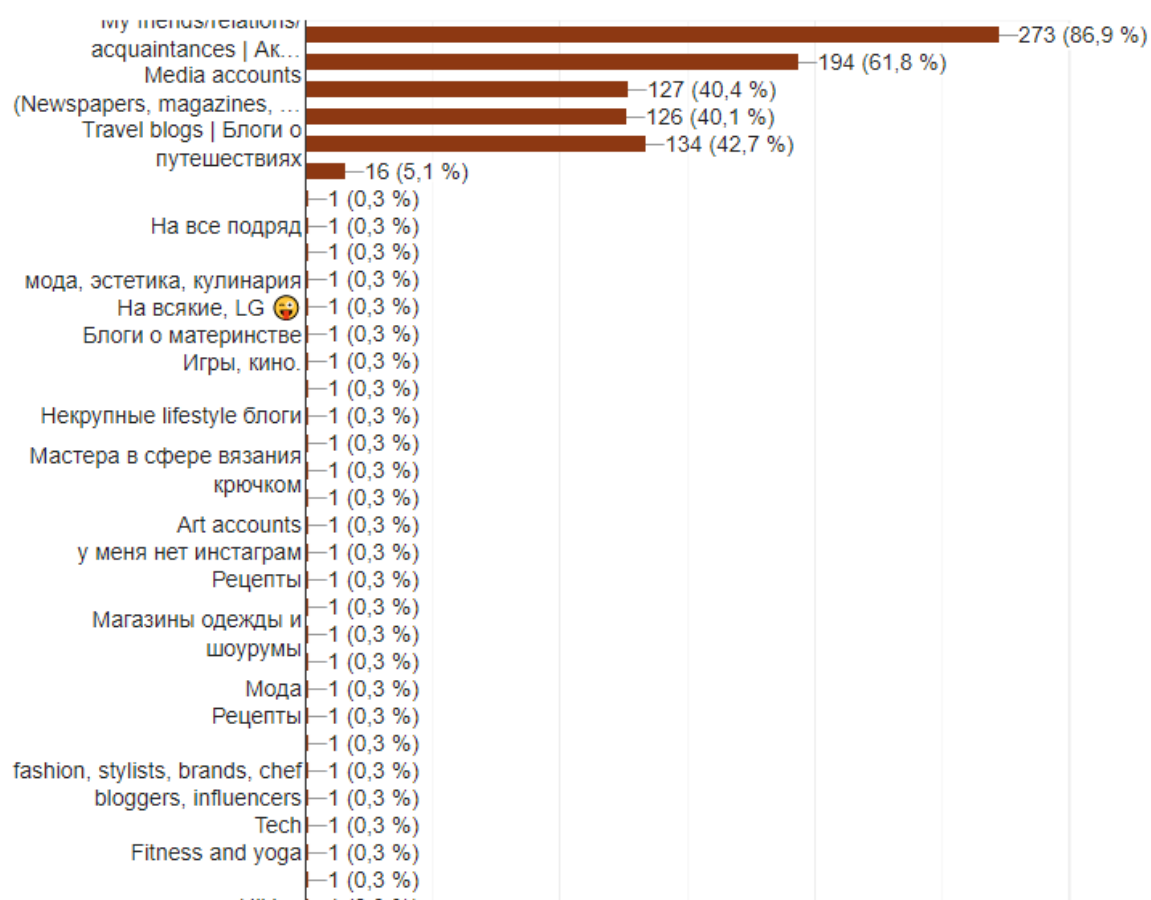
Do you follow any Instagram travel accounts? | Подписаны ли вы на блоги о путешествиях в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



What kind of accounts do you mostly follow on Instagram? | На какие аккаунты вы подписаны в «Инстаграме»?

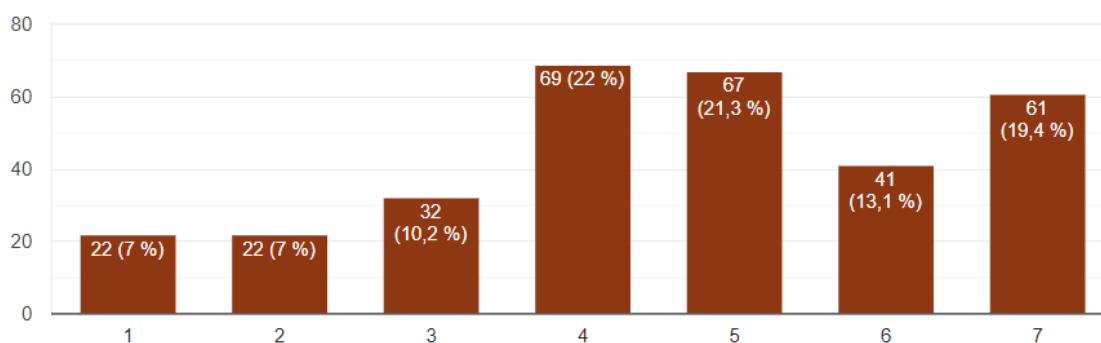
314 ответов



On a scale from 1 to 7 how much do travel blogs inspire you to explore the world? |

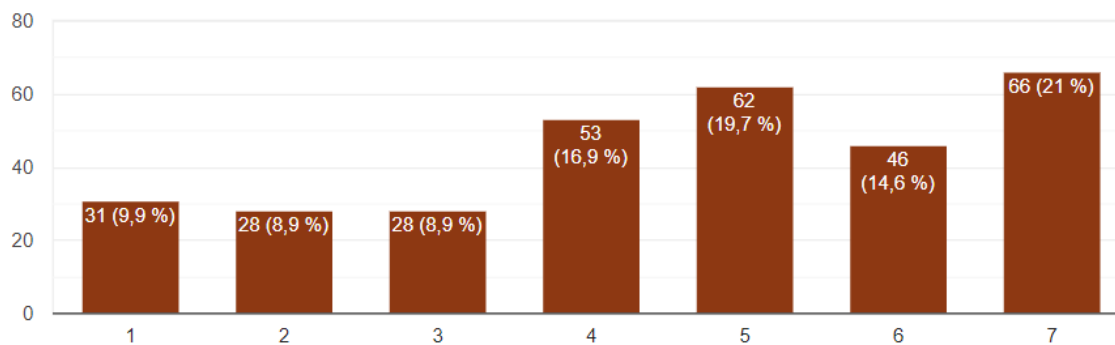
Насколько сильно по шкале от 1 до 7 тревел-блоги вдохновляют вас на путешествия?

314 ответов



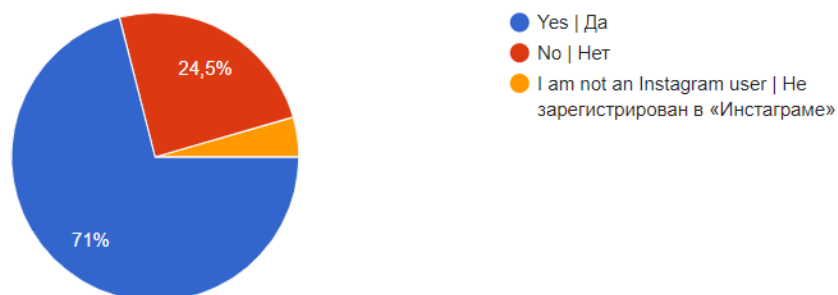
On a scale from 1 to 7 how could you evaluate your desire to travel caused by the Instagram travel bloggers? | По шкале от 1 до 7 как бы вы оценили ваше желание путешествовать, вызванное тревел-блогерами в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



Has it ever happened before that you had decided to visit a destination or an attraction because you saw it on Instagram? | Хотели ли вы когда-либо посетить какое-то туристическое место после того, как увидели пост о нем в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



If so, which one? | Если да, какое?

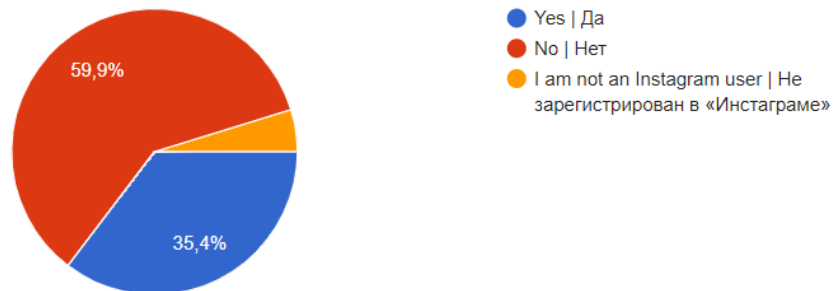
184 ответа

Iceland
Новая Зеландия
Норвегия
Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro
Гоа
Будапешт
Италия
Hotel Atlantis, Bahamas Borivar, Hungary
New Zealand

Have you ever managed to visit a tourist destination because you saw it on Instagram? |

Удалось ли вам когда-либо посетить туристическое место после того, как вы увидели пост о нем в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



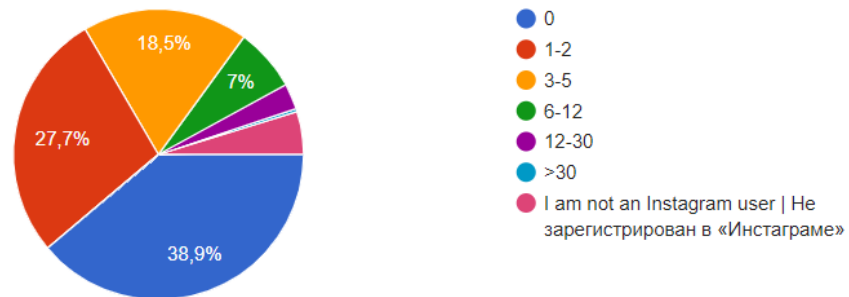
If so, which one? | Если да, какое?

108 ответов

Грузия
Greece, don't remember the exact place/Греция, не помню уже конкретное место
Пока нет
Голландия, Австрия, Венгрия, Италия, Египет
Many
Pink beach in Crimea, Pamukkale, Gai Kodzor Winery, Teletskoe lake, Mount Kazbek
Палекастрица
Puerto Rico
An influencer I follow has been to Lisbon, so after a few years, it was still in my mind and booked a flight

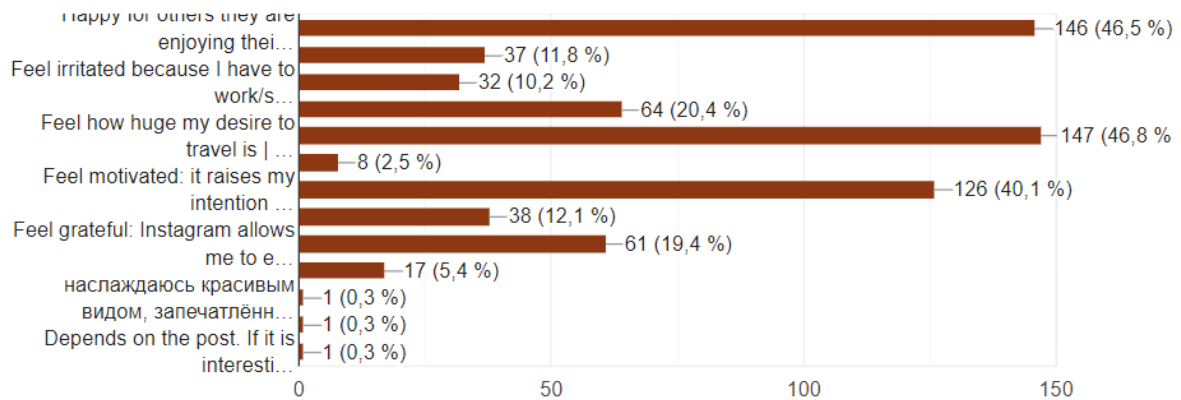
How many tourist destinations or attractions have you visited because you had seen them on Instagram? | Сколько туристических направлений/достопримечательностей вам удалось посетить после того, как вы увидели посты о них в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



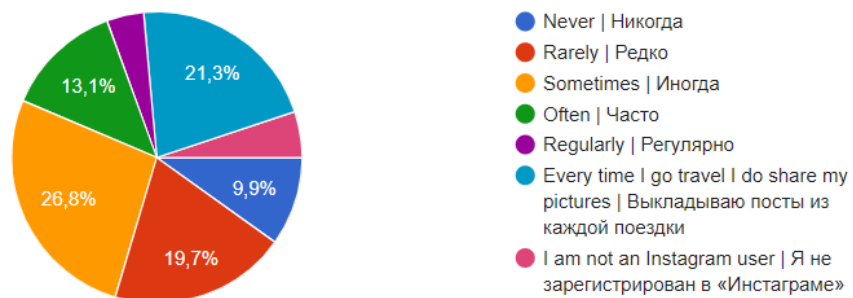
Which emotions do you usually experience while watching somebody's holiday pictures on Instagram? (Note that the research is totally anonymous) | Какие эмоции вы обычно испытываете, когда видите в ленте «Инстаграма» фотографии других людей из отпуска? (опрос анонимный)

314 ответов



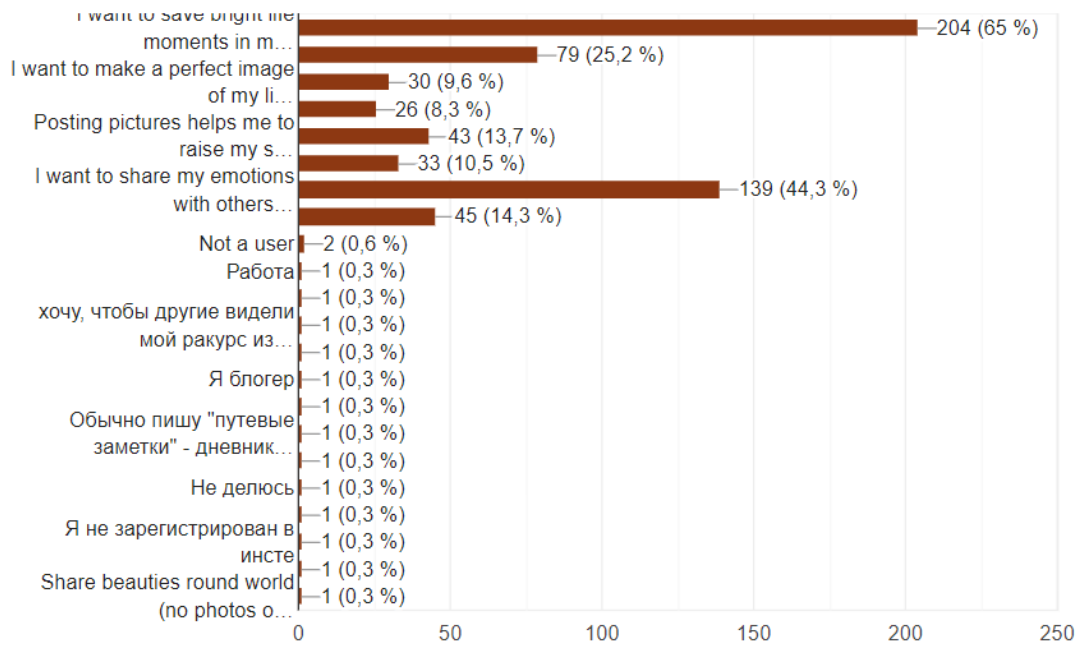
How often do you share your holiday pictures on Instagram? | Как часто вы делитесь в «Инстаграме» фотографиями из отпуска?

314 ответов



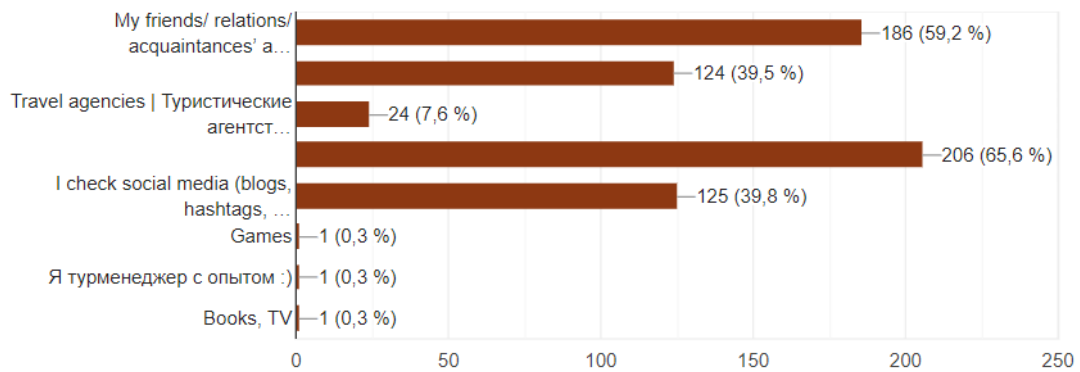
Why? What is the motivation behind it? | Почему? Что вас мотивирует?

314 ответов



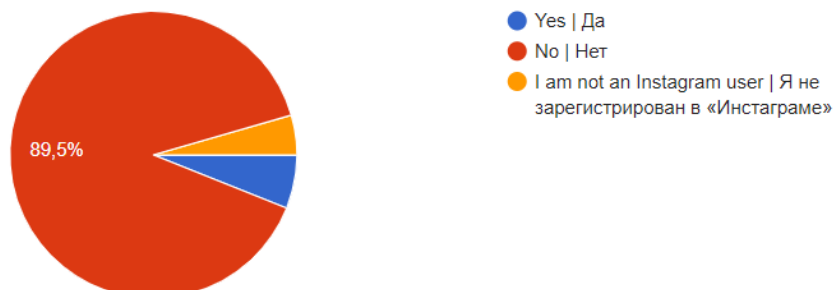
When planning your trip, which travel recommendations sources do you rely on the most? | Когда вы планируете путешествие, к каким рекомендациям больше всего прислушиваетесь?

314 ответов



Have you ever paid extra to visit an attraction/destination just so that it can be shared on Instagram? | Платили вы когда-нибудь сверх нормы за поездку в какое-либо туристическое место ради того, чтобы поделиться снимком оттуда в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



If so, where? Если да, где это было?

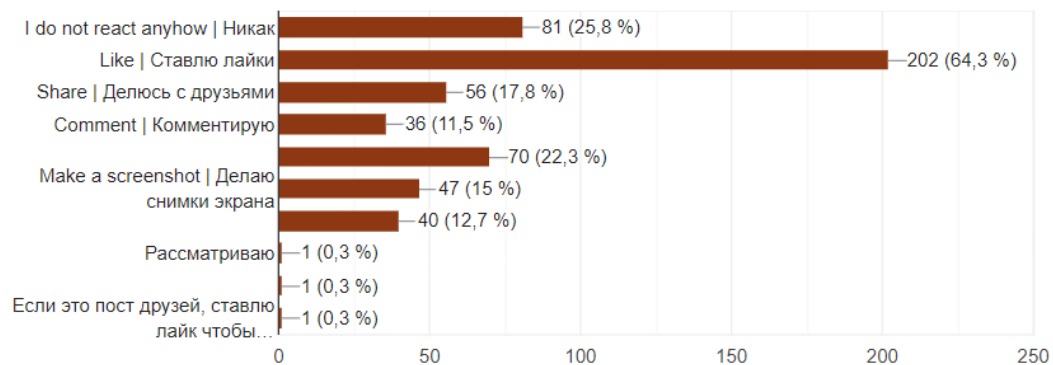
21 ответ

- Озеро Комо, замок с призраками
- Пришлось заплатить за навесной мост в Крыму, хотя он мне и не нужен был, но зато фотка оттуда кайф)
- Санторини
- 
- Санкт-Петербург, музей фотографии
- Египт
- Рио де Жанейро. Облетала статью Христа на вертолете. Приват. Заказывала частный самолёт в Берлин. Ездил на скоростном поезде шинкансен из Токио в Киото в бизнес классе( цена билета как до Токио из Москвы долететь), да много чего ещё.. хотя если честно делала это не для инстаграмма, а для себя. В инсту выкладывала по ходу дела..



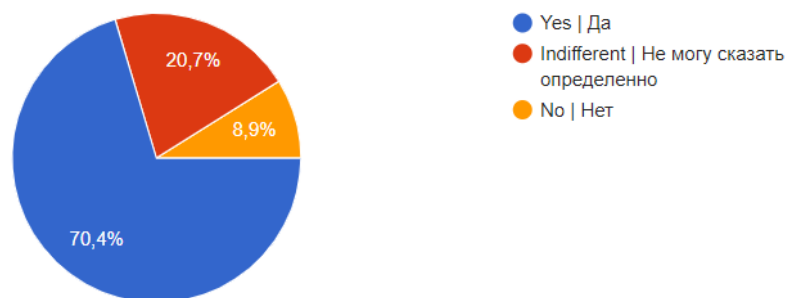
How do you react on travel content of bloggers/vloggers? | Как вы откликаетесь на посты о путешествиях в социальных сетях?

314 ответов



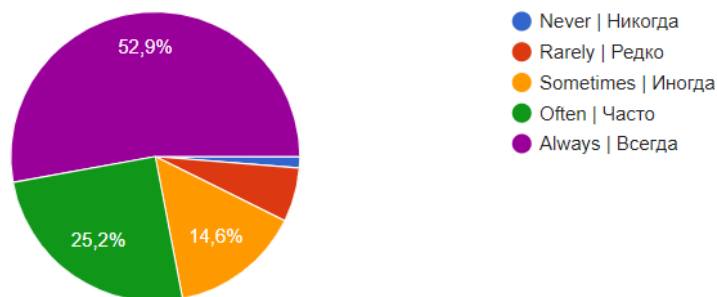
If you have a chance to visit an iconic attraction (e.g. Eiffel Tower), are you more likely to share that content than any everyday momentum of your life? | Если у вас есть шанс посетить культовую достопримечательность (например, Эйфелеву башню), поделитесь ли вы этим контентом с большей вероятностью, чем каким-либо повседневным событием вашей жизни?

314 ответов



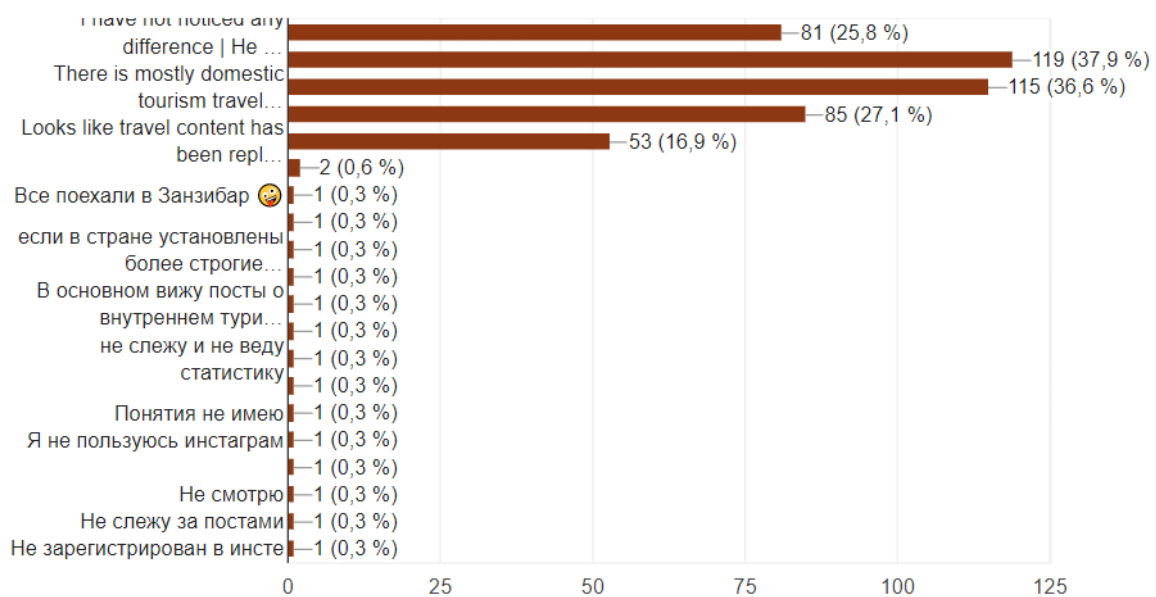
Do you take pictures/videos of the places visited (regardless of sharing)? | Делаете ли вы фото/видео, отправляясь в путешествие (в независимости от того, выкладываете вы это в сеть или нет)?

314 ответов



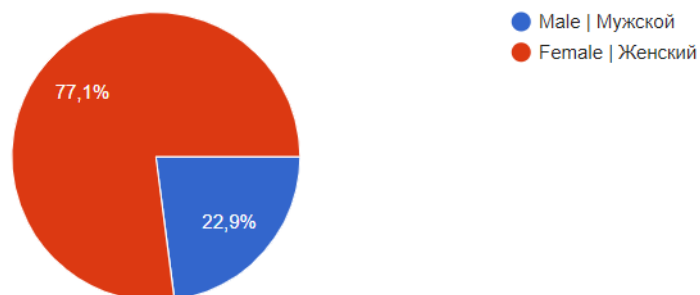
In your opinion, what is the impact of the pandemic on Instagram's traveling content? | На ваш взгляд, как ситуация с пандемией сказалась на тревел-контенте в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



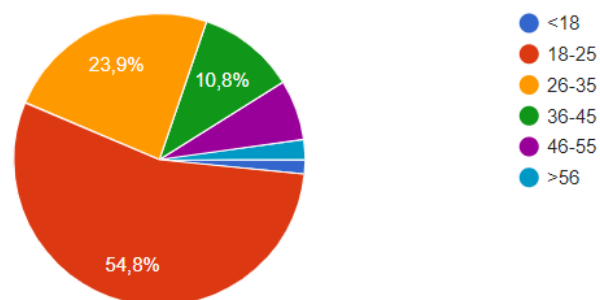
Your gender | Укажите ваш пол

314 ответов



You age | Укажите ваш возраст

314 ответов



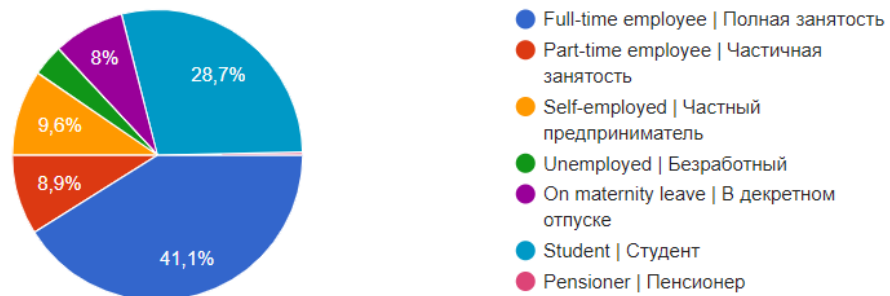
### Which country do you come from? | Из какой вы страны?

314 ответов

Россия
Россия
Russia
Венгрия
Hungary
Russia
Украина
Венгрия
Hungary

### What is your employment status? | Статус занятости

314 ответов



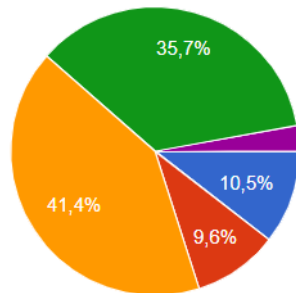
### How would you describe your overall financial situation? | Ваше финансовое положение

314 ответов



### What is your educational level? | Ваш уровень образования

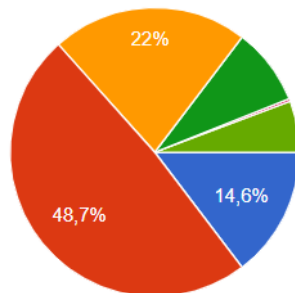
314 ответов



- Secondary school diploma | Среднее общее образование
- College diploma | Среднее профессиональное образование
- Bachelor's degree | Бакалавриат
- Master's degree | Магистратура/ Специалитет
- PhD | Аспирантура/ Докторантура

### How many followers do you have on Instagram? | Сколько у вас подписчиков в «Инстаграме»?

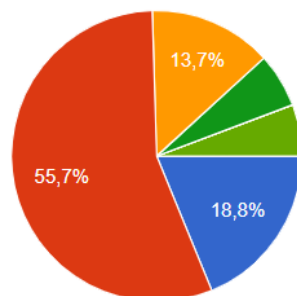
314 ответов



- <100
- 100 – 499
- 500 – 999
- 1000 – 9 999
- 10 000 – 40 000
- 41 000 – 100 000
- >100 000
- I am not an Instagram user | Я не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»

### How many accounts do you follow on Instagram? | Сколько у вас подписок в «Инстаграме»?

314 ответов



- <100
- 100 – 499
- 500 – 999
- 1000 – 9 999
- 10 000 – 40 000
- 41 000 – 100 000
- >100 000
- I am not an Instagram user | Я не зарегистрирован в «Инстаграме»