

Disclaimer:

The version of this thesis in this document has been shortened in order to protect confidential data provided the partner firms.

International University of Applied Sciences Bad Honnef • Bonn

Tourism Management

**Travelling like a local in the European Tourism Industry - a cooperation case study  
between "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki"**

Kathrin Deter

Student ID: 3081013

E-Mail: [kathrin.deter@iubh.de](mailto:kathrin.deter@iubh.de)

Supervisor: Mr. Prof. Dr. Helmut Wachowiak

Date of Submission: 17.09.2013

## **Abstract**

This dissertation seeks to define and place “local travel” as a niche tourism concept and to use the applied finding to aid the content provider "Spotted by Locals" and Destination Management Organisation "VisitHelsinki" to engage in a partnership. The aim was to clarify and elaborate on “travelling like a local” as a concept by looking at the background and its development. Furthermore, industry experts have been consulted to determine future potential of this concept in the European tourism industry – particularly in urban tourism in Europe, including a critical evaluation of issues and opportunities for an integration of local travel into official tourism institutions portfolio. Finally, a marketing plan for both partner organisations was developed and executed. The research shows that peoples’ strive for authenticity and the opportunities in city tourism are the foundation for the local travel concept to have come into being. Local travel is a growing concept that will be a relevant niche in urban tourism in the future. The cooperation between "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki" was concluded successfully after having launched a collaborative online page and direct marketing through various channels of both parties.

*Keywords: local travel, travelling like a local, authenticity, urban tourism, city tourism, "Spotted by Locals", blogger cooperation, "VisitHelsinki"*

## **Foreword**

Being a writer (“Spotter”) for "Spotted by Locals" in Helsinki myself, the choice to work with the company as my thesis project was an easy one to make as my personal interest in the company’s strategic development is a vastly beneficial value added to a comparable project. Combining my passion for my chosen home, Helsinki, my interest in the local travel concept and the business side of collaborating and working with two interesting companies has been very enriching for me and strengthened my belief in having chosen the right path for my studies and a future within the tourism industry. I would like to thank Bart and Sanne van Poll for having trust and faith in me, Maarit Pitkänen for her support and vividness as well as for her confidence in what we do. Furthermore, I am grateful to my parents for pushing me to where I am today and supporting me through all my decisions. Lastly, thank you, to my wonderful friends who have helped me through everything, more than they know.

# **Travelling like a local in the European Tourism Industry - a cooperation case study between Spotted by Locals and "VisitHelsinki"**

## **Contents**

Abstract.....	I
Foreword.....	II
Table of Contents.....	III
List of Figures .....	V
List of Tables.....	VI
List of Appendices.....	VII
Glossary.....	VIII
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Reading guide and structure of the thesis .....	1
2 Methodology .....	4
2.1 Research limitations.....	7
3 What is Local travel or Travelling like a local? .....	8
3.1 Definition.....	8
3.2 Why it matters.....	9
3.2.1 Urban tourism.....	9
3.2.2 Target group .....	14
3.2.3 European demand for local travel.....	15
4 Case study "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki" .....	18
4.1 "Spotted by Locals" .....	18
4.1.1 Distribution.....	21
4.1.2 Differentiation to similar offers.....	21
4.2 "VisitHelsinki" .....	31
4.2.1 Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau and the Event Office.....	31
4.2.2 Distribution.....	34

4.3	Prior analysis.....	34
4.3.1	The power of bloggers.....	36
4.3.2	Transmedia storytelling.....	37
4.3.3	Cooperating with external content providers.....	38
4.4	Cooperation development.....	42
4.4.1	Timeline.....	42
4.5	Goals.....	43
4.5.1	"VisitHelsinki".....	43
4.5.2	"Spotted by Locals" goal.....	43
4.6	Project implementation process and content development.....	44
4.6.1	Online "Spotted by Locals" to "VisitHelsinki".....	45
4.6.2	Offline "Spotted by Locals" to "VisitHelsinki".....	48
4.6.3	Online "VisitHelsinki" to "Spotted by Locals".....	49
5	Reception and Results.....	50
5.1.1	Industry.....	50
5.1.2	Website and app results.....	51
5.1.3	"VisitHelsinki".....	51
5.1.4	"Spotted by Locals".....	52
6	Conclusion.....	53
6.1	Future recommendations.....	54
7	Bibliography.....	56
8	Appendices.....	60

## List of figures

Fig1: Illustration of thesis structure.....	3
Fig. 2: Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.....	12
Fig. 3: Gender and Age relation.....	20
Fig 4: Timeline model.....	42
Fig. 5: Final map implementation visuals on <a href="http://visithelsinki.com/spottedbylocals">visithelsinki.com/spottedbylocals</a> .....	47

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research.....	5
Table 2: List of interviewees.....	35



## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Screenshot "VisitHelsinki" front page.....	60
Appendix 2: "Spotted by Locals" partnership blog post.....	62
Appendix 3: Press Releases Fi/En.....	64
Appendix 4: Declaration of Authenticity.....	66

## **Glossary**

**Page views:** The number of times a page (an analyst-definable unit of content) was viewed.

**Visits/Sessions:** A visit is an interaction, by an individual, with a website consisting of one or more requests for an analyst-definable unit of content (i.e. “page view”). If an individual has not taken another action (typically additional page views) on the site within a specified time period, the visit session will terminate.

**Unique visitors:** The number of inferred individual people (filtered for spiders and robots), within a designated reporting timeframe, with activity consisting of one or more visits to a site. Each individual is counted only once in the unique visitor measure for the reporting period.

**Visit duration:** The length of time in a session. Calculation is typically the timestamp of the last activity in the session minus the timestamp of the first activity of the session.

**Page exit ratio or exit rate:** Number of exits from a page divided by total number of page views of that page. (Comment: Page exit ratio should not be confused with bounce rate, which is an indicator of single-page-view visits on your site, regardless of length.)

**Single page view visits (bounce):** Visits that consist of one page-view.

**Bounce rate:** Single page view visits divided by entry pages

(Taken from The Web Analytics Associations approved definitions, 2007)

# **1 Introduction**

This first chapter aims at illustrating the structure of the diploma dissertation and outlining its goals and objectives. By briefly giving an overview of each chapter, a clear guide through the chosen topic and the case study is given in order to follow the approach that leads to reaching the final conclusions.

## **1.1 Reading guide and structure of the thesis**

To begin with, the Methodology of the thesis is explained in chapter two. Why the applied research methods were chosen, as well as a critical discussion regarding benefits and limitations of each chosen method is also included.

The major subject of this thesis is the topic of local travel in urban tourism. The literature review in Chapter Two aims to explain Local travel as a fairly new concept that has emerged as a popular alternate approach to experience. But what exactly does it mean and where does it come from? To understand the concept that is being worked with, a detailed focus will be put on the history and motives, as well as on an attempt to define a target group of local travel in urban realms. By determining relevance for the industry, it is researched why it has lead to institutions considering travelling like a local as an additional segment as well as companies developing new innovative concepts.

After having clarified the concept itself, the case study and the two partners of the thesis are introduced in detail in Chapter Three. In summary, this dissertation aims to aid "VisitHelsinki" as a tourism bureau and "Spotted by Locals" as an external content provider to establish a set of marketing actions in order to integrate "Spotted by Locals" offers in "VisitHelsinki's" portfolio. "VisitHelsinki" seeks independent, local advice from Helsinki's citizens for tourists particularly interested in the local approach of spending their time in Finland's capital, less driven by commercial and popular attractions. "Spotted by Locals", run by a Dutch couple since 2008, offers city tips by carefully selected independent writers in European and North American cities. Their focus lies upon up-to-date information on local "spots", not clearly being defined, but mainly bars, restaurants, cultural sights and events and so forth. Recent efforts to build connections with tourism institutions Europe-wide have failed due to the common misunderstanding of "Spotted by Locals" rather being a competitor than a potential partner. Therefore, a focus is put on a detailed differentiation of "Spotted by Locals" in comparison so seemingly similar services. Previous research to analyse tourists' demand in this concept and the interest and

perception of "Spotted by Locals" as a provider of service have already been conducted and will not be a main focus of this paper.

This being the foundation for this subject, Chapter Four aims to analyse the crucial strengths and weaknesses of this kind of cooperation, as well as to determine general demand within Europe. Industry professionals including marketing executives from tourism institutions and leading bloggers have been interviewed.

In Chapter five the practical case study is introduced. From first negotiations in November 2012 to the final project release in July 2013, the process development is explained and evaluated. Means to measure success of the project and a number of clear goals by both "VisitHelsinki" and "Spotted by Locals" have been set and will have been evaluated before and after the completion of these cooperation ideas. Both on- and offline steps have eventually been taken to market "Spotted by Locals" and travelling like a local both to locals and tourists.

Chapter six features the industry reception and an evaluation of the measurable results of the project campaign. This includes a reflection of numbers taken from the relevant website statistics.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, final conclusions are drawn and recommendations are being given.

To illustrate the position and connection between "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki", a brief model was created to facilitate the process of following the development.

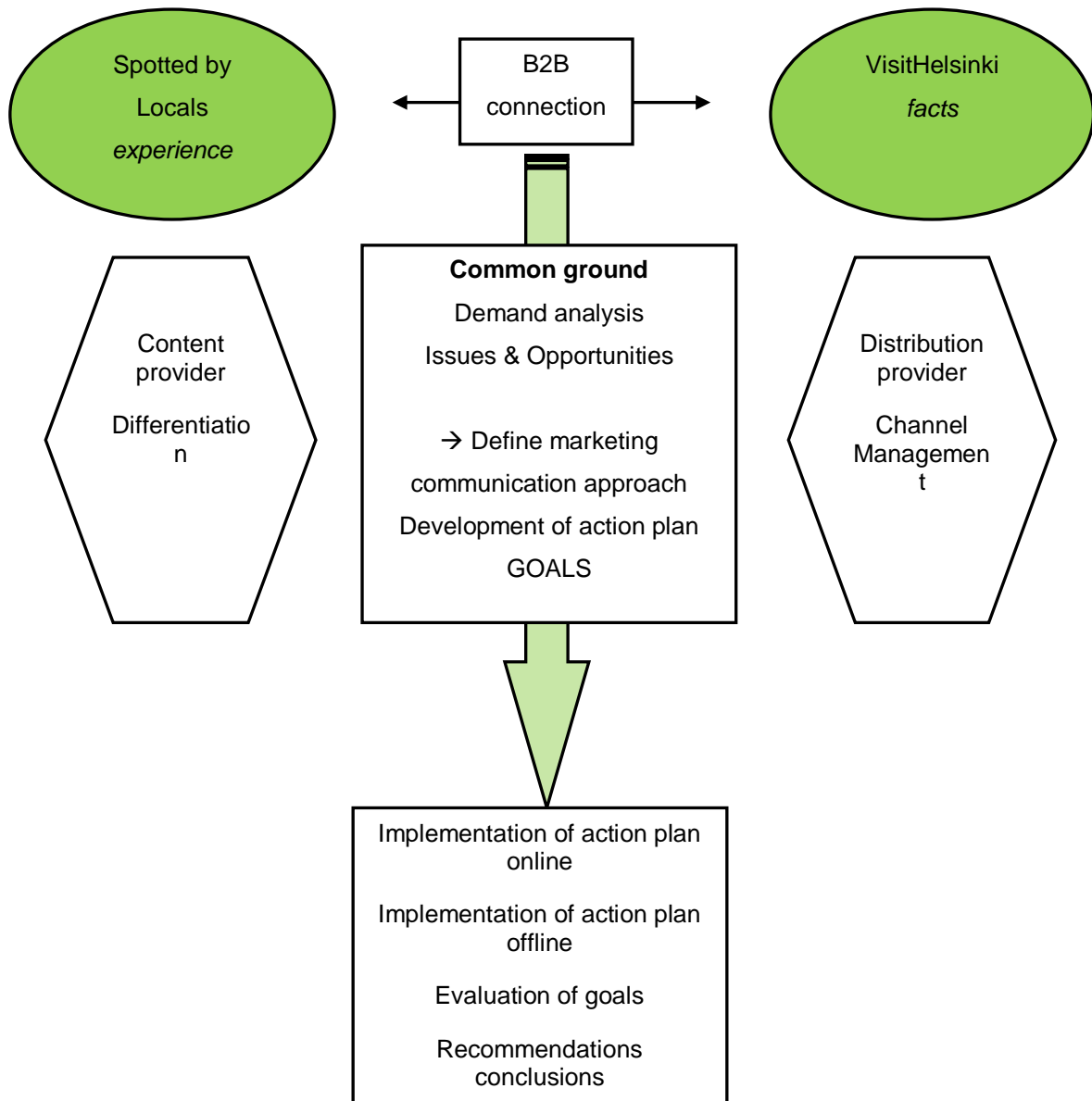


Fig. 1: Illustration of thesis structure (by the author)

To summarize, the following aims have been derived from this thesis topic:

- Define Local travel as a concept and determine future potential within the European Tourism industry
- To develop an action plan to integrate "Spotted by Locals" in "Visit Helsinki's" offer, including the identification of challenges and potential issues
- Establish a list of goals and determine measurables to visualize success, apply actions
- Draw conclusions and give recommendations

## 2 Methodology

This chapter aims at presenting and outlining the research methods that were used to undermine the theoretical and practical aspects of this thesis. In addition to illustrating the methods itself, also the benefits and weaknesses of each research conducted will be looked at, in order to diagnose research limitations and disadvantages. This is important to give reasonable and realistic interpretations of the data. To conclude why solely qualitative research methods have been applied, the differences between either method can be summarised as follows:

As the primary motive of this thesis is to understand a certain concept and to evaluate its significance, it is imperative to gather interpretations and opinions by analysing primarily through respective industry professionals in touch with and specialised in this topic and secondarily through existing literature. Both methods have been used for different parts of research in this dissertation.

Research methods can very basically be divided into qualitative and quantitative research. Whereas quantitative research uses the collection of numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular, statistics) (Aliaga/Gunderson 2000), qualitative research is based on interviews, questionnaires with open questions and the analysis of written statistical data. For this research paper, qualitative research has been conducted exclusively. It is an approach that allows examining people's experience in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods and life histories or biographies (Hennink, 2010). The aimed outcomes of the qualitative research related to local travel are:

- understand behaviour
- understand and explain people's views and behaviour
- understand processes, such as how people make decisions
- identify social, cultural, economic or physical context in which the activities take place
- give voice to the issues
- and to provide depth, detail, nuance and context to the research question.

(Selected from Hennink, 2010)

	<b>Qualitative research</b>	<b>Quantitative research</b>
Objective	To gain a detailed understanding of underlying reasons, beliefs, motivations	To quantify data and extrapolate results to a broader population
Purpose	To understand why? How? What is the process? What are the influences or contexts?	To measure, count, quantify a problem. How much? How often? What proportion? Relationships in data.
Data	Data are words (called textual data)	Data are numbers or numerical data
Study population	Small number of participants or interviewees, selected purposively (non-randomly)	Large sample size of representative cases
	Referred to as participants or interviewees	Referred to as respondents or subjects
Data collection methods	In-depth interviews, observation, group discussions	Population surveys, opinion polls, exit interviews
Analysis	Analysis is interpretive	Analysis is statistical
Outcome	To develop an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs or actions	To identify prevalence, averages and patterns in data. To generalize to a broader population

Table 1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research (taken from Hennink)

The research focus has been put on two major questions and topics:

For the primary part focussing on the definition and historical development of local travel as a concept, the research has been carried out through extensive content analysis, being a secondary source of information gathering. Secondary information consists of data and information collected by others in some form (Kamins, 1993). The literature review is an examination of scholarly information and research-based information on the specific topic (Dawidowicz, 2010). Local travel representing a niche in tourism, hence the research question considered the background and motives of the development of this topic, a review of its relevance in tourism history as well as an analysis of its potential in current tourism publication and trend features. This research builds the theoretical framework that guides the research design data collection (Hennink, 2010). In contemplation of establishing a concrete profile of Local travel as a niche segment, the incorporation of connected sub-questions to specify the research goal was a main issue of this research paradigm. These smaller studies and the new information generated are combined to create a new, higher level of understanding (Dawidowicz). This understanding of the concept, ideas and its presence up to this point are the fundament of exploring Local travel in practice.

Furthermore, recent publications concerning tourism trends and predictions for the current and upcoming years have been taken into consideration in order to evaluate the market demand and potential for Local travel.

For the practical chapters regarding the actual concept-realisation in form of the cooperation between "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki", the major part of the research was identifying issues regarding the direct service implementation of "Spotted by Locals" as exemplary content provider. Other than in secondary research, in this primary form of research, the analyst is responsible for the design of the research, the collection of the data, and the analysis and summary of the information (Kamins, 1993). This afforded to construct a set of interview questions that would deliver the anticipated answers to be contemplated. The questionnaires were mainly answered in writing via e-mail, also some telephone interviews were conducted. This gave the interviewer the opportunity to further inquire in case of vagueness or incomplete answers, also misunderstanding could be avoided. Personal interviews allowed a deeper insight in the topic, whereas the written replies were stunted off or incomplete.

In order to achieve the research goals, main consultants in relation to the direct implementation of the project itself, the project manager from "VisitHelsinki" and the founders of "Spotted by Locals" were mainly responsible, as the decision-making-process clearly relied on wishes and possibilities by either commissioning party. By defining and outlining the basic aims of "local travel" in the secondary research chapter, the foundation for research in terms of its future in the industry was built upon a set of questions. The following interviews were held with purposely selected professionals of different backgrounds, to gather information and get ideas from various points of views with relevance to the project. Questions related to prospective success and potential project issues were addressed to Directors, Marketing and PR managers of some selected European tourism bureaus and Destination Management professionals, focussing on Helsinki and the Scandinavian area. Questions directed towards representatives of the two content provider (bloggers) cooperation mostly covered the topic of issues regarding the working together process of bloggers or comparable content providers.

To evaluate campaign results and measure the level of success in relation to the goals set prior to project-launch, quantitative data has been collected from Google Analytics. By



reviewing those numbers, user behaviour can be retraced and analysed. Based on these, future recommendations and final conclusions can be drawn.

## **2.1 Research limitations**

The disadvantages of a purely qualitative study are always the question of subjectivity and the actual difficulty of a reasonable quality assessment of the researched material (Wint, 1997). The usually smaller sample size gives only a limited insight in the topic, yet allows more detail. In terms of the primary research conducted, the major problems accounted in this research were the occasional limited and less specific replies of the interviewees. Despite having gotten valuable answers, the restraint of preciseness limits a deeper research. Written replies have the advantage that they are easier to quote and draw conclusions from; furthermore, they are ideally more deeply considered replies. A face-to-face or telephone interview on the other hand, allow the interviewer to directly respond to ambiguous answers and allow generally to go deeper into the issue. Also, misinterpretation is a common problem, mainly due to the relative naturalness of methods (Wint, 1997).

### **3 What is Local travel or Travelling like a local?**

To build a solid structure around the topic and guarantee maximum understanding of the concept, the following chapter takes a look at the definition of “Local travel”. Furthermore, a brief excursion in history was taken, leading to motives and eventual development to the concept as to how it exists today. Subsequently, its relevance in the tourism sector, particularly in urban tourism is evaluated with a special regard to its potential target group.

#### **3.1 Definition**

Local travel or Travelling like a local is a concept that has not yet been clearly defined, despite it having been around for quite many years already. Not to be confused with Local tourism leading to the term of domestic tourism, which refers to involving residents of the given country travelling only within this country (UN, 1994) – local travel is understood as a concept which is related to the apperception of the tourist itself at the travel destination. According to [www.localtravelmovement.com](http://www.localtravelmovement.com), Local travel implies mindfulness in travelling respecting the countries’ local heritage, culture, people and economy. According to this point of view, local travel refers to the involvement of the locals in the tourism industry and encourages tourists to make increased use of local products and so spend money locally as well as to the actual experience and travel perception by the tourist. Locals, the people residing in the country or city of interest, are taken as the benchmark of what the tourist wants his experience to be comparable to – “travelling like a local”. The way of life in and meeting inhabitants of the destination is strongly anticipated. A blog post on [www.goinglocaltravel.com](http://www.goinglocaltravel.com) refers to travelling like a local to being “more about awareness, personal judgement calls and rethinking the way we have become accustomed to travelling” – defining it more as a change in the travellers mindset and perception of the travelling process. The conscious way of travelling and experiencing the trip and holiday at the chosen place is furthermore part of the concept of local travel or travelling like a local.

Local travel is not about branding a certain activity or person; it is about experiencing a way of life. Neither is it about a certain approach to actual sightseeing. When visiting a city, tourists tend to usually also want to explore the famous attractions of a city, but when it comes to going out or having a meal, it is difficult to make a choice. Also, in addition to main sights (such as for Helsinki for example the White Cathedral, Atheneum or Kiasma museum), festivals, local events in the various city districts and less frequented neighbourhoods are subject.

“Locals know it better”, they know where to get the best price for values, they know the newest restaurants and bars, they are aware of events and happenings. The people from a city know their city and they live it unlike any tourist would – naturally. The choice of store to go, when happy-hours are best in which bar, which restaurant offers the best lunch menu – elemental knowledge for any local, possibly complicated for a tourist – especially since life and living constantly changes. Moreover, locals live the spirit of the city and it’s mainly a mindset that makes a difference. The experience the tourist gets from joining a guided tour in a group to see the cities’ most popular attractions and the experience of the individual tourist who mingles with the locals and finds hidden spots “off the beaten track”, is very different.

## **3.2 Why it matters**

### **3.2.1 Urban tourism**

In result of the cooperation case study between "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki" for this thesis, the focus of local travel will be strictly limited to urban tourism. The UNWTO refers to urban tourism as trips taken by travellers to cities or places of high population density. The duration of these trips is usually short (one to three days), therefore it can be said that urban tourism is closely linked to the short – breaks market (Tourism 2020 Vision, UNWTO 2002). Urban tourism is a trend that is re-emerging after a shift towards coastal and rural areas in the beginning of the 1980s due to the introduction of paid leave (EC, 2000). City breaks are a highly popular option for short trips to get out of one’s daily routine, resulting from a growth in mobility and a shift in behaviour (EC, 2000). Europe’s flight connections offer affordable and accessible trips to all major cities, which are well established and intoned for leisure tourists who want to take weekend trips. The ITB trend report states there has been a European wide increase in city trips by 14% compared to the prior research of 2011/2012, giving reason to examine new trends and preferences by tourists. Urban tourism and its development in the recent years, have brought an entire new market into being, city breaks (UNWTO, 2012).

Cities need to assess their products and act in response to tourists’ needs and wants. As pointed out by Kolb (2006), since the city cannot change as a product, tourism marketers need to segment and target potential tourists who will enjoy what the city has to offer. In regard to the high demands and ambitions of tourists, new segments of all kind are emerging. The growing trend of city breaks and urban tourism, offers have to be more

variable than ever before to guarantee a maximum satisfaction of all potential customers and visitors. Since most cities do have a certain target group, yet naturally remain unspecific to urban tourism in general, it is of even greater importance to provide the most possible alternatives in terms of information research and offers. Urban tourism has many opportunities for the tourist to customize the trip effectively according to personal preferences and budget. The big city offers more opportunities for a visitor to learn about the society they are visiting, from museums and heritage centres to cultural activities (Law, 2002). Main travel related categories such as transport, accommodation, meals and entertainment have countless offers that allow maximum individualisation for the urban tourist.

Travelling like a local opens new viewpoints and possibilities for the local him- or herself. Especially after having lived in the same place for a long time, many people often find themselves in a routine. For locals, Local travel can open up a new view point of their city, explore new things and find new places they might not have visited on own initiative. Baeker and Hanna (2009) stated “when we live and breathe in an environment, it’s difficult to stand back and describe its special character”, but locals live and make the identity of a place and communicating the subtle charm of life as it is, makes what the concept “travelling like a local eventually stands for.” It is a concept that does not only attract tourists, but locals themselves.

### **3.2.1.1 Strive for Authenticity**

According to the ITB Travel Trend report 2012/2013, more people would turn their backs on artificial ‘travel worlds’ and instead seek authentic holiday destinations and experiences with more interaction with local communities. Meeting the local people of a destination is associated greatly with experiencing authenticity, as well as spending time the way inhabitants would, creating an individual and multi-faceted trip. By striving to meet local people and experience local culture and life as it “actually is”, the tourists gains a better and more genuine impression of the country. No longer satisfied with being one step removed from a destination, customers want to get under the skin of it and experience the place as an insider. A Kuoni report from 2013 remarks, that tourists want authentic experiences. Already stated by the UNWTO, it has always been of great importance to solidify the attraction of mass market mainstream tourism to developed destinations, whilst at the same time generating demand for individualised or niche tourism products (Tourism

2020 Vision, UNWTO 2000). Local travel is niche product outcome from this precise need.

The Finnish tourism board (MEK) published a trend report in 2006, outlining the future tourism prospects in a “facts and fiction scenario”, where the trend towards individualism is already predicted, and a phenomenon very contradictory to package holidays. Booking travels individually, including booking separate travel components through different channels, equals to a higher risk potential for the tourist, in terms of safety issues such as insurance. The trending package holiday is likely to be fuelled by consumers valuing the security and cost effectiveness that package holidays provide, stated by the ABTA (2013). Changes in leisure time contribute to the shift in priorities of tourists. According to the WTO (1999), the two major factors are the significant alternation of money vs. time relation, as well as the competition of tourism-related products amongst each other. These factors illustrate the increasing segmentation of the market and the continuing demand shift from standardised mass tourism products towards products with local identity and authenticity, designed to meet more individual needs (WTO, 1999). Consequently, taking Maslow’s hierarchy of needs into consideration to explore the value implied by a local travel experience. In comparison to booking a safe and trustworthy package holiday that will satisfy the somewhat basic need of security and order, local travel is a concept that is appealing to the need of self-actualisation such as personal growth. Striving for a new meaning and a more in-depth significance in travelling and experiencing, adds an intangible value to the experience that enriches the tourist on a different personal level. Being individual and “standing out of the crowd” assuages the wish for uniqueness. This movement to self-actualisation is a search for a deeper meaning and a sense of worth beyond material possessions. Quoting Yeoman (2007), it is a fulfilment of moving beyond goods and services to experiences. It is no longer enough to have particular gadgets and tangible possessions, experiences and things we do are unique and our own achievement.

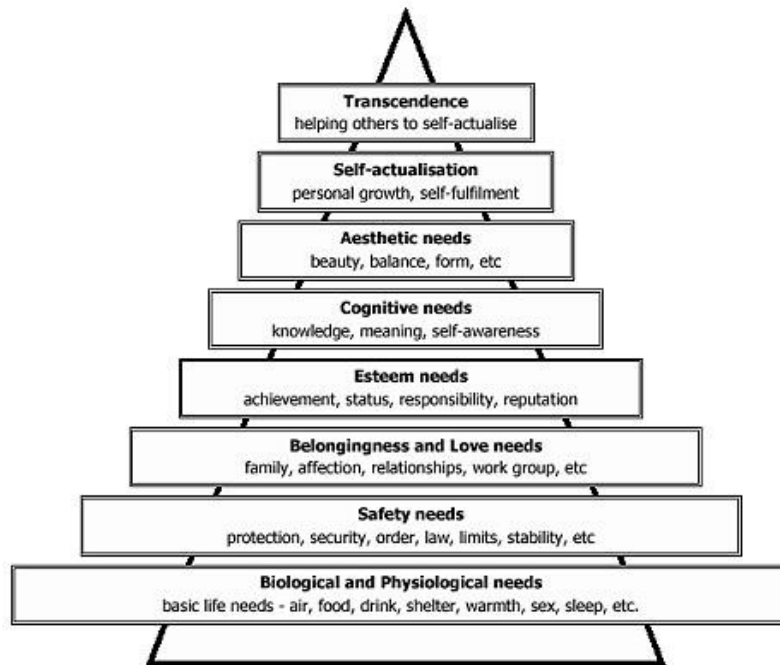


Fig. 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (8 stage model) (taken from Reisinger, 2008)

The new sensibility for immaterial values, individual quality, singular experiences as well as an integrated, multifaceted and wholistic world view is a direct reaction to the deteriorating process of mass markets (Zukunftsinstitut, 2006). Experiencing on a local level is a way of participate in a destination's life unlike other tourists, and a direct result of the standardised tourism façade. Yeoman (2007) outlines that there is a growing desire to obtain experiences and products that are original and the real thing, not contaminated by being fake or impure. Within the realm of staged attractions, the significance of breaking out of the artificially constituted tourism world. The people strive for authenticity and individualism results from horizons broadening, access to information and education being easier, and independence of people increasing was, according to Rojek (1993) "all motivated in part by a desire to escape the strictures and simulacra that define life in this modern world".

Authenticity in tourism is often related to the actual reality of, for example, historic sites (Naoui, 2003). An outcome of this is naturally places being overcrowded by tourists and unreasonably priced and hence resulting in a loss of perceived and actual authenticity. These highly standardised offers by Destination Management Organisations result in many tourists that are nowadays looking for a different approach to their trips. Conforming to Sharpley (1994), authenticity in tourism now refers to traditional culture and its origin, in

the sense of the genuine, the real and the unique. The desire to experience authenticity in tourism has already been stated by MacCannel (1973) that sightseers are motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives, and, at the same time, they are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals. He outlines that despite tourists trying to make an effort to correspond to their wishes, they fail to do so. The lack of offers and missing access to alternative options for tourists' information search used to be an explanation for this, but nowadays many possibilities to find advice and tips to do so. Additionally, the safer an environment the more likely a tourists is to take a step off the common path and dive into an unplanned experience. Tourists as well as locals themselves associate the actual term "tourist" with the loss of authenticity - "The term "tourist" is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experience" (MacCannel, 1973), outlining the negative overtone often associated with tourists. Often tourists commonly have a reputation as being ignorant of local culture and customs. Mutual understanding and appreciation of habits and traditions is encouraged and the relationship between tourist and destination strengthened. According to Law (2002), Tourism is generally seen as a positive force in the world, helping visitors to understand culture and societies and thereby reduce conflict potential that might occur between nationalities. On the other hand it could reinforce prejudices which already exist.

The Local travel concept aims to make a contribution to change this general view. Tourists being seen as the intruder of a society and culture have shaped their perception and acceptance by locals immensely. Per, Rua (2013) mostly, locals accept the price they have to pay to be invaded. Tourists travelling like a local attempt to integrate themselves in a more favourable way to the local inhabitants. Showing the interest and drive to experience their city and their home, aids in building trust and understanding different cultures. Despite urban cultural tourism is a mass phenomenon resulting from the growing demand for cultural activities that are often concentrated in towns and cities (EC, 2000), the local approach epitomizes the interest and efforts made by the tourist to 'escape' from this pattern. Tourism is seen as a way to contribute to society in a new manner.

Hence it can be concluded, that the development of local travel in an urban setting is a consequence from the trend in city breaks and people's wish for individualism and authenticity. This shift in values and expectancies towards a holiday trip have resulted in, amongst others, local travel being a contrast to the interchangeable tourism offers. As one

of many niche segments that emerged as a result of shifts of various factors, travelling like a local is establishing its place in the industry.

### **3.2.2 Target group**

The question, who wants to travel like a local, goes in line with its definition and analysis. This is not necessarily a standard derivation as to whom local travel content providers want to appeal to, the issue is rather who they in fact do appeal to. This chapter attempts to outline and establish a construct to present an idea of the actual audience that the services reach.

Vibrant, authentic places bubbling with lively cultural and entertainment options are magnets that attract and retain creative people (Baeker; Hanna, 2009), and that is also mainly what local travel is affirming, where "Spotted by Locals" in this case gives information from the source of the happenings.

Generally it can be said that the target group itself is not limited to any extent regarding age or profession, it is the mentality and enthusiasm for new experiences that forms the group local travel intends to reach. Segmenting target groups for specific concepts rather than particular attributes of potential visits can be examined with the VALS model, a psychographic market segmentation tool developed by SRI International (SRI, 2005). This model aims to divide potential travellers based on identifying who might buy a product by analysing the values and lifestyles of people (Kolb, 2006). Local travel as a concept is the result of people striving for and trying to reach a certain goal which can be broken down to a selected mind-set. Unlike segmentation according to age or income, lifestyle and values are a segmentation variable independent of demographic influences. The results of research are three primary motivations that affect a consumer's activity, including consumption, which are ideals, achievement and self-expression (Kolb, 2006). Arguably, the local travel concept is more appealing to a younger generation of travellers that are potentially more open to "adventure" and more eager to get to know locals and fellow travellers. Law (2002) summarises that in the end the tourists who starts out with a positive attitude to the people and country they are visiting is likely to return home with an enhanced understanding.

Travelling like a local is a concept that is more appealing to a younger target group (Schwaff, 2013), as elderly travellers have different needs and are more likely to look for a relaxed approach to city travelling and might not be as interested anymore to find new



inspirations. Younger people are more flexible, might have lower expectations to certain places and are more willing to take risks (Schwaff, 2013).

Also the writers itself form and influence the people targeted. In the case of the Helsinki tourism blog, the writers' age from 24 to 64 – all giving information that revolved around their own age group, interest and budget. This extends the limits of the target group in terms of demographics, given the common denominator, the interest and passion for authentic travels. The writers itself make a target group.

Nevertheless, to establish a profile of the tourists that is subject of the concept, it is crucial to determine sociological factors that influence their behaviour and evaluate their decision making process. Categorising tourists facilitates the analysis of their level in demand of authenticity and hence them being subject to this matter. According to Cohen's typology of tourists, we may categorise his definition of the "explorer" to fit the general profile of the tourist aiming for a trip off the regular tourist path. The explorer is independent and interested in the local culture and people in particular, yet has a need for safety such as having for example the return ticket back home (taken from Sharpley, 1994). The explorer will most likely be looking for a genuine experience at his destination but concluding from his search for safety and desire for information and education, he is likely to request the tourism information on site in addition to prior research. Yet he will remain in the so-called environmental bubble as to preferring a certain kind of security, for example the time frame of the trip and prior bookings of a hotel and flights. Yet, when we consider urban tourism, the explorer does not seem to be a type of tourist actually fitting in the common definition of an urban tourist. Urban surroundings provide a certain level of safety

Local travel is not a concept that will speak to the masses. It has certain prerequisites to it, that make it a niche, and it will most likely stay a niche. A tourist who engages in local travel is adventurous, open minded and eager to experience something different.

### **3.2.3 European demand for local travel**

"VisitHelsinki" conducts a yearly online-based research poll to evaluate customer and tourist satisfaction based on their offers both on- and offline. Based on the result of this research from 2012, Maarit Pitkänen, Marketing Communications Manager for "VisitHelsinki", has had local travel "on her agenda", as various responses stated the wish for more information from Helsinki locals. The obvious demand from tourists, particularly requesting it, encouraged her to take the opportunity of a cooperation with "Spotted by

Locals", which is offering exactly what she had in mind. Efforts to integrate the Local travel concept into their portfolio have been implemented in forms of the "Nordic Oddity" brochure, leading towards less frequented districts of Helsinki, divided into three different possible approaches, depending on interest and budget. The brochure has been taken off the print as a separate information sheet, as information was soon outdated. It has been integrated in "Visit Helsinki's" new print catalogue which is always issued in January of each year.

VisitStockholm has taken a few initiatives to communicate local tips to tourists, mainly executed by VisitStockholm itself. There is no existing cooperation with a local association, but the PR department does put a focus on marketing local designers, fashion and music experts etc. to "tell the story of Stockholm" and sharing "their common love for our city", says PR Manager Ann-Charlotte Jönsson. VisitStockholm's own cityblog on recent campaigns and happenings is only available in Swedish. An incentive was launched to invite staff members to post pictures to their official "Instagram" site when visiting a nice place or simply having taken a nice photo. According to Jönsson "the general social media influence in all of our private life has opened our eyes to get influenced by 'local strangers' "– so the demand for local input is there, but no clear action has been taken in response.

Brigitte Olsen, Head of International Marketing of "WonderfulCopenhagen" stated in a short telephone interview, that there is definitely demand for information from locals, particularly where tourists can meet and interact with locals. Interest in cooperating in order to add local travel to their range of offers, was also expressed. Alike to VisitStockholm, the website of Copenhagen features a live connection to their Instagram account. Marketed with "An #iphoneonly look at Copenhagen", the tourist office staff posts impressions from the city directly. This gives a first-hand feeling of the local life in real-time.

Tourists in Vienna do request authentic and individual experiences, also at the local Tourism Information Bureau. Bloggers are a respected dialogue group that is worked with, just like journalists. "Travelling like a local" initiatives and subsequent cooperations with tourist boards very much depend on a lot of different factors (Engl, 2013), but there is no current interest in working with an external content provider. "We have our own websites we put a lot of efforts into. In case commercial websites ask for cooperation, we

have a thorough look at it, as mentioned above, there are no general rules how to proceed.”

Leona Flynn from VisitDublin has also mentioned the tourism demand in local travel and meeting locals. Fáilte Ireland has launched the initiative “city of a thousand welcomes” which connects interested tourists and city-loving Dubliners to meet and get to know each other over “a cup of tea or a pint”. These “social energizers” help to strengthen Dublin’s and Ireland’s image of being a very hospitable destination. A source for tourists to inform themselves on locals’ favourite spots before their trip is not offered by VisitDublin.

VisitBerlin is already working with many bloggers to make sure to stay updated on development, new art spaces or pop up restaurants etc. says Allyn Wetendorf. „Berlin off the beaten path” is definitely requested by both tourists on-site and bloggers. She added that in addition to the sights and must-dos of the city, the company runs its own blog with personal tips and less known sites written by employees who live here there for years.

## **4 Case study "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki"**

### **4.1 "Spotted by Locals"**

“Spotted by Locals” is a Dutch company founded in 2008 by Sanne and Bart van Poll, is dedicated to offer tourists in the 51 (date: 07/2013) European and North American cities with up to date information provided by hand-selected city-loving locals, who know their neighbourhoods best. The concept idea emerged by the difficulties the founders experienced in finding the kind of bars, restaurants and sights to visit where they could meet actual locals. With no specific focus on either budget or certain themes, "Spotted by Locals" picks their writers by their main criteria, authentic enthusiasm. The overwhelming amount of review websites and city tips, unreliable and outdated information, resulted in the idea for "Spotted by Locals". Their Helsinki cityblog was launched in 2010.

Their authors are different personalities with different personal preferences, living in different city districts. By writing about their favourite places, maybe even not particularly centrally located, the level of authenticity is intensely high as the probability of meeting locals in less frequented and commercialised places. Their personal experience and incentive to write and maintain information is the most valuable asset of "Spotted by Locals". The community of spotters and their loyalty to the owners and support of the concept has been the company’s key to success. "Spotted by Locals" guarantees authentic information about places that locals really like and go to, introducing the writers in detail and effectively using their personality as an asset to what they offer. As writers are more considered “blogger/spotters” and not “reviewers”, the final aim is different to many online offers that review and rate places (see the following sub-chapter on differentiation). The vast majority of the spotters take their representing role as an ambassador of their home with great enthusiasm and volunteered to write for "Spotted by Locals" on a regular basis with agreeing to submitting new articles 2-3 times a month and/or amendments to the existing texts (Spotter Contract "Spotted by Locals", 4.1). The spots featured on the "Spotted by Locals" city blog are chosen by the individual writer. They are places the particular “spotter” enjoys going to and written about because they want to bring people to their home town and aid them in experiencing it the best way possible – like themselves.

Every writer starts with a set of 20 articles, which is the minimum of publication online at all times. This guarantees "VisitHelsinki" constant new, different content to offer to their customers. Maintaining information and content is a general weakness of travel blogs and

hence a consistent advantage of "Spotted by Locals". The frequent new content provided by familiar faces to the readers, strengthens the loyalty and writer-reader relationship. By customising the actual texts, and if needed taking them offline, the seasonality of the articles according to e.g. weather is established. Reviewing information and maintaining correct material, the up-to-dateness of their articles is "Spotted by Locals" all time priority. These regular updates and thorough maintenance of all related practical information such as address, opening hours and prices, ensure that all details are up-to-date and correct. Spotters are encouraged to review and edit information at least every three months; reminder e-mails by the editing system embolden this effort. The fact that blog entries are written once, and regularly updated clearly differentiates their product from articles on websites that are written once and are archived. Although a blog's advantage is always that they will "exist" forever within the online realms, does not mean that they will be valid for the entire time. "Spotted by Locals" wants to provide tips that can be relied on which boosts reader loyalty.

To ensure grammatical correctness and language accuracy, all content is proofread before it gets published. "Spotted by Locals" strongly believes in a close and personal relationship to their writers, as it will enhance commitment and improve the quality of the work.

"Spotted by Locals" pursues transparency very engaged, as they are strongly aware of the potential mistrust from readers. "Spotted by Locals" does accept sponsored content, which will always be clearly indicated to the readers. Also, "Spotters" are by contractual agreement not entitled to receiving any kind of compensation for writing about a particular spot (Spotter Contract "Spotted by Locals", 1.3 Section e.).

In terms of practical advantages amongst other blogs and content providers, the guaranteed variety of genuinely devoted writers who present content on places in Helsinki is unique in the "blogosphere" for Helsinki. The common blog consist of a number of blog entries presented in a chronological order. The articles are marked with "tags" so they can easily be filtered and found, whereas "Spotted by Locals" uses a selection of clearly outlined categories. The distribution channels through which the content is available and is flexible to different tourist needs and hence offers an easier navigation. Additionally, "Spotted by Locals" divides its articles in the following categories: Art & Culture, Bars, Coffee & Tea, Festivals & Events, Music, Relaxing, Restaurants, Shopping and Snacks.

Following the attempt to analyse the target group for local travel itself in Chapter two, the actual audience of "Spotted by Locals" reaches has to be looked at. This is important in order for the industry to evaluate and critically consider a co-operation with "Spotted by Locals" as a local tips provider. To get an impression of people who make use of "Spotted by Locals" services, looking at statistics from "Spotted by Locals" Facebook profile and at the statistics of people connected to "Spotted by Locals" Facebook page, give an overview. Users accumulate up to 13,694 people (Facebook, 08/2013). It can be derived that the majority, 65,7%, of readers is female. Of all "likers" the clear majority of both male and female readers are aged between 25 and 34. Travelling like a local is a concept that is more appealing to a younger target group, as elderly travellers have different needs and are more likely to look for a relaxed approach to city travelling and might not be as interested anymore to find new inspirations and adventures, said Angelika Schwaff in an interview (Schwaff, 2013). Furthermore, she claims that younger people are more flexible, might have different expectations to certain places and are more willing to take risks.

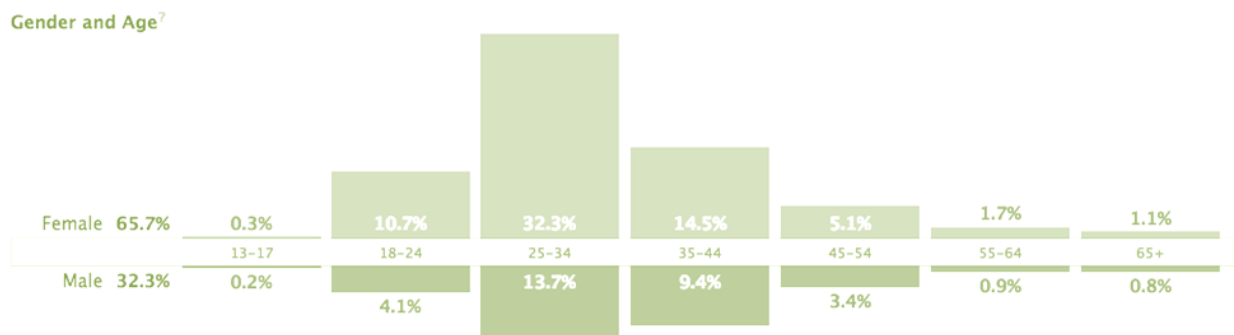


Fig. 3: Gender and Age relation ("Spotted by Locals Facebook statistics)

Budget issues are not necessarily a crucial point for determination of the target group of local travel. Unlike the common understanding that local travel equals budgeted trips, the actual profile of "Spotted by Locals" readers shows differently, as previous research shows that the site attracts more affluent travellers (Quantcast, 2012). According to Wetendorf, "Travelling like a local" is a concept with future potential especially for recurrent visitors. She states, that people who will experience the city and not only visit it, are a target group for local travel. This leads to the conclusion, that local travel is indeed not only a concept subjective to tourism but also for the locals themselves and recurrent visitors with more time.

#### **4.1.1 Distribution**

"Spotted by Locals" content is distributed mainly through their website "www.spottedbylocals.com" where all information including articles, details and maps can be accessed free of charge.

PDF versions of the city blog articles can be downloaded as a bundle at a charge of 2,99€ on their website. Additionally, smartphone apps for iOS and Android were published in July 2012 and are available in the respective platforms. The app includes regular updates of all articles and all maps. GPS feature allows the user to locate spots closeby and mark the users' accurate location to facilitate orientation, even when using the device offline. Android offers free trial versions of all city blog apps, where the most recently published five articles are available, the full version including all the maps and complete articles can be purchased for 3,99€. The iPhone full-version app can be directly purchased for 3,99€ and includes all features such as "bookmarking" favourite spots.

All content and maps are available offline in the Smartphone app, all content can be accessed for free via the website and hence encourages prior trip planning as well as on-site information search.

#### **4.1.2 Differentiation to similar offers**

Travel and the internet have brought new tastes and awareness of new ideas and destinations (Yeoman, 2007). The ITB travel trend report 2012/2013 also states that tourists will "rely more on personal information and recommendations available on commercial and social websites". This indicates both a higher interest in more personal and authenticated travelling as well as the gathering of information through online offers.

Tools of information search options are endless. The following chapter seeks to compare existing products that aim to fill the need for individual, "off the beaten track" travel advice. This amplification also aims to differentiate "Spotted by Locals" from other existing offers and outline its advantages and to clarify the concept in comparison to others. To particularly consider "Spotted by Locals" main message, some selected alternate services are elaborated, with a focus on

- A: content providers and level of personification
- B: up-to-dateness and correctness of information

- C: credibility and trustworthiness
- D: relevance to local travel in detail
- E: content provided on Finland and Helsinki.

The services reviewed have been chosen upon their popularity in the travel sector, also according to their message. This comparison aspires to increase clarity regarding to "Spotted by Locals" concept and to distinguish it best possible.

#### **4.1.2.1 User-generated information platforms**

##### **Tripadvisor**

*TripAdvisor offers trusted advice from real travellers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, with more than 260 million unique monthly visitors\*\*, and over 100 million reviews and opinions covering more than 2.7 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions.*

*(Tripadvisor, 2013)*

A: TripAdvisor offers travel and destination advice purely generated by user provided content. Accounts can be set up anonymously and without a maximum amount of accounts per user. Profiles give the possibility to reveal personal information and upload a picture, yet it is left to each, how much is published.

B: User-generated content does have the advantage of giving different opinions and multiple points of view, but the lack of personal connection to the writer due to the possibility of remaining anonymous, leads to possibly unsubstantiated data. Meaning that anyone can write reviews and information; there is no possibility to control accuracy and authenticity. Dodson said in his article for The Guardian (2007) about TripAdvisor that "it's too big, too open." Tourists as well as locals write about the places they visit, and rate them according to a given rating scheme, in the restaurant category for example Food, Value, Service and Atmosphere.

C: Due to its size and lack of adequate monitoring of that content, is often highly outdated and rarely updated, despite having the online advantage in comparison to printed publications. The system allows reviews to be filtered according to date, which gives the reader the opportunity to focus on recent reviews only and avoid outdated information.



Additionally, it increases the chance of encountering fake reviews within the huge realm of TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor offers companies to sponsor their businesses content as well as offering tools to encourage people to write about them. This has led to the fairly common accusation of companies offering to pay or give certain benefits to employees or customers as encouragement for them to write a positive article about them (tripadvisor-warning.com, 2012) and hence affecting the objectivity of the reviews is a problem for the service. The website tripadvisor-warning.com has dedicated itself to rising awareness to what extent the immoral use of TripAdvisor is affecting the traveller and the tourism business. As there is no control of how many accounts an individual has, this gives the user the possibility to write unlimited amounts of reviews that can deliberately help but also destroy businesses, as it is also possible to give negative reviews. To avoid this, TripAdvisor encourages business owners to interact with reviewers, in order to get them feedback and work with them, which is prone to miscommunication, if not done openly.

D: TripAdvisor does not put a marketing focus on the “local” aspect of their services, as everyone is able to write reviews and put them online, regardless of their country of origin.

E: For Helsinki alone, TripAdvisor offers reviews for 75 accommodation services, 76 vacation rentals, 839 restaurants and 229 Things to do.

## **Yelp**

*Yelp is the best way to find great local businesses - People use Yelp to search for everything from the city's tastiest burger to the most renowned cardiologist. What will you uncover in your neighbourhood?*

*(Yelp, 2013)*

A: The system works similarly to the one of TripAdvisor, individuals setting up a profile and rating, reviewing places. Profiles can be set up with as much detail as wanted, providing pre-set questions to answer for the user in order to establish a more detailed and coherent profile system. Their massive offer of basically everything that is available does indeed provide personally written reviews including ratings, but it lacks the personal connection to the writers, simply due to the fair amount of users giving input. The pro and contras are fairly similar to those of TripAdvisor, although Yelp makes a significant effort to build a community feeling within “Yelpers” (reviewers).

B: The issue is comparable with the one of TripAdvisor: once a review is online, it is very rarely updated or modified. The information regarding the actual spot given is much more detailed in contrast to TripAdvisor; it includes more categories that can be rated. Reviews are shown in chronological order, showing the most up-to-date one on top.

C: In contrast to the sheer amount of reviews and ratings, the advantage is the variety that comes from it; people expect that “the more like this place, the better it is”. Consequently though, the question comes to mind, how quality and genuineness can be guaranteed here. Both services claim to use filtering systems and manpower to “check for content quality and screen for fraud”. Compared to TripAdvisor the amount of reviews per spot is lower, but the amount of places that are reviewed is much higher, simply because of its general aim and no restriction to travel-related places.

D: Yelp is, much like TripAdvisor purely reliant on user-generated content. Focussing on a more “local” approach, it offers not only reviews of travel related sites, but as mentioned above also medical services, for example.

E: For Helsinki, Yelp provides reviews a variety of categories: 1266 restaurants, 1375 shopping possibilities, 462 Nightlife, 511 Food, 386 Bars, 285 cafés and many more.

#### **4.1.2.2 Travel guide books**

Popular travel guide books for younger, seemingly more adventurous travellers, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guides provide the reader with a very different sort of information.

A: The connection to the writer in the within conventional travel guide books is very low. Usually, the writer gets introduced with information on his or her professional- and travel background. Also, the authors of travel guide books rarely are residents of the place they are writing about, they are also experiencing the country or city as a tourist. In summary: journalists and not individual locals write those books.

B: the common problem with print media is the out-datedness of the publications. Customer reviews on the online warehouse amazon.com on the Lonely Planet Guide to Finland mention that “The information about pricing and eating joints is outdated in several cases which - on the other hand - forces you to start exploring by yourself.” (Siwczuk, 2007) and also state that the books feature “good information with a lack of enthusiasm” (Hulse, 2007). In the most current issue available of the “Rough guide to

Finland” (Norum, 2010), a considerable amount of bars and restaurants in the Helsinki area are no longer operating or the information changed (address, budget).

C: Professional travel writers inform the reader about very broad topics, delivering mainly facts. Generally it can be stated, that all information provided is reliable and can be trusted. As the reader pays for the book and it is the travel writer’s job to deliver correct information and guidance, the expectations are accordingly.

D: Depending on the guide book, the books may advertise that they specialise on insider tips, but a particular guide book focussing on local travel does not exist.

E: Generally, the given content is much broader and giving an overview about the destination, including for example history and tourism highlights. Aforementioned guide books mostly provide books introducing an entire region or country, dedicating only single chapter to the city, whereas "Spotted by Locals" portfolio features exclusively cities. In the case example, both guide paperback books only include a chapter on Helsinki. A selection of restaurant and venues is given additionally in each chapter. Specific travel guide books for only Helsinki are also available.

#### **4.1.2.3 Travel blogs**

Word blog is a contraction of the word web and log (Walker Rettberg, 2008), written by individuals on a chosen subject. A travel blog is an online travel journal complete with travel stories, photographs and video that document travellers’ experience and enables them to share those experience with friends and family members, other travellers and strangers they meet online (Travel being only one of many types of blogs, possible subcategories being either types of travel (backpacking, luxury travel etc.) or a subject (history, food etc.).

A: Generally, travel blogs can be divided in two different categories. The personal blog, which is written in nominative form, the reader is often addressed directly. In these kinds of blogs the author shares personal ideas, feelings and happenings whereas the destination blog is much more focused on empirical information and facts. In this type of blog the author and his personality are the blog asset (Costa, 2012), whereas in the destination blog, the information featured on the site is the asset. Bloggers are like journal authors, it is personal and genuine, and their followers are loyal and trust their judgement. As the writers market themselves, the person, their preferences and what they initially stand for,

the reader who can identify themselves with the writer, can relate to them and is likely to follow their tips. These tips are valuable for the people who are looking for destinations.

B: "Spotted by Locals differs to the" traditional" travel blog mainly through the very detailed and explicitly focused content they offer, meaning the concrete advice from selected locals on a specific city. The issue of a travel blog is its limitations: blogs are mainly personal or a collective of some writers providing content about the destination they visit. Also updates on practical information are rare.

C: Travel bloggers write about their trips and share their experiences which are honest and believable, yet vary a lot. Basically, they are tips shared by tourists and their experience, who do focus on writing and party also make a living of it. Travel bloggers are often sponsored and invited by tourism boards or destinations, hotels and DMOs, yet their personal judgement and opinions are what make them one of the most reliable sources of information these days.

E: Local city blogs are an alternate version of travel blogs for travellers seeking specific information on the already chosen destination. While readers of a travel blog might rather search for inspiration while searching for a destination to visit, readers of "Spotted by Locals" are more likely to have made the travel decision and are looking for specific places to go to. Cooperating with the industry would be reduced to advertising, sponsored content on a trip to the destination, remaining most likely a one-time collaboration as the travel blogger will "move on" to the next place of interest.

D: Despite the efforts of a travel blogger to experience the destination like a local will be limited to the one trip the blogger will take there. "Spotted by Locals" provides regular content by multiple writers on one particular destination, with frequent updates and new content for all parts of the respective city.

#### **4.1.2.4 Use-it travel**

*The initiative to start a new USE-IT always comes from young locals. That means: there is no boss with a big bag of money who decides where the next USE-IT will come. Every USE-IT initiative sticks to the same basic philosophy, but apart from that they're quite independent and they look for their own money. USE-IT is a quality label. It's always non-commercial, free, no-nonsense, up-to-date and made by young locals.*

*(Use-it, 2012)*

A: Writers are not put in focus here; single locals are briefly introduced on their printed city map, naming one of their favourite places. Who is responsible for the main part of information on their printed material is not very apparent.

B: The Use-it travel incentive is purely financed through subsidies and the execution is entirely in the hand of individuals who decide to take part in use-it. In comparison to "Spotted by Locals" offer, the content is distributed via printed maps available at different city locations. The map as it is found there can be downloaded on use-it travels website, but there is no interactive map where the content can be easily accessed online. The information is verified and updated for each edition of their printed maps. In August 2013, the 2012 edition was available at Helsinki's local tourist office, not all information was accurate by that time.

C: Their print material is of very good quality, layout and design are very appealing and very handy to use for tourists that are on a spontaneous trip and are looking for good, compact information without further ado. The information seems accurate and trustworthy. The trustworthiness and sincerity of the network is strengthened simply by the time it has already been operating, which can be referred to their success in the industry.

D: The printed map features local content in terms of personal tips by selected people; it also features a section on how to "act like a local". It gives the reader very practical hints on local customs, particularities and things a visitor should be aware of. They clearly outline their offer as being focussed on local tips.

E: Offering local content on a self-initiative basis has also arrived at Helsinki already.

#### **4.1.2.5 Like a local Guide**

*Like A Local Guide is about finding those cool and cozy spots that locals' like to hang out at and missing the tourist traps. We have built this awesome web site and a mobile app where the travel tips are being created by well-selected local editors of each city who know what they're talking about.*

*(Like a local Guide, 2012)*

The most direct competition and strikingly similar offer to "Spotted by Locals" is provided by the Estonia-based "Like a local" guide-series which is available for a limited number of European cities, also including Helsinki. The online offer is divided into various categories

and also offers general information on the city and for example, accommodation. In addition to the online content and the iPhone mobile application, they also provide print material that is distributed around their cities. Their chosen “spots” are highlighted on the spot with, for example stickers at the door or window, indicating them as a “local favourite”. Their app can be purchased for 1,99€ at the Apple App-store.

A: Writers of the “Like a local Guide” are introduced on separate profile, revealing their personal background, preferences and listing their articles. The set-up is similar to “Spotted by Locals”. Readers can sign up with a profile in order to save and modify their own lists and preferred places that they found on the website.

B: Up-to-dateness and accuracy according to changing seasons etc. is not a focus of these local guides. Information is not updated on a regular basis.

C: Similar to “Spotted by Locals”, the “Like a local” guide features a coherent set-up of their services, in terms of categorisation, lay-out etc. Their mission and aim is clearly communicated and the personalisation of their writers is giving the introduced destination a face. This enables a foundation of trust towards the writers and the service in general. As the locals are individually selected and not “everyone” can provide advice, it increases the perception of quality.

D: As the name already states, the guide service focuses on the “travelling like a local” concept, offering local tips by individuals only. Additionally, it features the headline “skip the tourist traps”, indicating that the tips found on their site are not conventional tourists go-to places at all.

E: A “like a local guide” to Helsinki is published and features tips by six writers.

#### **4.1.2.6 Global Greeter network**

This association was formed by some city-loving locals of cities who volunteer as tourist guides. The concept is offering a city tour by the local people and their favourite places to go to, for small groups and free of charge.

Like someone would show a good friend around, the aim is to introduce local neighbourhoods and less well known places as well as to acquaint the visitors with local culture and so support the socio-economic path off the beaten track (Global Greeter Network, 2012), they also name sustainability as a main core value of their concept.

A: The guides are not introduced on their website; neither can you choose the guide that will show you around. The focus here lies on the personal interaction with the guide, not on information exchange prior to the trip. Meeting the actual local takes the personification to a different level, yet the service provided itself is not directly comparable to "Spotted by Locals".

B: not applicable

C: Since the local guides are not introduced, the tourist books somewhat of an unknown experience. The website makes a good impression on the user, but there is lack of personal level in forms of references or profiles of the guides that are available, which would increase trustworthiness. The offer clearly differentiates itself, mainly through the personal contact to the "Global Greeters", as the "Spotters" work mainly online. Also, the places that will be visited cannot be looked into beforehand, the choice of options lies exclusively with the "Greeter".

D: Focus is clearly put on the local, city-lover experience. Like "meeting a new friend", the Global Greeter network provides a different approach to the local concept.

E: The Global Greeter network has not reached Helsinki yet.

#### **4.1.2.7 Couchsurfing**

*Connect with travelers all around the world*

*Travel the world - Find local hosts to stay with in over 100,000 cities.*

*Rediscover your city - Meet visiting travelers & locals at events in your area.*

*Become a host - Give back by opening your home to travelers.*

(Couchsurfing.com)

Probably being the actual precursor when it comes to connecting travellers and locals, "couchsurfing" is a platform for people offering their couches for visitors to "crash on for a night or two".

A: The simple system of people introducing themselves on a profile page, who invite others to come to their home and experience the "real life" of the place they live in. Actually living with a local enables the possibly closest connection with the residents of

the place and encourages intercultural understanding and authentic experiences at a very high and personal level.

B: not applicable

C: Up to what extent the potential guest trusts the host of their choice and vice versa, is entirely subjective. Travellers' profiles are usually and often very detailed, with pictures and personal information. Reviews and references by previous hosts and guests strengthen the level of trust.

D: Meeting local people and experiencing the way of life in the chosen destination is a focus of this platform, besides the budget accommodation mission. Bringing locals and visitors close to each other and providing a huge network of people all around the world.

E: The size of the network established by 2012, has increased to an amount of 5,5 million users in 97,000 cities. The network for the Helsinki area invokes more than 10,000 registered "couchsurfers".

#### **4.1.2.8 Tourism bureaus**

Tourism offices are usually a tourist's first go-to point to get information on the destination, and due to their official status in an entirely non-competitive position. Basic material can be collected there for free such as city maps, information on public transport and main sights of the city. Information about restaurants and nightlife is also to be found there, mostly in forms of brochures.

Destination Management organisations "which is responsible for the marketing of an identifiable destination (Pike, 2004) tend to specialise on promoting general information leading to a destination's main attraction and most popular sights, in addition to traditional restaurants which have a reputation by tourists that are often centrally located. These sights are marketed to serve the main purpose of attracting tourists. Tourism offices in general are mostly frequented by travellers who are interested in gathering information on transportation and popular sightseeing trips, said Maarit Pitkänen from "VisitHelsinki".

#### **4.1.2.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be stated that the mission of "Spotted by Locals" is to use the personality of their few, selected writers as a clear quality indicator for the reader. The main difference here: quality vs. quantity and a very specific concept in comparison to



open reviews. Additionally, the personal connection to the writer and the focus on their personality and not the “cold facts” set them apart from i.e. travel guide books. In the end, all kinds of reviews are objective and the reader has to decide individually whether to trust the content or not. Guide books are possibly the least reliable source of information when it comes to advice on the aforementioned topics, whereas facts on history and basic information on popular sites around can come in very convenient book form.

## **4.2 "VisitHelsinki"**

### **4.2.1 Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau and the Event Office**

Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau and the Event Office is the leading Destination Management Organisation that is responsible for promoting tourism, congresses and events in Helsinki. Destination Management organisations “which is responsible for the marketing of an identifiable destination. “ (Pike, 2004; p. 14) tend to specialise on promoting general information leading to a destination’s main attraction and most popular sights, in addition to traditional restaurants which have a reputation by tourists that are often centrally located. These sights are marketed to serve the main purpose of attracting tourists. Alike to tourism offices in general, Helsinki City Tourist Information office is mostly frequented by travellers who are interested in gathering information for example on main attractions, restaurants, events, transportation and popular sightseeing trips (Pitkänen, 2012).

Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau and the Event Office is responsible for the tourist information and tourism in general. Cooperating with many other organisations and companies in this sector, the Event Office wants to bring events and meetings to the city. Additionally, its responsibilities are congresses and events, which aims to manifest Helsinki as a desirable destination for international business.

Helsinki Tourist & Convention Bureau and the Event Office work together with “Helsinki Travel Marketing Ltd” (Helsingin Matkailu Oy), a fully owned subsidiary of the City of Helsinki. The company’s mission is to handle the city’s operative tourism marketing operations in cooperation with the travel industry.

Helsinki has 3,4 million overnight stays registered for the year 2011, of which 46% were domestic and 54% foreign visitors. Major tourism markets include Russia, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and the USA. Additionally, Japan, Spain, France and China have been

increasingly growing target markets. As Helsinki serves also as a great ferry and cruise destination, 2011 has had an approximate 10,2 million ferry- and 382.000 international cruise passengers visiting the Finnish Capital. Visitors arriving by air have grown by 15,5% to 14,9 million. Additionally, 15 million day visitors from the outside Helsinki region have been an addition to tourism statistics. Main travel times are during the summer, with July and August being the peak months with roughly 400.000 visitors in 2011. Helsinki makes more than half of the countries' tourism net sales with 6,9 billion Euros. Short haul travels within Europe "grew by a moderate 2%" which puts Helsinki on the map for many potential European tourists as short-haul travels are defined by a flight length of less than three hours (Eaves, 2008). Also, the general trend for long-term future development in tourism is going towards the North. "Rough guides" has Helsinki in their list of Top 10 city breaks for 2013, stating that "Helsinki lives and breathes design" (Whittleton, 2013), referring to Helsinki having been the World Design Capital of 2012, which has given the city a boost in tourism, not only related to architecture and design, but has put it generally on the map for tourists seeking a city break destination, even now that the actual World Design Capital Year is over, it has put Helsinki on the map for architectural and art & design themed trips. Moreover, Helsinki has been ranked as one of the world's most liveable cities throughout the past years, currently placed on rank 8 by the EIU (EIU, 2013).

The strategies for Helsinki as a tourism destination and its marketing approach are developed by the Tourism Bureau. Current issues for Helsinki are advertising and selling Helsinki more effectively as a cruise destination. Its geographical location makes it a highly popular stop for journeys around the Baltic Sea area and making a major part of arrivals in general. "VisitHelsinki" has recently put a focus on marketing the following twelve factors:

1. Friendly locals who are open and interested people and the opportunities to meet them is amongst the reasons Helsinki is trying to get attention for. Here, the choice for working with "Spotted by Locals" in order to strengthen this, is visible.
2. Helsinki's accessibility is high. Good flight connections, multiple cruise ports and also the train and long distance bus connections make Helsinki a rather easy place to get to. Additionally, its excellent public transport system is a valuable asset.

3. Strengthening Helsinki as a city break destination for year-round visits. Summer naturally being the peak season, but people are still unaware of Finland, or Helsinki as the Capital city, being a very versatile destination in winter.
4. Keeping the Design focus on the city of Helsinki. After having been the World Design Capital of 2012, "VisitHelsinki" tries to keep the spotlight on this particularly valuable feature.
5. In line with the design factor go the shopping possibilities in Helsinki. Small design shops and boutiques in the design district are a contrast to the main shopping areas in the city centre and make it a unique destination for shopping.
6. Also, Helsinki is famous for its marvellous architecture and great architects. The "Jugendstil" architectural style is just as present as neoclassicism – but also contemporary architecture.
7. Finland and Helsinki being a food and culinary destination. The cities' scene of fine dining and high-class restaurants has become more distinct. Finnish cuisine is not yet being a main part of the Finnish culture that is marketed to the tourist.
8. The maritime surroundings offer a large variety of things to do, including city beaches and boat tours. Also, the countless islands in the Helsinki archipelago are a popular destination.
9. It's proximity to nature is amongst the strongest features of Helsinki. Despite it being a Capital city, its connection to nature is all around. National parks are reachable easily, offering the tourist multiple city escapes.
10. Marketing Helsinki as an event destination for established happenings is strengthened, but also new business in form of congresses and conventions is a strategy with greater importance.
11. Despite a long list of main attractions, Helsinki is well aware of it not being the mainstream destination for European city breaks such as Paris or Barcelona, but "VisitHelsinki" sees that rather as strength than as a disadvantage. Not being conventional in any way is part of Helsinki's strong brand image.
12. The small sub cultural scenes highly define the city and its international image, without being overwhelming the visitor. This refers for example to the already mentioned design focus, as well as Helsinki being famous for its music background. Also its close connection to both Russia in the East and Western Europe, make Helsinki an interesting target for the "Nordic Oddity".

"VisitHelsinki" is working entirely upon government funding. Its yearly budget is approximately 3,9 million Euros. There are existing partnerships with Hotels, but none with restaurants or shops. Anyone can deliver brochures and leaflets, but the Tourist Office decides freely which ones to put out for consumers. According to Senior Information Officer Nina Lager, it is all a question of budget. The larger chains and more exquisite restaurants can rather afford print material, which is the reason why smaller, less frequented spots outside the direct city centre are not represented in the choice of printed items at the tourist office. Lager says, it is important for them to remain neutral and change the material available on a regular basis.

#### **4.2.2 Distribution**

"VisitHelsinki" web site (<http://www.visithelsinki.fi>) is in full version available in six languages (Finnish, English, German, Russian, Swedish and Japanese) and had over one million unique visitors in 2012 ("VisitHelsinki", 2012). The Helsinki city blog with frequent new posts about recent happenings in the city has approximately 5.000 followers per month. The printed brochure that is released every January has a print run of 450.000 pieces that is available in various languages.

Their tourism offices are located in Helsinki's city centre on Pohjoisesplanadi 19 and at the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. Both together had about 500.000 visitors, additionally to that the "Helsinki Helpers", individual tour guides placed around Helsinki during summertime for direct contact with tourists, helped 130.000 guests in the city in 2012. The tourist office located at Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport has had 200.000 visitors per year. Accessorily to their main website and the own blog Helsinki city blog, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube add up to more than 16.800 followers.

"VisitHelsinki" is regularly represented on international tourism fairs such as the ITB in Berlin or the World Travel Market in London.

#### **4.3 Prior analysis**

To become aware of mainly potential issues of "VisitHelsinki" and "Spotted by Locals" working together, experts in the field of both Tourism institutions as well as bloggers who have experience in this topic were consulted. Blogger relations are a common practice but a cooperation of this kind has not been carried out before, here "Spotted by Locals" being the initiator of working together.

“Travelling like a local” as a concept is relatively new, yet the demand from the customer and tourist side has been analysed and evaluated in the past. This B2B side, as to what extent (for this paper limited to) European tourism institutions are interested in funding and cooperating with "Spotted by Locals" to include the “local travelling” concept to their portfolio, has been chosen to be the main research topic. The research will be conducted amongst (marketing communication) executives from selected tourism bureaus. In line with the prior differentiation of "Spotted by Locals" services, the power of bloggers as such has been looked at.

For this part of the research, a brief set of questions was sent to each expert. The open questions allowed the interviewees to shortly elaborate their thoughts in order to gain material for this part of the dissertation. The major parts of the questionnaire sent to each participant, was identical. The final question concerning potential cooperation with a blogger or the tourism institution was interchanged for the respective side.

Experts interviewed and consulted for this thesis:

Project partners	
"VisitHelsinki", Marketing communications	Maarit Pitkänen
"Spotted by Locals", founders	Sanne and Bart van Poll
By telephone or personal conversation	
VisitDublin	Leona Flynn
AS Mediaconsulting, Reiseblogger Kollektiv, Reisefreunde Blog	Angelika Schwaff
WonderfulCopenhagen, Head of International Marketing	Brigitte Olsen
E-Mail questionnaires	
VisitFinland, Director	Jaakko Lehtonen, Anna Leikkari
VisitStockholm, PR strategist	Ann-Charlotte Jönsson
VisitVienna – Head of Media and Marketing Management	Gudrun Engl
VisitOslo – Director Tourism Information	Synne Myhre
VisitBerlin - Press and Public Relations	Allyn Wetendorf

Salzburger Land, Digital media and Online marketing	Reinhard Lanner
TBEX Conference Director, Travel Blogger	Mary Jo Manzanares

Table 2: List of interviewees

#### 4.3.1 The power of bloggers

Blogging is a massive phenomenon, not only in the tourism and travel sector. Although travel bloggers have only fairly recently been acknowledged and recognized as a valuable and important multiplier in the industry, their influence on information search and decision-making is significant. "Spotted by Locals" defines itself as a city blog, providing information in a coherent setting for cities.

The power of bloggers and the amount of people they reach highly underestimated. Bloggers are always “real” people who the reader can identify with and often encourages interactive communication and further spreading of blogs. Bloggers market themselves and their lives to their followers, often in terms of being accessible and “like a friend”. This factor is crucial in marketing "Spotted by Locals" writers in addition to their mission. Because “bloggers cultivate trust by interacting with their readers/followers via social media, making recommendations, based on their personal experiences and views” (Jenkins, 2012), the authors are perceived as a trustworthy and valuable source of information. Bloggers, of whichever genre they are writing about, are perceived as people the reader knows. Schwaff states that the character and personal aims and preferences by each writer make a major part of the readership as it allows the follower to assess if the blog and the recommendations are of personal value. Wetendorf says, “Personal content is regarded as more authentic by the readership.” Many cities already work with bloggers, as they are a dialogue group just like travel journalists. Marketing both mission as well as personality is the main issue here, finding a proper balance between the two components of a blog is something that many providers underestimate. Making a personal connection to local lifestyle and their worldview is crucial for the individual determination of personal worth to someone (Lanner, 2013). Yet again, where the marketing focus will eventually be placed has to be decided in the direct campaign development process by each individual partner.

As for "Spotted by Locals" cityblogs, the writers introduce themselves in separate profile texts with details about their personal background, their hobbies and personal interests of different kinds. In order to build a picture of what the writer is passionate, further interested can be easier determined. This way, the connection to the reader is strengthened

as it is used as a way of “getting to know” the writer and being able to relate to him or her. Founders and editors frequently encourage the “spotters” to add a personal anecdote or story to their article about the “spot” in order to raise the level of personalisation in addition to the basic sharing of information such as opening hours, pricing and location. "Spotted by Locals" authors are passionate, active and different in their interest, backgrounds and preferences. Similar interests will incline that the reader will find similar places appealing. "Spotted by Locals" pushes and nourishes this process by providing additional interviews with the writers, marketing their personality additionally as a highly valuable factor within their general concept communication. “Experience city like locals” as marketing mission itself is clear, yet it requires the power of the face behind it. “The local”, being the writers, give the destination a face. Combining both aspects effectively makes the advantage "Spotted by Locals" has compared to similar offers.

Through their close relationship with their writers, "Spotted by Locals" has a huge range of ways to get to readers and promote their cooperation. Writers are actively connected to "Spotted by Locals" through social media services and encouraged to share their articles, updates and news from the company through those channels. This network has the power to reach many people in addition to the actual "Spotted by Locals" own representations in various social media channels and networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+. As elaborated before, many of the travellers subjective to local travel would not visit tourism offices anymore, as prior internet research and information gathering eliminates the obvious necessity.

#### **4.3.2 Transmedia storytelling**

Telling the story of a destination through the eyes of its locals can be understood as a form of transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a term common in the filmmaking industry, but it has found its way into tourism. According to Giovagnoli (2011), transmedia storytelling refers to involving multiple media in a publishing project. Essential is to keeping the language and particular features of each, nevertheless them being single parts of integrated alternate communication systems. The storytelling by "Spotted by Locals" authors can be accessed through their various platforms. Doing transmedia means to allow the multiple media to tell different stories but all exploring a common theme, even if it is experienced through multiple narrative perspectives (Giovagnoli, 2001). Additionally, it means that various authors are given authority and responsibility to produce the content provided to readers. The idea is to create a participatory experience for the readers.

"Spotted by Locals" authors give insight to their own personal story and their life in their city. By somewhat opening up to the audience and sharing lifestyle values and information, the reader gets the feeling of being able to participate in the writers' passion – despite the lack of the effort to create an interactive part between reader and writer. Transmedia storytelling does not necessarily refer to the use of telling a story in prose. It is rather the perception of familiarity through the written texts and the visit of the synergy of information provided and the personal level on which the information is communicated. This is the key to encouraging the reader to use the service in order to make his or her own story. The combination of information available from "VisitHelsinki" and "Spotted by Locals" offers the tourist a complete “package” needed with general information on public transportation and city maps, and the stories of the locals for an individual travel approach - “like a local”.

#### **4.3.3 Cooperating with external content providers**

Tourism offices need to respond to tourists' needs and wants in order to attract more and different customers. Not only in regard to vast technical advancement and competition related to that, as sources of relevant information that has previously mainly been collected on site offices, now are accessible through mobile applications, internet. Many independent information providers in forms of websites and smartphone applications have put Tourism bureaus in a challenging position where they need to react and correspond accordingly. Angelika Schwaff acknowledges that especially within Europe the market entrance of Low Cost Carriers has enabled this segment to be an affordable side segment in addition to most travellers “main vacation”. These relatively new ways of experiencing European cities have encouraged people to be more spontaneous and eager to have new ideas how to travel, she says. Particularly in urban tourism, the offers are multiplying and it makes the choice more challenging. Tourism offices tend to be giving the most obvious and practical information and often are also sponsored and financed by partner hotels and restaurants, Schwaff mentions, and hence are often limited to a certain offer they openly provide. By adding Local Travel as a separate yet integrated sector they can also open up doors to that kind of tourists that would rather not visit a tourist centre during their stay. "VisitHelsinki" has understood that it is essential to offer every visitor what they are looking for, says Maarit Pitkänen. From these observations it can be concluded that in times where people use the internet as major source for information on their destination, the classic on-site tourism office seems to slowly be losing their fundamental and unique position.



Strengthening their market position in terms of working with their image and being multifaceted, the common goal of everyone providing – in this case Helsinki – city advice and recommendations is to get people to come to the place. Wishes and needs by tourists are different, but if someone has visited a city already before, the wish to experience something “real” and “close to the real life of the city” is more and more often a goal for tourists (Schwaff, 2013).

According to Gudrun Engl, city tourism in general is very sustainable, because the entire infrastructure needed is already there, because it is used by the citizens and does not have to be created solely for tourists. This is doubtlessly a main induced advantage of urban tourism. Popular sights and monuments are always there, they don't change (Schwaff, 2013). The tourism offices have to work with and around what is already there. By considering travel motives, this has shifted from the plain sightseeing trips to more interactive, lively wishes to travel. Highly recognizable in blogs and travel reviews, people are obviously looking for more. Engl says, indeed tourists request individual, authentic experiences - they are not looking for “Potemkin villages” or experiences that are just orchestrated for them. The further segmentation of target groups and by reviewing tourists' wishes, partnerships in order to maintain and evolve the offer is a logical step to be taken.

Curation is a future core task of DMOs (Destination Management Organisations), believes Reinhard Lanner, as the multiplication through other media and additional channels is nowadays marking the success of tourism bureaus. For Maarit Pitkänen, good cooperation always increases the value for all stakeholders, in this case "VisitHelsinki", "Spotted by Locals" and the visitor. The requirements for cooperation are evidently the quality of the shared content, as this is what will be communicated to the tourist. The individual wishes for a DMO willing to work with an external content provider are always subject to the respective goals previously set. Shared values and transparency are imperative for any collaboration. For Jaakko Lehtonen, Director of VisitFinland, in the end, both providers of each end of the line share the same goal: they want people from other countries to experience their country in the most exciting and best possible way. As both separate entities still have their autonomous goals and missions, cooperation has to mainly rely on trust and good communication between project managers and responsible people involved. Integrating outside content providers always contemplates the risk of losing editorial control, in this case "VisitHelsinki" has no influence on what is written and published. Different visions on what is truly interesting and what's not as well as the guaranteed

validity of information regarding the up-to-dateness of the content, state Lehtonen and Leikkari, are potential issues DMOs might see in cooperating with external providers. This is important on the one side, as it guarantees the preservation of journalistic integrity of "Spotted by Locals" writers, especially in regard to both aforementioned issues are a main part of their mission and business. On the other hand, it requires the partner to fully understand and approve of what "Spotted by Locals" stands for. Wetendorf stresses that websites like "Spotted by Locals" need to build up trust and have to assure that the information given by the bloggers is and stays reliable long-term. The cooperation partners that want to work with providers need to be assured of their competence and fully aware of what they offer and represent. In blogger relations, this often presents to be an issue as DMOs have no authority on the content, unlike in their own websites and blog posts, explains Mary Jo Manzanares.

Transparency on how the partnership works and is structured is of main importance to also guarantee trust and reliance by readers towards everyone involved and also the services combined. Collaboration like this is needed as it frees DMOs from using own resources and gives better results as the knowledge and know-how is already there, think Lehtonen and Leikkari. Allowing external providers to 'take on' a particular segment adds freedom to either party, allowing benefiting of specialisation and market share and knowledge of the partner. Some hardcore travellers might think that mainstream has taken over for business reasons (Myhre, 2013), given that proclaimed local and individual content is now also distributed by official institutions. Even if content is sponsored, correct information regarding partnerships and the sponsors marketing targets is essential in order to guarantee credibility.

Collaborations with travel bloggers are not new to the industry, despite being a fairly new media power. The added value of "destination reviews" is used and worked with just like with journalists. As communication is an essential part of a DMOs work, they should partner with Bloggers as they do with journalists, travel agencies and other multipliers. Bloggers are representatives of a new word of mouth via new media (Lanner, 2013). The general advantages for official institutions of working with bloggers can be denoted to a set of variables that still leaves it open to the potential partner on how to work with it. As for any collaboration, it is necessary to look at details and determine shared values. The different factors leading towards success cannot be universally identified. They write about

and promote the city's image in the world, this is what also meets DMOs goals (Wetendorf).

Doing the right research and finding the fitting partners to reach the set goals is essential to begin with. This being the pilot project, it is difficult to determine outcome and predict results. Mary Jo Manzanares, Head of 'TBEX' travel blogger convention, stated how vastly important it is to set a clear range of measurable goals for both parties in the cooperation. The difficulty of defining success of a blog-and-destination-cooperation, especially if the parties are looking at qualitative results rather than quantitative, will be a challenge.

A major challenge for "Spotted by Locals" will be to change the generally dismissive mindset of tourism institutions towards a partnership. Tourism bureaus and DMOs are member organisations, so it is easy to understand how they may see working with you will take away from the mission to support tourism through their members (Manzanares, 2013). Identifying Local travel as a niche sector that is of interest for DMOs is a desirable approach and incentive taken, believes Schwaff. Clarifying the mission and common goals is of major importance to start with. Clearly outlining the benefits of adding the 'like the locals' concept to a destinations portfolio without it seeming like cancelling out their initial offer, is important. Travelling like a local is a concept on its own for a large variety of different types of tourists. Despite it being not a new concept in general, the larger part of travellers is yet unaware of its extensive offer around, especially in European cities.

Any cooperation might require more blogger involvement. "Spotted by Locals" relies on the content written and maintained by the "spotters". Providing additional content and possibly pictures takes more time off the writers who mainly engage in "Spotted by Locals" as a hobby although there is little remuneration which can be claimed or donated to the business. Moreover, the fear of a conflict of interest with their employer (and what their employer represents – in the Helsinki case two of four spotters are working in advertising) as well as the scepticism towards the exposure they will be facing through additional marketing and publicity of the Helsinki blog should be taken into consideration. Although the aim is to integrate "Spotted by Locals" "as it is" without modifying but only manifesting the offer, the concern was a factor for the writers in question.

All interviewees were generally in favour of collaborations between DMOs and external providers, but stressed that qualitative content and reliability are a major focus. A cooperation shows mutual trust and value-added from both sides to another. The network powers by "Spotted by Locals" may be beneficial for DMOs in terms of establishing new targets and showing openness and proximity to locals. Tourists, who were previously sceptical towards the credibility of either a blog or the DMO, could be more trusting through the already established connection to the respective other.

#### 4.4 Cooperation development

##### 4.4.1 Timeline

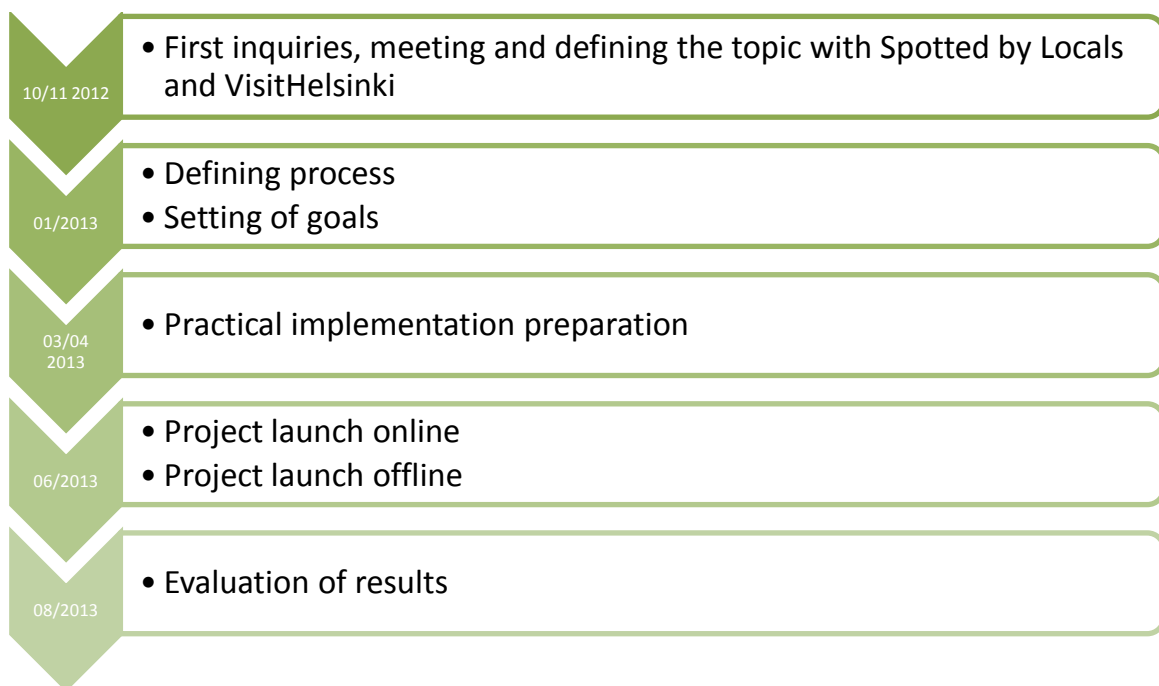


Fig 4: Timeline model (by the author)

First discussions with "Spotted by Locals" owners about a possible dissertation project started in November 2012. A search for a topic of benefit for the company as well as an interesting and rewarding topic for the author were main goals and soon it was crystallised how a cooperation with the tourism industry would be of major value. Due to logistic reasons, Helsinki was the main target to guarantee proximity for the author to set up meetings and work with the tourism office on-site most effectively.

Marketing Communications Manager Maarit Pitkänen quickly indicated that working together was of interest for "VisitHelsinki". The first step was eventually to find common ground and define goals for each party. Previous research as to what potential issues to

regard, has been taken into consideration to ensure smooth proceedings and avoid foreseeable struggles.

## **4.5 Goals**

### **4.5.1 "VisitHelsinki"**

With the city of Helsinki trying to attract a broader profile of tourists, the offer by "VisitHelsinki" has to adapt and grow. "It is very important that we can offer and share visitors those experiences that they are looking for. At least in Helsinki (and Finland) they are definitely looking for authentic local experiences", says Maarit Pitkänen. As project coordinator for this cooperation, her main goal is to offer good, reliable content to the visitors. In terms of measurable goals, she has been hesitant. "VisitHelsinki" has made it clear throughout the development process that their focus lays upon quality rather than quantitative results. Providing information and forming Helsinki as a destination by offering a large variety of aspects is their primary goal.

A rough number of a thousand additional visitors to the new content page have been aimed for.

### **4.5.2 "Spotted by Locals" goal**

Their general vision and aim is that "Spotted by Locals" encourages tourists to go "off track" even when doing city trips. Experiencing subcultures in a local way, student life or simply the life of the city locals is something that is rarely on the portfolio of the tourism information offices. "Spotted by Locals" is mainly looking for a cooperation partner in order to reach more readers and get more market recognition, especially on a B2B level. Recent efforts to cooperate with European tourism bureaus have not come into being, as "Spotted by Locals" has been misplaced rather as a competitor rather than a potential partner. Founders Sanne and Bart van Poll have outlined their increased interest in finding common ground with tourism bureaus in order to work together. The project of developing and executing a marketing action and cooperation plan to fully integrate "Spotted by Locals" services to tourism offices was completed by winning over "VisitHelsinki" as official cooperation partner, to be the pilot-case of this long-term development plan. Furthermore, the aim of the final project will be to generate a set of "plug-and-play" actions, which can be implemented in other cities as well.

Bart van Poll stated that in general, their aim is to get more readers and more market recognition in order to strengthen their profile in the international market of providing travel advice. Offering their services within the official tourism sector will strengthen their position in the market and gain more visibility. By having won "VisitHelsinki" as cooperation partner, the door towards additional collaborations is opened. Furthermore, the research conducted and the experts consulted gives "Spotted by Locals" deeper insight in the potential of their concept whilst outlining possible issues yet also giving new ideas and viewpoints on how to develop and take the business to the next level.

"Spotted by Locals" goal in terms of numbers is to reach a 50% increase in unique visitor within the first month after the launch of the cooperation implementation on "VisitHelsinki" website. Visitor numbers are generally expected to increase and remain at a higher level due to the additional distribution channels through which the service is available. A target for additional app downloads has not been set.

#### **4.6 Project implementation process and content development**

In brainstorm meetings with both partners wishes and ideas for the actual realisation were determined. "VisitHelsinki" considers local travel as a way to provide a more subject and theme- oriented way of presenting the city and its different district. They are hoping to mainly reach students and travellers on a budget, to market the actual way of life in Helsinki from the eyes of locals, with detail on nightlife, club and underground culture. As design and architecture are one of Helsinki's main themes, additional and more local input was of particular interest. "Spotted by Locals" does not want to influence or shape the works of the spotters to guarantee pure local individualism and freedom of choice in determination of relevance and quality. It was agreed though, to collectively browse through existing categories and try outlining which category might lack content, in order to encourage spotters to reflect and reconsider ideas for new articles to bring the offer down to a round figure. Additionally, writers were encouraged to modify their profile texts to specify their personality more, by outlining their interests, preferences regarding their own "spots" as well as which city district they are focussing on, without putting any restrictions area- or otherwise. To add another category or adjust the set up of the Helsinki blog was not made possible as the offer of "Spotted by Locals" aims to be a homogeneous series of blogs. "VisitHelsinki" uses its own blog to write about certain restaurants and also events are increasingly promoted through their Facebook and twitter accounts. The marketing focus - whether to lay it upon the mission ("Experience Helsinki like locals") or the

authors (“This is Terhi from Helsinki...”) was initially not set. To introduce and link spotters to their spots more effectively, it was considered to include video material as well as print media in addition to the online implementation.

#### **4.6.1 Online "Spotted by Locals" to "VisitHelsinki"**

The online implementation was set to be the focus and first major step in order to integrate "Spotted by Locals". Through the website of "VisitHelsinki" most people can be reached and grants a straight forward usage of the service, it also gives a diversifiable foundation for expanding and develop further at some point if desired.

The project release was aimed to be for the upcoming summer season, May 2013 was set as a first draft date for which the online project was supposed to be launched. The discussions on practical utilisation began in early 2013.

In contrast to the major city blog with full articles listed in order of publishing date, the previous cooperation with Volkswagen “Small Great Places” that "Spotted by Locals" had worked with in 2011 functioned as inspiration. "Spotted by Locals" used a form of API, which stands for application programming interface. API documentation provides access to data and services to build applications (Jacobson, 2011). The data made accessible by "Spotted by Locals" will provide all necessary information about writers and spots written about, including pictures, all location and practical information which can be directly downloaded from their server. Information has to be manually downloaded from the server in a chosen time in order to update the spots data used for the map; the data itself will be maintained by the spotters and by "Spotted by Locals".

The respective partner is responsible for the visual execution of the API; hence "VisitHelsinki" had full liberty as to how the data will be used. For the prior project, the data implementation was used for a map, visually similar to the map that is available on the "Spotted by Locals" websites for each city. “VisitHelsinki" has chosen to implement a similar kind of map and not include the blog texts as such on their website.

The "Spotted by Locals" websites map shows the city centre with all the spots that have been written about marked at their location, by clicking, the address as well as a link to the complete article appears, leading the reader back to the main site. By implementing the map only instead of the listed articles, it gives the reader a better and more compact overview of the location of the spots and simplifying the search in certain area. What is not


possible here is to have only the articles written by a certain spotter shown only; neither the category division was adapted. "VisitHelsinki" decided to integrate the entire article in the pop-up field that appears when clicking on a spot on the map. The current four authors and their introductory texts taken directly from their "Spotted by Locals" profiles are in line with the map presented on the same page. Source information also links to the original article on the main Helsinki blog of "Spotted by Locals" is to be found in the pop-up field. The mission focus was set to be "experience Helsinki like locals", as also finalised in the opening information text in line with the map: "Tips from locals - Experience Helsinki like locals and find great tips for your visit. City-loving local bloggers write about their favourite places and hidden secrets in different districts. It's like one's best friend from Helsinki guiding you through the multidimensional urban culture. The tips are provided by "Spotted by Locals" Helsinki! Explore & Enjoy!"



Tourist Professional

19°

Language



**Come**

Welcome to Helsinki  
Tourist Information  
Getting around in Helsinki

**Stay and Enjoy**


Accommodation  
Eat  
Nightlife

**What's On**

Events in Helsinki  
Sightseeing, trips and guidances  
For families

**See and Experience**

Shopping  
Sights and attractions  
Activities in Helsinki  
Daytrips from Helsinki



**Tips from locals**

Experience Helsinki like locals and find great tips for your visit. City loving local bloggers write about their favorite places and hidden secrets in different districts.

It's like one's best friend from Helsinki guiding you through the multidimensional urban culture.

The tips are provided by **Spotted by Locals Helsinki**

Explore and enjoy!

**Signora Delizia**

Created by: Antti Heimo  
Updated on: 25.4.2013

PRESENTED BY SPOTTED BY LOCALS

Last winter I overheard that you can find the best coffee in Helsinki at an Italian cafe in Katajanokka. Of course I had to find out what this place was about, since I didn't remember seeing many [Read more](#)

Share on Facebook

Authors



**Antti Heimo**

I'm a concept designer/copywriter who has lived in Helsinki a little bit more than 30 years. I like to play basketball and football. Like hip hop, like animals (but don't have any) and can't decide what the best beer in the world is. At the moment it's maybe Malheur Cuvee Royale or Kukko Pils.

**Why Helsinki?**

Maybe it's the contrasts of hot and cold, big and small. And how you can walk to almost any place with any trouble.



**Kathrin Deter**

I'm originally from wonderful little Luxembourg and came to Helsinki for a student exchange almost three years ago. I fell for the place and stayed for good - so far my choice has proven me right every day.

**Why Helsinki?**

Helsinki has everything within walking distances, without it losing its cosmopolitan and Capital city feeling to it. I love the proximity to nature - the beautiful harbours and natural sceneries, the islands around the coast are breathtaking every time. But you also have the modern city centre with great shopping areas and the different town districts that all have their own unique flair and secrets to discover.



**Lilu Nissinen - Turja**

I was born in Helsinki and have lived here all my life. For me the best part of Helsinki is Punavuori, a.k.a. Rööperi, where I have both my home and my office. Punavuori has during the last 5-10 years become very hip, lots of small design shops, artists, ad agencies etc. And it's also part of the Helsinki Design District.

**Why do I love Helsinki?**

It's a clean and beautiful city by the sea with a wonderful archipelago. The air is easy to breathe. A Finn is by nature a bit reserved at first, but friendly and honest, when you get to know them. New ideas are welcomed with enthusiasm and the city is getting more and more international by the minute.



**Terhi Ruuskanen**

I am a freelance journalist and photographer based in Helsinki. I have called Helsinki my hometown for more than a decade now.

**Why do I love Helsinki?**

I love my city, because it is unique, beautiful and a bit bizarre. We Finns love extremes. In winter we have sunlight only for 6 hours in a day. In summer the sun rises at 3 am and sets around 10 pm in Helsinki. We take our sunglasses when we go to out at night, so that we don't get blinded by the sunshine when we crawl back home at 4 am. I guess surviving all this and having all the time to think in the darkness make us Finnish creative and unique people.

Fig. 5: Final map implementation visuals on [visithelsinki.com/spottedbylocals](http://visithelsinki.com/spottedbylocals)

The marketing through the "VisitHelsinki" website to the actual "Spotted by Locals" content was to mainly be conducted by the use of traditional banners on the main page. A banner in the animated and constantly shifting main header leading to the "Spotted by Locals" page from the English language version only was introduced additionally to a permanent small banner on the right side of the website. That smaller picture remains consistent through all six alternate language pages. (See appendix 1 for a screenshot of the title page)

Furthermore, guest blog posts on "VisitHelsinki" own city blog were considered but within the first two trial months not executed.

In line with the website project launch, a press release to the website was published during the same week, in English and Finnish. Additionally, the cooperation was mentioned and outlined in both professional and customer newsletters that were going to be sent by the time the project timeframe for this dissertation was concluded.

The publication was extensively promoted through social media channels. A public post on the "Helsinki City Tourism Information" page was put up on July 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **4.6.2 Offline "Spotted by Locals" to "VisitHelsinki"**

To promote the newly launched collaboration on site at the tourism office in the Helsinki city centre at Pohjoisesplanadi 19, "Spotted by Locals" business cards were laid out for customers seeking information at the local office. Mainly, the computers available to the customers free of charge and easily accessible were used as a main tool to attract users to browse through "Spotted by Locals" website on the "VisitHelsinki" webpage directly. Staff on site was encouraged to educate tourists asking for recommendations on restaurants and bars, to take a look at the "Spotted by Locals" webpage right on the spot.

As "Spotted by Locals" does not make use of any print media for financial and ethical reasons, the on-site marketing was limited to the business cards and the information provided by the staff.

To further strengthen and promote the awareness of the cooperation, "Spotted by Locals" published an extensive blog post on the website's general blog - including links to the page and information about the process (see Appendix 2).

### **4.6.3 Online "VisitHelsinki" to "Spotted by Locals"**

To outline the collaboration with "VisitHelsinki", "Spotted by Locals" posted on their social media pages, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Additionally, an entire, extensive blog post about the reaches of working with "VisitHelsinki" on the main blog was posted on August 14<sup>th</sup>. To raise awareness of the collaboration further on, a banner linked to the "VisitHelsinki" own city blog was positioned permanently on the outer frame of "Spotted by Locals" Helsinki's page.

## **5 Reception and Results**

The main project was launched online on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2013.

Hence, the numbers taken for both development comparisons were taken from the previous year, as "Spotted by Locals" indicated an aimed 50% increase in unique site visitors. To get a broader overview of the measurable results of website hits, unique visitors and to elaborate on the user pattern and behaviour, the data for the following analysis was taken from "Spotted by Locals" Google Analytics page for the time frame starting from the launch of the project on July 5<sup>th</sup>, until September 5<sup>th</sup> 2013. A first review of outcome and potential success was also taken from questionnaires sent to project responsible Maarit Pitkänen, as well as to "Spotted by Locals" co-founder Bart von Poll. Moreover, reception from the industry and the public in response to the implementation of "Local travel" through "Spotted by Locals" to "VisitHelsinki" as a pilot project has been evaluated.

### **5.1.1 Industry**

In response to the project launch and the press release that was published in line with it (See Appendix 3 for the press release in Finnish and English), Finnish and international media responded. The press release has since then been featured on a number of Finnish, English, Swedish and also German websites. In Finland, the release was posted on "Rantapallo", a leading travel website; "Markkinointi&Mainonta", the leading website for news in marketing and advertising. Additionally, a link to the collaboration page is now featured on the website of Helsinki university. The English version was featured on travelogx, a website which is collecting news and stories about travelling with a focus on blogging, as well as on traveltourworld.com, an online travel news provider. Also, floost.com listed the press release in their news. Floost provides easy access to news customized to the preferences of the reader.

The German version of the City of Helsinki website also featured a translated version of the press release, a short version was published on the travel search engine fliegen-sparen.de.

An entire article dedicated to the cooperation, in addition to a short interview with Piia Tuomainen from "VisitHelsinki" PR department, was released on the Swedish website of YLE, Finland's leading Broadcasting company. Piia Tuomainen encourages locals to

explore their city more and stresses that "Spotted by Locals" can advise not only tourists to places they did not know of before.

The Swedish Radio station Radio Vega broadcasted a feature on August 11<sup>th</sup>, the Finnish Radio YLEX interviewed "VisitHelsinki" on the cooperation and blogger relations on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **5.1.2 Website and app results**

The measurable results as to how many people visited the collaboration pages and actually made use of it can be concluded from analysing the website statistics gathered from Google Analytics. For specific definitions regarding the terms used, please refer to the Glossary (VIII). The results were taken and evaluated after the collaboration website had been running for two months, from July 5<sup>th</sup> until September 5<sup>th</sup> 2013. This allowed the project to be online and develop for a while and make its results visible. It also gave "Spotted by Locals" and "VisitHelsinki" the chance to further promote the cooperation through their various channels to boost the campaign. Furthermore, the download statistics for the "Spotted by Locals" mobile phone app, as well as the response in social media has been evaluated.

### **5.1.3 "VisitHelsinki"**

[]

“Overall I’m very satisfied and the work has been very efficient. We are happy that the cooperation with Spotted by Locals has also been very flexible, and we think it was a great chance to be “pilot project” in this kind of cooperation”, said Maarit Pitkänen, “the “Spotted by Locals” content on Visithelsinki.fi –website is functional and so far we are happy with the output.”. Regarding the process development, she said that the smooth development was a result of clear goals and common ground as to ” to creating something unique and try a new type of cooperation”, were set from the beginning. Despite certain delays of the project launch due to various reasons from their side, she has been very happy with the actual outcome of the project. The “great willingness to do something different together” has made the cooperation successful.

”The amount of total page views at this point we think it is good. According to our web study (made autumn 2012) visitors like to hear more and more tips from the people who live in Helsinki and to gain this way new perspectives on the traditional tourism sites. With

the cooperation with "Spotted by Locals" we aim to fulfil this need. We are going to make a new website study this autumn and we look forward to hearing how the visitors find this new content that gives directly tips from locals" (Pitkänen, 2013).

Regarding the on-site marketing of the campaign, business cards have been distributed and the Tourist Office staff has been educated. They were encouraged to point the local travel approach and the information on the website out, which can be accessed at the office itself. Issues were the limited visibility and availability of the business cards which, apart from the website front page itself, was the sole tangible item referring tourists to the "Spotted by Locals" cooperation pages.

#### **5.1.4 "Spotted by Locals"**

[]

"We're satisfied how the project is going" stated Bart van Poll, "clear and brief communication, with clear questions and deadlines is important for us as we have little time." Effective and reliable communication has been of major importance throughout the process development and has facilitated the international correspondences.

## 6 Conclusion

Both parties concluded the project successfully. Despite several delays and not all actions delivered within the running time of this project, the outcomes were satisfactory for everyone involved. “We're convinced tourists are increasingly looking for local experiences instead of visiting tourist highlights. Spotted by Locals is one of the few travel content publishers who can deliver these local tips” stated Bart van Poll in a final evaluation. For future implementation of a similar kind he wishes to establish direct communication with the responsible contact in the Tourist office, as an on-site project manager is not likely to be available for other cities.

Maarit Pitkänen said that “we believe that visitors want to hear also in the future more and more tips from locals, and cooperation projects with local perspective will definitely be part of future marketing actions.” For the future development of the project, she wishes to expand and improve content usage such as implementing the category selection to serve customers even better. Additionally she stated “that we will make a website study which will give us direct feedback from consumers“. Furthermore she outlined that there are two distinctive types of tourists making use of their services: the one that visits the website to gather information prior to coming to Helsinki who is not likely to stop by the Tourist Office itself, and the tourist that comes to the Office and inquires about certain things to do in the time frame he or she has. As Helsinki is a popular cruise destination, there are many day-tourists who have a couple of hours in the city. According to the Tourist Office staff, tourists rarely inquire about restaurants or bars, the main questions are regarding sea activities such as the sea fortress Suomenlinna and generally things to do when one has “a couple of hours”. The self-service computers in the Tourist Office display the "VisitHelsinki" website with the large "Spotted by Locals" cooperation banner on their front page, making it available to tourists that do not require personal assistance.

For further conclusions that will lead to decisions on how both parties will proceed with the project in the future, the campaign will have to run a longer time. As the campaign was running throughout Helsinki's peak season, it can be expected that the general usage will decrease, which should not affect the perceived project success in the long run. Further tendencies and developments will be examined and evaluated after a longer run.

## **6.1 Future recommendations**

The collaboration as it was finally executed did achieve the anticipated goals and reached the goals easily. For the future of this particular project run it is important to take the appropriate marketing actions not only to address the tourists interested in this concept, but also to directly reach them and engage them in Local travel. It is a way of travelling that requires the prerequisite of the tourist being rather independent and having the right mindset to engage fully in a local experience. The concept as it is delivered in the cooperation between "VisitHelsinki" and "Spotted by Locals" still needs the tourists to take "the matter in his or her own hands" and make an effort to do research or download the mobile phone app, which simplifies finding the desired places a lot. This means that the accessibility of the cooperation output needs to be as high as possible. The potential for a permanent increase of visitors to "Spotted by Locals" as a result of the cooperation is given, but it is a project that has to be further maintained and nurtured.

The online marketing campaign needs to be continued further on. "VisitHelsinki" uses its social media channels very actively and it is important to "remind" followers occasionally of the local travel option. This can be done by, for example, introducing the authors in separate articles, post individual articles and links. To keep the project running and guarantee long-term success, making sure that data is up-to-date and pushing the campaign on a regular basis to increase awareness, should be a priority. For the on-site office, the visibility of the project needs to be increased. The simple use of a poster pointing out the cooperation, its mission, possibly introducing the authors and the mobile app, could easily draw attention to the website for visitors that are independently searching for information in the tourist office.

For future collaborations with Tourism Institutions in other cities, it is essential to keep deadlines realistically and do proper prior research to increase efficiency. By keeping this in mind, the process and final output can be finalised within a considerably shorter time frame. As this was a pilot project for both parties, there has been no financial background to the cooperation. As the result of the campaign proved to be successful, it can be denoted that there is potential for a new segment for "Spotted by Locals" and the possibility of cooperating with a financial benefit as well, for future projects with other tourism bureaus. Strategies as to how local content be further on distributed with Tourism institutions have to be developed for "Spotted by Locals". The results and responses can be used efficiently



to promote the concept line with tourism bureaus more. "VisitHelsinki" has expressed interest in presenting the case study as successful example at the European Cities Marketing Convention in 2014; also the Use-it "Act like a local" conference has been subject of discussion. The project with "VisitHelsinki" has definitely opened doors to the industry and has raised awareness of the opportunities that lay with local travel.

## 7 Bibliography

### Books

- Aliaga, M; Gunderson B. (2000), *Interactive Statistics*, Saddle River
- Baeker, G; Hanna, J. (2009), *Culture, Authenticity, Place*. *Municipal World*, 119, 2
- Dawidowicz P. (2010), *Literature Reviews Made Easy: A Quick Guide to Success*, Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Eaves, Matthew (2008). *How to Survive a Long Haul Flight*. Mandival
- Egan, John (2007) *Marketing Communications*, Cengage Learning Emea
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., Bailey, A. (2010), *Qualitative Research Methods*, SAGE
- Jacobson, D., Brail, G., Woods, D. (2011), *APIs: A Strategy Guide*, O'Reilly Media
- Kamins, M.A. (1993), *Secondary Research: Information Sources and Methods*, SAGE
- Kolb, B. (2006), *Tourism Marketing for Cities and Towns*, Butterworth-Heinemann
- Law, C. M. (2002). *Urban Tourism – The Visitor Economy and the Growth of Large Cities*, Continuum. pp. 190-191
- Molz, J. (2012). *Travel Connections : Tourism, Technology, and Togetherness in a Mobile World*. London: Routledge.
- Norum, R. (2010), *The Rough Guide to Finland*, Rough Guides
- Pike, S. (2004). *Destination Marketing Organisations*, Elsevier, Oxford.
- Reisinger, Y. (2008), *International Tourism: Cultures and Behavior*, A Butterworth-Heinemann Title
- Rojek, C., *Ways of Escape*, London: Routledge
- Sharpley, R. (1994), *Tourism, Tourists and Society*, ELM, Huntingdon
- Walker Rettberg, J. (2008), *Blogging – Digital media and society*, Polity
- Wint, E., Boxil, I., Chambers C. (1997), *Introduction to Social Research*, Canoe Press

Yeoman, Ian; Brass, Danna; McMahon-Beattie, Una (2007), *Current issue in tourism: the authentic tourist*, Elsevier

#### Journal publications & Reports

ABTA, *Travel Trend Report 2013*, retrieved from [http://67d8396e010decf37f33-5facf23e658215b1771a91c2df41e9fe.r14.cf3.rackcdn.com/publications/Travel\\_trends\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://67d8396e010decf37f33-5facf23e658215b1771a91c2df41e9fe.r14.cf3.rackcdn.com/publications/Travel_trends_report_2013.pdf)

Buck, Ruetz, Freitag; *ITB World Travel Trends Report 2012/13*, December 2012

Dodson, Sean (2007), *Best of the net Tripadvisor - the great divide*, The Guardian

European Commission (2000), *Towards quality urban tourism*, retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/studies/towards\\_quality\\_tourism\\_rural\\_urban\\_coastal/iqm\\_urban\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/studies/towards_quality_tourism_rural_urban_coastal/iqm_urban_en.pdf)

MacCannell, D. (1973), *Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings*, *American Journal of Sociology* 79:589–603.

Max Giovagnoli (2011), *Transmedia Storytelling: Imagery, Shapes and Techniques*, ETC Press

MEK (2006), *Travel2020 - facts and fiction*, retrieved from [http://mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/%28pages%29/Matkailu\\_vuonna\\_2020\\_toinen\\_painos?opendocument&ind=W5/mekfi/index.nsf&np=F-30](http://mek.fi/w5/mekfi/index.nsf/%28pages%29/Matkailu_vuonna_2020_toinen_painos?opendocument&ind=W5/mekfi/index.nsf&np=F-30)

Naoi, Taketo (2003), *Visitors' evaluation of a historical district: The roles of authenticity and manipulation*, retrieved from <http://eprints.surrey.ac.uk/1113/1/fulltext.pdf>

UN (1994), *Recommendations on Tourism Statistics, Statistical Papers. M* (New York: United Nations) (83): 5. 1994. Retrieved 12 July 2013 from [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/unsd\\_workshops/tourism/st\\_esa\\_stat\\_ser\\_M\\_83.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/unsd_workshops/tourism/st_esa_stat_ser_M_83.pdf)

World Tourism Organisation (1999), *Changes in Leisure Time: The Impact on Tourism*, WTO

World Tourism Organization (2000), *Tourism 2020 Vision*, UNWTO, Madrid retrieved from

[http://www.sete.gr/files/Media/Ebook/110301\\_Tourism%20Vision%202020%20Europe.pdf](http://www.sete.gr/files/Media/Ebook/110301_Tourism%20Vision%202020%20Europe.pdf)

World Tourism Organization (2012), *Global Report on City Tourism - Cities 2012 Project*, UNWTO, Madrid retrieved from

[http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/am6\\_city\\_platma.pdf](http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/am6_city_platma.pdf)

### Websites

"Spotted by Locals", *About us*, retrieved from <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/about-us/>

"Spotted by Locals", *Audience*, retrieved from <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/about-us/business/audience/>

"Spotted by Locals", *Start of our partnership with Visit Helsinki*, retrieved from <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/blog/start-of-our-partnership-with-visit-helsinki/>

"VisitHelsinki", *12 reasons to "VisitHelsinki"*. Retrieved from <http://www.visithelsinki.fi/en/professional/why-helsinki/12-reasons-visit>

"VisitHelsinki", *Press Releases*. Retrieved from <http://www.visithelsinki.fi/en/professional/media/press-releases/press-releases>

"VisitHelsinki", *Staff*. Retrieved from <http://www.visithelsinki.fi/en/professional/media/contact-us/staff>

"VisitHelsinki", *Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.visithelsinki.fi/en/professional/media/statistics>

City of Helsinki (2012). *The Economic and Planning Centre*. Retrieved from <http://www.hel.fi/hki/Taske/en/About+us>

Costa, A. (2012), *3 Types of Travel Blog*. Retrieved from <http://travelbloggeracademy.com/3-travel-blogs/>

Google Analytics Support. Retrieved from <https://support.google.com/analytics/>

Like a local guide, *About us (2012)*. Retrieved from <http://www.likealocalguide.com/about/>

Quinn, M., *How to reduce your website's bounce rate*. Retrieved from <http://www.inc.com/guides/2011/01/how-to-reduce-your-website-bounce-rate.html>

The Economist, *Liveability ranking - Australian gold*, retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2012/08/liveability-ranking>

Tripadvisor (2013), *About us*. Retrieved from [http://www.tripadvisor.com/PressCenter-c6-About\\_Us.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/PressCenter-c6-About_Us.html)

Use-it, *What (2012)*. Retrieved from <http://www.use-it.travel/info/detail/what/>

Volkswagen-up, *Small Great Places*. Retrieved from <http://www.volkswagen-up.com/#/?slide=sgp-secondlevel>

Web Analytics Association, *Web Analytics Definitions (2007)*. Retrieved from [http://c.yimcdn.com/sites/www.webanalyticsassociation.org/resource/resmgr/PDF\\_standards/WebAnalyticsDefinitionsVol1.pdf](http://c.yimcdn.com/sites/www.webanalyticsassociation.org/resource/resmgr/PDF_standards/WebAnalyticsDefinitionsVol1.pdf)

Whittleton, A. (2013), *Top Ten New City Breaks for 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.roughguides.com/article/top-ten-new-city-breaks-for-2013/>

## **8 Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Screenshot "VisitHelsinki" front page, "Spotted by Locals" ads marked red**

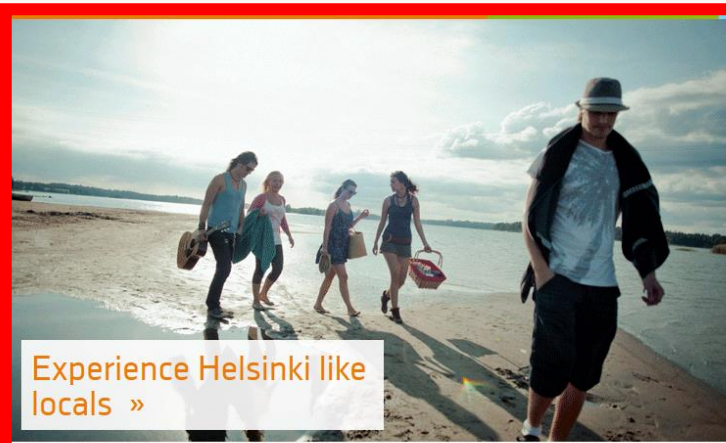


**Come**  
 Welcome to Helsinki  
 Tourist Information  
 Getting around in Helsinki

**Stay and Enjoy**  
 Accommodation  
 Eat  
 Nightlife

**What's On**  
 Events in Helsinki  
 Sightseeing, trips and guidances  
 For families

**See and Experience**  
 Shopping  
 Sights and attractions  
 Activities in Helsinki  
 Daytrips from Helsinki



**Experience Helsinki like locals »**

Subscribe to the Visit Helsinki newsletter

Email address:

Subscribe

Advertisement



Advertisement



Advertisement



Advertisement



Advertisement



Experience Helsinki like locals



**Experience Helsinki like locals »**

Find great tips for your visit in Helsinki! City loving local bloggers write about their favorite places and hidden secrets in different districts. [Read more »](#)

**Crayfish colour the late summer evenings red**

The highlight of the summer for many Finns is the opening of the crayfish season in late July. People dress up and head for the island and rooftop ...

**Helsinki Festival 16.8.-1.9. »**

Finland's biggest multi-arts festival fills Helsinki with an exciting programme. [Read more »](#)

**Main attractions in Helsinki »**

The Capital of Finland offers lots to see, do and experience for visitors of all ages. Here are just a few examples of the most popular attractions.

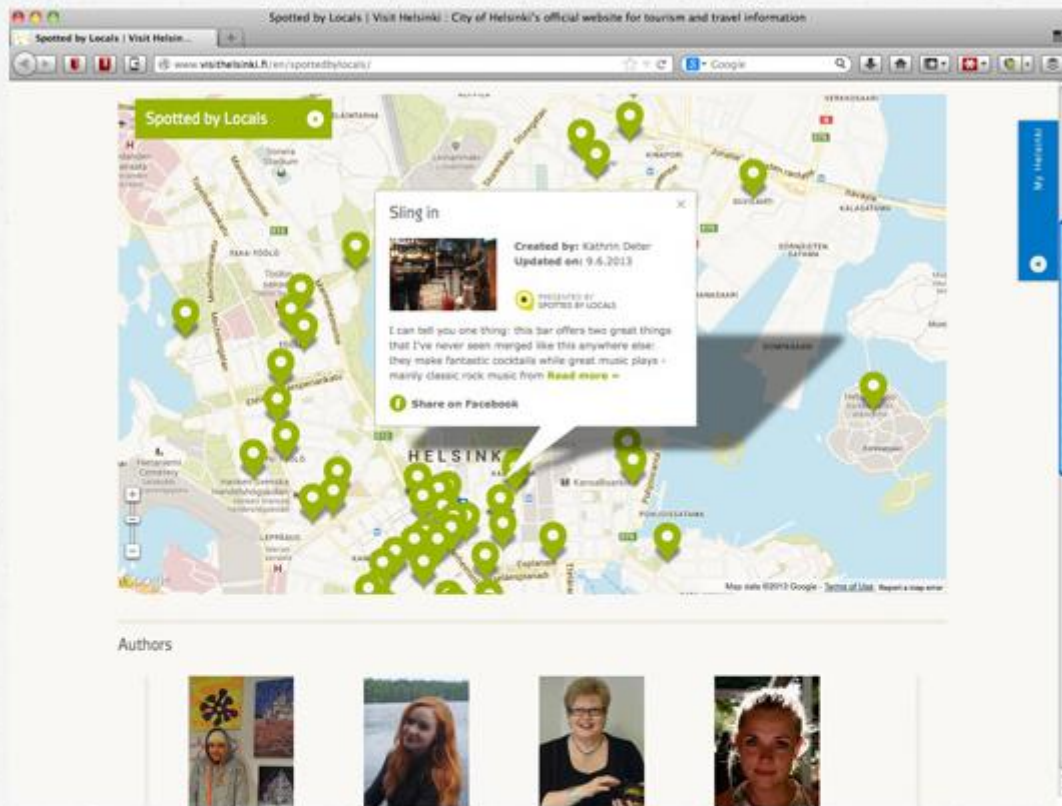
**Hakaniemi Market Hall: food lovers' paradise**

**Shopping at Design District Helsinki »**

## Appendix 2: "Spotted by Locals" partnership blog post

### Start of our partnership with Visit Helsinki

Aug 14th, 2013 | By: [Spotted by Locals](#)



We are proud to be working with the Helsinki Tourist Office – Visit Helsinki – to help spread the “Experience Helsinki like a local” virus:

- Our locals’ tips have been [beautifully integrated on the Helsinki Tourist Office website](#) using our [API](#)
- The tourist office desk in Helsinki is promoting Spotted by Locals’ blogs & 100% offline Helsinki app to visitors with business cards

Also, the tourist office will promote our cooperation in their newsletters and in press releases. We’re already seeing a 50% increase of visitors on our [locals’ Helsinki blog](#) and a 100% increase of the sales of Helsinki iPhone city guides!

We hope our locals’ tips on the Visit Helsinki website will help a lot of visitors to this beautiful city! Lots of thanks to our Helsinki Spotter Kathrin for arranging & managing this project for us!



## Appendix 6: Website links industry reception

Rantapallo: <http://www.rantapallo.fi/matkailu/haluatko-paikallisten-vinkkeja-helsinkiin-kokeile-tata/>

Markkinointi&Mainonta:

<http://www.marmai.fi/uutiset/spotted+by+locals+bloggaajat+antavat+vinkkeja+helsinkiin+tuleville+matkailijoille/a2193774>

Travelogx: <http://www.travelogx.com/helsinki>

Floost: <http://floost.com/spottedbylocals-post-start-of-our-partnership-with-visit-helsinki-5304803>

University of Helsinki: <http://www.helsinki.fi/rre/>

City of Helsinki:

<http://www.hel.fi/hki/helsinki/ge/nachricht/helsinki+aus+sicht+der+einheimischen+erleben>

Trans and Tour world: <http://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/the-visithelsinki-fi-website-offers-you-a-local-view-of-the-city-in-cooperation-with-the-spotted-by-locals-city-blog/>



### Visithelsinki.fi-sivusto tarjoaa paikallista näkökulmaa yhteistyössä Spotted by Locals –palvelun kanssa

Visithelsinki.fi-matkailusivuston monipuolista tarjontaa on täydennetty paikallisten vinkeillä. Sivuston osaksi on otettu verkossa toimiva Spotted by Locals –palvelu, joka tarjoaa ajantasaisia paikallisten bloggaajien vinkkejä kaupunkilaisten suosikkikohteista.

Spotted by Locals -palvelu valitsee paikalliset sisällöntuottajansa, "spottersit", tarkasti. Kirjoittajiksi on etsitty erityyppisiä henkilöitä, jotta matkailijat löytäisivät helposti juuri itseään kiinnostavia vinkkejä. Helsingissä Spotted by Locals -bloggaajia on tällä hetkellä neljä, ja heidän vinkkeihinsä voi tutustua nyt myös Visithelsinki.fi-sivuston englanninkielisessä osiossa.

– Enemmän ja enemmän matkailijat haluavat kuulla juuri helsinkiläisten omia vinkkejä ja saada uutta näkökulmaa myös perinteisiin matkailukohteisiin. Yhdessä Spotted by Localsin kanssa pyrimme vastaamaan tähän toiveeseen. Yhteistyömme on ainutlaatuista, sillä vastaavanlaista he eivät ole toteuttaneet aiemmin minkään muun matkailutoimiston kanssa, kertoo Helsingin matkailun markkinointiviestintäpäällikkö Maarit Pitkänen.

Bloggaajien vinkit liittyvät erityisesti ravintoloihin, yöelämään ja kulttuuriin. Tutustumiseen houkuttelevia kohteita tarjotaan ydinkeskustan lisäksi myös eri kaupunginosissa.

– Olemme iloisia yhteistyöstä Helsingin matkailun kanssa. Tavoitteenamme on tarjota matkailijoille ajankohtaista sisäpiiritietoa paikallisnäkökulmasta, kuvailee Spotted by Locals -palvelun perustaja Bart van Poll.

Spotted by Locals -verkkopalvelu on perustettu vuonna 2008 ja palvelu tarjoaa sisältöä yli 50 eri kaupungista Euroopassa ja Pohjois-Amerikassa. Palvelu on saanut tunnustusta muun muassa New York Timesilta hyvästä konseptista matkailijoille, ja mm. The Guardian julkaisee heidän matkavinkkejään.

#### Mobiilisovellukset matkailijan apuna

Kaupungin tarjontaan liittyvien mobiilisovellusten käyttö lisääntyy jatkuvasti. Myös Spotted by Locals -palvelu on saatavana kartan sisältävänä kätevästä mobiilisovelluksena.

Helsingissä matkailijoita palvelee lisäksi esimerkiksi City-Oppaan tuottama Helsinki-karttasovellus, joka toimii painettujen City-Opas karttojen rinnalla. Sovelluksesta saa kätevästi vinkkejä Helsingin monipuolisesta tarjonnasta, kuten käyntikohteista, ostospaikoista, matkailupalveluista ja päätapahtumista. Sovellus on helppo ladata, eikä se käytä verkkoyhteyttä latauksen jälkeen.

Helsingistä on saatavilla myös lukuisia muita mobiilisovelluksia, joihin voi tutustua Visithelsinki.fi-sivustolla. Sovellukset ovat ladattavissa Google Play:stä ja App Storesta.

Tutustu palveluun Visithelsinki.fi-sivustolla: [www.visithelsinki.fi/spottedbylocals](http://www.visithelsinki.fi/spottedbylocals).



## The Visithelsinki.fi website offers you a local view of the city, in cooperation with the Spotted by Locals city blog

The versatile services of the Visithelsinki.fi tourism website have been complemented with tips from the local population. Spotted by Locals city blog has been included as part of the site, to offer up-to-date tips from local bloggers of their favourite sites around the city.

The spotters, or local content producers, for the Spotted by Locals service are selected carefully. Different types of people are selected to ensure that as many visitors as possible can find tips that are of interest to them. At the moment, there are four Spotted by Locals Helsinki -bloggers, and their tips are also available in the English section of the Visithelsinki.fi website.

"Visitors like to hear more and more tips from the people who live in Helsinki, and to gain new perspectives on the traditional tourism sites. Together with Spotted by Locals, we aim to fulfil this need. They have never carried out such unique operations with any other tourist office", says Marketing Communications Manager Maarit Pitkänen from the Helsinki City Tourist & Convention Bureau.

The tips from the bloggers concentrate in particular on restaurants, nightlife, and culture. Inviting sites are presented not only in the heart of the city, but in several neighbourhoods as well.

"We are happy about the co-operation with Visit Helsinki. Our goal is to offer visitors seasonal insider tips from a local perspective", describes the co-founder of Spotted by Locals, Mr. Bart van Poll.

The Spotted by Locals city blog was founded in 2008, and it offers content for more than 50 cities in Europe and North America. The service has been acknowledged by the New York Times for offering an excellent concept for tourists, and for example The Guardian & Sueddeutsche Zeitung publish their tips.

### Mobile applications to help the tourists

The use of mobile applications related to the services offered by the city is constantly increasing. Spotted by Locals is also available as a convenient mobile application, including a map.

Visitors to Helsinki can also use the Helsinki map application by City-Opas, which can be used alongside the printed City-Opas maps. The application offers tips on the sites to visit, places to do some shopping, tourism services, and the main events offered in Helsinki. It is easy to download, and it does not require a network connection once it has been downloaded.

For more information on the many more mobile applications available in Google Play and App Store, please refer to the Visithelsinki.fi website.

[www.visithelsinki.fi/spottedbylocals](http://www.visithelsinki.fi/spottedbylocals)

## Appendix 8: Declaration of Authenticity



### Declaration of Authenticity

**Herewith I confirm that this thesis is my own work, which was written without unauthorized assistance and that all references used are marked appropriately.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Place, Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

(original – no scans please!)