

## EVALUATION OF VISIT FINLAND

Owal Group Ltd.

Visit Finland works to develop Finland's image as a tourist destination and helps Finnish tourism businesses to become more international and develop, sell and market high-quality travel products. The aim of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Visit Finland's activities in relation to its objectives and main responsibilities.

Tourism is one of Finland's fastest growing sectors

Tourism is the third largest service export industry in Finland. Tourism is one of Finland's fastest growing sectors. Income from tourism, comparable to income from exports, amounts to almost four billion euros. This is more than all of Finland's high technology exports in total. In recent years, tourism in Finland has grown more than other sectors. In 2017, tourism amounted to 2.6% of Finland's GDP and tourism consumption reached EUR 15 billion. International visitor numbers have doubled since 2000 (situation before Covid-19).

Visit Finland's importance for the tourism industry is widely recognised

Visit Finland's importance for the tourism businesses is widely recognised within the industry. However, Visit Finland's impact is primarily considered to be indirect: Visit Finland's activities support the whole industry rather than individual businesses. In the tourism industry survey, the bulk of the respondents saw that Visit Finland has more impact to the whole industry than it has for the respondents themselves.

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Impact through international networks. The greatest impact to businesses is created through Visit Finland's networks and contacts with international markets. The events/seminars/webinars and marketing insights/statistics are the most used ones of Visit Finland's services. 79% of the respondents had participated in seminars or webinars and 55% had utilised marketing insights or statistics produced by Visit Finland.

Visit Finland's services are seen as of high quality among international marketing partners

High quality services for international marketing partners. Visit Finland's marketing partners in the target markets are in general very satisfied with the cooperation with Visit Finland. The satisfaction with cooperation with Visit Finland is generally good but varies among the marketing partners in different target markets. Visit Finland's services are seen as relevant and of high quality among international marketing partners.

Revenue of tourism industry is severely affected by the coronavirus.

Results	Impact
<p>Business Finland's funding for the travel industry has been relatively small (before Covid-19 related funding).</p> <p>Business Finland's funding criteria do not apply well to most travel businesses. Their business is mostly small and local without significant scaling potential.</p> <p>In all, Business Finland has provided a few million euros of funding for the travel industry per year.</p>	<p>Although Visit Finland's importance for the tourism businesses is widely recognised with the industry, the pandemic has wiped out most of the companies' turnover.</p> <p>For example, in June 2020, overnight stays by foreign visitors declined by 93 per cent. The impact to businesses would have been the same regardless of Visit Finland's measures.</p>

Visit Finland's target markets correspond well with the needs of the businesses and the market potential of different markets. However, the fact that the Nordic countries and the Baltic countries have not been included in them has been seen as a deficiency. In the latest revision of the target markets (2021), also Sweden was included. All key stakeholders emphasized the importance of the closest markets, especially in the post-COVID world.

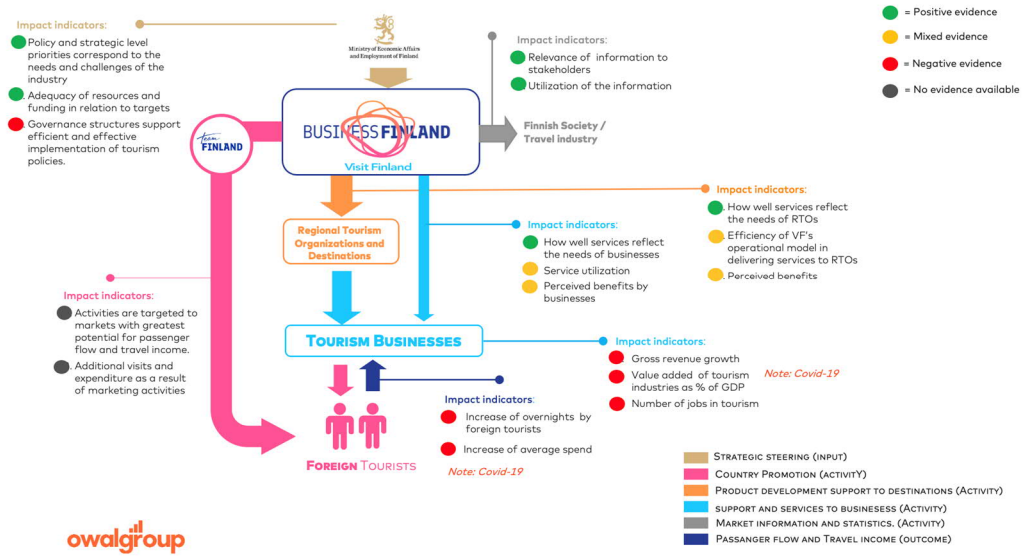
The regional tourism organizations wish better predictability and earlier communication of planned activities. The regional tourism organizations wish that Visit Finland's actions would be planned and communicated more in advance. This would help them in planning and budgeting their own work. Currently the problem is that the regional organizations' budgets are already fixed by the time Visit Finland communicates its own plans.

No systematic assessment of promotional activities has been made and therefore there is no evidence of the impact of these activities. Assessment of the impacts of promotional campaigns is a central element of country branding and any professional marketing activity. The evidence for the evaluation of promotional work can only be acquired through monitoring of campaigns. The impact assessment of promotional activities is necessarily campaign based: it is the only possible method for evaluating the success of the alternative measures and the additionality of the promotional work. The same applies for the programs. There is not a lot of evidence available of the programs' results and impacts, and there is no systematic culture of performance evaluations.

Need for stronger business focus and performance culture

### Conclusions and recommendations

The following model was created for the impact assessment. It aims to describe the key elements of Visit Finland's impact and how impact is created as a result of interlinked activities. The assessment is based on gathered evaluation evidence as described in the report.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stronger business focus and performance culture.** The stakeholders are generally very satisfied with Visit Finland's operations. However, the operational objectives of Visit Finland are not particularly precise, and performance monitoring is rather limited. The effectiveness of different programs or marketing measures is not systematically monitored. Therefore, the results of the activities remain largely unclear to all. Visit Finland should have a stronger business focus in all of its activities, the activities should be more targeted with clear outcome targets and the performance of different activities should be monitored systematically.
- Clearer strategic positioning in relation to the regions and destinations.** Visit Finland faces a multitude of expectations from different regions and stakeholders. Some of them call for more specific strategic and regional focus, while others emphasize regional equality. Currently Visit Finland is balancing between these expectations without a clear strategic choice between the two. From an effectiveness perspective, clearer focusing would create better value-for-money, but whatever the position is, it should be more clearly defined and communicated to ensure common understanding as a basis for cooperation with different stakeholders.

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