

+ Creating Content for Travellers.

Comparison of travellers usage and needs for travel content & information with the beliefs of travel bloggers.



Results of independent commissioned studies of travellers and bloggers

By Gary Bembridge
In partnership with Travel Bloggers Unite 2013

+ People behind the study



■ Gary Bembridge

- Gary Bembridge has over 30 years of Global Marketing Experience managing and building brands at multi-nationals like Unilever & Johnson, and now as an independent global branding consultant.
- He launched tipsfortravellers.com in 2005 where he shares luxury travel ideas, advice and tips via audio podcasts, videos and articles.
- <http://www.tipsfortravellers.com>
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■ Travel Bloggers Unite

- Founded by Oliver Gradwell, TBU (Travel Bloggers Unite) is a global community for travel bloggers, travel writers and new media creators.
- In addition to Travel Blogger and Travel Provider conferences, TBU is the blogger content partner for the World Travel Market in London & Sao Paulo.
- <http://www.travelbloggersunite.com>
- Email: oliver@travelbloggersunite.com



Need for the studies

Gary Bembridge

<http://www.tipsfortravellers.com/TBU>

As a marketer I have always believed that if you want to provide a successful product, you have to start with the consumer. They need to be the focus of what you do. You need to understand what they want, what they are doing, why they are doing it and when.

I believe that to create a successful travel blog, that is valuable to regular travellers, you need to deeply understand the needs of “regular” travellers.

Travel blogs are usually created out of a passion for travel. I believe that as they usually start documenting personal travels, they need to evolve to be more aware and focused on travellers if they want to grow and become a true resource for travellers.

Many travel bloggers want their blogs to become a valued resource for travellers. They want to build a travel resource with a loyal audience. An audience of a size that enables them to generate income. An audience that is attractive enough for them to be invited to visit destinations to report and recommend that place to their audiences.

However, as I engaged with bloggers, and travel brands, I felt that the traveller and their needs were not always understood – or focused on enough. I did not see a lot of data and insights about the needs of “regular” travellers, but did see and hear a lot of speculation and assumptions.

So I decided to conduct a study of what travellers were using, and wanting, from travel content and information – and to compare that with what travel bloggers felt and were doing. I partnered with Oliver Gradwell of TBU to develop and then share the findings at the TBU Rotterdam Conference in 2013.

This report shares what I found, and what I think the implications are.

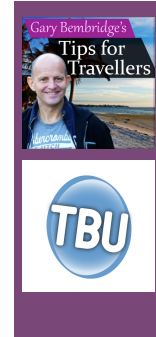
Gary Bembridge

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+ Main findings

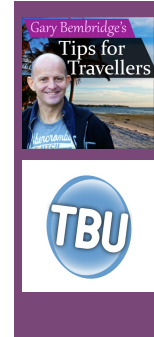
The travel content sources travellers use & trust



- **Most travellers travel infrequently. Half travel less than 2 weeks a year.**
 - 50% of travellers travel 2 weeks or less a year, with a further 35% travelling between 3 and 6 weeks a year.
- **“Search” and “Friends & Family” are the most used sources of travel information and content.**
 - Search is the most used source for travel information and content (61%).
 - “Family & Friends / Word of Mouth” (52%) is the 2nd most used.
 - A multitude of other sources are then used, at lower levels based on preferences, with travel sites (e.g. LonelyPlanet, Frommers etc), Tourism Board Sites and Travel Guides being the main choices.
- **“Friends & Family” is the most trusted source by far.**
 - 66% say Friends & Family is the most trusted source of travel.
 - Tripadvisor.com & review sites are the 2nd most trusted source (36%).
- **Trust in sources is driven by familiarity and past reliability.**
 - The main factor driving trust is familiarity and having proven reliable in the past (48%).
 - This is followed by honesty (37%) and sources not driven by commercial considerations (36%).

+ Main findings: Travel Blogs

Why travellers read travel blogs

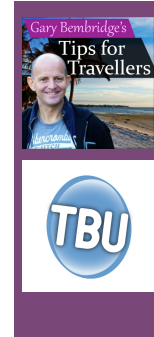


- **Only 40% of travellers have ever read a blog.**
 - 60% of travellers say they have never read a travel blog, though readers may be higher as 20% of those that say they have not read a blog are not sure what a blog is.
 - However, only 10% of travellers said they used travel blogs often in the last year.
- **Travellers who read blogs do so to get unbiased opinions based on real life traveller experiences.**
 - To hear opinions of others about places they have visited (58%).
 - To get unbiased and honest reviews and opinions (48%)
 - To read about the real life experiences of travellers (47%).
- **Travel blogs have a significant impact on travel decisions, especially in reinforcing and confirming travel plans.**
 - 88% of travellers who have ever read a travel blog say it affected their travel decisions
 - The main impact of blogs seems to be about helping confirm or reinforce travel decisions:
 - Helped reinforce or confirm a decision I had made about a travel plan (55%)
 - Inspired me to visit a specific destination, stay in particular place or travel with a specific company (47%)
 - Made me change my mind or decision I had made about an existing travel plan (35%)



Main findings: Travel Blogs

What travellers like and dislike about travel blogs



- **“Real life, first hand advice & tips” is what makes blogs different from other sources of travel content.**
 - 71% of travellers say “real life”, first hand advice & tips is what they expect blogs to offer that is different to other sources of travel content.
 - They also see personal anecdotes and stories (46%) and “impartial and unbiased opinions and reviews, with more frankness about the positives and negatives” (45%) as being key to what blogs do differently.
- **Tips and advice around money saving, accommodation and general travel “how to” are the most helpful content areas.**
 - Travellers say the top 3 most helpful content they find on blogs is money saving tips (54%); hotel, hostel and guest house reviews (52%) and general travel tips, advice and “how-tos” (48%).
 - This is then followed by destination reviews and tips (46%) and anecdotes and stories of places in versus regular tips and advice (40%).
- **Intrusive pop-ups and poorly written articles are the main dislikes about travel blogs.**
 - 72% of blog readers say they dislike pop-ups (such as newsletter sign-ups) and 60% say they dislike articles with poor spelling and grammar.
 - Other dislikes are advertising (57%), posts asking them to vote for the blogger in competitions, awards or to win trips (55%) and overly positive articles about trips funded by tourism boards or travel brands (48%)

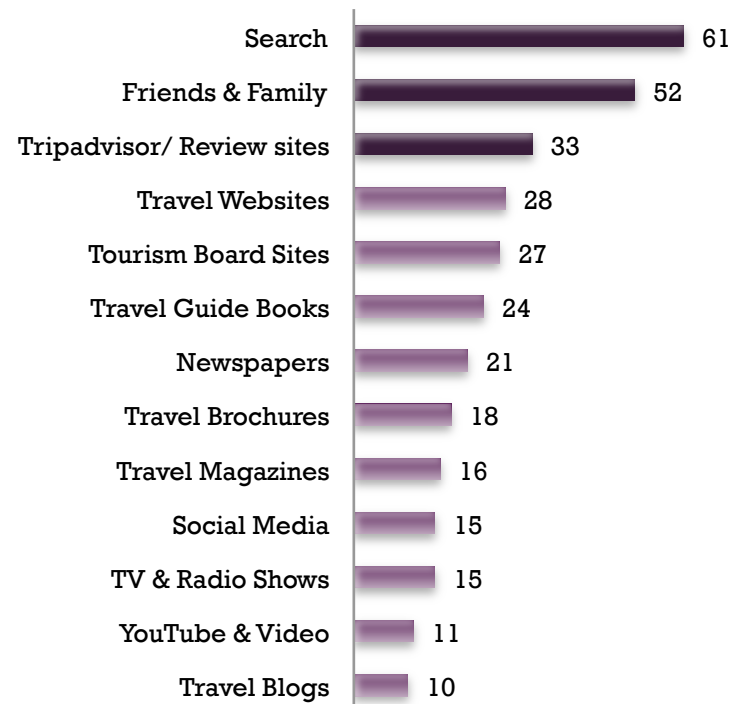
+ Sources of travel information used in last year



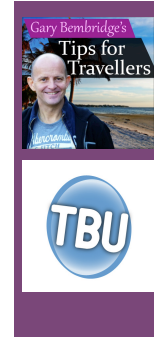
Summary

- Travellers use many and diverse sources of travel information, though there are two that are most commonly used:
 - **Search** is the most used source for travel information. 61% of travellers say it is their main source for travel content and information.
 - **Friends and Family/ Word of Mouth** is the 2nd most used source of travel information.
- **Travel blogs** do not appear to be a major source of travel information among travellers in total, with only 1 in 10 claiming to have used them often in the last year suggesting some opportunity to improve loyalty to blogs.

“which sources of travel information have you used most often in the last year?”



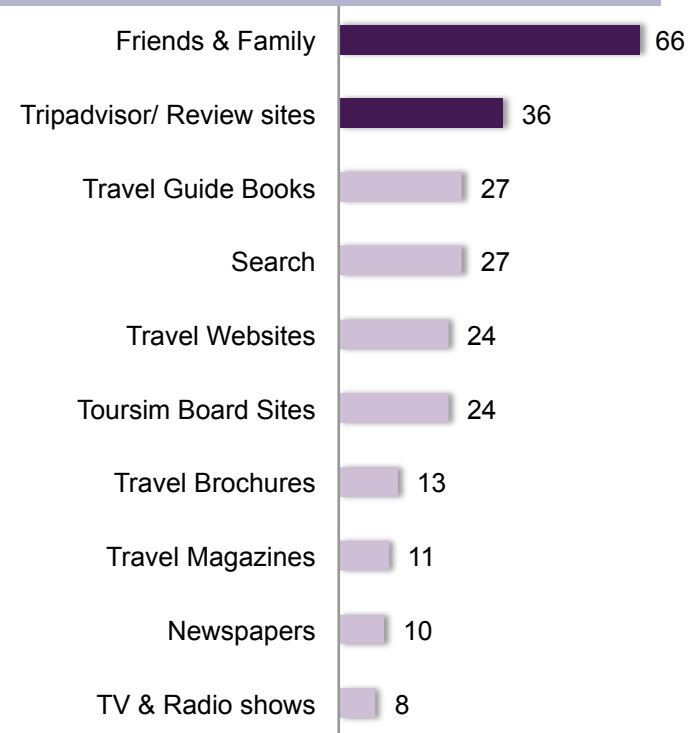
+ Most trusted sources of travel information Used



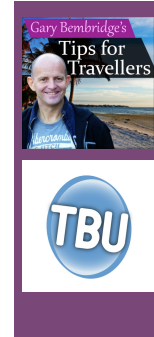
Summary

1. Travellers trust **Friends & Family / Word of Mouth** more than any other source of travel information, by quite some margin.
2. **Review sites, like TripAdvisor.com,** are the 2nd most trusted source of information.
3. Despite **Search** being given by travellers as their most used source for travel information in the last year, it is only the 4th most trusted source for information.

“thinking about the different types of travel information you use, what are the 3 that you trust more than the others?”



+ Why trust sources of travel information

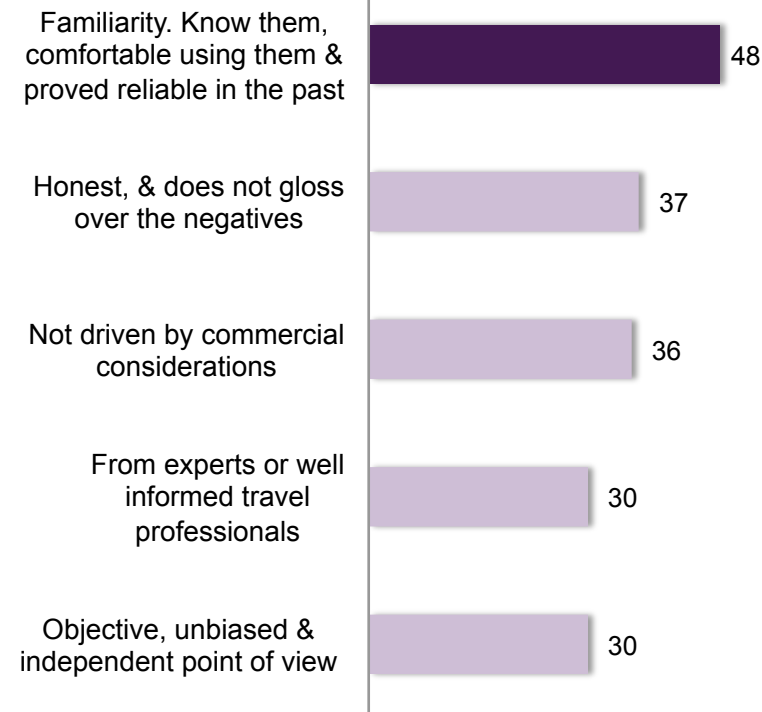


Summary

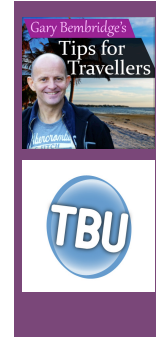
The main drivers of trust are focused around objectivity and giving balanced and unbiased opinions, free of commercial influence.

1. Familiarity, and having proved reliable in the past, is the main driver of trust.
2. Honesty, and not ignoring the negatives is key. Also key is not being overly driven by commercial considerations.

“thinking about the source you trust the most, why do you trust it more than the other sources?”



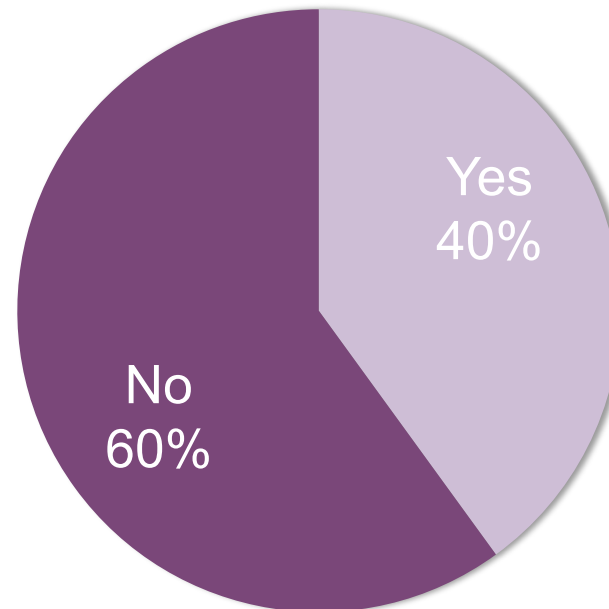
+ Only 40% of travellers have ever read a travel blog. Huge growth potential.



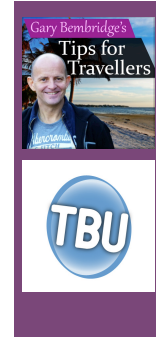
Summary

- Only 40% of travellers say that they have ever read a travel blog.
- The potential for growth of blogs is huge, since 60% of travellers say they have never read a blog.
- The challenge facing travel blogs, is that although 40% said they had ever read them, 10% of travellers said they had used a blog often in the last year.
 - There are clues in the data that follows about what blogs will have higher loyalty and what blogs need to focus on more to ensure used more often.

“Have you ever read travel blogs?”



+ No one major reason for not reading a travel blog. Though not all sure what a blog is.

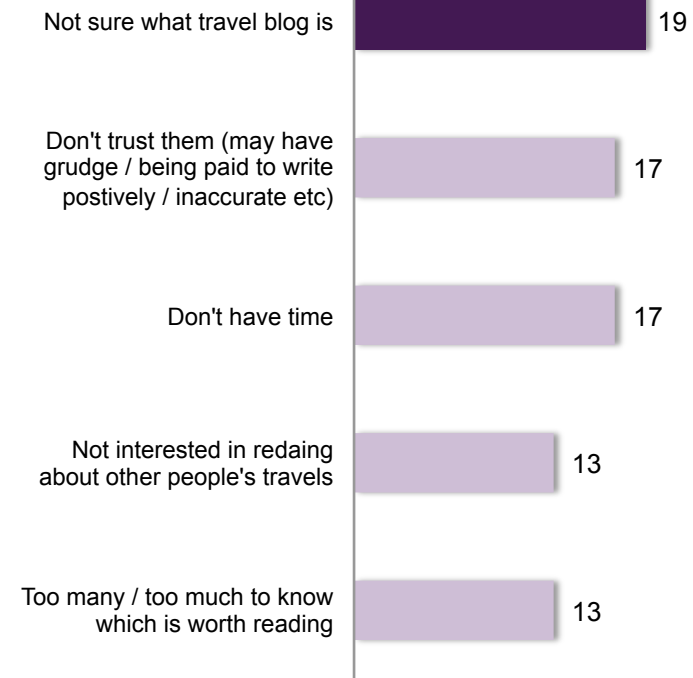


Summary

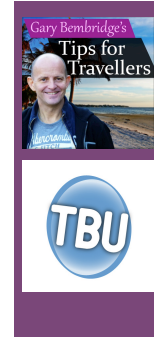
It is possible that more than 40% have read a blog, as the main reason people said they had not read a travel blog is that they are not sure what a travel blog is.

However, the data suggests that there is a huge growth potential in travel blog usage. Both from growing awareness and trial of them, but also in building more loyalty by those that have ever read them.

"Thinking about why you do not read travel blogs currently, which of the following best applies?"



+ Reasons travellers read travel blogs



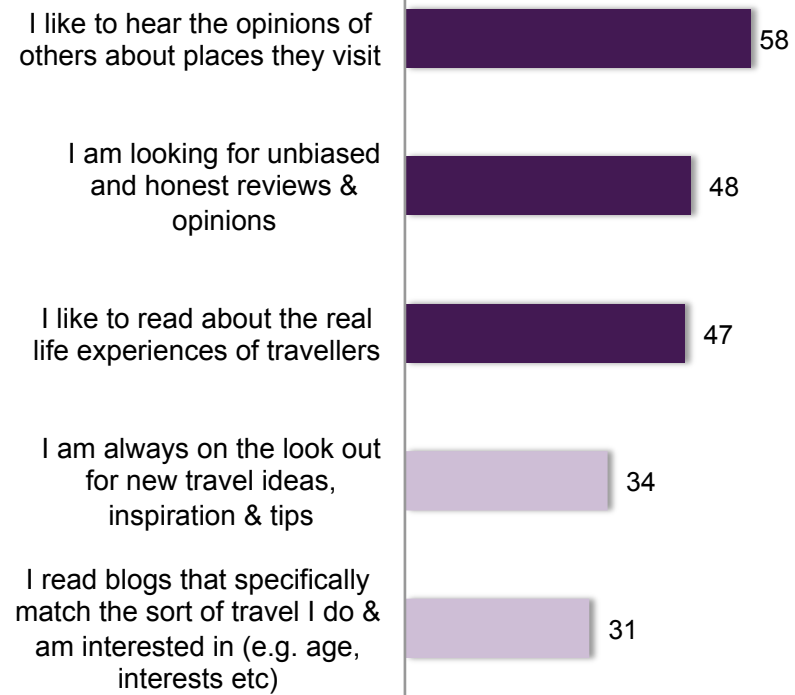
Summary

Unbiased opinions and reviews based on real life experiences is what travellers are expecting blogs to provide.

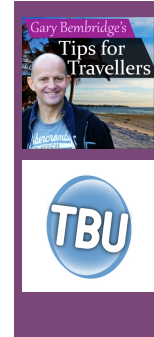
New ideas and inspiration is only the 4th most important reason that travellers read travel blogs.

They are more interested in understanding the pros and cons of travel destinations and places to stay it seems than inspiration and ideas as such.

"Below are some reasons other people say they read travel blogs. Which of these best reflect why you read travel blogs?"



+ How travellers expect blogs to be different from other sources

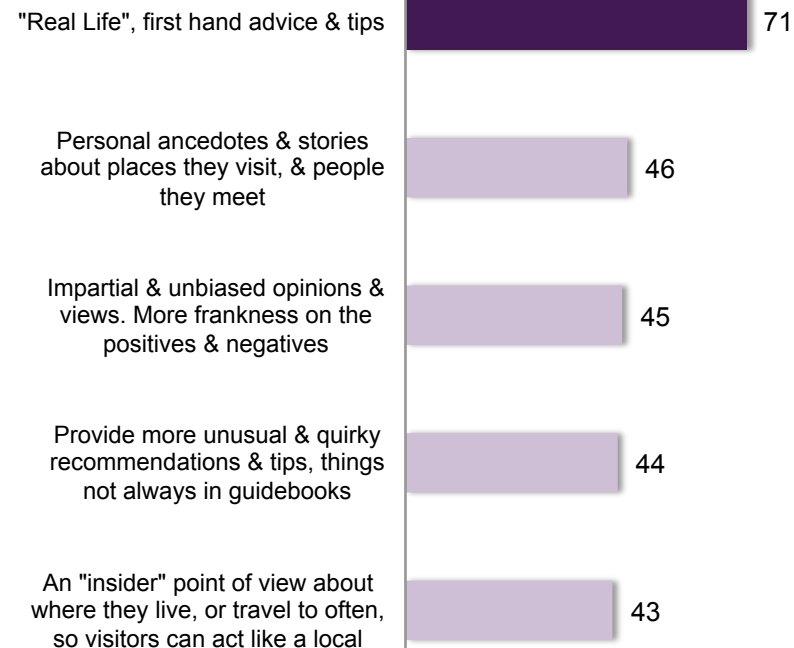


Summary

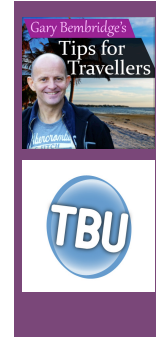
Travellers see the main difference, and advantage, of travel blogs is their ability to provide “real life, first hand advice and tips”.

They see blogs as being able to provide guidance based on the real world experiences.

“What do you expect travel blogs to provide that is different to the other sources of travel content & information available to you?”



+ Most helpful content on a travel blog



Summary

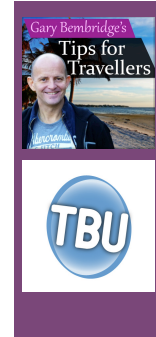
Travellers appear to value practical advice and tips about travelling more than any other content, and more than anecdotes and stories .

Money saving tips, accommodation reviews and tips and travel advice and “how-tos” were the 3 areas that travellers said were most helpful.

“What content do you find most helpful on the travel blogs you read?”



+ Least helpful content on a travel blog

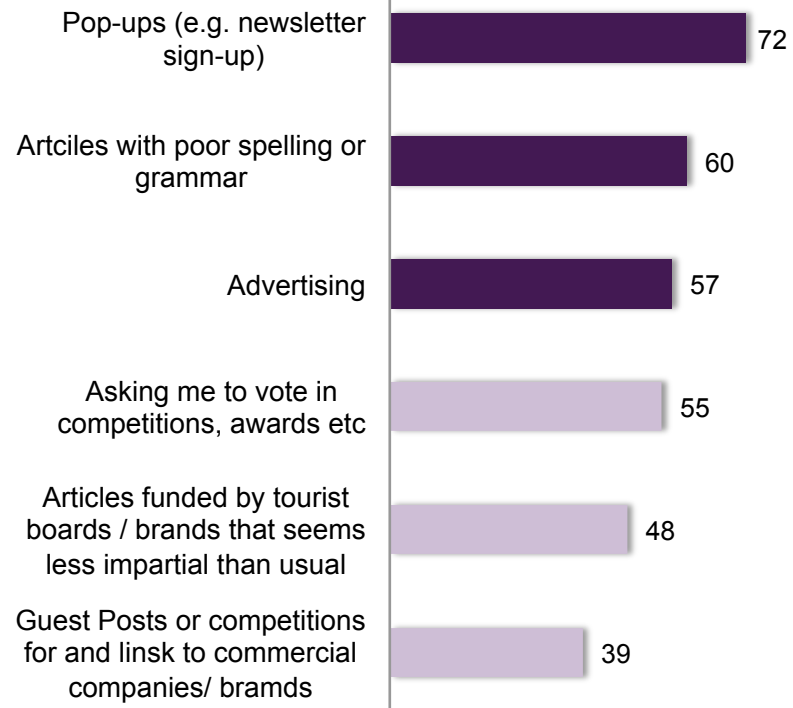


Summary

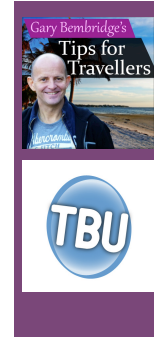
Travellers are looking for an environment that is not too intrusive and focused on their needs.

The main dislikes were pop-ups, poor spelling and grammar and advertising.

“What content do you find least helpful on the travel blogs you read?”



+ Travel blogs major impact on decisions



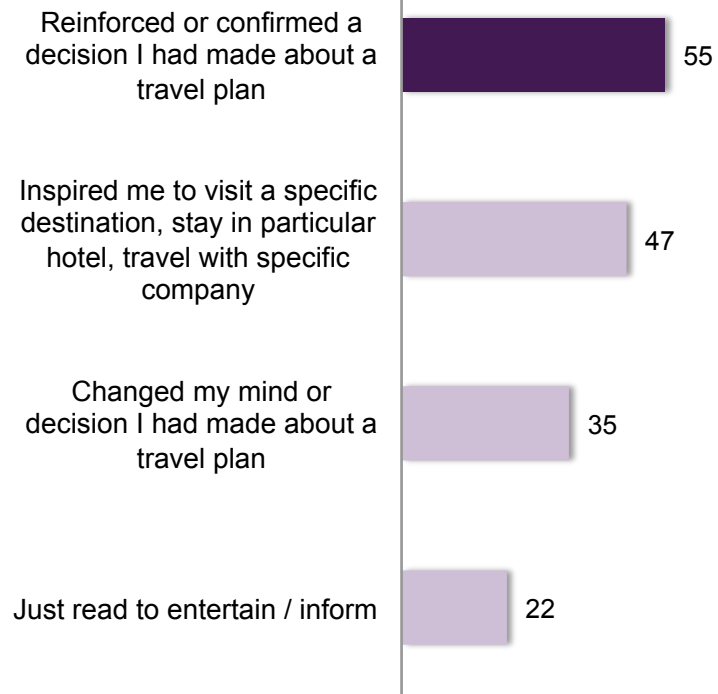
Summary

For those people that read travel blogs, they are very influential in travel decision making.

88% of readers of travel blogs say they affected a travel decision.

The main influence was helping to reinforce or confirm a decision, followed by helping to chose a specific destination, place to stay or provider to use.

“which of these has a travel blog made you do?”





Travellers versus Bloggers

This next section looks at some of the key differences between “regular” travellers and travel bloggers.

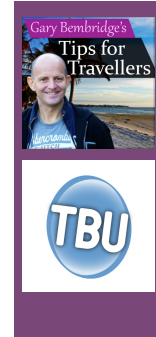
The key aspects are:

- 1. Bloggers travel significantly more than “regular” travellers.**
 1. So while bloggers may themselves be driven and looking for inspiration and ideas, travellers seem to be seeking content to help them reduce their risk as they only travel infrequently (1 or 2 times a year).
 2. This is evident in how bloggers use different sources of travel content and information than “regular” travellers
- 2. Bloggers believe travellers are seeking more inspirational and story telling content than travellers seem to be seeking.**
 1. This may suggest why the use of blogs often (10%) is lower than then ever read (40%).



Implications for travel blogs (1)

Based on the learning, there are a number of implications and areas of focus for travel bloggers



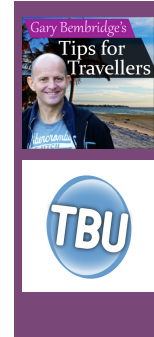
- **Awareness of travel blogs needs to be built. There is a huge growth potential for travel blogs.**
 - 60% of travellers who are active online claim they have never read a travel blog.
 - It is likely that some of those travellers are reading blogs without realizing it. The main reason declared for not reading blogs was that they say they do not know what a travel blog was (19%).
 - Only 17% said they did not read blogs as they did not trust them to be accurate, unbiased or free of commercially driven opinions. Only 10% said they prefer to read content written by professional travel writers and trained journalists
 - There appear to be few barriers to reading blogs other than awareness of them..

- **Trial of travel blogs is most likely to grow through “search” and through recommendations of “Friends & Family”.**
 - Search and “Friends & Family/ Word of Mouth” are the main sources of travel information used by travellers by far.
 - 61% of travellers active online say they use search. It is the largest source of travel information and content.
 - 52% of travellers say they rely on Friends & Family / Word of Mouth. It is the 2nd most used source of travel content.
 - If blogs provide relevant content on travel corresponding to what travellers are searching for, the trial of blogs should grow as they appear more frequently in search results. Reliability of the advice and tips in blogs is likely to translate into recommendations from Friends & Family over time.



Implications for travel blogs (1)

Based on the learning, there are a number of implications and areas of focus for travel bloggers



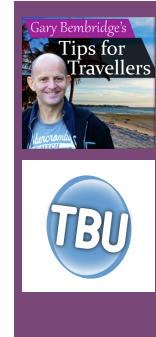
- **Loyalty to travel blogs needs to be increased by better meeting the needs of travellers.**
 - There appears to be a disconnect between what travellers are looking for and what bloggers believe they want. This is an issue that needs to be explored and addressed by bloggers.
 - The survey showed that travellers have different content needs and emphasis to what bloggers think they want, which likely explains some fall off in loyalty and use.
 - Travellers say they value real life tips and advice over anecdotes and stories. They are seeking more content around money saving tips; accommodation reviews, tips and advice; general travel tips and advice and destination advice and tips.
 - To improve the loyalty to travel blogs, bloggers need to ensure they understand traveller needs in travel content and focus more on real life advice and tips, delivered through anecdotes and stories.

- **Influence of travel blogs in travel decisions is significant.**
 - 88% of travellers who have ever read a blog say it directly influenced a travel decision.
 - The greatest impact in decision making is, though, around helping travellers to confirm and validate decisions. 55% say that blogs helped to reinforce or confirm a decision they had made and 35% made them change their mind about a travel plan.
 - 47% of travellers said that a blog made them decide on a particular destination, place to stay or company to travel with.
 - It is clear that blogs do, and will, play a major role in travel decisions as their usage grows.

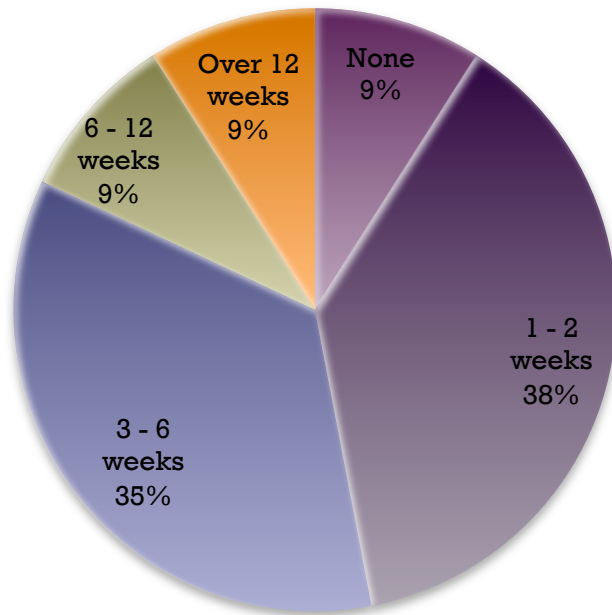


Bloggers Vs. Travellers: Frequency of travel

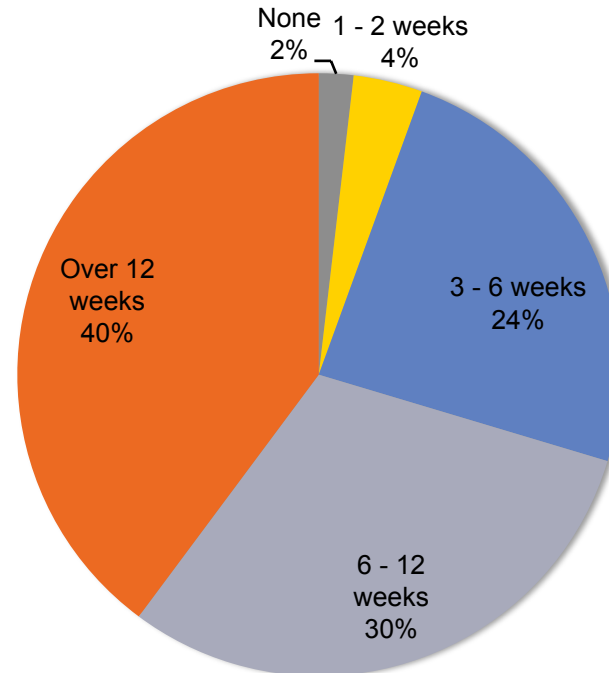
While regular travellers likely to travel 1 or 2 times a year at most (1-2 weeks or 3-6 weeks), 70% of bloggers travel over 6 weeks a year. This is likely to have impact on content needs and focus.



Travellers



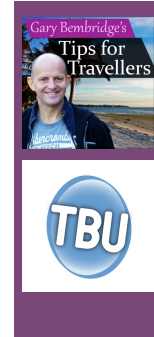
Bloggers





Bloggers Vs. Travellers: Travel Content Sources

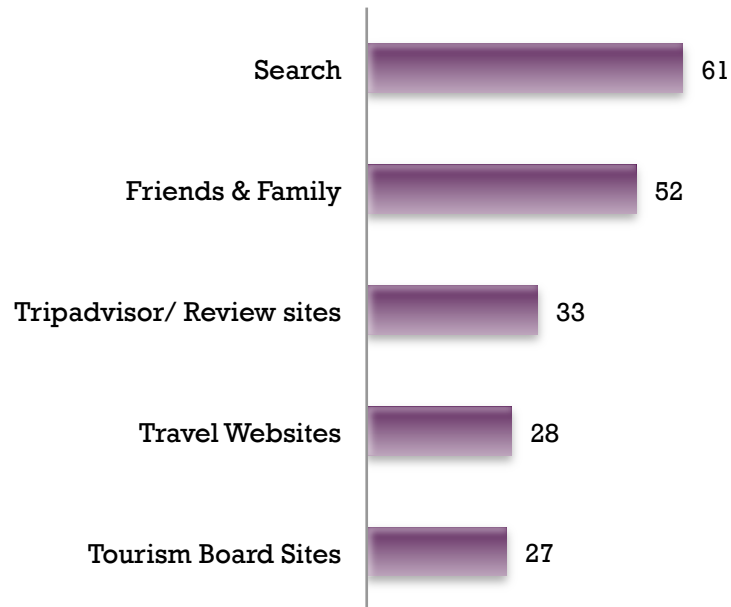
Bloggers use different travel content sources to “regular” travellers. Travellers seem to use content more around risk reduction, bloggers around inspiration.



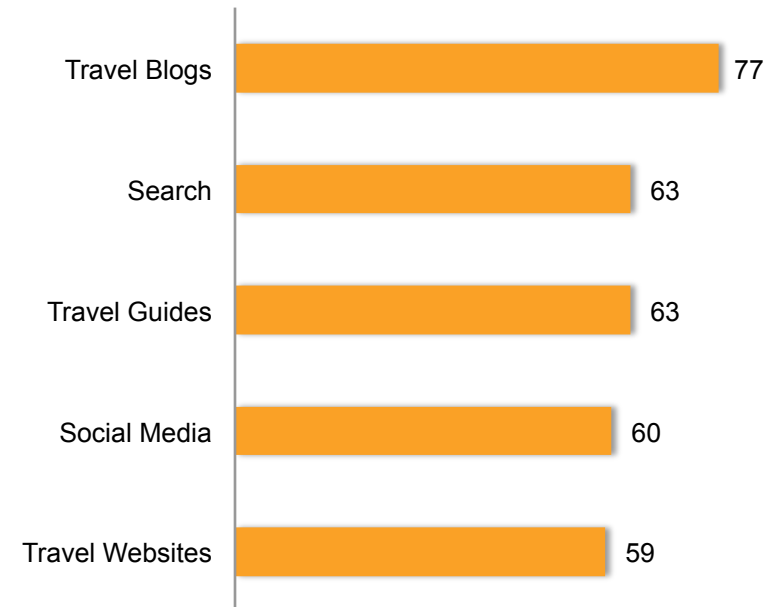
Summary

“which sources of travel information have you used most often in the last year?”

All Travellers



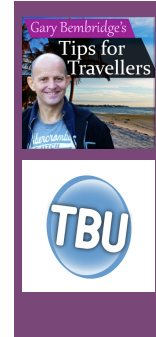
Bloggers





Bloggers Vs. Travellers: Most trusted information

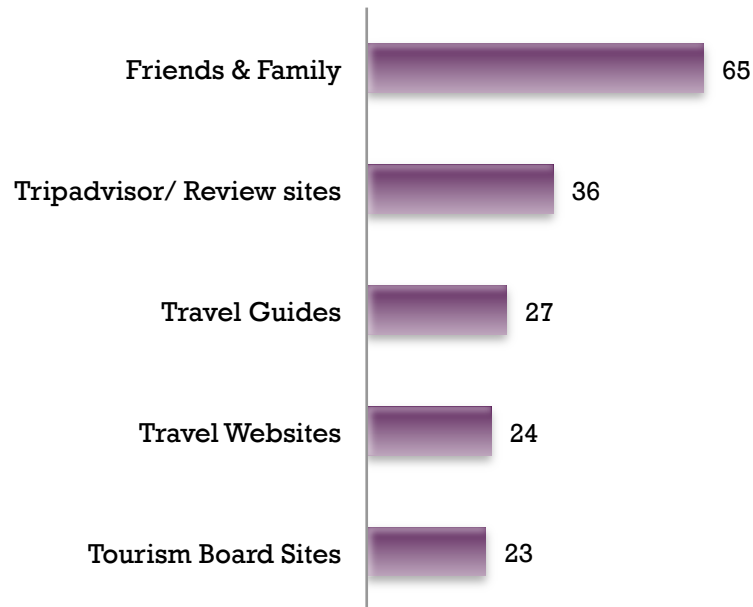
Bloggers and travellers largely trust the same sources of content, although bloggers trust travel blogs as their most trusted source.



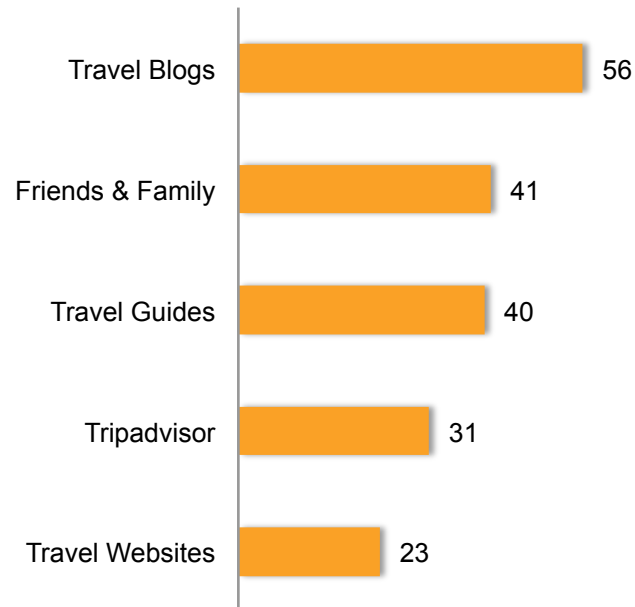
Summary

“which sources of travel information have you used most often in the last year?”

Travellers



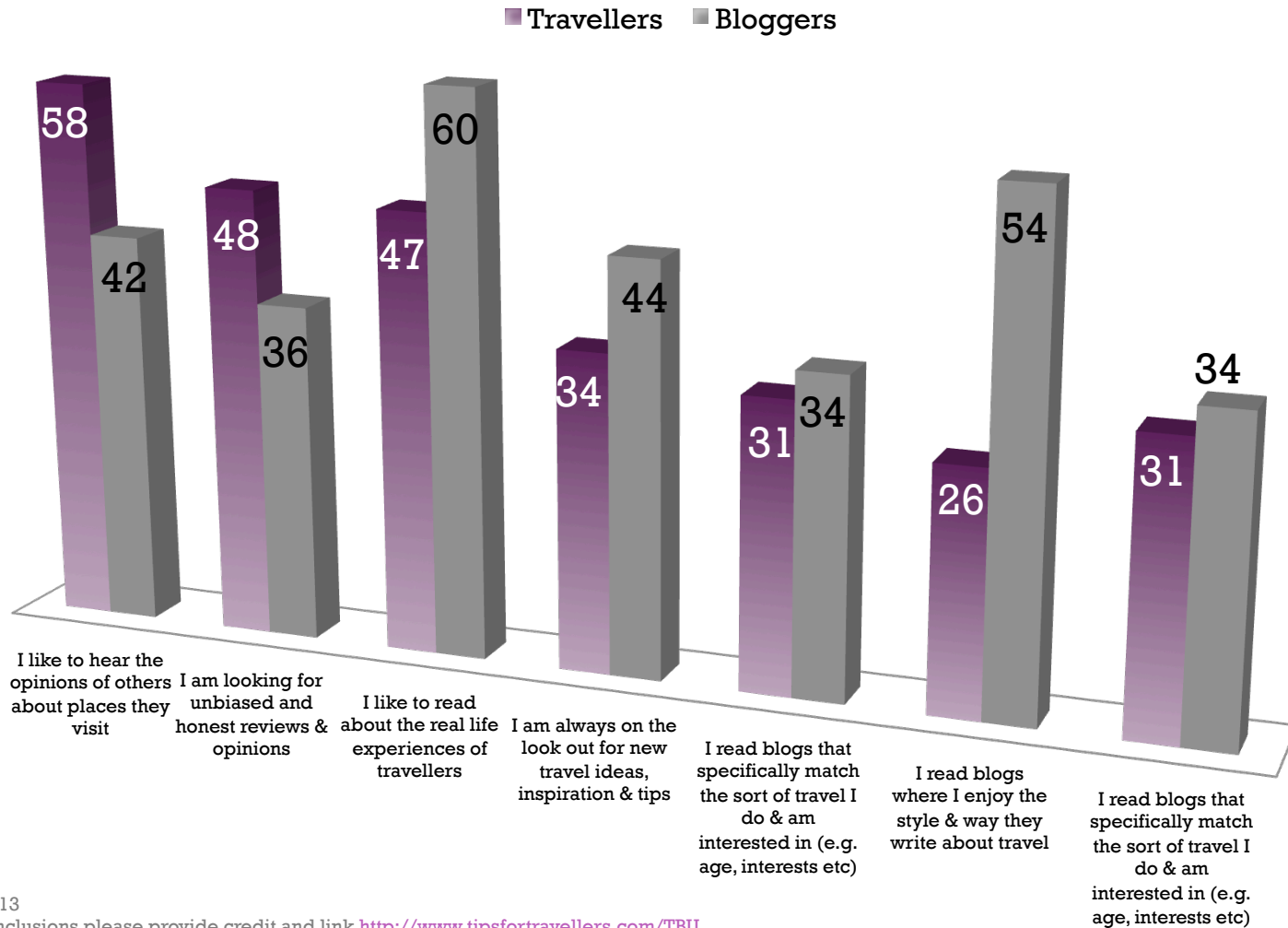
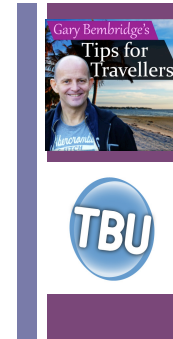
Bloggers





Bloggers Vs. Travellers. Why read blogs

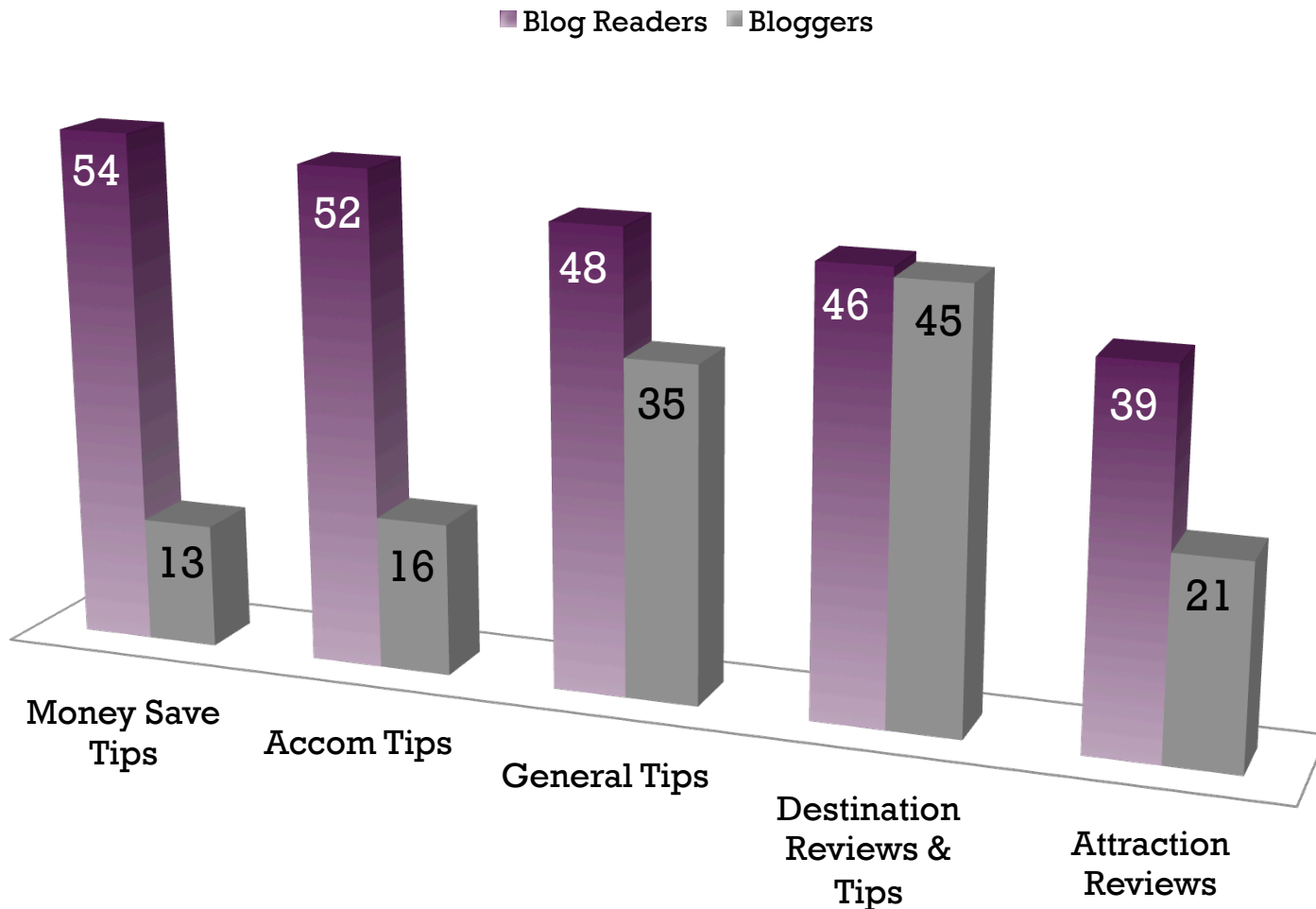
Bloggers have a different perception of why travellers are reading blogs, and what they are looking to get from blogs. They especially underestimate the importance of advice and tips





Bloggers Vs. Travellers. Most helpful content

Bloggers did not think that travellers valued content like money saving tips, accommodation review and general tips to the extent that travellers reading blogs do.



+ Survey details



Travellers 276 respondents

Random recruitment from SurveyMonkey panel based on representative sample based on demographics, gender, income and age.

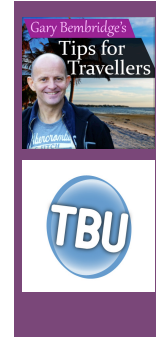
Respondents had to be over 18 and:

- Made personal or business travel plans (lodging, air travel, car rental, etc.),
- Posted a comment or review on a blog, online forum, message or bulletin board
- Shared photos through an Internet website
- Social Networking (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, etc.)

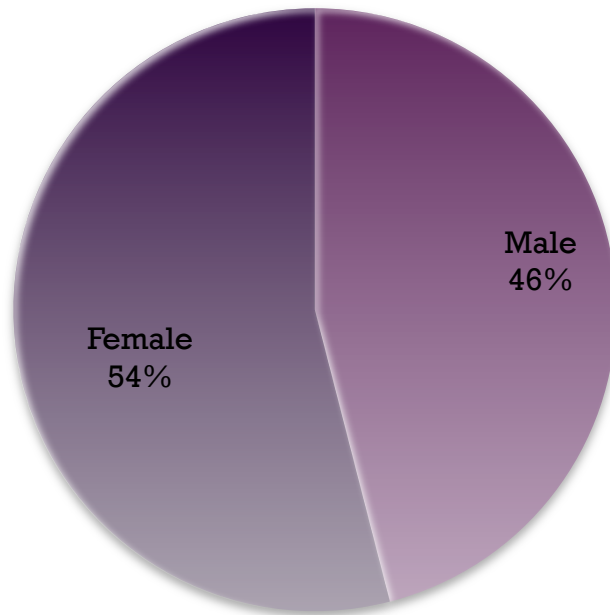
Bloggers 158 respondents

Recruited by posting through Twitter, Facebook Bloggers Groups, Google + Blogger Groups and word of mouth

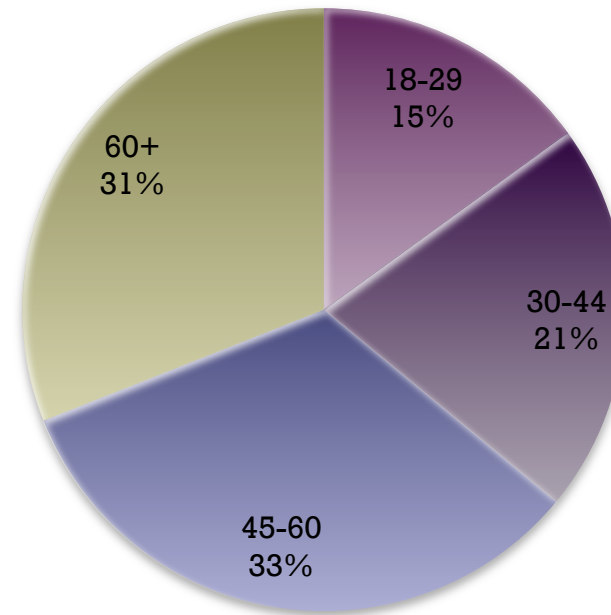
+ Traveller Respondent Demographics



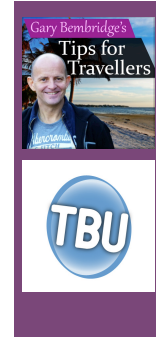
Gender



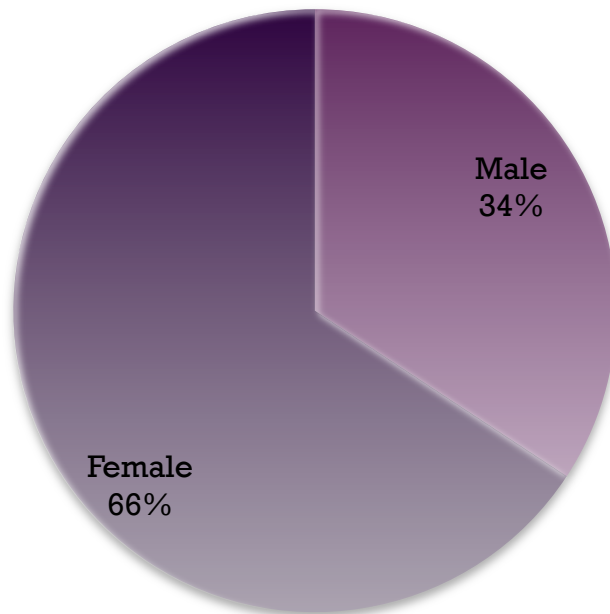
Age



+ Travel Blogger respondent data



Gender



Years blogging

