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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN
CREATING A HOT SPOT
MOUNTAINEERING DESTINATION: THE
TROLLTUNGA CASE

Masteroppgave i
Transcultural European Outdoor Studies for
Norges idrettshøgskole, 2018



Transcultural European Outdoor Studies
(TEOS) Master Thesis

The Role of Social Media
in creating a Hot Spot
Mountaineering
Destination:
the Trolltunga case

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ABSTRACT

The study is to show how social media can create hotspot mountaineering destination from the remote wild place. It is the detailed study on the link of social media and hiking experience in Trolltunga. Trolltunga is used in this research as a case study.

This study is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of social media in the outdoor experience, particularly in remote backcountry area.

The study finds that social media creates a circular flow of continuing sequence of trip stages. The experience starts from the images of Trolltunga in social media and ends in social media by sharing own experience (usually pictures, videos), which, in turn, becomes an inspiration for other people to go for the same experience, and it is an endless circular process.

The finding of the study says that the role of social media in all stages of the outdoor experience is different, and not efficient in being an information source for preparations.

The study utilises quantitative research method. An online questionnaire was used to get information about the experience. Results of the survey show that motivations, outcomes, perceptions of the experience differ by gender and generations.

This study recommends that role of social media in outdoor studies should not be neglected as social media has become an integral part of human life. Online sharing of unique, exotic experiences as Trolltunga hike provides an increase of recognition, self-esteem, but also might negatively effect on the preparation level of other visitors. The latter creates problems not only to visitors but also to locals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Kirsti Pederson Gurholt for her constant support, kindness, patience, constructive advices and professional supervision from the beginning to the final stage of the thesis writing period. This thesis would not be possible without her guidance and encouragement. Also, I would like to thank her for supporting me not only in study progress but also in private issues.

I would also like to thank all the professors and coordinators of TEOS program, including, Martin Lindner, Peter Becker, Martin Wollmer and Chris Lyones for giving me a chance to participate in this program, providing theoretical and practical approaches to the outdoor studies.

I am grateful to all the participants who took part in my focus groups. Your input was greatly appreciated. Thank you for not only filling out the questionnaire but also wishing me ‘good luck with the research’.

I would like to thank all of my friends and classmates in TEOS program, Cohort 5, for all of your support and understanding.

I would like to thank my parents for all their help and encouragement.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Purpose of the study

“I think the outdoors is having a mainstream moment. People are feeling more detached from nature, and you are constantly reminded of it on Instagram and across other channels. People have a natural tendency to experience wanderlust, and when you’re behind a computer at a desk all day, you think, ‘Oh my god, I wish I were there and not here,’” - CEO of Outbound Collective’s Heifferon (McHugh, 2017).

Abovementioned statement is highly relevant to the current research paper, as here I discuss the role of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, blogs, vlogs etc.) as a source for various outdoor inspirations. Researchers say that social media is now playing an essential role in information diffusion, in inspiring, motivating people to travel to not only well-known, typical tourism destinations, but furthermore to remote, relatively unknown rare places, thus making remote natural areas more accessible. It is essential to investigate the role of social media in travelling to remote backcountry places in a broad perspective of whole travel process (pre-trip, during and post-trip stages).

Social media, as an integral part of modern life, has seeped into not only human-nature relationship, but it is also leaking into the backcountry mountainous terrains (Barrow, 2016). Through social media, people tend to share as soon as possible their adventure stories, especially from backcountry places. Carefully chosen and filtered pictures with the spectacular views litter many social media feeds thus inspiring people to experience the same or visit the same site.

Quite a lot of researches have been conducted on the role of social media as promotion element (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), as information source (Xiang & Gretzel 2009; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012; Miller, Costa, Haynes, McDonald, Nicolescu, Sinanan, Spyer & Venkatraman, 2016; Baruah, 2012), impact of social media in destination image formation (Ghazali and Cai, 2014; Kim, Lee,

Shin, Yang, 2017), trustworthiness of social media (Jeacle, I.& Carter, C. 2011; Filieri, Alguezaui & McLeay, 2015), role of social media in travel decision making (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017), and all of these works examine social media in terms of tourism business, where social media is considered as supplier's marketing, promoting tool for the destinations which are expected to be touristic places. However, so far no systematic research has been undertaken on the role of social media in outdoors, natural, wilderness places which are turning into touristic hot spot due to the blowing up in social media where users are generating the content and using this content themselves. Journalists are paying attention to the new effect of social media on outdoors, on role of social media in turning wilderness places into massively touristic places (McHugh, 2017; Hanbury, 2017; Fowler, 2015; Corderoy, 2017), but less actual research studies are found on role or relationship of social media and outdoors.

In current paper I use Trolltunga as a case study, mainly I will focus on the role of social media in all stages (pre-trip, during, post-trip) of Trolltunga experience. Trolltunga is a spectacular scenic cliff with the breath-taking view, located in Skjeggedal area, Norway. It is a long and hard hike with 23 km in total. Every year number of visitors to Trolltunga is increasing with breakneck speed. Social media made this destination massively popular. However, the quality of hike preparedness leaves a lot to be desired.

Trolltunga case is an excellent example of the significant role of social media in the dissemination of information, in being the primary information source and motivating others to go for the same experience. Lack of practical information in social media about Trolltunga can create an illusion of light hike and real solitude with nature, which inspire more people to go to that kind of places. Social media reduces the actual distance, makes everything look simpler, close, attractive, and also as Isaak (2013) notes social media affects adventurers' decision-making out on the terrain.

Trolltunga gives people a chance for a hike, and it should be considered as a good thing as Trolltunga motivates people to do physical activity in outdoors, and latter is not only physically healthy but psychologically beneficial as well,

especially in modern sedentary lifestyle. However, things in Trolltunga case are not going as smoothly as it seems from the side look or how it appears in that beautiful pictures shared on social media. The hike can be considered as not so difficult if not to take into account the facts that most of the visitors are one-day visitors with no significant hiking experience, that in high-season it takes from 1 to 5 hours waiting in a queue to step on the cliff to take “wanted” picture and being exhausted go back in a rush, sometimes in rainy weather. When the high season of hiking to Trolltunga approaches local news start to repeat that tourists are poorly prepared for the hike in Norwegian terrain, that many life rescue works have been conducted and that locals are getting more and more annoyed by tourists making troubles for locals and local nature. All these news are true, and it is a look to Trolltunga case from locals, Norwegian side. The current research paper is supposed to look to Trolltunga experience from the visitors themselves, their opinion on how they experience their undertaking. Apparently, the experience starts from the images of Trolltunga in social media and ends in social media by sharing own experience (usually pictures, videos), which, in turn, becomes an inspiration for other people to go for the same experience, and it is an endless circular process.

1.2 Research questions

The field of study seems to be paradoxical, broad and complicated in diverse ways. Therefore it is necessary to embrace all stages of the trip to give a completed picture of the role of social media in the outdoor experience, and I will use Trolltunga as a case study. To visualise this idea I created a model of the possible connection between experience stages and social media (Figure 1) based on Travel behaviour model of Mathieson and Wall (1982, Figure 2). Figure 1 represents a continuing sequence of trip stages in a circular flow, emphasising the connection between all components. For example, in case of Trolltunga, destination images shaped in social media inspire people to go for the same experience, after being motivated preparations for the trip starts and social media plays a central informative role. “Sources of information on a destination greatly

influence tourist decision-making, and tourist behaviour determines how the search for information is undertaken and how that information will be used” notes Chetthamrongchai (2017, p.2).

Next stage is ‘during the trip’, or real experience stage, which ends up with certain level of satisfaction, outcomes (post-trip) and generally this experience is shared in social media by posting digital narratives, which will be an inspiration for other people and the circle flow starts again.

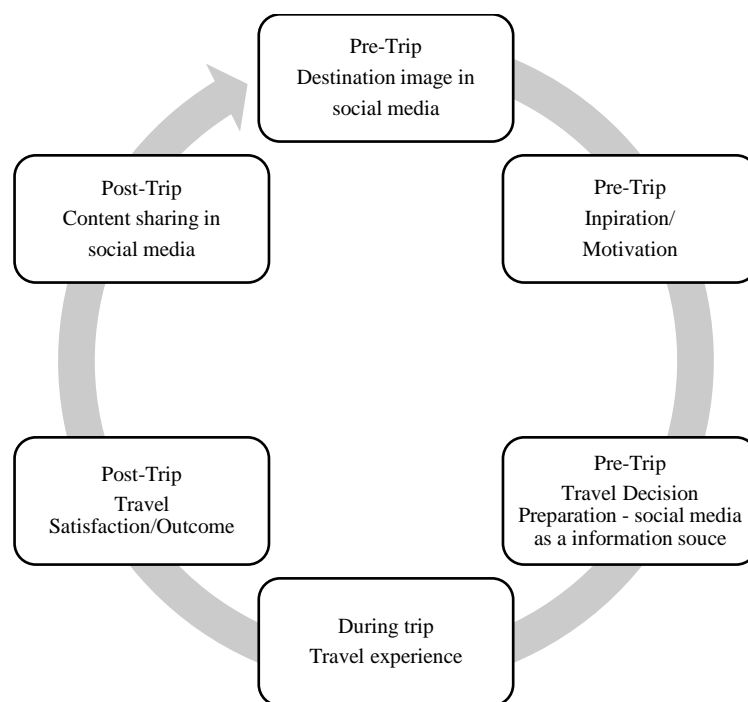


Figure 1: Circular model of sequential connection of social media and trip experience by Roza Khasanova, 2018

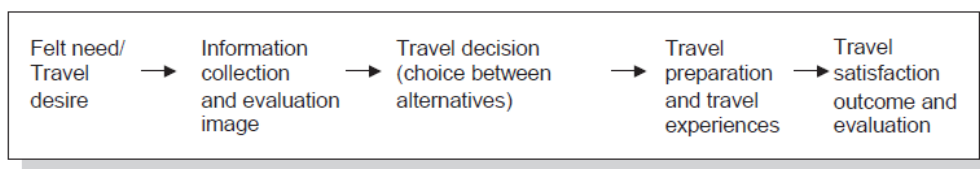


Figure 2: Travel behaviour model by Mathieson and Wall (1982).

Source: adapted from Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p. 46

Hypotheses:

- a) *Social media the main inspiring source of motivation to engage in adventurous trips to remote natural areas*
- b) *Social media is also the main, but not reliable information source for preparations for the trip*
- c) *'Status/prestige' motivator pushes peoples to engage in adventurous trips to remote natural areas, 'status', 'prestige' is also gained by sharing digital narratives in social media*
- d) *Images in social media are the 'start and finish' point of the trips to Trolltunga, thus travel behaviour model influenced by social media is changed from linear to circular model with the same start and finish point.*

Hypotheses are investigated by analysing data from the case study of Trolltunga experience. Specifically, data analysis are divided into three sections as three stages of Trolltunga experience (pre-trip, during, post-trip).

1. The first step is "Pre-trip" consists of 'Destination image in social media', 'Inspiration/Motivation' and 'Travel decision and preparation'. This section will shed light on informative, motivating role of social media and its trustworthiness. Questions in this section are:

- a) If social media is the main source of discovering about Trolltunga?
- b) Do Trolltunga images shared in social media drive people to go for same experience?
- c) Do visitors know that "solitude" image of Trolltunga represented in images on social media is not quite a real story? Do the visitors look for this solitude experience?
- d) What is the motivation for going to Trolltunga?
- e) What is the main information source for preparations for the Trolltunga hike?
- f) How good are the visitors prepared for the hike? It includes equipment, hiking experience, weather awareness, backup plan.

2. The second section is “During the trip” and it includes questions:
 - a) Did visitors take the picture on Trolltunga and how long did they wait in a queue?

3. Third step “Satisfaction/ Outcome” of the hike. In this sections I will attempt to find the answers to the questions:
 - a) What are the outcomes of the hike?
 - b) Did the visitors realistically estimate their ability to complete the hike?
 - c) Were the expectations for Trolltunga fulfilled?
 - d) Did they share their experience in social media?

The data collection was implemented in Oslo, Norway. Online survey with 72 responses was collected in March 2018. For data analysis, the qualitative approach supported by SPSS 23.0 was applied. Considering that the results might differ depending on the demographic data, some results are grouped by gender, generation and nationality segmentation.

To better understand the interrelationship of outdoors, social media and Trolltunga tourists/hikers, first, it is recommended to go through the literature review, discussed in the second chapter of the current paper. In this chapter, the concept of human-nature and outdoors, information about Trolltunga and its transformation, concept of social media, the power of image (destination image) on visitor’s motivation, travel decision and attitude will briefly be introduced. In the third chapter, methodology chapter, the research methodology and measurements will be described. The fourth chapter, the result and findings part, will indicate and explain the results and findings of the survey. The last chapter will conclude this study.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Modern renaissance of Outdoors

In modern time, people tend to learn something, to discover new things through social media (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). Scrolling through social media people often see pictures of spectacular natural landscapes, they comment that they wish to visit these places and finally man's innate connection to nature leads them to adventures in nature. Nowadays people are in need to re/connect with nature, with the missing part of the modern present, many urban tourists, consciously or subconsciously, prefer to go the natural areas as to 'shrine to the past' (Lowenthal, 1982, as cited in Jacobsen, 2007, p.234).

Indeed nowadays the outdoors and the desire of connection with nature is living its renaissance. However, humans are innately attracted to nature, and the tendency of humans to seek connections with nature has, in part, a genetic basis (Willson, 1984). Crockett (2014) believes that 'nature connection will be the next big human trend'. Lost interaction with nature leads to the disconnection with surrounding world causing many social and psychological issues for a human. Many researchers note that in a rapidly urbanising world people are losing connection with nature. The latter is a very essence of human's life and it delivers measurable benefits to people, including physical and psychological health and well-being (Ashbrook, 2003; Bratman, Hamilton & Daily, 2012; Keniger, Gaston, Irvine & Fuller, 2013; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2009; Seppelt & Cumming, 2016; Wilson, 1984). However, human's disconnection with nature is not a new social issue. Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian Arctic explorer, scientist and humanist, in the first half of the 20th century was already criticizing modern civilisation and calling people to go to 'wild places' to find harmony with nature, hence with themselves:

'This urban life is after all unnatural and was certainly not our destiny from natures' mould' (Nansen, 1921).

Now after almost hundred years of this statement scientists are still worried about the same issue of disconnection of a human with nature. However, as it was mentioned before being outdoors, spending leisure time in nature living a renaissance and is becoming a new trend.

2.2 Norway and outdoor travellers

The phenomenon of being in outdoors, in the open air, embracing fresh air for the mind and soul is called Friluftsliv in Norway. The concept of Norwegian culture of Friluftsliv takes its roots also from the concept of adventure, curiosity, stepping out from the comfort zone and be free from the familiar world (Pedersen, Humberstone, Prince & Henderson, 2016).

Norway gives all for experiencing wanderlust/nature. It is recognised as an excellent place for great outdoors, and according to surveys conducted by Innovation Norway, many visitors agree that Norway is becoming a good place to pursue outdoor activities. Norway is associated with fjords, nature, mountains, cold and northern lights (Helgebostad, 2015). Every year the number of foreign tourists visiting Norway is increasing (Helgebostad, 2015) and local nature-based tourism with the elements of adventure is attracting more tourists from abroad. According to the statistics from Innovation Norway's Tracker data (Helgebostad, 2015, Figure 3) 'spectacular scenery', 'opportunity to experience natural phenomena', and 'good hiking opportunities' are the first three characteristics of holiday in Norway and they have shown good increase (marked with small red stars in figure 1). Norway is recognised as one of the best places for active leisure time in outdoors.



Figure 3: What characterises a holiday in Norway

Source: Report - Key figures for Norwegian travel and tourism, 2015, pp. 46.

(small red stars indicate good increase)

2.3 Trolltunga

2.3.1 Trolltunga - general information

One of the most popular touristic destinations in Norway is Trolltunga (Troll's Tongue). Trolltunga has been enormously successful in becoming an iconic place of Norway and attracting tourists from all over the world. The spectacular scenic cliff is hovering 900 meters above the lake Ringedalsvatnet. The view is breath-taking. The hike starts in Skjeggedal and goes through the high mountains, different terrains and sharply changing weather conditions. The hike takes 10-12 hours (23 km in total to Trolltunga and return). It is a long and hard hike. Despite the fact that the hike is very demanding, the number of tourists to Trolltunga is increasing with breakneck speed. In the year 2017 it was estimated to reach 100.000 (Taylor, 2017) while in 2009 Trolltunga counted only about 500 visitors (Norway stops Trolltunga photos after deadly fall, 2015), the

number of visitors dramatically increased from about 10 000 to about 100 000 (in 10 times) within seven years (Figure 4).

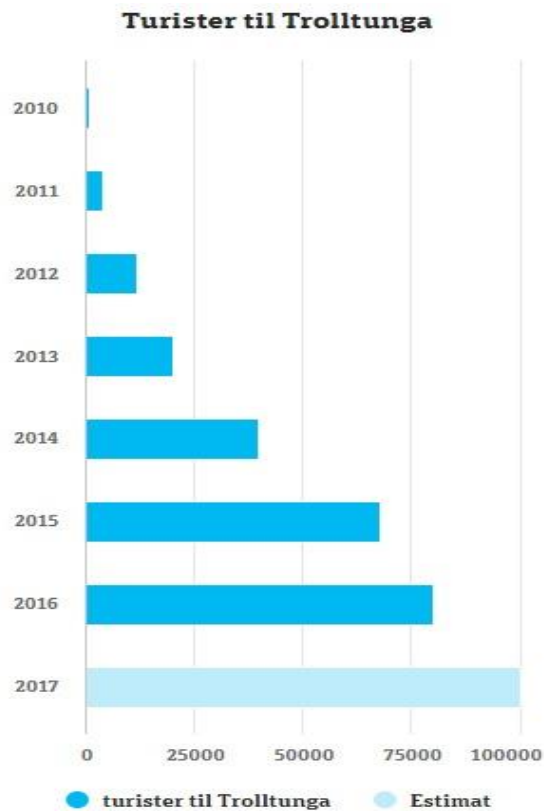


Figure 4: Tourist to Trolltunga

Source: Reinertsen, R. & Kumano-Ensby, A.L., 2017.

2.3.2 Transformation of Trolltunga and role of social media in this process

The fact that Trolltunga has become very famous touristic spot is undoubtedly impressive but then again not that surprising. Since the dawn of social media, information spreads globally at a rapid pace, and it is entirely reasonable that certain places, after blowing up on Instagram or other social media platforms, transforms from uninterrupted sites into popular 'hot travel destinations/spots' in a very short period (Hanbury, 2017). It is happening in many parts of the world that once wild natural places with the real solitude, wild

and untouched environment are transforming into massively popular touristic spots and now they are teeming with tourists (Hanbury, 2017; Fowler, 2015; McHugh, 2017). This popularity is gained mainly due to the information shared and found in social media, as social media is not only the tool of communication but furthermore is a vital information platform for planning and consuming travel (Buhalis and Law in Xiang & Gretzel 2009; Hanbury, 2017), and for channelling travel interests and goals. Geotagged pictures in social media not only inspire others to go for the same experience but also go to the same place. One aspect of social media in outdoors that may be of particular interest to researchers is the geotagging function. When inspiring pictures of a site are posted on social media and geotagged, soon this place is expected to get a hot spot. “What happens when social media increases the rate of outdoor discovery? How long until every corner of the planet has been Instagrammed and geotagged?” argues McHugh (2017) in her article emphasizing on fact that places which were used to be wild and untouched now are becoming attainable to everyone, but not everyone is prepared for what the site requires of them, and moreover, the places are not prepared to host hundreds or thousands of yearly visitors. Anyhow, I will not go further on the theme of the geotagging function of social media in current research as it is not a subject of interest for this paper.

In Norway, Trolltunga is going through these kinds of transformations. It is turning from being wild and untouched to a crowded tourist attraction. Trolltunga, as aforementioned, is an example of how places became popular touristic destination due to social media (Evers, 2016; Hanbury, 2017). According to Evers’s research (2016), many of the visitors of Trolltunga intend to share their experiences through social media soon after their experience, and thus consequently contributing to making this place even more famous.

However, what is more, surprising about Trolltunga is that despite its remoteness and robust access Trolltunga has become a ‘dream’ on the bucket list for many tourists even from the other side of the world. Long external (to an area from outside) and internal (within the area) access to the landscapes may constrain physical and economic accessibility (Koppen, Tveit, Sang & Dramstad, 2014), but in case of Trolltunga long and tough accessibility is not an obstacle for

tourists. Koppen et al. (2014) note a purpose of visit (or motivation) plays a significant role in the perception of accessibility. It means that motivation of tourists to Trolltunga is playing the leading role, reducing the perception of long distance and robust accessibility to the landscape.

2.3.3. Pros and cons of gained popularity of Trolltunga

Anyhow, an inrush of tourists to Trolltunga invariably leads to the transformation of the site and the latter is creating both challenges and opportunities (Evers, 2016; Hanbury, 2017).

“In some cases, the newfound fame brought about by Instagram, and other social media platforms have helped to boost local economies and bring tourists to places they might never have discovered otherwise. In other cases, it's creating problems for countries and cities that are not equipped to deal with the influx of tourists.” (Hanbury, 2017)

This statement is also relevant to Trolltunga's current situation. The massive boom in Trolltunga can be considered as an excellent opportunity for the local economy, but from the other side, the area itself and local authorities were not prepared to welcome so many tourists in one season. However, now the route and area are being upgraded. For example, signs are showing the right direction to the cliff, there are survival cabins in almost every 2 km, and the newest innovation is a new toll road up the steep hillside to Mågelitopp which takes up only the first 400 meters ascent. However, Gundersen, Mehmetoglu, Vistad & Andersen (2015) states that recently the type of visitors to Nordic alpine areas has changed over the past decades, 'now visitors prefer to use modern management measures like infrastructure and provision of basic services' as marked hiking tracks, easy accessibility through designed entrance and visitor centres. He also mentions that the average age of visitors has increased while the length of stay has decreased.

All these kind of infrastructural changes in the area is also changing natural appearance of the landscape and its qualities. “Such facilitations may, however, impact negatively on the experience of those who are seeking

“authentic” experience in nature, and who prefer solitude” notes Gundersen et al. (2015,p.78). However, now Trolltunga is not a place for those who are seeking for solitude in nature, as there are always visitors, on the trail and on the cliff itself. The essence of wilderness and solitude is becoming blurred and disappears now. It can only exist in carefully edited or designed images and pictures. However, it can be argued that solitude experience is not only about being in remote, lonesome place with no or fewer people around. Solitude can be experienced even in crowded place if this place is a place of “escape” from the usual circle of people, from routine life. The concept of solitude will be discussed more in the part of Trolltunga image.

Not only the place and locals are not prepared to host hundreds or thousands of yearly visitors, but the visitors/tourists themselves are not prepared for the hike and Nordic (summer) climate and mountainous conditions. The unexpected inrush of tourists with unsatisfactory awareness of Nordic terrains and climate circumstances leads to dangerous consequences. For instance, Red Cross volunteers are rescuing tourists in Trolltunga route every year (about 40 rescue works was counted in 2016), and every year new measures are taken to reduce the lifetime risk in the given area. In the year 2017 along with the Red Cross volunteers there have been working the team of “Mountain Guards”, they tell people to turn round if they see that tourists are not enough prepared for the hike. However many ignore the advice (Taylor, 2017).

Gundersen et al. (2015) highlight that while finding socio-ecological solutions it should be considered that local users differ significantly from non-local visitors. The inrush of tourists makes “a landscape less attractive to the group of people that prefer less accessible areas with qualities such as peace, calmness, and wilderness, which are central on traditional Scandinavian outdoor recreation” (Koppen et al., 2014, p.152). Probably that is the reason why visitors on Trolltunga are mostly from all over the world, and less from Norway. It is becoming a foreign attraction; they are turning natural landscapes into great amusement parks, say locals (Wijnen, 2017; Sachse, Reinertsen & Evertsson, 2017).

Unpreparedness of many foreign travellers for Norwegian circumstances at remote places causes damage not only to nature but also risk to human's life (Bø, 2016). It was proposed to ban tourists who are poorly dressed to go to Trolltunga. However, it may not be allowed due to the "every man's right" – allemannsretten (Fjelltveit & Nave, 2016). In Scandinavian outdoor life, everyone (no matter local or foreign) has the right to visit and move around freely and sustainably on uncultivated land. Foreign travellers, consciously or subconsciously, use the right of allemannsretten while having free access to remote wild places of Norway, however, it is dubious if they are using it sustainably. "Being aware of public lands doesn't necessarily mean someone knows how to treat them" notes McHugh (2017). Koppen et al. (2014) argue that it is a political question whether accessibility should be enhanced and for whom.

Adding to the negative sides of the transformation of a place into the hot touristic spot, it should be mentioned pollution issue. It has become a typical issue that favourite touristic places are suffering from human waste and disrespectful attitude of tourists. For example, New Zealand is also teeming with tourists facing pollution problem caused by visitors who can camp and roam wherever they like (Hanbury, 2017).

"Many of these visitors, lured in by inspiring, jealousy-inducing Instagram posts, aren't prepared for what a location requires of them. And that threatens the very thing their social media presence prizes: beauty" (McHugh, 2017).

With the increase of visitors in Trolltunga pollution in the area is also increasing. The irresponsible behaviour of tourists is threatening the beauty of the area. "This destination is full of trash and human waste!" say tourists seeing a sad truth behind the smokescreen (Corderoy, 2017). The area also does not have a solution to cope with the trash and human waste that is often left behind by tourists. Through social media, locals are trying to reduce pollution by warning visitors to bring their garbage down to the base camp. However, the destination is full of human waste.

However, now Trolltunga area is challenging the balance between the ecological integrity with the safety of tourists' experience. "The increasing demand for visiting wilderness areas often requires management actions that both conserve the natural resources and ensure a high-quality visitor experience" emphasise Gundersen et al. (2015). They note that management actions should, first of all, consult research-based knowledge on visitors, their motivation, decision and behaviour. These all values are subject of interest for the current paper.

2.4 Social media

"Social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. User-generated content, such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions, is the lifeblood of social media." (Social Media, n.d.)

In other words, social media is a group of Internet-based platforms where people create, share and exchange various content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012). Social media is used extensively for communication with a person or a group of people. Today many people are connected through social media, and it has become an essential part of our lives. Social media as an information source is also playing an important role in online tourism domain. It has fundamentally reshaped the way people plan for and consume travel (Buhalis and Law in Xiang & Gretzel 2009).

In social media, users post and share their travel-related comments, opinions, and personal experiences, which become information for others. As it was mentioned above, information or the content is the lifeblood of social media. Thus it is the content rather than the platform that is more significant when it comes to why social media matters (Miller, Costa, Haynes, McDonald, Nicolescu, Sinanan, Spyer & Venkatraman, 2016).

There are pros and cons of social media. One most important advantage is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people (Baruah, 2012). They share content with the intent of educating each other about products, brands, services and places (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009). Nowadays many travellers while planning their trip mainly rely on travel reviews (Filieri, Alguezaui & McLeay, 2015), however, the reviews can vary significantly in their quality and helpfulness (O'Mahony & Smyth, 2009). Blackshaw & Nazzaro emphasise that downside of content shared by the user in social media is that it is a "mixture of fact and opinion, impression and sentiment, founded and unfounded tidbits, experiences, and even more rumour" (in Xiang & Gretzel, 2009, p.180). Information shared by other users in social media is almost always has a subjective assessment. Nevertheless, information created by users and shared among themselves has a tendency to be perceived as more trustworthy than official destination websites (Filieri R. et al. 2015; Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). Moreover, user-generated content archived and shared online become easily accessible by other impressionable users (Xiang and Gretzel, 2009).

2.4.1 Motivating and informative role of social media – pre-trip stage

Web current society's life is considered as "a platform where the users are not in the passive position but able to create and produce a variety of content and services" (Rodriguez as cited by Dwityas & Briandana, 2017, p. 194).

Social media and its content are playing a role of information platform for the tourists going to Trolltunga. Trolltunga tourists are mainly independent, they are mostly motivated by digital narratives shared in social media and plan their trip to Trolltunga on their own inspired by social media (Evers, 2016).

For example groups on Facebook as 'The World'(Figure 6), '1000 places to see before you die' (Figure 5) etcetera, which have around 2-3.000.000 subscribers, share pictures of Trolltunga and these pictures gain thousands of 'likes'. Hundreds of comments to these posts say that after seeing these pictures, people wish to be there or put this place on their bucket list. However, under

these pictures less or no information can be found on the practical side of the experience. These pictures mostly play inspiring, motivating role.



Figure 5: Thousands of 'likes' for image of Trolltunga in social media

Source: from the group '1000 Places to See Before You Die' in Facebook. *K means thousand, in this case 9.400 'likes' and 5000 'shares'.

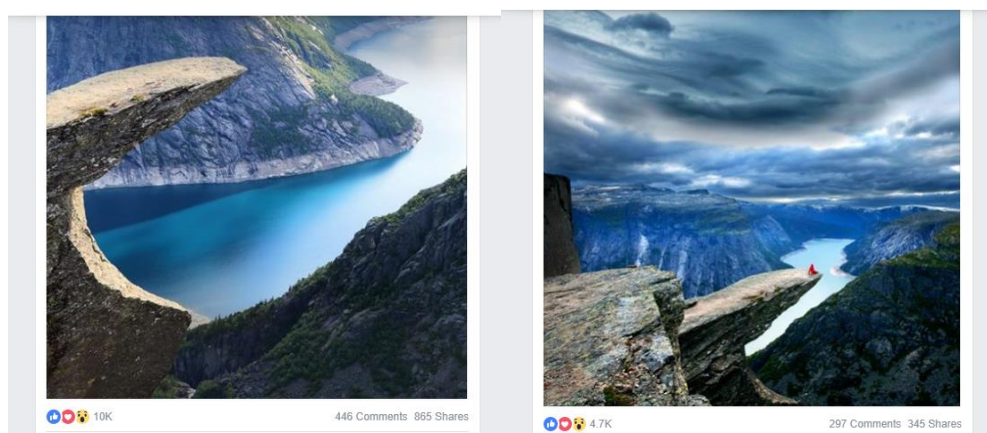


Figure 6: Inspiring image of Trolltunga in social media

Source: both pictures are from group 'The World' in Facebook. *K mean thousands, in these cases 10.000 and 4.700 'likes' and 865 and 345 'shares'.

“ Next time you're scrolling through Instagram enviously looking at vacation photos of uninterrupted views and dramatic landscapes, console yourself with the fact that behind this secluded view there are likely at least a handful of other

people holding their selfie sticks, waiting to get their magic shot,” Hanbury emphasizes on trustworthiness of images in social media (2017) & (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Long queue to the cliff on the rainy day

Source: Photo from the archive of Roza Khasanova, during the field trip in August, 2017.

Thus it is crucial for social media users to understand that the content they are sharing online is spreading very fast and the other users are perceiving it as trustworthy. Ever's (2016) research shows that most of the visitors to Trolltunga are intended to share their experience soon after visitation through social media. Isaak (2016) emphasises that users should be more responsible for the content they are sharing as it influences other users' motivation, decision and behaviour:

“Particularly, backcountry social media users should be challenged to consider the questions to whom and for what purpose they are constructing their online narratives”.

McHugh (2017) notes that despite that there are plenty of handful apps that are designed to help users to discover hiking, camping, and backpacking retreats, people mostly tend to use social media platform, notably Instagram, while looking for outdoor inspiration. Ironically, people are inspired by Instagram which shows plenty of “sun-splashed, falsely faded photos, angled just so the mountain looks a little steeper or the water reflects the forest in a shimmering, seemingly impossible image”, but which do not include more handful information as “miles, elevation, routes, and topographical maps, along with a handful of

accurate, unfiltered, semi-boring photos” (McHugh, 2017). CEO of Outbound Collective’s Heifferon says that they try to use Instagram in more informative and handfull way: “...we don’t just want to post pretty photos; every Instagram post has questions like, ‘Where is this? How do I get there?’ and we try and include more information so that people don’t show up in skinny jeans and loafers to try and hike seven miles.” (as cited in McHugh, 2017).

Trolltunga images shared on social media are picturesque and inspiring, but how informative are they? Do they tell details of how to get there, how individuals should be prepared for the hike?

2.4.2 Image of Trolltunga in social media: “solitude” versus “everywhereness”

As it was mentioned above images/pictures on social media, inspire others to go for the outdoor adventure. In case of Trolltunga pictures and narratives shared on social media give to people ideas and impressions about the place, thus shape its destinations image. Burgess (as cited in Baloglu, 2000) states that in the absence of actual visitation the image of the destination is formed by the information found in media and other sources. The destination image is a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place (Crompton 1979a, Kotler et al. 1993 in Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In other words, destination image is typically about “what people know about the place, how they feel about it, and how they plan to act on those thoughts and feelings” (Chetthamrongchai, 2017, p. 1).

The destination image is a crucial aspect of tourist’s motivation, travel-decision and behaviour (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Lee, 2009; Ghazali and Cai, 2014,). The information source, which can be symbolic stimuli (media, promotions etcetera) and social stimuli (friends’ recommendations or word-of-mouth), travel motivations and sociodemographics determine destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Tourists have a desire to visit the destination of their interest if their perception and impression about the destination is positive.

Social media in case of Trolltunga is the primary information source, and pictures and narratives shared there form the destination image of Trolltunga. As it was mentioned before people are attracted to the pictures of Trolltunga and express their wish to visit this place. Pictures of Trolltunga shared in social media are romanticised, and in the absence of actual visitation or previous experience, these pictures of Trolltunga shape the image of solitude, aloneness and harmony with nature. Ideally, there would be relevant Fridtjof Nansen's romanticised idea about solitude:

“The first great thing is to find yourself, and for that, you need solitude and contemplation - at least sometimes. I can tell you deliverance will not come from the noisy rushing centres of civilisation. It will come from the lonely places.”

But the authentic story is ironic, in reality, there is usually a long queue on the backstage waiting for that obligatory picture on the cliff. Laurence Scott (2015) identifies the problem of presence in a virtual environment with the term “everywhereness” (Isaak J., 2016). He calls new era as the era of “summit selfies” and “Instagram skiers”, emphasising that even in remote places, that is initially has a characteristic to be a place for isolation, solitude, people are by fact “everywhere” by sharing online narratives. This “everywhereness” inevitably changes our relationship and proper perception of self-sufficiency, remoteness and isolation (Scott, 2015 in Isaak, 2016). Trolltunga is not wilderness place anymore; it is a place for Instagram pictures with growing infrastructure say locals (Bø, 2016). However, the image of Trolltunga in social media is mostly staged, distorted and mismatching with the reality on the site.

Making a connection between solitude and social media, Isaak (2016) emphasises:

“Social media has profoundly changed the nature of solitude and remoteness. Now, our peers and online communities may travel anywhere with us on our smartphones. They are an ever-present audience, generating pressure on our decisions in ways that were not possible in a pre-digital era”.

Cohen (as cited in Welk, 2004, p.81) admits that ‘solitude... has become an attraction in a crowded world’. Welk (2004) comments that solitude generates the promise of luxury as today solitude is a rarity. Tourists want to take photographs (especially of natural attractions) in such a way that possibly no people, in particular, no other tourists can be seen on them, thus creating the idea of travel as ‘I have it all to myself’ (Welk, 2004). This paradox of crowdedness and staged image of solitude happens on Trolltunga cliff on high-season. However, Welk (2004) also notes that solitude can be experienced in even crowded places if this place is an exclusive place of ‘escape’ from usual circle of people, routine and everyday life, ‘getting away from it all’.

Crockett (2014) notes that nowadays in the rise of social media people tend to glorify self-concern, which generates endless competition. In case of Trolltunga, it is becoming a competition of the best ‘solitude’ image. People nowadays like to flaunt their exclusive experience through social media consequently blending the idea of solitude and everywhere-ness. 97% of Millennials (who reached adulthood around the year 2000) say they share pictures while travelling (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc.), what, in essence, is ‘everywhere-ness’ (Fuggle, 2016).

2.5 Travel motivation

2.5.1 Models of travel motivation

“Motivation is described as a driving force that makes us move” (Solomon as cited in Lien, 2010). Motivation comes out from the individual’s need (Gundersen et al., 2015) and can be considered as the primary driver (Lee, 2009). Maslow’s (1943) theory of human need is frequently used to explain the premise of motivation. According to his hierarchy, there is basic sets of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem and self-actualisation.

Tourist needs and motivations are interrelated (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002 as cited in Lee, 2009). Understanding travel motivation helps to understand

what motivates tourists to choose a particular destination (Lien, 2010).

Krippendorf (1987) pointed out the reasons or motivations for holiday travel can be different such as relaxing, getting away from everyday life, experiencing something entirely different, experiencing another country and so on. According to Gartner (as cited in Pike, 2008) travel motivation leads to the decision-making process and thus lays the foundation for further procedures.

There is a lack of a universally agreed-upon conceptualisation of the tourist motivation construct (Fodness, 1994). However, the concept of a push-pull model of travel motivation is accepted by many researchers (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Jang & Cai, 2002) and prevailed among others. Push factor leads individuals to leave home and look for appropriate for them vacation destination, while pull factor is determined by destinations specific that attracts tourists to visit that place (Chen, Mark & Mc Kercher, 2011; Lee, 2009). The push factor can be determined as a visitors' socio-psychological needs which motivate a tourist to travel. These social-psychological needs are described by Crompton (1979): escape from an everyday environment, discovery and evaluation of oneself, relaxing or participation in recreational activities, gaining a certain level of prestige, for regression, strengthening family ties and facilitating their level of social interaction. Lee (2009) notes that tourist need is generally related to the higher need for self-esteem, self-actualisation and social needs.

Above-mentioned implies that motivation arises to meet individual's needs (Chen et al. 2011), and motivation is primary and core concept in understanding 'why individuals chose specific destination' (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Figure 8). In other words, a destination is chosen based on the individual's needs. However, Cohen (as cited in Chen et al., 2011, p.121) contended that 'what tourists want is not merely to satisfy their psychological needs but authenticity of the destination', or in other words, it can be the other way around, that for some people destination and its authenticity can be the primary driver in their travel decision. In case of Trolltunga, I support Cohen's (1972, 1979; Figure 9) "strangeness – familiarity" concept, as I believe that characteristics of Trolltunga and its authenticity are the primary drivers which motivate people to

visit this place. This concept will be further discussed in the chapter of results of motivation.



Figure 8: Push – pull model. Picture made by Roza Khasanova

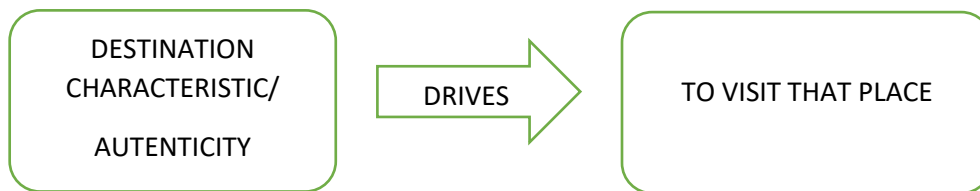


Figure 9: Strangeness – familiarity model. Picture made by Roza Khasanova

2.5.2 Travel motivation scaling and grouping

Among many types of research and studies on scaling tourists' motivation the Leisure Motivation Scale by Beard & Ragob (1983) is considered as most efficient one. This scaling mainly divides motivators into four types, based on the Maslow hierarchy of needs. These four types are:

- 1) The *intellectual* component – motivates individuals to engage in mental activities such as learning, exploring, discovery, thought or imagery.
- 2) The *social* component - individuals are interested to participate in leisure activities for social reasons, which is based on two basic needs - the need for friendship and inter-personal relationships.
- (c) The *competence-mastery* component – drives individuals to be involved in leisure activities which helps them to achieve, master, challenge, and compete. The activities are usually physical in natural areas.
- (d) The *stimulus-avoidance* component – “the desire to escape and get away from over-stimulating life situations. It is the need for some individuals to avoid social

contact, to seek solitude and calm conditions; and for others, it is to seek to rest and to unwind themselves.” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p.55).

Furthermore, Swarbrooke & Horner (2003) proposed their own six main factors that motivate people to visit a particular destination (Figure 10). However, they also note that “no tourist is likely to be influenced by just one motivator. They are more likely to be affected by a number of motivators at any one time” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p.55)

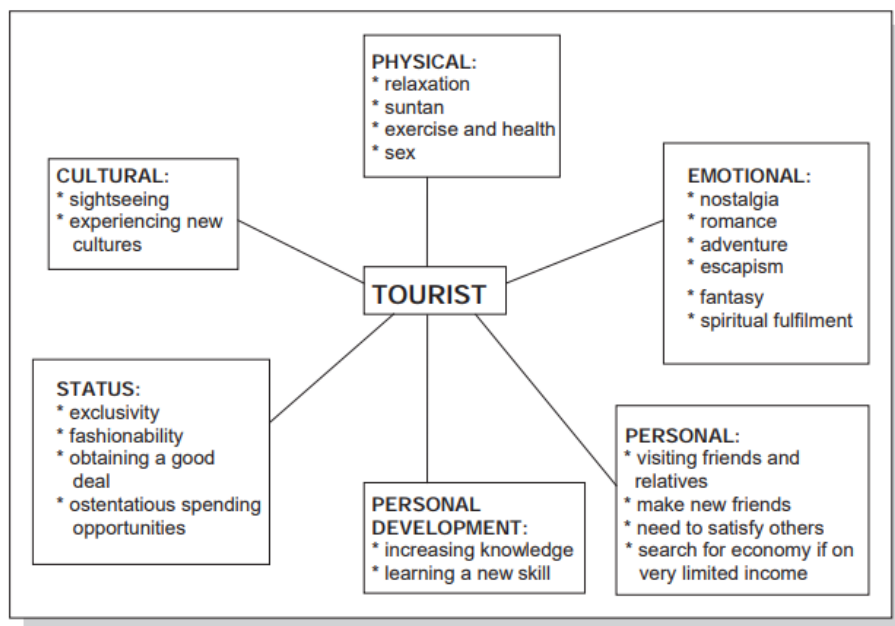


Figure 10: A typology of motivators in tourism by Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p.54

Source: adapted from Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p.54

2.5.3 Novelty seeking is a new wave in tourism

Prosser (1994, p. 22) claimed tourism as one type of fashion industry, where changes in consumer’s perceptions, expectations, attitude and values identify demand – supply, or in other words push-pull relationship.

Furthermore, Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret (2003) support the views of Poon to divide tourist in two groups 'old tourists' and 'new tourists'. According to him, a new generation is moved away from being 'old tourists', who were predictable in their tastes, was mostly interested in warm destinations, went on holiday to escape from work and home life, meanwhile nowadays 'new tourist' go for travel mostly to 'to go beyond the routine'. Tourists are now seeking for extraordinary destinations and new experiences in some of the world's most remote and exotic locations, which can be characterised as 'unique' and 'prestige-worthy' form of travel (Laing & Crouch, 2005; Bell, Tyrvaianen, Sievanen, Probstl & Simpson, 2007). Welk, 2004 explains that the desire to stand out from the masses pushes more people to look for special, unique, exclusive experience in order. Fuggle (2016) also confirms the tendency that tourists today tend to look for opportunities to explore lesser-known destinations, especially those that are untouched or unique, and which will have the image of solitude, regarding rarity. Statistics say that 69% of global travellers - of all age groups - are planning to try something new in 2016 (Fuggle, 2016). Adventure, novelty, sensation seekers tended to prefer more remote exclusive places and experience life on the edge, go beyond the everyday life (Galloway and Lopez in Lepp & Gibson, 2008). According to the Swarbrooke & Horner's (2003) classification of motivators 'new tourists' are driven mostly by 'status motivator', which includes the desire to obtain something as exclusivity, fashionability and ostentatiousness. The paradox of 'desire for new and unique experience' is that "it is getting harder to find places that are unexplored or untouched by mass tourism" (Laing & Crouch, 2005, p.216).

Despite the fact that Trolltunga now is crowded places, it can still be considered as an appropriate place to fulfil the needs of tourists who are looking for extraordinary destinations, novelty and uniqueness. Consequently, it makes them stand out from the masses, at least stand out from usual circle of people.

2.6 Travel decision and Travel preparation

Next stage after being inspired and motivated to go for the specific trip is the stage of travel decision and preparation. Travel preparations include many factors which must be considered, however for a hiking trip, especially to Norwegian mountainous terrain, weather conditions are one of the most critical factors. Nichollas and Amelung (as cited in Denstadli, Jacobsen & Lohmann, 2011) stated that weather conditions in Northern Europe, including Norway and Scotland, are ‘unfavourable’ for general tourism experiences, however Denstadli et al. (2011) belie this idea and say that studies show that people decide to travel to desired places despite adverse and unpredictable weather conditions. Weather conditions, such as precipitation leading to slippery terrain and wind are not beneficial for mountain hiking. Thus preparation for hiking to Nordic mountain terrains must include awareness of weather conditions of the area, terrain difficulty and accordingly equipment preparations. Adventure travellers are mainly responsible for their safety throughout their journeys, facing risk and adventure as well as isolation and discomfort, note Laing & Crouch (2005).

As Gundersen et al. (2015) state visitor now prefer easy access to remote natural areas, which is maintained by infrastructure. However, social media also creates an illusion of accessible remoteness. If the content in social media generated by other users is not informative enough, it can cause an illusion of easy access, and consequently, visitors are not well prepared for the trip to remote backcountry areas. Statistics say that 76% of travellers confirm that their travel decision was influenced by the traveller-submitted narratives, especially by photos (Fuggle, 2016; Lee, 2009)

2.7 During the trip/experience – “flow” or no?

The stage ‘during experience’ will be explained by the concept of “flow” of Csikszentmihalyi (1975), as the flow is experienced precisely in the present moment, it is a positive feeling of ‘complete absorption in what one does’

(Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p.89; Boniface, 2000). Flow has two dimensions – skills and challenges, and all activities also have these characteristics. (Weber, 2011). Flow occurs when ‘one is engaging challenges at a level appropriate to one’s capacities’ (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 90, Figure 8).

Flow concept is widely used in outdoor adventure studies, as often outdoor activities are challenging dynamic activities which require from the participants' skills to engage, and flow state is a dynamic equilibrium of skills and challenges (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Boniface (2006) describes outdoor and adventurous activities as significant positive and engrossing experiences, because of demand of high-level involvement. By engaging in adventurous outdoor activities people can test their skills of overcoming challenges, and in case of a skill-challenge match, they experience flow state - ‘engrossing, intrinsically rewarding and outside the parameters of worry and boredom’ (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1999 as cited in Beedie, 2008, p.177).

However, it can happen that people overestimated their skills, underestimated challenges, or vice versa. What happens then? Apparently, it is not engrossing experience, and there is no flow state. The balance of skill – challenge is intrinsically fragile. ‘If challenges begin to exceed skills, one first becomes vigilant and then anxious; if skills begin to exceed challenges, one first relaxes and then becomes bored’ explain Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2009, p. 90, Figure 11).

“Flow is experienced when perceived challenges and skills are above the actor’s average levels; when they are below, apathy is experienced. Intensity of experience increases with distance from the actor’s average levels of challenge and skill, as shown by the concentric rings.” - (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997 as cited in

Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p.95, Figure 11).

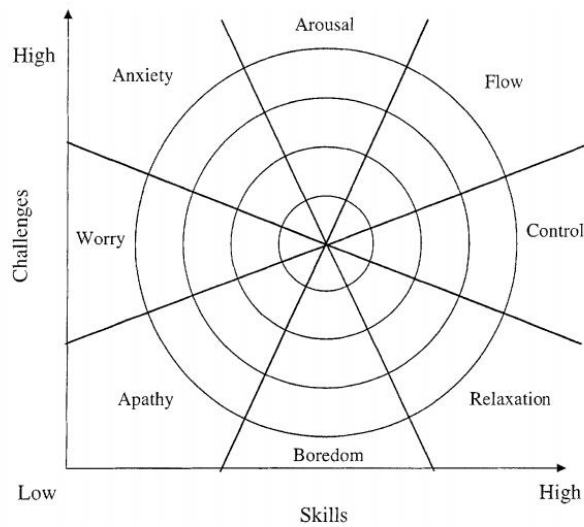


Figure 11: Model of flow state

Source: adapted from Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p.95)

2.8 Outcomes and experience sharing in social media

Outcomes of the experience can vary greatly by gender, age and sociodemographics. Whatever are the experience outcomes, people tend to share them online mostly on social media platforms. Sharing private experiences in social media now become an indicator of sociability and emotional support (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). In social media, people digitise not only knowledge (Buhalis & Law, 2008 as cited in Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), but also emotions and experimental moments (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012 as cited in Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Experience sharing can be textual narratives (blogs, written reviews, reflections) which are created mostly for information dissemination (Stoeckl, Rohrmeier, & Hess, 2007 as cited in Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), and audio-visual which represents emotions, imaginations and fantasies about features of a destination, for example through photographs, videos and emoticons. Munar & Jacobsen's (2014) research show that visual content sharing is more popular than textual narratives.

Content sharing behaviour in social media can be widely divided into two groups: personal and community-related expectations. 'Personal expectations that may lead to largely self-centred motivations include possibilities for gaining respect and recognition, increasing social ties, augmenting one's self-esteem, enjoyment of online activity, and achieving enhanced cooperation in return' (Baym, 2010; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008 as cited in Munar & Jacobsen, 2014, p.48). Community-related expectations appear to be more altruistic, providing practical tips and recommendations to improve the quality of experience and minimise possible risks in the decision-making of other travellers and during their trip. In other words, community-related motivations are more informative. However, 'community-related expectations are often interlinked with personal-related expectations and vice-versa' (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014, p. 53).

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection and Study population

Initially, it was supposed to gather information through the interviews on the site. For this purpose trip to Trolltunga was organised on 26th of August 2017, and I was planning to stay on the site several days to collect data by interviewing visitors. This plan was not successful enough, as I had faced obstacles as being unable to remain on the site as long as it was planned. Rainy and windy weather I have encountered on the way to the cliff caused me swollen hands, which become first physical and psychological obstacle to interview on the site. It was interesting to observe how often the weather was changing during the day, quite cold in the morning, very hot and sunny in the middle of the day, and in the afternoon (close to 15-16 o'clock) it started to rain and became windy, and in the evening the sun showed up again. Despite my proper preparation and weather forecast following, I have experienced the difficulties of the sharply changing weather in Nordic mountainous terrain. Moreover, I could experience myself the flow state, which was turning into anxiety and worry state when the challenge was exceeding my skills.

Furthermore, I have found it difficult to interview visitors on the site, as often many of them are in a rush to get to the cliff as soon as they can, on the cliff – they are also excited and tired, and do not want to be bothered by answering questions. I have observed them waiting in a queue to step on the cliff in rainy and windy weather. However, I have got several respondents who shared their email addresses. I have sent them an online questionnaire which I have designed as an alternative data collection. The trip to the site helped me to create an image of Trolltunga visitor, real weather conditions, and it also helped to design questions for the online survey.

The online self-administered questionnaire was designed to collect data using Google Survey Form's service. The study survey was conducted in March – April of 2018. The poll was conducted in two languages, English and Russian, the set

of questions were the same in both language forms. Participants were informed that the questionnaire is anonymous, the data will be used in a generalised form. Questions were designed to get information on socio-demographics, and every stage of the trip, pre-trip – discovering about Trolltunga, getting inspired, motivated, preparations, during the trip – a physical and mental condition of a participant, risky situations, post-trip – reflections, satisfaction and outcomes (see Appendix for the questionnaire). Basically, questions were designed based on travel behaviour model by Mathieson and Wall (1982, see Figure 2).

The requirement for respondent was the actual visit of Trolltunga. Individuals were invited to participate in online questionnaire mostly through Facebook groups (such as ‘Hiking and outdoor travel to Northern Europe – Norway, Sweden, Finland’, ‘Hiking and Wildcamping in Norway’, ‘Hiking the World’, ‘Visit Trolltunga’, ‘Russian speaking community in Norway’, ‘New to Oslo’ etcetera), personal messages and posts on the Facebook page of my friend - the famous traveller/blogger who has many followers. Messages with the invitation to take part in the questionnaire were sent to individuals who had experience of visiting Trolltunga.

72 answers were received. Participants are from numerous and diverse language, national and cultural background. The age range of participants is from 17 to 52. The standard group size of visitors was two or three persons, and few groups were more than 4. Four different demographic variables were included in the study: gender, age, nationality and residency. These four demographics were chosen after my visitation to Trolltunga and observation of its visitors.

Age of respondents was divided into three groups of generations, Generation Z (1995-2020), Millennials group (1980-1994) and Generation X (1960-1979). Age was chosen as one of important for this study variables and grouped by generations as it was discussed above hiking/outdoors is becoming favorite activity and leisure type (Lepp & Gibson, 2008), especially for the young generation Z (Hargrave, 2017) and Millennials (Outdoor activities popular with Millennials, 2017).

My observations on the site gave me a rough idea that gender of Trolltunga visitors is evenly distributed. Gender is currently the subject of interest in outdoor studies, as outdoor activities became more accessible for females and now nearly half of all outdoor participants are female (Pearson, 2017). Furthermore, women are getting inspired and empowered by books, movies, personal stories of outdoor women (Mitten, 1992). For instance, hundreds of women have been encouraged to go the long hike by Cheryl Strayed's book 'Wild' and the recently-released movie (Lankston, 2014).

As Gundersen et al. (2015) highlight that local users in remote natural areas differ significantly from non-local visitors. Researchers identified differences in the behaviour of cross-cultural tourists (Gudykunst and Hammer, 1988 as cited in Lee, Chang, Hou & Lin, 2008). Nationality has the most influence on tourist behaviour (Pizam and Jeong, 1996; Bonn et al., 2005 as cited in Lee et al., 2008). In many articles about Trolltunga it is mentioned that visitors of Trolltunga are mainly foreigners (Wijnen, 2017; Sachse, Reinertsen & Evertsson, 2017, Evers, 2016). The nationality variable is supposed to test if it is true that most of the visitors of Trolltunga are foreigners. The residency was included in socio-demographics as it is vital to have an idea if visitors of Trolltunga are 'tourists' of Norway or 'residents'. "Long-term immigrants or residents often adapt to the new culture or nationality. Residential time and experience can affect their image when they are in a familiar space", note Lee et al. (2008, p. 219).

3.2 Strengths and Limitations

Survey rely on recall method (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004) the memories, reflections, throwbacks on the experience. "...asking respondents to recall specific rather than general events improves the accuracy of memory recall" and furthermore, "goal-based events are easier to recall", note Phillimore & Goodson (2004, p. 249). However, recall is not raw emotions of participants. Dex (1991 as cited in Phillimore & Goodson, 2004) identifies recall method as a problematic one, mentioning that people may not remember all experiences clearly over time.

This method can cause a potential limitation of this study, as questions about ‘during trip’ or on-site feelings, emotions are limited on the memories of individuals, while fresh physical and psychological emotions as exhaustion, anger, anxiety, happiness, euphoria are not with them anymore, and thus there might be lack of clarity. I assume that there should be a difference in answers received right after the experience on the spot and responses which has been obtained after a while. Latter might be too positive, as the negative physical emotions as tiredness, pains are not there and not affecting the answers. From the other side, recall method can be considered as a positive experience for participants, as recall gives people “new perspective, increased empathy” (Zhang & Moore as cited in Dennis, 2014), chance to relive the experience by recalling memories, reflect on their behaviour. This can give them an objective assessment of the experience and be useful for the next similar experience.

Another limitation of this study is that questionnaire did not include a socio-economic class of visitors. Fredman’s (2005, as cited in Gundersen et al., 2015) and others research facts notes that hiking attracts more visitors from a high socio-economic class, as defined by education, income and occupation. Gundersen et al. (2015) note that visitors’ socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, place of residence, level education) also influence their decision to visit the national park. However, this study about Trolltunga experience is missing information about education, income and occupation.

During this research, I found that ‘nationality’ is a tricky variable, as nationality means belonging to a given country, which can be changed, newly obtained, and nationality does not say the country of origin. Nationality does not mean being native to a country.

3.3 Researcher's status – insider and outsider

My researcher status in Trolltunga case has both insider and outsider status.

*“We have **insider** status when we share some group identity with our participants (for example, a **male** researcher researching **men** would be an insider), and **outsider** status when we do not share some group identity with our participants (for example, a **white man** researching **Asian men** would be an outsider)”*. –

Brawn & Clarke (2013, p. 10).

As an insider I have shared the same experience with the respondents: I have gone through all the stages of Trolltunga experience myself and knew the realities. I am insider also because I am a foreigner, and temporary resident in Norway as many of the visitors of Trolltunga (see result and findings chapter). I am not local as many of them.

As an outsider, I do not share the nationality identity as many of visitors are from Russia and Western side of the world. I am the outsider in relation to the local visitors. Another reason for outsider position is that my motivation for visiting Trolltunga was utterly different, it was not for my personal experience, but for research.

Insider and Outsider status give me a chance to be on both sides of the experience, which allows to look at the experience from different perspectives.

3.4 Measurement

My goal in conducting a quantitative research study is to determine the role of social media in all stages (pre-trip, during trip and post-trip) of Trolltunga experience. Pre-trip includes stages of inspiration, motivation, travel decision and travel preparation. During trip includes experience on site and in route, while post-trip consists of outcomes and experience sharing on social media. The

research design is descriptive (Quantitative Methods, 2018) as subjects measured once, after the experience.

This research uses a quantitative analysis (Daniel, 2010). Data collected through online questionnaires give us numbers, percentages and they are analysed by using the IBM SPSS 23.0 statistics program. Descriptive statistics, frequency and correlations were mostly used in analysing data.

“Descriptive statistics are commonly used for summarising data frequency or measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode)” - IBM SPSS Statistics, Part 1: Descriptive Statistics (2016, p.7).

“Frequencies, in statistics, refers to counts of categories or responses and provides a sense of how often specific response options occur in a population. ‘Frequency’ reports the number of cases that fall into each category of the variable being analysed. ‘Percent’ provides a percentage of the total cases. ‘Valid Percent’ is a percentage that does not include missing cases. ‘Cumulative Percent’ adds the percentages of each category from the top of the table to the bottom, culminating in 100%.” – Using SPSS and PASW/Frequencies (2014). I mostly utilise “valid Percent” and ignoring “cumulative percent”.

“Correlation coefficients (r) range from -1.0 to +1.0. An absolute value of 1.0 indicates a perfect correlation. A negative correlation means that as one variable goes up, the other goes down. Positive correlations mean that as one variable goes up, the other also goes up. The asterisks at the end of the correlation indicate that the correlation is significant. The p-value is for the significance” – Harder (2010). In this study, I use the Spearman’s correlation (Table 5 and Table 7). Spearman’s correlation is “a nonparametric measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables. It is denoted by the symbol r_s (or the Greek letter ρ , pronounced rho). The test is used for either ordinal variables or for continuous data that has failed the assumptions necessary for conducting the Pearson's product-moment correlation” - Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation using SPSS Statistics (2018). The closer rho is to +1 the stronger the monotonic relationship. The strength of the correlation can be described by using the following guide:

- .00-.19 “very weak”
- .20-.39 “weak”
- .40-.59 “moderate”
- .60-.79 “strong”
- .80-1.0 “very strong”

Correlation and comparative analysis were tested between all four independent social-demographic variables and dependent variables as motivation, preparation, and outcomes etcetera. However, only the results that showed significance are highlighted in the results and finding the chapter.

Chapter 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Trolltunga visitor

4.1.1 Visitors' sociodemographic profile and general characteristics

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that gender of the respondents was almost evenly distributed, with 54, 2 % male and 45, 8% are female (Table 1).

The majority of the respondents is within Millennials group (born in between of 1980-1994) with 59, 7%, followed by Generation X (born in between of 1960-1979) (24%). And 15, 3% belonged to the Generation Z (born in between of 1995-2020). However, the average age of a visitor is 32, Millennials. (Table 2).

Nationality is diverse, however Europeans are the majority (54, 4%) and the second big group is Russians (15, 28%). Country of current residence is mostly Norway 30, 56% (Figures 12 & 13).

56, 3% of visitors are identified as non-experienced hikers (summary of those who answered that they had only a few hiking experiences – 45, 1% and that it was their first hiking experience – 11, 3%, Table 3). 43,7% of visitors are experienced hikers. However, the majority of visitors are non-experienced hikers. Visitors rate the difficulty level of the hike as difficult - 37, 5% and middle - 36, 1 % (which was indicated as number 4 and 3 in the scale of from 1-very easy to 5-very tough, Table 4).

Table 1 Gender of respondents

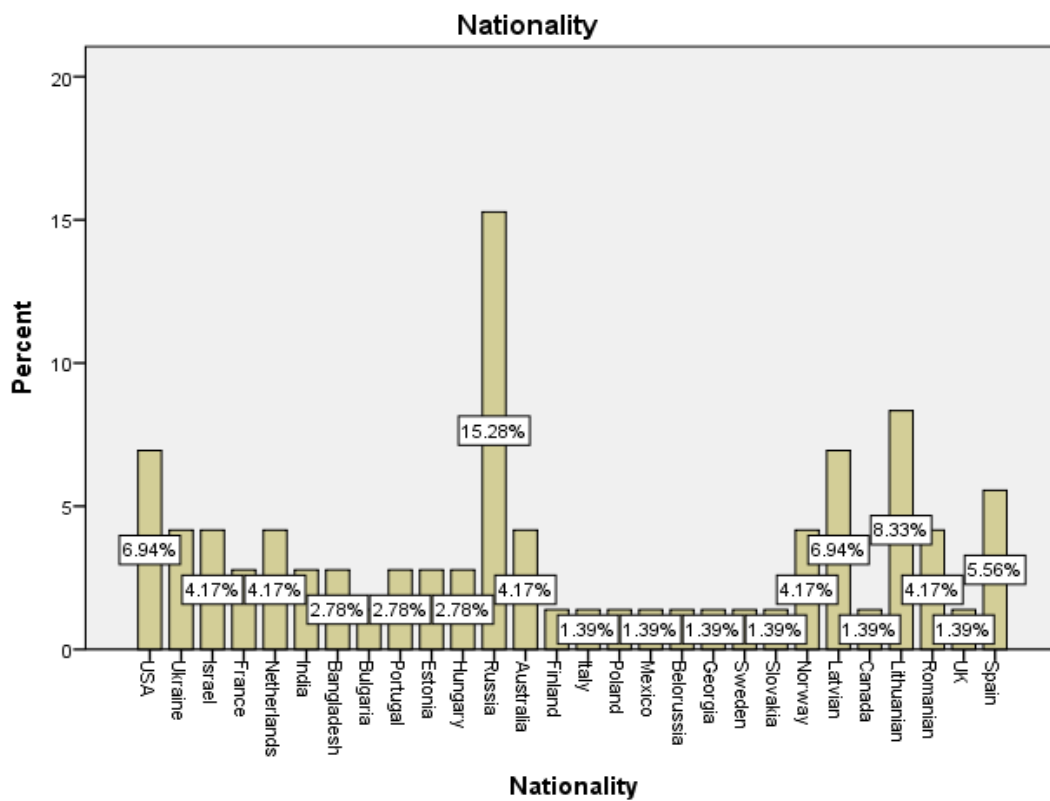
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	39	54.2	54.2	54.2
Female	33	45.8	45.8	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Age of respondents	72	17	52	31.83
Valid N (listwise)	72			

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Gen Z 1995-2020	11	15.3	15.3	15.3
	Millennial 1980-1994	43	59.7	59.7	75.0
	Gen X 1960-1979	18	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Average age and generation

Figure 12: Nationality



Russians – 15, 28%

Europeans - 54, 4 %

Americans and Canadians – 8, 3%

Asians – 5, 6%

Israelis – 4, 2% And others

Figure 13: Country of residence

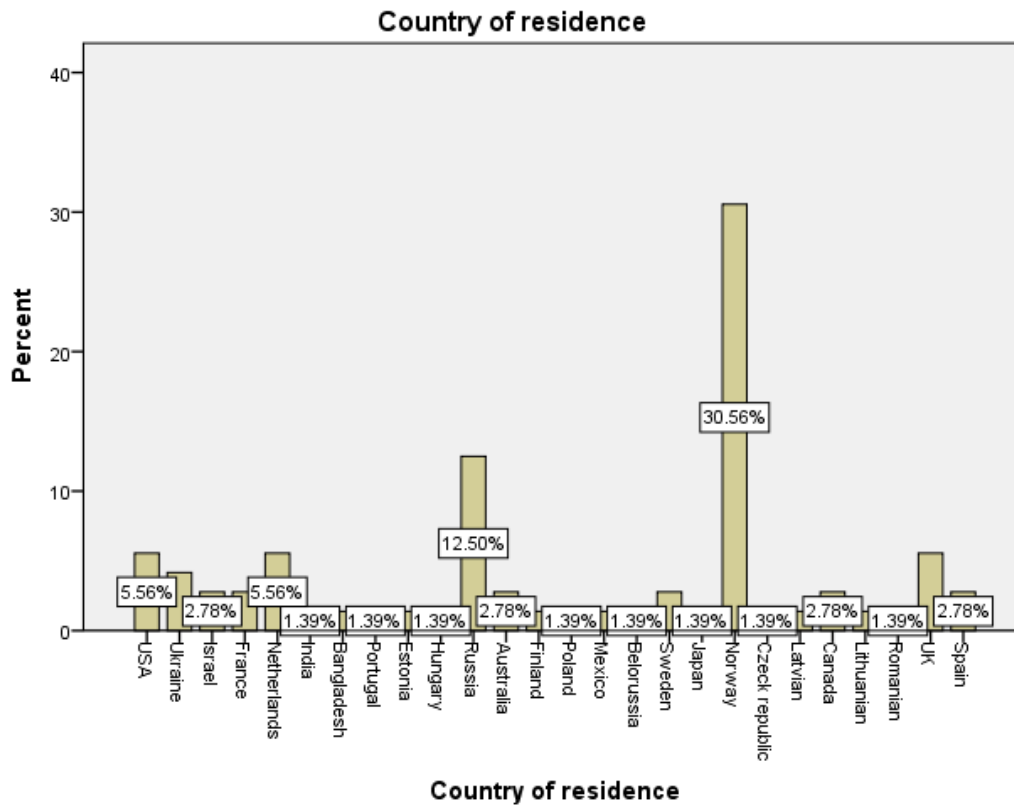


Table 3. Hiking experience – general

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	It was my first hike	8	11.1	11.3	11.3
	My experience of hiking is not big, only several times.	32	44.4	45.1	56.3
	I go for hiking often, several times in a year.	13	18.1	18.3	74.6
	Hikes are important part of my life.	18	25.0	25.4	100.0
	Total	71	98.6	100.0	
Missing	0	1	1.4		
Total		72	100.0		

Table 4. Difficulty level of the hike – general

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2 - not so easy	10	13.9	13.9	13.9
3 - middle	26	36.1	36.1	50.0
4 - difficult	27	37.5	37.5	87.5
5 - very tough	9	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

4.1.2 Younger generations go for hiking more often

However, a significant difference in hiking experience by generation was found during the data analyses. Unlike Generation X (1960-1979) which has no big hiking experience, Generation Z (1995 - 2020) goes for hiking more often (Figure 14). This says that interest for hiking in young generation is increasing, and it can also prove the statement that ‘outdoor activities are becoming new trend’ as it was mentioned in the chapter of the literature review. Consequently, the difficulty level is also perceived differently by generations. Generation Z saw the hike as middle level of difficulty, while Millennials and Generation X perceived the hike as tough/ demanding (Figure 15).

As it was mentioned above hiking/outdoors is becoming a popular activity and leisure type (Lepp & Gibson, 2008), especially for the young generation Z (Hargrave, 2017) and Millennials (Outdoor activities popular with Millennials, 2017).

Figure 14: Hiking experience by generation

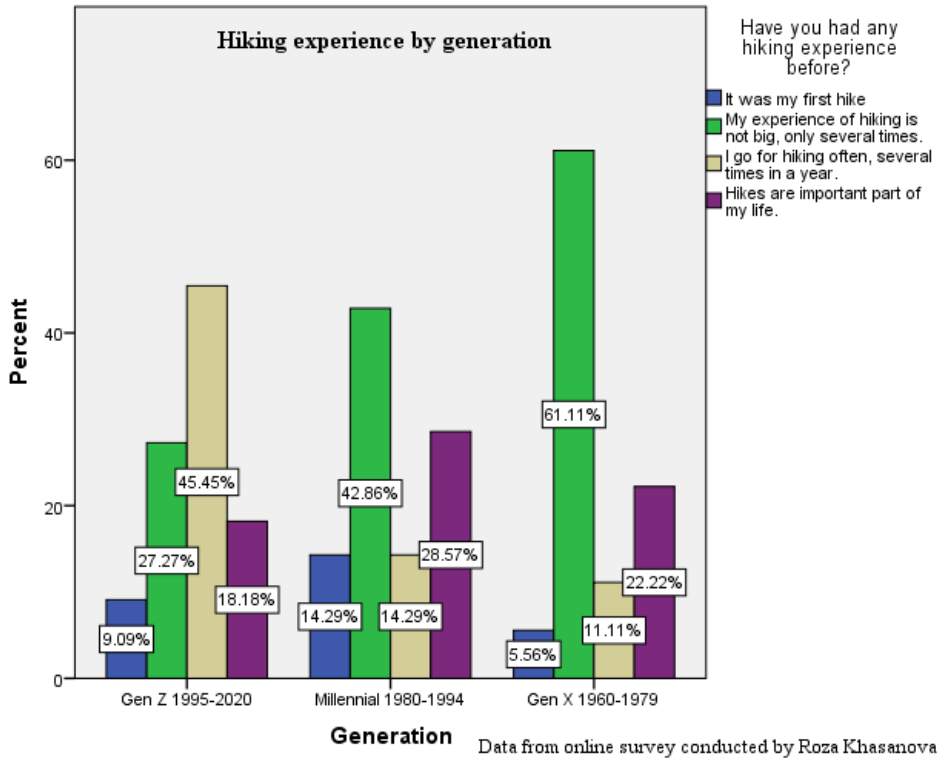
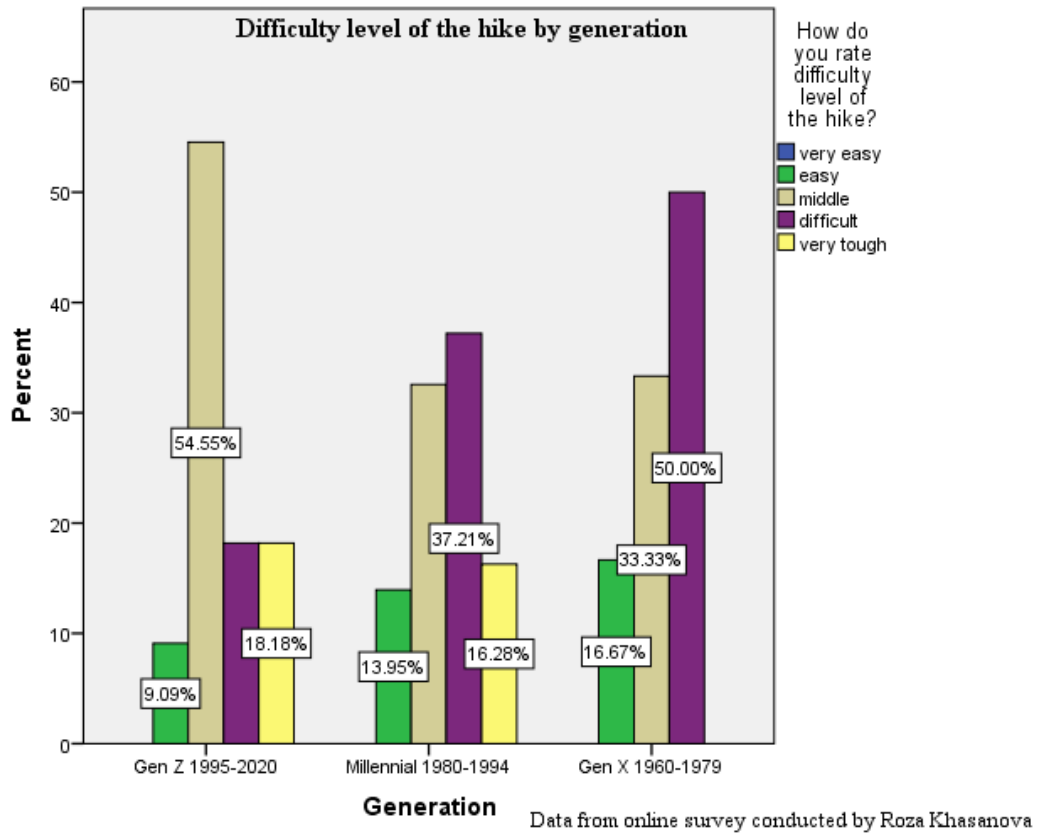


Figure 15: Difficulty level of the hike by generation



4.2 Pre-trip stage

4.2.1 Social media is the main source of ‘discovering’ about Trolltunga and inspiration source

As it was assumed social media is the primary source of learning about Trolltunga (54, 93 %), the second big source is the stories of friends (not online friends) – word of mouth (38, 03%) (Figure 16.).

45, 83% of participants answered that they were impressed and motivated by the pictures they have seen on social media, however taking the picture was not their first motivation (Figure 17).

Meanwhile, a weak positive relationship was found between the variables ‘source of information dissemination’ and motivation of ‘taking the picture on Trolltunga’ (correlation coefficient $r = 0, 260$ and significance value $p = 0,029$, Table 5). This finding says that social media, as the primary source of learning about Trolltunga, anyhow push people to take the same picture on the site (by the fact 91, 6% of visitors answered that they took the picture on the cliff).

Figure 16: Discovering about Trolltunga

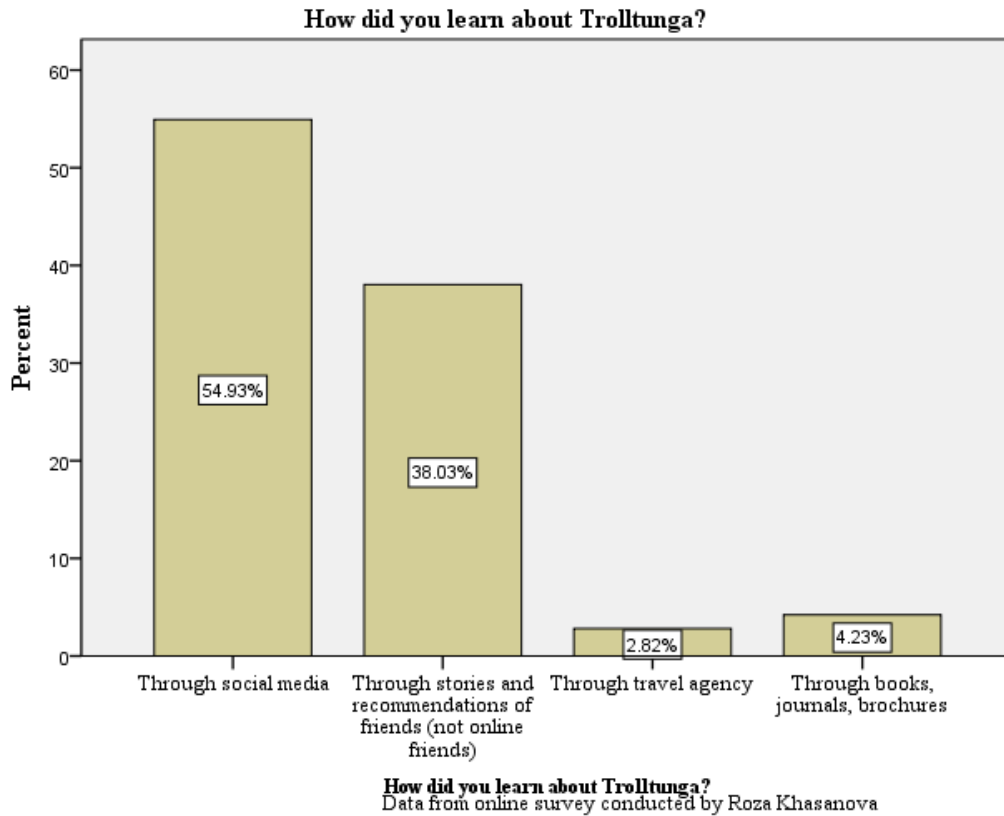
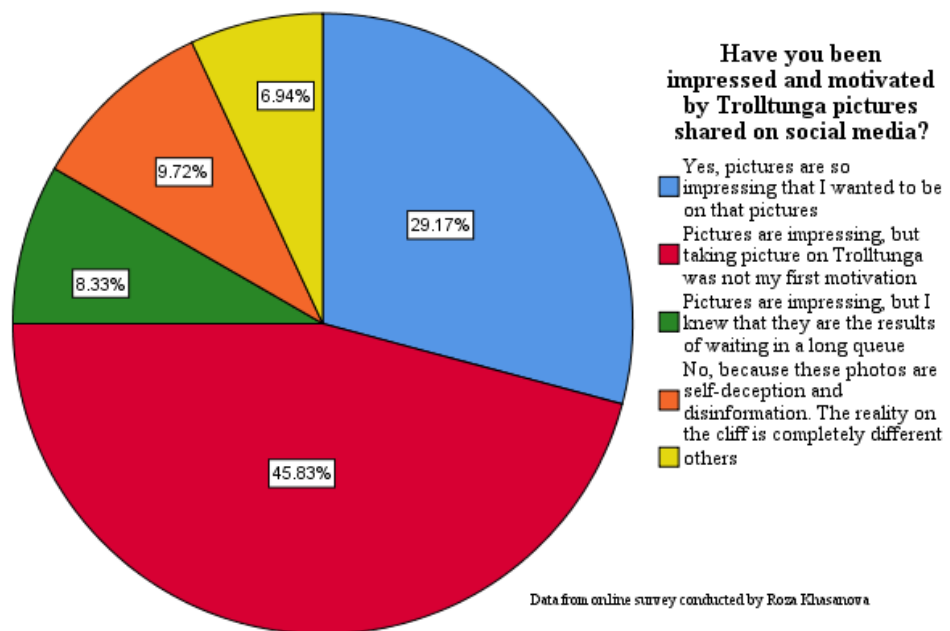


Figure 17: Inspiring Pictures of Trolltunga in social media – general

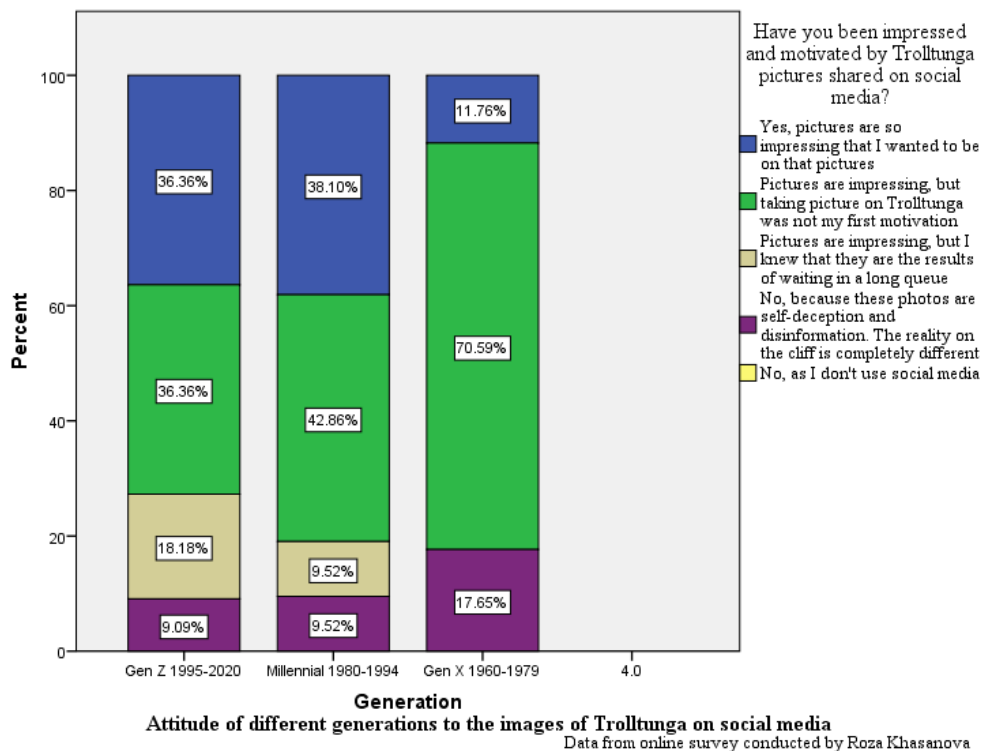


4.2.2 Power of Trolltunga pictures on generations

Age/generation is the only variable affecting the perception of images of Trolltunga shared in social media. Generation X (1960-1979) expresses an opinion that though pictures are impressing it is not the first motivation of the hike (70, 59%). Pictures of Trolltunga shared in social media inspire and motivate to take the same pictures mostly among generation Z (1995-2020), the desire of taking the picture on the cliff is three times stronger in generation Z than in generation X (Figure 18). This finding says that pictures of spectacular scenery shared in social media inspires and motivates to go for the same experience, and this power is stronger on the young generation.

However, data analysis shows that all generations almost equally said that they took pictures of themselves while being on the destination site. It can be concluded that no matter what is their motivation when reaching the cliff almost everyone takes the picture there. It can be assumed that stepping on the cliff and taking the picture there gives people the feeling of “accomplishment”.

Figure 18: Image perception by generation



4.2.3 Motivation to go to Trolltunga and gender differences

The most frequent answer to the question about the motivation that ‘drove them to go to Trolltunga’ was ‘desire to explore Norwegian landscapes and nature’ - 73, 61%, while the second frequent answer was ‘to test own abilities to overcome long and tough terrain routes’ 38, 89% (Figure 19). However, motivations ‘test own abilities to overcome long and tough terrains’ and ‘desire to take the picture and post it in social media’ is stronger in the male group than in the female group (Table 5).

Correlation analysis also showed a weak positive relationship between motivation variable ‘desire to explore landscape and nature’ and demographic variable of ‘gender’ ($r=0,24$ and $p=0,047$) (Table 5). Comparison analysis shows (Figure 20) this difference between male’s (64, 10%) and female’s (84, 85%) motivation to explore the landscape. Interestingly motivation of ‘exploring Norwegian landscape and nature’ is stronger in female group (other motivations are evenly distributed) than in the male group where first motivations are also ‘explore Norwegian landscape and nature’ and the second big motivation is to ‘test own abilities to overcome long and tough terrains’ (43, 59%, Figure 20).

Figure 19: Motivation to go to Trolltunga

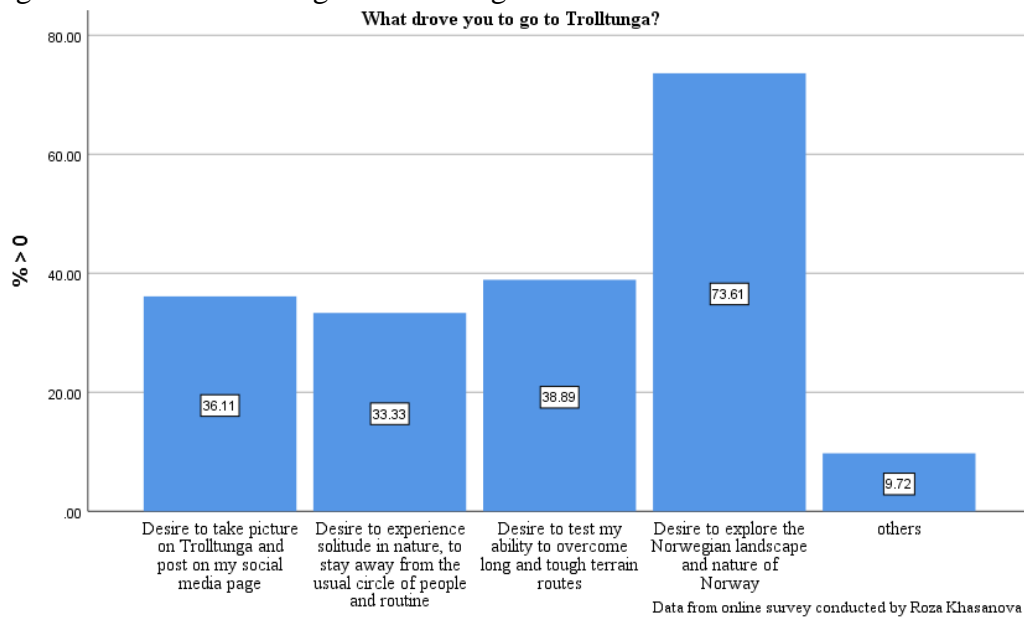


Table 5. Correlation of source, motivation, gender and generation

			Gender	Generation	How did you learn about Trolltunga?	Desire to take picture on Trolltunga and post on my social media page	Desire to experience solitude in nature, to stay away from the usual circle of people and routine	Desire to test my ability to overcome long and tough terrain routes	Desire to explore the Norwegian landscape and nature of Norway
Spearman's rho	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.227	.123	-.111	0.000	-.105	.235*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.055	.306	.352	1.000	.381	.047
		N	72	72	71	72	72	72	72
	Generation	Correlation Coefficient	-.227	1.000	-.016	.017	-.108	.054	-.102
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.055		.894	.884	.368	.653	.393
		N	72	72	71	72	72	72	72
	How did you learn about Trolltunga?	Correlation Coefficient	.123	-.016	1.000	.260*	.130	.050	-.043
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	.894		.029	.281	.681	.721
		N	71	71	71	71	71	71	71

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

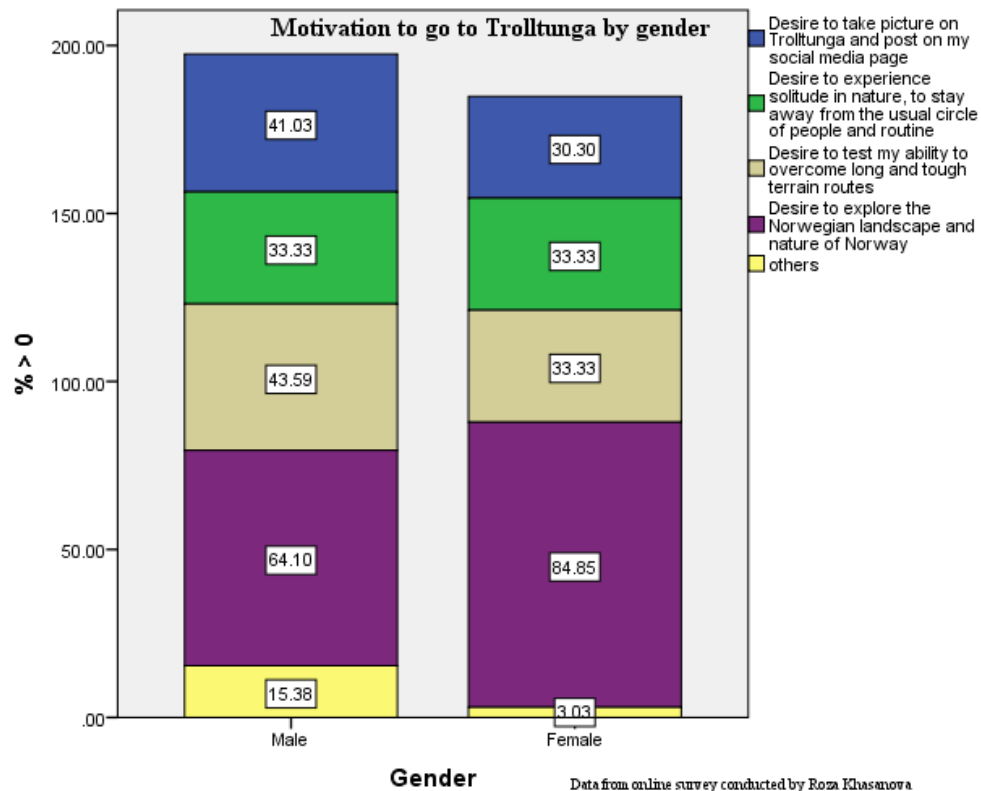


Figure 20: Motivation difference by gender

4.2.4 Travel – decision and Preparation

Social media and Internet was mentioned as a first main information source for the hike preparation (57, 1 %, Table 6). Hence, social media in case of Trolltunga plays the role not only in information dissemination about the place, but also it is a central informative platform for the preparation, and thus it influences the level of preparedness.

Most of the visitors are one-day visitors, they are independent visitors (81, 94%, Figure 21), who organise their trip themselves. Their level of preparation appears to be not well-planned. According to the data obtained, first three things they have are food/snacks, warm clothes and waterproof hiking shoes. Other essential equipment as first aid kit, torch, and the map of the area is usually not accompanied one-day visitors (Figure 22).

From my own experience of Trolltunga hike, I can say that Trolltunga hike is not that easy as it might appear in social media, as pictures do not show the reality of the experience. I observed some visitors were extremely exhausted and were not able to continue walking back, and moreover, they did not have first aid with them. Furthermore, the weather can also affect the quality of the experience, as it happened in my case. Rainy and windy weather can cause physical discomfort and pains.

“...It was surprising to see that a lot of people were absolutely unprepared - in light summer shoes, slippers, there were people with poor physical preparedness, and some were almost carried on the backs of others on the back slope.”

(Anonymous respondent, age 52, male, Russian)

From the obtained data about the preparation level and additionally comments it is obvious that visitor using social media as their first information source for preparations do not get enough practical information, thus not appropriately prepared for the hike.

“The trek was fantastic but it took us more hours than expected, in internet you can't really find a lot of information but it is worth it”

(Anonymous respondent, age 30, female, Mexican)

Table 6. Information source for the hike preparation. Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
source ^a	Travel agency	1	1.1%	1.4%
	Internet and social media	52	57.1%	72.2%
	Advices and recommendations of friends (not online friends)	20	22.0%	27.8%
	Did not prepare for the trek so carefully	15	16.5%	20.8%
	Others	3	3.3%	4.2%
Total		91	100.0%	126.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Figure 21: Type of trek

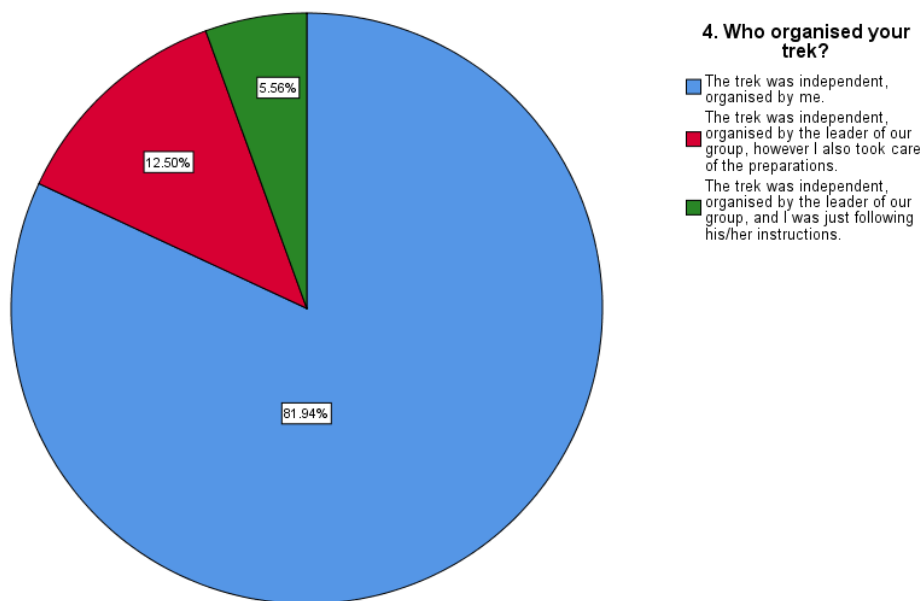
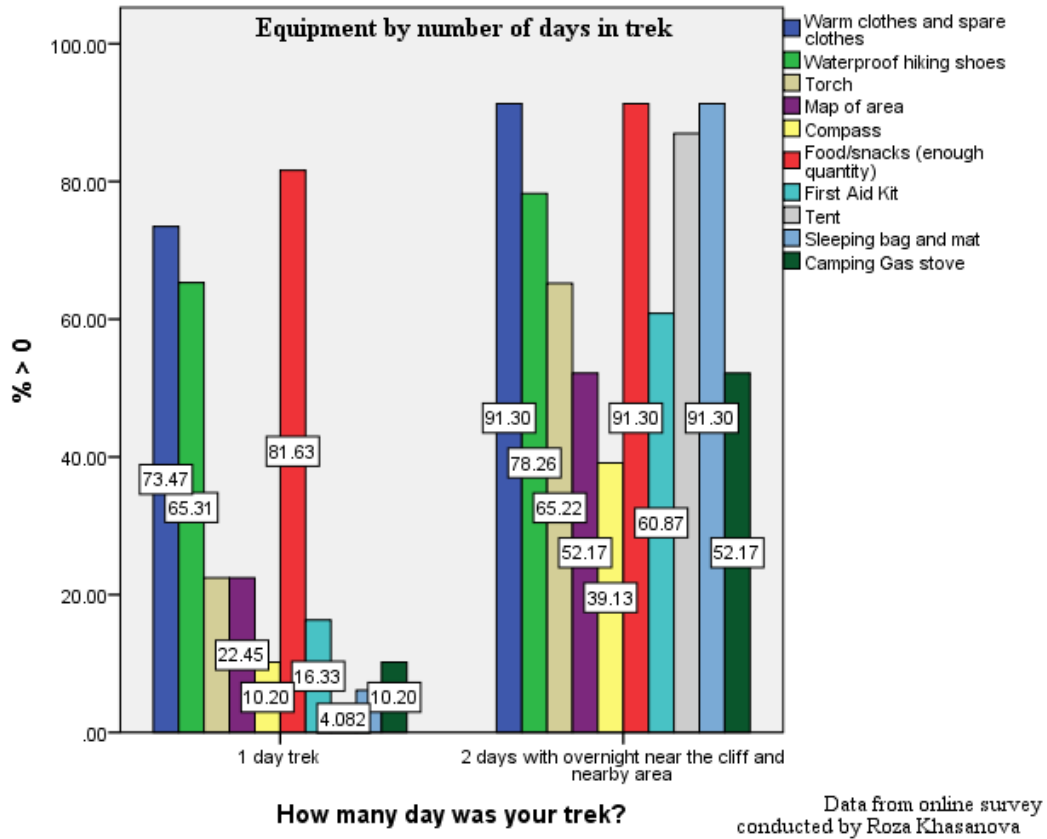


Figure 22: Equipment by group of visitors



4.3 During the trip

4.3.1 During the hike – anxiety and frustration

As it was mentioned before it takes time and efforts to get to the Trolltunga cliff. The physical part of this experience mostly consists of walking, hiking through mountainous terrain, with the weather changing conditions, sometimes rainy and windy.

The main thing in ‘during experience’ stage is the experience itself – it is physical and emotional state of the experience and participant. Physical state effects emotional state. Thus here, I will bring back the finding of the difficulty level of Trolltunga hike and experience level of visitors. As it was mentioned above the difficulty level of Trolltunga hike was identified as tough/difficult (4 in scale of 1-5, see Table 4) and visitors are defined as non-experienced, only few

hiking experiences (see Table 3), which will be determined as 2 in scale from 1 to 4 (1 – first time hiking, 4 – very often hiking).

When the difficulty level, or in other words challenge of Trolltunga experience, and experience level, or in other words skills of visitor, are applied on Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) model of 'flow state', we can see that challenge of the experience is above average level, and skills of visitor are below of average levels. Thus it is often that 'anxiety' is experienced during the hike (Figure 23). Evers's (2016) study also found that inexperienced hikers perceived hiking as 'challenging and too far, with resulting emotions of fear and frustration' (p. 44).

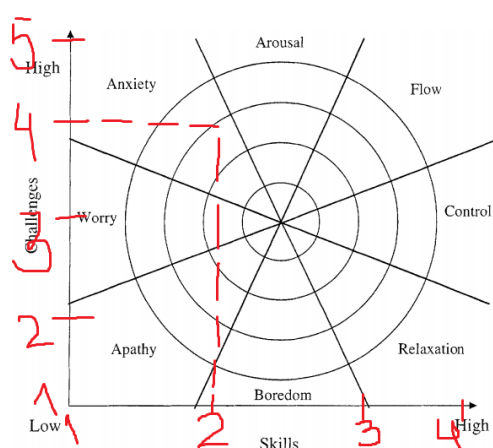


Figure 23: Perceived challenges and skills in Trolltunga experience on Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) model of 'flow state'

Challenge of Trolltunga hike is above average level, skills of visitors are below actor's average levels. According to flow model of Csikszentmihalyi 'Anxiety' is experienced during the hike.

'Csikszentmihalyi's earlier research (1975) did lead him to conclude that beginners do not experience flow possibly because an activity that is too demanding is likely to result in too high a level of anxiety, or because conscious thought is necessary at a novice level preventing detachment' (as cited in Boniface, 2000, p. 62).

Trolltunga visitors are the beginners with only several times of hiking experience, and they have completed the hike with the level of difficulty of 4 – tough/difficult (1 – easy 5 – very tough). Thus it can be concluded that generally average visitor of Trolltunga does not experience flow state during the hike, but face 'worry' and 'anxiety' state. However, the results show most all of them are satisfied with their performance and proud of themselves. Even though they

experience anxiety, frustration during the hike, after the accomplishment of the experience they live positive emotions as increased self-esteem, personal growth.

“Definitely underestimated the hike, but I can definitely handle hikes like that. However, I was pleasantly surprised!”

(Anonymous respondent, age 21, male, American)

4.3.2 Solitude versus crowdedness

As it was mentioned above Trolltunga now experiencing the transformation of being hot spot destination. The paradox of Trolltunga is in its image in social media, which mostly show solitude/tranquillity, and the reality of crowdedness. Both of states of solitude and being surrounded by crowd are experienced during the trip/experience. Thus I discuss these states and its perceptions by visitors in the stage of ‘during trip’.

My study found that awareness of crowdedness on the site is almost 50/50. Majority of respondents (38, 9%) is aware that the route and the cliff are crowded in high- season, however second large group (34, 7%) says that they were shocked by meeting the crowd of other visitors on the site (Table 8). It means that the second group were expecting that destination is wild, and pictures shared on social media with the image of solitude show the real image of the destination. Anyhow, the majority of respondents said that even it was shocking to meet the crowd of another visitor, this fact of crowdedness did not affect their mood. Furthermore, some of the respondents said that crowd of other visitors ‘gave them the sense of security that they were not alone there’ (Table 9).

Furthermore, correlation analysis identified a weak positive relationship between the variable of gender and ‘solitude experience’ (correlation coefficient $r = 0,260$ and significance value $p=0,029$, Table 7). Further comparison analysis on solitude experience by gender showed that male group says they could experience ‘solitude’ during the hike while walking, while female group mostly replied that crowd of people did not give them a chance to experience ‘solitude’

(Figure 24). It can be assumed that perception of solitude by gender is different, a male can move beyond crowdedness and concentrate on own interests, while for a female it is generally hard to ignore the crowd.

Table 7. Correlations of gender, generation and solitude experience

			Gender	Generation	Did you experience solitude during the trek or on the cliff?
Spearman's rho	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.227	.260*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.055	.028
		N	72	72	72
	Generation	Correlation Coefficient	-.227	1.000	-.086
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.	.475
		N	72	72	72
	Did you experience solitude during the trek or on the cliff?	Correlation Coefficient	.260*	-.086	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.475	.
		N	72	72	72

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

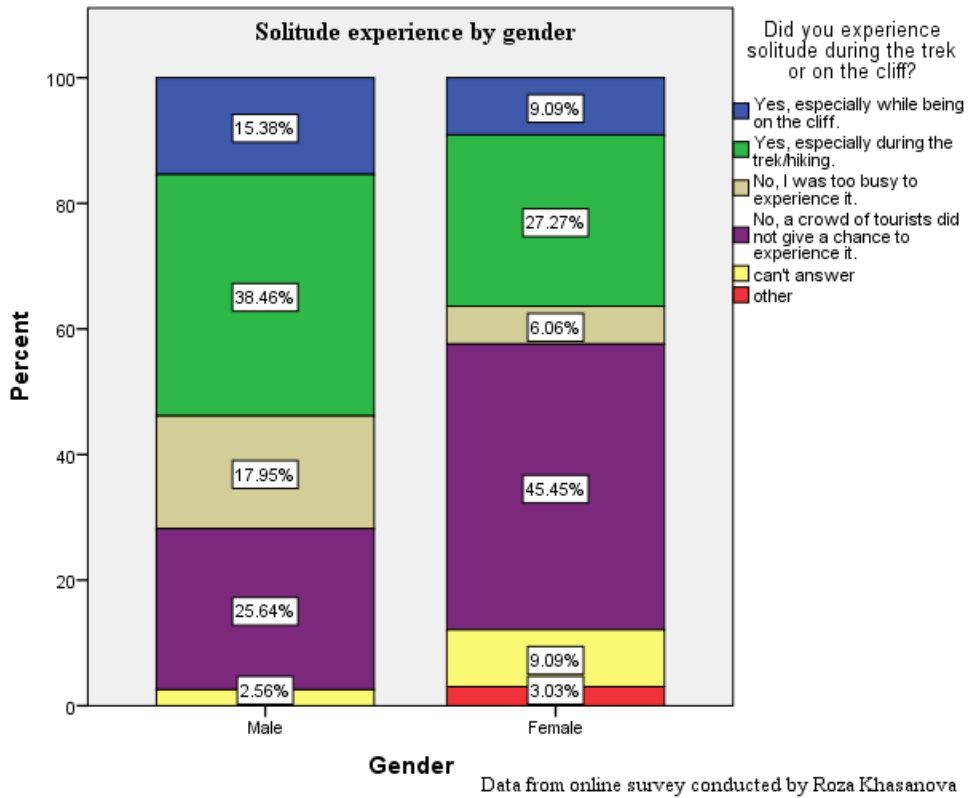


Figure 24: Solitude experience by gender

Average waiting time in a queue to step on the cliff is about 1 hour 40 minutes (Table 10). However, many respondents who were aware that the cliff is crowded in high-season say that to avoid the queue they started their hike either very early in the morning or stay for overnight and have the cliff and the view to themselves. Below are some additional comments from the respondents about their experience on site and waiting time/queue on the cliff.

“I was the first one there! So we spent about 40 minutes taking pictures and enjoying the nature before all the crowds showed up and ruined it.”
 (Anonymous respondent, age 21, male, American)

“I showed up before all the other tourists, but it would have spoiled the mood. It would have felt less natural and more like a city which is the opposite of why I wanted to visit such a place”
 (Anonymous respondent, age 21, male, American).

*“... I slept there so I went early in the morning. Still 30 f*cking minutes. The day we arrived it (queue) was up to 4 hours.....”*

(Anonymous respondent, age 24, male, Dutch).

"We hike to Trolltunga when all the crowds are gone - evening or early morning, so we don't wait"

(Anonymous comment of respondent, 2018).

Table 8. Awareness of crowdedness: Did you know that the destination is crowded?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes, I was ready for that.	28	38.9	38.9	38.9
No, I was shocked.	25	34.7	34.7	73.6
Can't answer.	13	18.1	18.1	91.7
others	6	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Your attitude to the crowdedness of the route and the queue to the cliff

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid I was very upset, I did not know that this place was teeming with tourists	6	8.3	8.3	8.3
I was surprised, but it did not affect my mood.	22	30.6	30.6	38.9
It did not affect my mood	14	19.4	19.4	58.3
I liked it, it gave me sense of security that I/we am/are not alone there.	8	11.1	11.1	69.4
I liked it very much, it was interesting to meet and talk with other people.	3	4.2	4.2	73.6
can't answer	4	5.6	5.6	79.2
other	15	20.8	20.8	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Waiting time in a queue

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How long did you wait in a queue to step on the cliff?	72	0	5 hours	1.39 hours	1.193
Valid N	72				

4.4 Post- trip

4.4.1 Expectations versus reality

Respondents were asked if the reality they have seen on site met their expectations. Majority of respondents (45, 83%) say that the reality suppressed their expectations (Figure 25). Some of them wrote additional comments:

“It is a wonderful place and I am missing it; hope to be there soon again.”

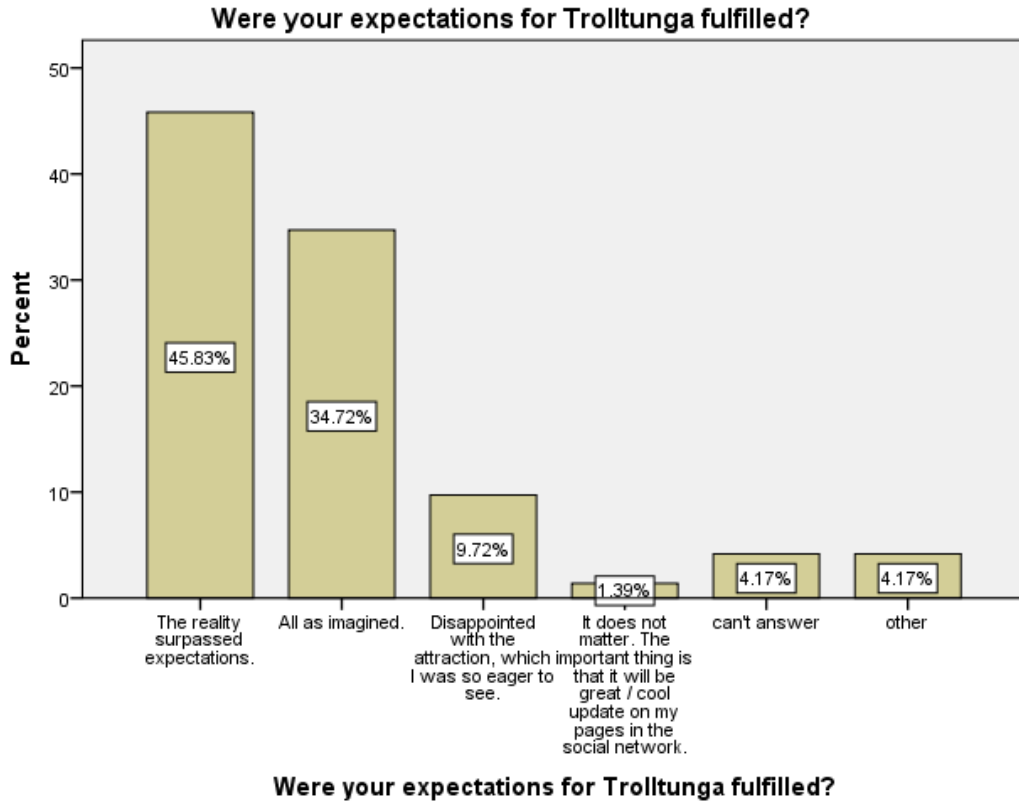
“After visiting Trolltunga I got to know that it’s not just a cliff and a pic. It’s all about a journey with nature. I am in love with each moment I spent there.”

“It is worth to visit.”

“I very much enjoyed it, it was tough, I do have a metal rod in my right leg but i was OK. The scenery, nature of the experience I will treasure for the rest of my life.”

(Anonymous respondents)

Figure 25: Reality versus expectations



Second large group say that reality was as they were expecting (34, 72%, Table 23) and less people say that they were disappointed with the attraction they were eager to see (9, 72%):

“Trolltunga is nice but over rated. Norway has more beautiful trekking route than that.” (Anonymous respondent)

“Trolltunga in real life looks much less impressive than in photographs”
(Anonymous respondent)

“The journey was more fun.. the photo however good was not that special unlike the way it appears on social media”
(Anonymous respondent, age 30, male, Indian)

Some respondents expressed disappointment on changes of the area due to the infrastructural improvements and irresponsible behaviour of other visitors who litter the area:

“Very disappointed with the large litter and faeces near the plateau”

(Anonymous respondent, age 40, female, Norwegian)

*“I visit Trolltunga every year and it is really sad, that a new road has been built and a parking lot at the top. Now even more people will go there. It is very sad to see people hiking to Trolltunga without appropriate equipment, shoes, clothes, etc. and doing it in one day back and forth like crazy... And it is very sad, that people sh*t there and leave their trash and napkins all over the place... Total disrespect to others and to the nature.”*

(Anonymous respondent, age 32, female, Latvian)

“I hope they keep the place as it is, without anymore “improvements” nature should be left as it is, not adapted to people who do not equip themselves with the proper gear or do not have proper fitness level to do the hike!”

(Anonymous respondent)

“By far the most beautiful place I have travelled to. I am only 21 and I have been to over 13 countries and there will be plenty more as I am trying to find somewhere that is even better than Trolltunga. However I feel like standard tourists will ruin this place. As they always do. An example is Yellowstone National Park in the US. It has some of the most amazing sites I have seen, but it is dying. People destroy it. Either by littering or walking where they shouldn't. I imagine that years down the road Trolltunga will probably be affected too.”

(Anonymous respondent, age 21, male, American).

In additional comments there were notes that the way to Trolltunga cliff, the route and landscapes along the route were more impressing:

“The views, landscapes on the way to cliff were more memorable.”

(Anonymous respondent)

“Yes it was by far, the cliff was just a bonus, to be honest the best part was to get there, we arrived by bus at Odda bus station with no plan, then took another bus

that stopped at a football field, quite far from the proper start of the hike, and we just went from there, walking at slow pace. Even the road part was really nice we just explored around, therefore starting the hike really late for the day. That's why we had the cliffs to ourselves later so it was the perfect random plan”

(Anonymous respondent, age 22, male, French)

4.4.2 Outcomes

Frequency data analysis shows that first common outcome of Trolltunga experience is ‘new discoveries, new emotions, new landscapes and adventures’ (28, 9%, Table 11). This finding confirms the tendency of “new tourists” (mentioned in 2.5.3 – Travel motivation/novelty seeking) to ‘go beyond the routine’. It proves the statement that a tourist is now seeking for extraordinary destinations and experiences in some of remote, unique and prestige-worthy locations.

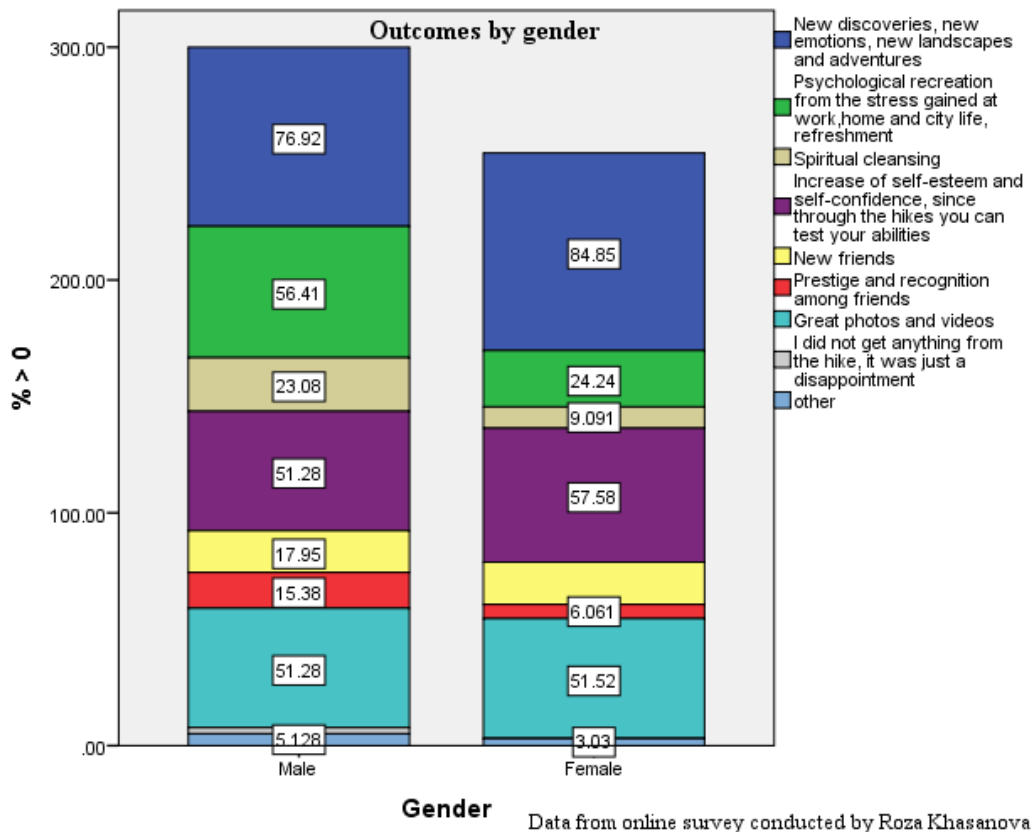
The second frequent outcome of completing this tough hike is ‘increase of self-esteem, self-confidence’ (19, 4%, Table 11). And the third one ‘psychological recreation from the stress gained at work, home and city life, refreshment’ (14, 9%, Table 11).

Additional comparison analysis shows that there is a difference in outcomes by gender. First, the common outcome is the same for both gender group – ‘New discoveries, new emotions, new landscapes and adventures’. However, next outcomes differ: for male group second big outcome is ‘psychological recreation from the stress gained at work, home and city life, refreshment’ (56, 41%) and ‘increase of self-esteem, self-confidence’ as third one (51, 28%), the latter is second important outcome for female group. Outcome ‘psychological recreation from the stress gained at work, home and city life, refreshment’ for the female group (24, 24%) is almost twice less important than for male group (Figure 26).

Table 11. Outcome frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
outcomes ^a	New discoveries, new emotions, new landscapes and adventures	58	28.9%	80.6%
	Psychological recreation from the stress gained at work,home and city life, refreshment	30	14.9%	41.7%
	Spiritual cleansing	12	6.0%	16.7%
	Increase of self-esteem and self-confidence, since through the hikes you can test your abilities	39	19.4%	54.2%
	New friends	13	6.5%	18.1%
	Prestige and recognition among friends	8	4.0%	11.1%
	Great photos and videos	37	18.4%	51.4%
	I did not get anything from the hike, it was just a disappointment	1	0.5%	1.4%
	other	3	1.5%	4.2%
Total		201	100.0%	279.2%

Figure 26: Outcomes from Trolltunga experience by gender

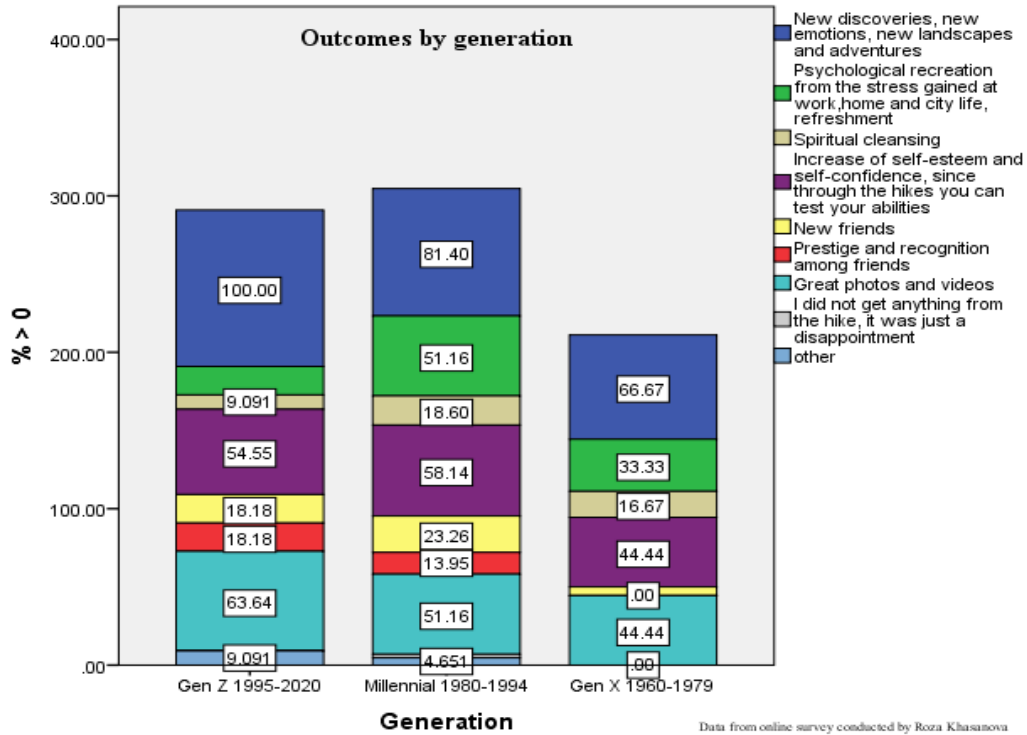


For male: 1 – Novelty, 2 – psychological recreation, 3 – Increase of self-esteem

For female: 1 – Novelty, 2 – Increase of self-esteem, 3 – Photos and videos

Another significant difference in outcomes was found by comparing outcomes by generations. The outcome of ‘psychological recreation from the stress gained at work, home and city life, refreshment’ for Millennials (1980-1994) is twice bigger than for other generations (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Outcomes from Trolltunga experience by generations



4.4.3 Content sharing in social media

Majority of respondents (75%, Table 12) answered that they had shared their Trolltunga experience in social media (mostly Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat) by posting pictures and narrative stories.

Table 12. Content sharing in social media.

Did you share your Trolltunga experience in any social media platforms?

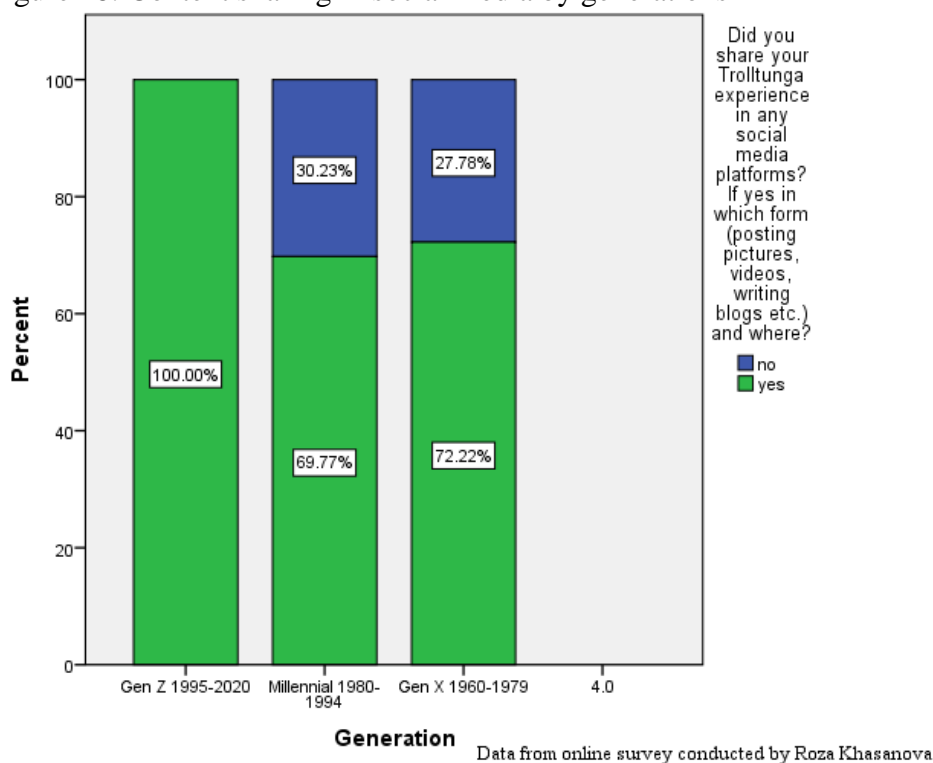
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	18	25.0	25.0	25.0
Yes	54	75.0	75.0	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Trolltunga visitors create informative platform about Trolltunga by sharing their experience in social media and thus contribute to the diffusion of Trolltunga experience. But most of sharing is photographs/pictures, and they are

not as helpful in term of practical information as textual content sharing of experience. Textual content includes more details of the experience; hence it is community related and altruistic. As it was mentioned above, community-related content provides practical tips and recommendations to improve the quality of experience and minimise possible risks in the decision-making of other travellers and during their trip. In other words, community-related textual contents are more informative.

Photograph and video content sharing mostly has personal expectations, and it helps gaining respect and recognition, increasing social ties, augmenting one's self-esteem, enjoyment of online activity, and achieving enhanced cooperation in return' (Baym, 2010; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008 as cited in Munar & Jacobsen, 2014, p.48). Furthermore, generations Z is the first in online sharing, while generation X is the second, and Millennials are the third but with no significant difference with generation X (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Content sharing in social media by generations



Chapter 5. DISCUSSIONS

This study has attempted to investigate and provide a broad and detailed overview of the role of social media in the transformation of remote wild place into a hot spot destination by analysing Trolltunga experience as a case study. Even though now Trolltunga is considered to be a hot touristic spot, it is not a product of marketing, but a product of social media. And it should be emphasised that social media is a platform of user-generated content, in other words, people made Trolltunga popular by generating and spreading various content about Trolltunga in social media.

The case study of Trolltunga and data analysis from case study was supposed to approve or reject the hypotheses of current paper:

a) *Social media the main inspiring source of motivation to engage in adventurous trips to remote natural areas - approved*

The case of Trolltunga showed that social media plays a significant role in inspiring people to go on adventurous trips to remote natural areas. As it was assumed social media is the primary source of learning about Trolltunga (54, 93 %). The study shows that pictures of Trolltunga with the spectacular view impress and motive people to go for the same experience. This finding confirms the statement of McHugh (2017) that social media (especially Instagram) now became a platform for many outdoor inspirations.

Thus, social media in the very early stage of the experience, in the pre-trip stage, plays an inspiring and motivating role and pushes travellers to go to that area. Isaak (2016) emphasises that users should be more responsible for the content they are sharing as it influences other users' motivation, decision and behaviour. However, study shows that motivation of Trolltunga visitors can be various and differ by gender and generation.

b) *Social media is also the primary, but not reliable information source for preparations for the trip - approved*

The case of Trolltunga showed that social media is the main information source for the hike preparations. (57, 1 %, Table 6). Hence, social media in case of Trolltunga plays the role of a main informative platform for the preparation, and thus it influences the level of preparedness. Here it must be mentioned that current study found that social media does not provide enough information for the preparations, as content shared in social media about Trolltunga is mostly visual (pictures and videos), and it has more personal behaviour rather than altruistic in terms of being useful for the next travellers. Furthermore, social media in the pre-trip stage can create an illusion of easy access to remote wild places, what in 'during -trip' stage can cause disharmony (imbalance) of skills of visitors and challenge of the experience. The latter as it was discussed in the literature review and findings lead to the negative experience of anxiety, worry and frustration. However, as Laing and Crouch (2005) emphasise adventure travellers are largely responsible for their own safety throughout their journeys, facing risk and adventure as well as isolation and discomfort.

c) 'Status/prestige' motivator pushes peoples to engage in adventurous trips to remote natural areas, 'status', 'prestige' is also gained by sharing digital narratives in social media – not approved, not rejected – motivator are different

The case study of Trolltunga defined that visitors are mainly driven by the 'desire to explore Norwegian landscape and nature'. This motivator I identified as a motivation of 'intellectual component' (utilising Beard & Reghob's (1983) motivation scale). It motivates individuals to engage in mental activities as earning, exploring, discovering etc. 'Desire to explore' can be also interpreted as 'personal development' motivator, which is described as increasing knowledge and learning a new skills (according to Swarbrooke & Horner's (2003) scheme of travel motivators).

However, 'desire to explore and discover' can also be considered as 'status' motivator (according to according to Swarbrooke & Horner's (2003) scheme of travel motivators) as it pushes to engage in unusual, unique experience, thus making this experience prestige-worthy and helping to increase self-esteem, recognition and achievements. The majority of respondents said that they shared their experience, mainly by posting pictures on Facebook and Instagram. Thus it

can be concluded that sharing about own achievements as accomplishing tough hike raises recognition and status.

However, next two main motivations of ‘test own abilities to overcome long and tough terrains’ and ‘desire to take the picture and post it in social media’ are stronger in the male group than in the female group. Thus it can be concluded that motivators for male groups are: personal development, physical factor and status, and for a female is mainly personal development. Moreover, as Swarbrooke & Horner noted “no tourist is likely to be influenced by just one motivator. They are more likely to be affected by a number of motivators at any one time” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003, p.55).

d) Images in social media are the ‘start and finish’ point of the trips to Trolltunga, thus travel behaviour model influenced by social media is changed from linear to circular model with the same start and finish point.

The case study of Trolltunga shows that the start point of the experience is in social media. As discussed in results and findings part content, mainly pictures, of Trolltunga attracts people’s attention. Majority of visitors found out about Trolltunga through social media, they were impressed and then motivated to go for the same experience. In other words destination and its characteristics drags visitors from all over the world. Hence, the concept of Cohen (1972, 1979, Figure 9) which says that destination and its features pull people to visit the place, is more appropriate for the destinations which a product of social media.

Social media is also the final stage of Trolltunga experience, as this experience is not finished on the site after accomplishing the hike. Majority of respondents said that they have shared in social media their experience, mostly photographs and videos. When individuals share on social media their experiences about any trip, adventure and so on, it means that experience is relived again by bringing back memories. Thus social media is the finish point for those who have accomplished the hike and starting point for those who get inspired by that posts. Furthermore, as it was noted above social media appears not only at the start and finish point, but also during the process – ‘on-site’/’during trip’ stages.

Concluding it can be noted that model of Trolltunga experience is circular flow. The circular model of the possible connection between experience stages and social media (Figure 1) is approved by findings of the case study. Social media appears at every stage of the experience/trip and plays its essential role in every stage. In the pre-trip it inspires, motives, provides information about the experience, preparations, even though it is not sufficient as study shows; in the during-trip stage it influences the behaviour of visitors; in post-trip social media becomes a platform for sharing unique experience and achievements.

It can be summarised that social media indeed plays essential, but different roles in every stage of touristic mountaineering experience. Millennials (born in between of 1980 - 1994) are attracted to that kind of adventurous experiences in remote wild places. They are inspired mainly by content about wild experiences shared in social media. Generally, they are poorly prepared and not experienced hikers.

Chapter 6. CONCLUSION

This study provides an overview of the role of social media in outdoors, particularly in turning remote wild places in hot touristic mountaineering destinations. This study covers all stages of the process and touches the themes of many details as motivation, preparation, on-site experience, outcomes, content sharing. Even though the range of subjects is broad, all stages are interconnected and effect next stages. Many exciting differences by gender and generation were identified during data analysis. The current study is a general overview of the role of social media and its influence on destination and visitors. However, further research can be conducted specifically on one stage of the experience/process.

Role of social media in outdoors is not well investigated and thus it should be researched further and more profound. Social media in outdoors, especially in adventurous outdoor experiences, should not be neglected by outdoor researchers and practitioners.

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APPENDIX

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt
Postboks 4014 Ullevål stadion
0806 OSLO

Vår dato: 04.08.2017
ref:

Vår ref: 54717 / 3 / ASF

Deres dato:

Deres

Tilbakemelding på melding om behandling av personopplysninger

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 12.06.2017. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

54717	Trolltunga: to go or not to go. Motivation, the level of preparedness (informative, physical skills, equipment, clothes, food etc.), risk perception and satisfaction of travellers to Trolltunga (in the case of Russian and Japanese travellers) Current research is supposed to determine the motivation encouraging tourist to go for this hike, their demands, and preferences. The successfully completed research will provide data and information which can be useful for marketing of tourism on Trolltunga hike, reducing risk-taking attitudes and the hazards
Behandlingsansvarlig	Norges idrettshøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt
Student	Roza Khasanova

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget [skjema](#). Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en [offentlig database](#).

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.07.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Dersom noe er uklart ta gjerne kontakt over telefon.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Amalie Statland Fantoft

Kontaktperson: Amalie Statland Fantoft tlf: 55 58 36 41 / amalie.fantoft@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Roza K hasanova, khasanovaroza@yahoo.com



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 54717

PURPOSE

This research deals with incoming tourism in the Trolltunga cliff. It will focus on the increasing number of foreign tourists in case of Russian and Japanese travelers

INFORMATION AND CONSENT

According to the notification form, participants will receive verbal information about the project and give consent to participation. In order to satisfy the requirement of informed consent of the law, the participants must be informed of the following:

- that Norges idrettshøgskole is responsible
- the purpose of the project
- which methods will be used to collect personal data
- what kind of information will be collected
- that information will be treated confidentially and who will have access to it
- that participation is voluntary and that one may withdraw at any time without stating a reason
- the expected end date of the project
- that all personal data will be anonymized or deleted when the project ends
- whether individuals will be recognisable in the final thesis/publication
- contact information of the researcher, or student and supervisor

METHODS

We can only find information on how you will collect personal data through interviews. Therefore, we presuppose that you will not collect personal data through social media/Internet.

SENSITIVE DATA

There will be registered sensitive information relating to ethnic origin and health.

DATA SECURITY

The Data Protection Official presupposes that the researcher follows internal routines of Norges idrettshøgskole regarding data security. If personal data is to be stored on portable storage devices, the information should be adequately encrypted.

PUBLICATION

It is stated that personally identifiable information will be published. The Data Protection Official presupposes that the participants give their explicit consent to this. Further, we recommend that participants are given the opportunity to read through their own information and give their approval before publication.

ANONYMIZATION

Estimated end date of the project is 30.07.2017. According to the notification form all collected data will be made anonymous by this date. Making the data anonymous entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be recognised. This is done by:

- deleting all direct personal data (such as names/lists of reference numbers)
- deleting/rewriting indirectly identifiable data (i.e. an identifying combination of background variables, such as residence/work place, age and gender)
- deleting digital audio files

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

21/05/2018

"The role of social media in motivation, travel decision and behavior of visitors to Trolltunga"

"The role of social media in motivation, travel decision and behavior of visitors to Trolltunga"

Hello. My name is Roza Khasanova. I conduct a survey for the master thesis on the topic: "The role of social media in motivation, travel decision and behavior of visitors to Trolltunga" at Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

The questionnaire is anonymous, the data will be used in a generalized form. The questions are simple, filling out the questionnaire will not take you more than 10 minutes. Your opinion is very important to me. I will be grateful for every feedback. Final work in the future can be sent by e-mail, if you wish.

Respondents must have experience of visiting Trolltunga.

* **Обязательно**



1. **Sex ***

Отметьте только один овал.

- Male
 Female

2. **Age ***

3. **Nationality ***

4. **Country of residence ***

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1KpcRRp4KrTXkOH_dv/vT-mwVGy4aBJDORqRk1sH9Js/edit

1/7

5. Date of Trolltunga visit*Пример: 15 декабря 2012 года***6. 1. How did you learn about Trolltunga? ****Отметьте только один овал.*

- Through travel agency
- Through social media
- Through stories and recommendations of friends (not online friends)
- Tv, Radio
- Другое: _____

7. 2. What drove you to go to Trolltunga? (you can choose several answers) **Отметьте все подходящие варианты.*

- Desire to take picture on Trolltunga and post on my social media page
- Desire to experience solitude in nature, to stay away from the usual circle of people and routine
- Desire to test my ability to overcome long and tough terrain routes
- Desire to explore the Norwegian landscape and nature of Norway
- Другое: _____

8. 3. Have you been impressed and motivated by Trolltunga pictures shared on social media? **Отметьте только один овал.*

- Yes, pictures are so impressing that I wanted to be on that pictures
- Pictures are impressing, but taking picture on Trolltunga was not my first motivation
- Pictures are impressing, but I knew that they are the results of waiting in a long queue
- No, because these photos are self-deception and disinformation. The reality on the cliff is completely different
- No, as I don't use social media
- Другое: _____

9. 4. Who organised your trek? **Отметьте только один овал.*

- The trek was independent, organised by me.
- The trek was independent, organised by the leader of our group, however I also took care of the preparations.
- The trek was independent, organised by the leader of our group, and I was just following his/her instructions.
- The trek was organised by travel agency, however I also took care of the preparations.
- The trek was organised by travel agency, and I was just following their instructions.
- Другое: _____

10. 5. What was your main information source for the preparations to the trek? **Отметьте все подходящие варианты.*

- Travel agency
- Internet and social media
- Advices and recommendations of friends (not online friends)
- Did not prepare for the trek so carefully
- Другое: _____

11. 6. How many people were in your group? **Отметьте только один овал.*

- 1- myself
- 2
- 3
- 4 and more
- Другое: _____

12. 7. How many days did you spend in Trolltunga trek? **Отметьте только один овал.*

- 1 day trek
- 2 days with overnight near the cliff and nearby area
- 3+ days with overnights near the cliff and nearby area

13. If your trek was with the overnight, where did you overnight?*Отметьте только один овал.*

- In a tent
- In the survival cabin
- In a sleeping bag under the open sky
- Другое: _____

14. 8. Did you have everything you need for the hike? Indicate what you had with you, and also you can add in the section 'other'. (you can choose several options) **Отметьте все подходящие варианты.*

- Warm clothes and spare clothes
- Waterproof hiking shoes
- Torch
- Map of the area
- Compass
- Food/snacks (enough quantity)
- First aid kit
- Tent
- Sleeping bag and mat
- Camping gas stove
- Другое: _____

15. 9. Have you been following the weather forecast for the Trolltunga area on the day of your hike? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, I was aware that weather on Trolltunga area is unpredictable
- No, as I did not consider it as something important.
- Don't remember.
- Другое: _____

16. 10. Have you had any hiking experience before? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- It was my first hike.
- My experience of hiking is not big, only several times.
- I go for hiking often, several times in a year.
- Hikes are important part of my life.
- Другое: _____

17. 11. How do you rate difficulty level of the hike? *

Отметьте только один овал.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very tough

18. 12. Were there any risky, dangerous situations or moments during the trek? If yes, please describe. If not, write - no *

19. 13. Did you have a backup plan, in case of an emergency situation, such as the impossibility of going back to the base camp on the planned day. If so, please describe.

20. 14. In 2017 it was predicted that the visitors to Trolltunga will be increased up to 100,000 and this is 10 times more than just 7 years ago. Did you know that the route and the cliff are overloaded with tourists? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, I was ready for that.
- No, I was shocked.
- Can't answer.
- Другое: _____

21. 15. Your attitude to the overcrowdedness of the route and the queue to the cliff: *

Отметьте только один овал.

- I was very upset, I did not know that this place was teeming with tourists
- I was surprised, but it did not affect my mood.
- It did not affect my mood
- I liked it, it gave me sense of security that I/we am/are not alone there.
- I liked it very much, it was interesting to meet and talk with other people.
- I can't answer.
- Другое: _____

22. 16. How long did you wait in a queue to step on the cliff? (Approximately) please indicate minutes, hours or days *

23. 17. Did you take pictures of yourself on the cliff (or someone took pictures of you on the cliff)? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes of course, that is why I did this long way.
- Yes, but it was not important for me.
- No, as the queue was really long and I/we had to go back.
- No, I lost my interest after seeing that everyone is waiting in a queue for only few minutes on the cliff and taking pictures.
- No, I initially didn't have a wish and goal to take pictures on the cliff.
- Другое: _____

24. 18. Pictures of Trolltunga shared in social media mainly show "solitude", "solitude with nature", "a lonely place". Did you experience this yourself during the trek or on the cliff? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, especially while being on the cliff.
- Yes, especially during the trek/hiking.
- No, I was too busy to experience it.
- No, a crowd of tourists did not give a chance to experience it.
- I can't answer.
- Другое: _____

25. **19. Did you share your Trolltunga experience in any social media platforms? If yes in which form (posting pictures, videos, writing blogs etc.) and where? ***

26. **20. What was your outcomes of visiting Trolltunga? (You can choose several options). ***

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- New discoveries, new emotions, new landscapes and adventures
- Psychological recreation from the stress gained at work, home and city life, refreshment
- Spiritual cleansing
- Increase of self-esteem and self-confidence, since through the hikes you can test your abilities
- New friends
- Prestige and recognition among friends
- Great photos and videos
- I did not get anything from the hike, it was just a disappointment
- Другое: _____

27. **21. Did you realistically estimate your ability of completing this trek? ***

Отметьте только один овал.

- I surpassed my expectations, more than pleased with my abilities and performance.
- All was as expected, I am happy with my abilities and performance.
- The hike was more difficult than I was expecting. But I am still satisfied that I have reached the destination point and could make to go back.
- Clearly underestimated the complexity and seriousness of the hike and terrain, overestimated my abilities.
- I can't answer/ hard to answer.
- Другое: _____

28. **22. Were your expectations for Trolltunga fulfilled? ***

Отметьте только один овал.

- The reality surpassed expectations.
- All as imagined.
- Disappointed with the attraction, which I was so eager to see.
- It does not matter. The important thing is that it will be great / cool update on my pages in the social network.
- I can't answer/ hard to answer.
- Другое: _____

29. 23. What did you do with your garbage? *

Оставьте мусор обходою.

- I took it back with me to the base camp site.
- Left it in the nature. I do not consider that it is my duty to clean up the garbage after myself.
- All food and organic wastes left in nature, everything else was taken back to the base camp site.
- Другое: _____

30. 24. Would you like to repeat the trip to the Trolltunga? And what would you change next time? (for example the number of days, equipment, route, the group, or would go alone, etc.)

31. 25. If you have additional comments, please write here.

Thank you for answers!

If you have any questions, please contact me by e-mail: humanous.com@yahoo.com