



UiT Alta - Department of Tourism & Northern Studies

**From 'gaze' to engage:**

*Exploring Digital Technology Usage in North Norwegian Museum Narratives in relation to Tourism Experiences and Imaginaries*

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Cover Photo: 'Traces in Stone', Permanent Exhibition at Alta Museum, 2020.  
Photo by: Eman Udaya

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## Abstract

Museums are important heritage sites, cultural institutions, and tourist attractions. They hold a special authoritative status in providing legitimacy and authentic representation of art, artefacts, history, people, and cultures. The entry of digital technology in the museum space has brought forward numerous possibilities and complexities. Through this study, I will explore the use of digital technology in the narratives of three museums in Northern Norway.

Taking into consideration the background and context of these museums and focusing on three main examples (two exhibitions and apps), I will discuss how museum narratives, through interactivity and digital staging mediated by digital technology, enhances experiences by inviting the visitors to engage and co-create instead of passively ‘gaze’. The discussion on representation of minority cultures of Sámi and Kven people in the museum space is also made. In this case, digital technology in museum narratives, on one hand, contributes to the revitalization process by promoting visibility, knowledge preservation and dissemination, and inclusion; while on the other hand, lack of ‘self-representation’ and collaboration poses a risk of promoting unequal power relations, and retaining stereotypical, ‘emblematic’ touristic image of the minority groups. The process results in making an impact on the ‘pre-tour’, ‘on-tour’ and ‘post-tour narratives’ and tourism imaginaries of Northern Norway. Consequently, by analysing the practical limitations, challenges, and complexities of using digital technology in the museum, this study brings to light the balanced relationship of digital and non-digital objects in museum narratives.

*Keywords: museums, digital technology, tourism, experiences, narratives, imaginaries, minority cultures*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

The relationship between museum, digital technology, and tourism has been discussed, examined, and debated throughout the last decades (Parry, 2007, Chamberlain, 2011, Jewitt, 2012). In European Union's eEurope 2002 Action plan, recognition was given to the role that digitization process plays on cultural heritage initiatives.<sup>1</sup> DigiCult 2003 (Digital Heritage and Digital Content) states that the digitization process contributes to the heritage and scientific resources conservation, to encourage tourism, to create new educational opportunities, and improves accessibility to our heritage.<sup>2</sup> Museum has been an important heritage site, tourist attraction and a contested space 'with numerous and conflicting stakeholders, definitions and mandates'.<sup>3</sup> International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines museum as a non-profit making, permanent institution, open to the public for the service of society and its development through conservation, research, communication and exhibition with an aim to provide study, preservation, education, and enjoyment of people's material culture and their environment.<sup>4</sup>

Innovation Norway's annual key figures on tourism 2018 has shown that nature is one of the leading reasons why tourists visit Norway, however, culture is not far behind either.<sup>5</sup> As per the report, 68% of people associated Norway with 'interesting culture and history' and wanted to experience both culture and nature (ibid, p.54). The 'culturally active tourists' were identified based on their choices that signified at least two of the listed activities as 'very important' (ibid, p.57). Museum visit was one of those activities and 35% of the foreign visitors chose 'museum

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11884063.pdf>. Last accessed 2 Jan, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.roots-routes.org/what-the-museum-does-not-say-museums-and-contested-histories-by-eleanor-foster-and-kylie-message/> Last accessed 2 Jan 2019

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> Last accessed 2 Jan 2019

<sup>5</sup>Innovation Norway (2018). Key figures for Norwegian Tourism 2018. Retrieved from [https://assets.simpleviewcms.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/norway/Key\\_figures\\_for\\_norwegian\\_tourism\\_2018\\_f9ac4f82-7b02-4fee-a67b-dcf98c4bd403.pdf](https://assets.simpleviewcms.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/norway/Key_figures_for_norwegian_tourism_2018_f9ac4f82-7b02-4fee-a67b-dcf98c4bd403.pdf) Last accessed 2 Jan, 2019

visits' as 'very important' activity (ibid, p.60). The collection in museums are important resources for making sense of the past, research, education, entertainment, and signify socio-cultural development. Therefore, museums are an important tourist destination in Norway.

The rapid evolution of digital technology and internet has also made an influence on museums and other cultural institutions. The term 'digital' is used as a catchall term that unifies various forms and practices (Geismar H. , 2012), making it 'multifaceted and ambivalent' (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p.4). Digital refer to different types of digital objects (e.g. photographs of artefacts and from field research, documents, and metadata), digital solutions (such as 3D scanning and printing, mapping, photometry), and digital platforms (that are museum-generated, or commercial social media such as Facebook and Youtube) (ibid).

The use of handheld interpretative devices, audio-visual technology, augmented/virtual reality, interactive screens, software and apps, websites and social media, and digitization of materials for digital archival processes are increasing steadily in museum spaces in the past years. The critical and elaborated analysis of digital technology in the museums have shown that this process is a result of 'a long-standing trajectory of networking, classifying and forging representations of relationships between people and things' (Geismar, 2012, p. 266). In case of digital heritage tourism, a study done by J.M. Griffiths and D.W. King (2006) showed that 45% of the museum visits were done by the online visitors (as cited in Proctor, 2011, p.2). This rate is growing, as Nancy Proctor (2011) points out that the museums report up to 10 times more visitors online than in their buildings (ibid). Similarly, digital technology in the museums have also proven to have potential in opening new routes of participation and engagement (Jewitt, 2012).

National Strategy for Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Cultural Heritage, Norway discusses the importance of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in community services mainly preservation and dissemination of cultural heritages and equates the concept of

digital common with the Norwegian culture of '*almenning*' which means owned by all (p. 8).<sup>6</sup> The report suggests strategies to use 'digital technology as a targeted instrument for making cultural heritage material more readily and more widely accessible to the country's inhabitants may lend further substance to the goal of all inhabitants having easy access to relevant and necessary information in various contexts'(ibid., p.8). Therefore, understanding how digital technology are being used in museums in Northern Norway can bring out novel instances about its implication on tourism and other aspects of the society.

In the rest of the chapter, I will discuss the rationale behind this choice of topic, research question, relevance of the study, and the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Choice of the topic**

The idea behind this thesis began to evolve while writing a term paper for one of the Tourism Studies courses: REI 3003 Heritage Tourism. The term paper was based on museum representation of Sámi cultural heritage. Writing that paper gave me a renewed outlook on contemporary trends in museums in Northern Norway, and its significance in representation of cultural heritage. In case of Sámi people and their cultural heritage, which I based my paper on, several different perspectives and stories came forward during the writing process. I also came to notice that museums are not just used as a space for display but also as a space which enables a dialogue and brings forward a commentary on new socio-cultural changes. Most importantly, writing that paper made me aware of the use of digital tools and technology in museums to promote participation and dissemination, and digitization processes for preservation of arts and artefacts.

The launch of the Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app also played a role in choosing this topic. The app was launched on 10 April 2019 by Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (North Norwegian Art Museum) with an objective to 'enhance the perspectives of North' by exploring

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<sup>6</sup> National Strategy for Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Cultural Heritage. Retrieved from [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/f3f0e538cc704abda770db1ef2c5399b/en-gb/pdfs/stm200820090024000en\\_pdfs.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/f3f0e538cc704abda770db1ef2c5399b/en-gb/pdfs/stm200820090024000en_pdfs.pdf) Last accessed 5 Jan 2020

the works from the museum's collection in super high resolution.<sup>7</sup> The Second Canvas app features the works that are physically present in the museum space to the virtual space in super-high gigapixel resolution and also boasts of access to 'brushstrokes and craquelure of the paintings'.<sup>8</sup> The users also have an opportunity to get an elaborate description of the art, artists and stories behind them. Downloading the digital version of art works and sharing them on social media is possible through the app.<sup>9</sup>

My avid interest in the issues related to art, technology, cultural heritage, identity processes, and museum. Similarly, my previous involvement in 2010-2012 as an employee at Tribhuvan University research center: 'Center for Nepal and Asian Studies'<sup>10</sup>, Kathmandu, Nepal has also been instrumental in making this choice. Being involved in the center's two years research program related to social exclusion and inclusion of ethnic minority and indigenous people in policy discourses helped me gain an insight not only on identity politics, policy discourses and cultural heritage system but also on practical issues of archiving through digitization. As one of their main objectives was to collect, preserve, and disseminate information regarding the issues of inclusion and exclusion in Nepal, digital media and technology was widely used.

The centre publishes biannual multi-disciplinary journal called *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* that has been publishing articles both in English and Nepali since 1973.<sup>11</sup> As a part of the layout editing and design team of the journal, I also attended workshops related to digitization of materials for archival purposes. This gave me first-hand experience of the process of digitization and use of digital technology for archival purposes. In addition, my personal experience and fascination for the interactive digital multimedia tools, as an onsite and online museum visitor also fuelled extra motivation and passion to carry out this study.

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<sup>7</sup> App Description. 2019. Retrieved from [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.secondcanvas.nordnorsk&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.secondcanvas.nordnorsk&hl=en_US) Last accessed 27 April, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Last accessed 27 April, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> About CNAS. 2013-2019. Retrieved from <https://cnastu.edu.np/about-us/> Last accessed 20 March 2019

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from [http://tribhuvan-university.edu.np/research-centers/centre-for-nepal-and-asian-studies-cnastu#xd\\_co\\_f=YWM5ZDNINDktYjMxMS00ZTVILTlhNzAtZmE4NWJmMTM3MDYz~](http://tribhuvan-university.edu.np/research-centers/centre-for-nepal-and-asian-studies-cnastu#xd_co_f=YWM5ZDNINDktYjMxMS00ZTVILTlhNzAtZmE4NWJmMTM3MDYz~) Last accessed 20 March, 2019.

### **1.3 Research Question**

When I started to brainstorm about this study, several questions came into my mind: what kind of digital projects were going on in the museums in Northern Norway? How does the relationship between digital and museum work? What role does it play in shaping and presenting the narratives? How does it impact the tourism experiences and imaginaries? After carefully considering these queries and rigorously readings previous literature, the research question was formulated: *how is digital technology being used in North Norwegian museum narratives to create tourist experiences and imaginaries?*

### **1.4 Relevance of the Study**

Every research work has some implication and relevance. In the case of this project, the subject area and the fieldwork setting gives it a unique and multidisciplinary relevance. This study will shed more light on the use and impact of digital technology within the museum space. This study will be informative in the study area of cultural heritage, digital technology, and museology. It will also be a contribution to the tourism studies as the focus is on tourism experience, and imaginaries. The finding of the research will be helpful in bringing together the diverse study areas of digital technology, visual art, museum, cultural heritage, identity, and tourism.

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1, which is this chapter contributes to familiarizing the readers with the subject area by discussing the background of the study, rationale behind the topic, research question, aim and relevance of the study.

Chapter 2 will shed some light on the previous studies done on the general and specific areas related to the topic. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework chosen for this study. The chapter contains several sections divided according to different topics and will provide an insight on what has been written and studied about digital technology, museums, narratives, tourism experience, and imaginaries. Through the chapter, attempt will be made to present the relationships between different elements that constitute in the research topic and relevance of the study.

Chapter 3 will take the readers to the settings of the fieldwork. The historical background of the three museums that have been chosen for the study will be presented to formulate a background to specific cases. The specific examples i.e. the two permanent exhibitions and an app will be thoroughly discussed.

Chapter 4 constitutes the research methodology of this thesis. The chapter provides explanation on what choices were made regarding research methods and the reason behind those choices.

Chapter 5-7 presents the analysis of the findings of the fieldwork. Chapter 5 is the first discussion chapter. This chapter will focus mainly findings of the research on the ‘stories’ that museums tell. Entering the topic by discussing the role and importance of museum narratives, exploration on what happens when digital technology has been brought into the dynamics is done in this chapter.

Chapter 6 focuses on representation of minority (Sámi and Kven) cultures in museums and the role digital technology plays in this representation.

Chapter 7 elaborates the dynamics between digital and non-digital objects in the museum presentations. Focusing on the complexity of situating the digital as ‘museum objects’, question regarding its authenticity, and the challenges that come across when incorporating digital technology in museum presentations, this chapter argues, based on the research findings, that balanced use of digital and non-digital objects in museum narratives is ideal for tourism experiences and imaginaries.

Chapter 8 is the final concluding chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

‘The originality of the research topic depends on the critical reading of a wide-ranging literature’ (Hart, 1998, p. 26). Every research project is built upon the extensive background study and analysis of previous literature relevant to the research topic helps formulate a basis that helps a researcher to embark on further exploration, find a point of departure, figure out what contribution can one’s own study can make to the field, and identify the knowledge gap that can be filled.

This project is built upon the theoretical and methodological framework generated through a thorough study of literature, both general and specific, available on the subject related to digital technology usage, museums, and tourism. In this chapter, I will summarize and critically assess what has been previously discussed on the research topic by my predecessors.

### **2.2 Museum and Minority Culture**

Museum’s role in the society and culture has been one of the important of research within museology, anthropology, and heritage study. Clifford (1997), proposed the idea of museums as a ‘contact zone’, a concept he borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt which signified a space, where colonial encounters take place and subjects previously separated both historically and geographically come together. He argued that when a museum is a contact zone, ‘their organizing structure as *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship, a power charged set of exchanges, a push and pull’ (Clifford, 1997, p. 192). Through this renewed role of museums, he challenged the view that museums are ‘dominant national or cultural spaces’ where cultural cores were articulated and argued they are now ‘sites of passage and contestation’. (ibid., p.210). He argued that by taking this role, not only do museums benefit by displaying the objects but the cultures/communities whose artefacts are being displayed also greatly benefit by them as they ‘accommodate different systems of accumulation and circulation, secrecy and communication, aesthetic, spiritual and economic value’ (ibid.,p.217).

Kathrin Pabst et al. (2016) discuss the changing role of museum in contemporary society. The discussion is mainly about how museums are transforming into a participatory, engaging space that encourages dialogue but also sometimes shed lights on conflicts and issues that needs attention in the society. They also discuss the role of museum in a globalized landscape where mobility of population from one place to another is increasing and thus, museums have the responsibility to reflect the society they are a part of, incorporate individual personal narratives, and mirror ‘diversity in all its nuances’ (Pabst et al., 2016, p. 8). The article also discusses the importance of ethical and moral reflection that needs to be considered in carrying out this responsibility.

Capstick (1985) observed the increasing importance that museums have in the growth of tourism industry. Taking British Isles as the point of reference, in her seminal essay that focuses on the relationship museums has with tourism industry, she draws a parallel between the growth in tourist activity and interest in heritage, and the rise of awareness regarding ‘the fragility of the material evidence of our cultural and natural environment’(ibid., p.365).

Eeva-Kristiina Harlin (2017) discuss the encounters and experiences with recording the heritage related to indigenous Sámi community in museums in Europe. She discussed how several challenges were posed when Sámi museums started to work with ‘Recalling Ancestral Voices’ in 2006 because even though the heritage was related to the Sámi peoples common yet it was managed and operated by the rules that were related to the borders of three different countries: Finland, Norway and Sweden. Discussing on how the information on Sami cultural heritage has been collected and what kind of challenges were encountered during the process, the article focuses on two main themes: returning the knowledge back to Sámi people, the use of museum collections by them, and based on some empirical examples, discusses what kind of knowledge is useful for Sámi people and why (ibid.).

McCarthy (2011) explored the relationship between museums and indigenous people, mainly Maori of New Zealand and posed some key questions such as: how do (museum) professionals on a day-to-day basis deal with indigenous objects in the museums? On what practical level do they engage with indigenous communities? The book points out that even though issues like representation, politics of display and so on have been the topic of interest, very little focus has

been given to the museums and ‘source communities’ which is based on the current museum practice and includes the voices of indigenous people. Hence, this book places museums in the centre of the arguments related to culture, identity, history, social inclusion and restitution and uses research methods like interviews, documentation, and observation of the work of indigenous professionals and community representatives involved in transforming the museum practice in New Zealand in the decades three decades of internal ‘decolonization’, to address these generic problems. McCarthy (2011) writes:

‘Museums and Maori is an historical assessment of biculturalism's legacy in the museum context, and an assessment of what might come next as the relationship between museums and Maori moves into a new phase’ (p.3).

### **2.3 Museum, Digital Technology and Tourism**

‘Recoding the Museum: Digital Heritage and the technologies of Change’ by Ross Parry (2007) is one of the literatures that has been instrumental in formulating the knowledge base and theoretical framework for this project. The book deals with mainly two stories, as the author calls it: one about the museums that has struggled because of

‘strategic weaknesses and a lack of resources’ with the opportunities offered by new digital media, leaning towards the ‘incompatibility between the idea of museum and the idea of computer’. (Parry, 2007, p. xi)

and the second one is about the increased co-ordination and partnership between organizations which leans towards the resolution of incompatibilities between the museums and computers (ibid.).

The book presents the histories of museums and new digital technology and shows how different the experiences of institutional changes have been over the past forty years, and the challenges that come up while attempting to build a single historical narrative of this whole process. Using the word ‘recoding’ to fuse the terms ‘coding’ that is used in software development and ‘codifying’ in terms of cultural behaviours, the book explores the way we,

human being, and the technology we use, give meaning to things, thus, bringing together cultural studies and technology studies to one platform (Parry 2007).

‘Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse’ is extensive collection of twenty two essays focusing on the themes: replicants/object morphologies, knowledge systems and management: shifting paradigms and models, and cultural heritage and virtual systems that deals with the ways in which digital technologies have been instrumental in transforming the traditional museums, and also ‘altering’ the understanding of terminologies such as indigenous, heritage, space, the past, ecology and so on (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007, p. x). The writers in this series argue that the emergence and use of digital technologies have had a powerful impact on the society and culture and have created

‘an extended moment of transition and re-evaluation’, thus, they urge reconsideration, newly theorization, and re-imagination of the ‘ground assumptions on which the museums and the knowledge communities devoted to preserving and representing the cultural heritage’ (ibid., p.x)

Gowlland and Ween’s introductory essay (2018) on the special issue of *Nordisk Museologi* discuss the ‘nuts and bolts of digital heritage’ in order to find an answer to the a question: ‘what is the place of the digital in our efforts to document and disseminate knowledge about heritage?’ (p. 3) Reflecting on how digital tools and platforms offer different affordances, the authors focus on the political dimensions of digital heritage. The essay also offers some behind the scenes of digital initiatives and shed some light on a very important issue of ‘the materiality of the digital’ and what it implies. Dealing with the issues of ‘digital heritage ecosystem’ and ‘digital post-colonialism’, this essay draws attention on the conclusion drawn from different articles on the issue that the digital initiatives need to be grounded in the ‘real world’ and the long-term sustainability needs to be taken into consideration as the digital tools become obsolete (ibid, p.12).

In Horst and Miller (eds) ‘digital anthropology’, Geismar (2012) discusses the increasing integration of digital technology in the museums in the various practices such as collection management, exhibitions, curating, information management, and communication and

dissemination processes. Drawing upon Miller and Horst's definition of 'digital', Geismar focuses on technological mediation in museum practices and experience, remediation of collection online, and taking the few case studies, the discussion on 'how digital projects 'encode' theories of digital sociality and how digital coproduces not only representations of objects and social relations, but collections and sociality in museum worlds' (Geismar, 2012, p. 266). The author has also re-evaluated the claim within digital studies that digital is a completely new form and practice that makes different social and material encounters possible and argues that the digital practices in the museum now is in fact a part of long-standing trajectory of networking, classifying and forging representations of relationships between people and things'(ibid).

Vaz et al. (2018) explore the role of interactive technologies in museums. The essay elucidates how museums through digital installations and media are enhancing visitor experiences and promoting positive relations between them and the public. By observing the exploitation of 'digital ways of interactivity in museums', the authors conclude that by designing digital installations and utilizing virtual media, cultural institutions such as museum allows increasing physical, cognitive and sensory accessibility and 'transforms this kind of experience for disabled publics (ibid. p. 30).

Jewitt (2012) took various case studies and discussed different issues regarding digital technologies use in museums such as,: how can the use of digital technology in museum or gallery create interactive experiences for the visitor?, in what ways does technology afford new routes to engagement and participation with an exhibit or museum/gallery, and how can digital technology impact on opportunities for visitor interpretation or understanding of exhibits and experiences? (p.75).

## **2.4 Tourism Narratives**

From everyday life to the more specific formal study area as in narratology, there are no two ways about the importance and relevance of narratives regardless of the field and setting. Various perspectives such as existential, aesthetic, technical, cognitive, sociological etc. have been put forward to describe the meaning and relevance of narratives. The existential narrative

theorists describe narrative as something that gives meaning to our lives and helps us deal with our existence and thus, ‘the act of narrating enables humans to deal with time, destiny and morality; to create and project identities; and to situate themselves as embodied individuals in a world populated by similarly embodied subjects’ (Ryan, 2004, p. 2). According to these theorists, sky is the limit for the expression through narrative, as it helps human transcends the physical, ‘real’ world, exceed the boundaries of what one can see, feel, touch, smell and hear, and travel onto the realm of the dream, fantasy, and the unknown (ibid).

The context in which the narrative is produced is the focus of the sociological approach. According to this approach, shift occurs in understanding the ‘narrative as a text’ to ‘the performance of this text’ as it is not possible to define what narrative or the act of narration is ‘without defining the object created through this act’(ibid, p. 5). Whereas, in technological approach, context and other textual features are separated from ‘narrativity’. Furthermore, this approach gives priority to the language-based narrative and is concerned about situating narrative in a discourse theory so as to figure out if it is a genre, or an act or just a type of sentence (ibid, p. 5). On the other hand, in terms of aesthetics, narrative integrates all other layers of meaning and situates it with ‘total textual experience’ instead of isolating it. Hence, ‘narrativity, fictionality and literariness (or aesthetic appeal)’ are regarded as ‘inseparable features’ (ibid, p. 4).

Turner eloquently states that narrative is the instrument of human thoughts (as cited in ibid, p.3). David Herman describes narrative as ‘a spatio-temporal construct’ that reports action that take place in the world (p.8). Bruner associates it as ‘one of the two fundamental modes of thinking’ (paradigmatic/argumentative being the other one) which is focused on human, their intentions, actions, and consequences’ (ibid, p3). Two distinct realms of narratives are: a) a textual act of representation that has a particular meaning to it; and b) a mental image created as a response to a text by an interpreter (p.9). However, based on these perspectives, it is quite clear that finding one true definition of what a narrative is challenging. But what we can understand is: a) We use narrative to express what we want to or need to express (be it a fictional presentation, an elaborate description of an event, a minimal verbal act of telling something to someone else, or just a narrative script on our mind (ibid, pp 3-5); b) No matter what the quality

of narrative that is being expressed is, it is still a narrative; and c) Narrative is a way, we make sense of life and respond to it.

Previously confined only in literature and media studies, the formal study of narratives now transcends various disciplines and media (Ryan, 2004). Narrative holds a special place in tourism scholarship. From romantic descriptions of faraway places in travel writings such as journals and books to audio-visual narratives presented by guides in guided tours, photographs, television etc, the relationship narrative has with tourism experience is undeniable. Acknowledging this importance, several social scientists contributing to the field of tourism have extensively discussed narratives in tourism through different perspectives.

Pioneer anthropologist and tourism scholar Edward Bruner (2005) critically discussed the relationship between narration and experience, categorized narratives into three types and discussed how each narrative type plays a significant role in different stages of tourism process. His categorizations were: pre-tour, on-tour and post-tour. Each of these types of narratives played a significant role in tourist experiences, understandings, and reflections. Pre-tour narratives, for instance, are stories that a tourist hears/gathers/encounters before s/he goes to a tour.

These narratives are stories that are told by friends, acquaintances that have been to similar tours, travel agents, travel writings, brochures, guidebooks, internet, and enabled tourist understanding through a 'generalized Western discourse' (ibid. p.5). Bruner states that no tourists are naïve tourists who visit a place without having a pre-conception about what they will encounter there and thus, 'pre-tour narratives are already in the tourist consciousness before the journey begins' (p.5).

He posits that touristic experience is fundamentally based on sensory perceptions and pre-tour narratives, in a way, controls how tourists use their senses while on tour. Taking Balinese culture as an example, he also discusses the impact and power master narratives have in representation of any destination culture because they 'make meaning, shape action, mould tourist behaviour, serve to select which aspects of Balinese culture will be displayed for visitors, direct the construction of the infrastructure for foreigners, and work in subtle ways, sometimes in unconscious level. They are not only stories of meaning but of power' (ibid. p.3).

Benedix (2002) has elaborated the importance of narratized experience and its relationship with the emergence of ‘tourism as a modern industry’ (p.469). She discussed how touristic experiences are shaped and structured by narratives and how the ‘narratized memories’ of travellers have guided touristic adventures from generations to generations. This importance of narratives in turn compels the touristic providers to commodify and sell narratable memories to the potential consumers (ibid).

Lichrou et al (2008), on the other hand, deviate a little bit from the traditional way of describing tourism destination as a *product* to tourism destination as *narratives*. They argue that by taking place as a set of meanings, the focus diverts more towards role of culture and symbolic meanings in the construction, experience of place, and the contested ‘realities’ involved in the making of a tourism destination.

## 2.5 Tourism Imaginaries

‘Imagine’, ‘Image’, ‘Imagination’, and ‘Imaginary’ have been fascinating human minds for a long time. From thoughts of early philosophers such as Aristotle, Hume, Hobbes, Kant<sup>12</sup>, later to ‘active imagination’ by psychoanalyst Carl Jung<sup>13</sup> to ‘Imagine’ by musician John Lennon, to be able to ‘imagine’ have inspired several contemplative accounts.<sup>14</sup> Drawing parallel between theoretical precursor of analytical psychology and psychoanalysis, Coleman (2006) stressed on the dependency ‘real imagination’ has on the ability to fully ‘acknowledge the absence of what is imagined from the world of material actuality’ (p. 21). He stresses that unlike ‘true imagination’ that has its own reality that ‘enhances our being in the world’, imaginary is, on the other hand, ‘a misuse of imagination for the purpose of denying everything that opposes the subject’s desire’ (p.23). Following the footsteps of Foucault and Gregory, literary theorist

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/imagination/> Last accessed 10 March 2020

<sup>13</sup> ‘What is active imagination?’ Retrieved from [https://www.carl-jung.net/active\\_imagination.html](https://www.carl-jung.net/active_imagination.html) Last accessed 10 March 2020

<sup>14</sup> Martin Chilton (11.10.2019). ‘Imagine’: How John And Yoko’s Provocative Anthem Became A Hymn For Peace

Retrieved from: <https://www.udiscovermusic.com/stories/imagine-john-lennons-provocative-anthem-became-hymn-peace/> Last accessed 10 March 2020

Edward Said (1994) uses the term ‘imaginative geographies’ as the meaning ascribed to a physical space or how places are imagined, interpreted or perceived.

‘Imaginarities’ as a concept has also been explored extensively with a tourism studies lens. ‘It is, indeed, hard to think of tourism without imaginaries’ (Salazar and Graburn, 2014, p. 1). Salazar (2011) states that imaginaries resonate mostly in destinations, ‘the physical and mental landscapes where the imaginaries of local residents, tourism intermediaries, and tourists meet and, occasionally, clash’ (p.14). The function, role, impact of imaginaries on people, places, and practices have been studied and the need for ‘multidimensional definition’ has been acknowledged, on that basis, a genealogy of tourism imaginaries has been laid out (Gravari-Barbas & Graburn, 2012, p. 1).

Three different types of imaginaries are described by the authors: a) Imaginaries of Place, b) Imaginaries of practices, and c) Imaginaries of participants. The tourist imaginaries are the views, accounts or engravings that are favoured since the very conception of tourism and are produced, in the beginning, by the artist, intellectuals, scholars or scientists, for the ‘international elites’ (ibid., p.5) and then used by popular narratives. The imaginaries are, therefore, ‘the representations that forever characterize the tourist destinations’ (ibid.). Imaginaries are “complex systems of presumption—patterns of forgetfulness and attentiveness—that enter subjective experience as the expectation that things will make sense generally (i.e., in terms not wholly idiosyncratic)” (Vogler 2002, p. 625 as cited in (Salazar & Graburn, 2014, p. 3).

## **2.6 Experience Model**

Experience model has been used as another theoretical framework for this thesis. Experience consists of four main realms: entertainment, education, escape and esthetics; and four factors where individuals are absorbed, immersed, passive or active participant. (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999). The authors recognized experiences as the primary economic driver instead of services. Similarly, experiences were predicted to become a dominant domain in marketing as well (Schmitt, 1999). A shift in consumers wanting to actively engage with the providers in co-creating experiences were also observed (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Experience model

has become a big part in tourism arena as well. Getting great experience is one of the primary objectives of travelling. Increased interest in experience has also led the service provider to focus on experience designing.

## **2.7 Multimodality approach**

Multimodality approach has also helped me in finding practical ways to understand different mediums and modes present in the museum presentations. Derived from social semiotics, multimodality is an interdisciplinary approach that can be linked to social semiotics theory and understands communication and representation as more than language and attends systematically to the social interpretations of a range of forms of making meaning'. (Jewitt C. , 2013, p. 250). Based on the works of semiotic-systematic language theory by Halliday (1978) and meaning creation through the integration of semiotic resources by O'Toole (1994), multimodality approach the combines interpretation of meaning construction with various other relevant processes and phenomena within the structure of communication such as images, sound, gestures, signs, symbols etc, which ultimately is an extension of study of language.

Semiotics is rooted in an assumption that language and cultural world can be understood as signs. On this similar note, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) describe a sign as 'a unit in which a form has been combined with a meaning or, put differently, a form has been chosen to be the carrier of meaning (p.4). The term 'mode' to describe how different entities/objects are represented in the process of sign-making<sup>15</sup>. These modes are selected, arranged in the order of importance, and represented by the sign-makers. However, we need to keep in mind that these signs are never arbitrary, there is always motivation and interest that drives the sign-maker to make those choices (p.8). 'I would say it is all planned', says Kress in his conversation with Berit Hendriksen<sup>16</sup>. When asked what mode is in the conversation, Kress replied: 'mode is a term that are used to allow us to get away from using language for everything'<sup>17</sup>. Modes can be images, colors, texts, sound and so on (Kress, 2003) and they have different affordances and

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<sup>15</sup> 'How do people choose modes?' Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvP2sN7MFVA>. Last accessed 15.04.2020

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

representational potentials depending upon the purposes they are used for and the principles they are built in (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998, Kress, 2003).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The different approaches, perspectives, and sources that I have discussed here provides a strong foundation for this study. Their role in binding the data analysis to formulate coherent and reliable synthesis shows that the fundamental assumption they are built upon is 'meaning-making'. Therefore, the rationale behind choice of theory becomes connected and valid as they guide me towards a common research goal. Although the critical readings of these literature have brought forward extensive discussion on the relationships that digital technology, museum, heritage and tourism, however, I also came across the lack of literature on the digital technology usage in the museums in Northern Norway. Similarly, very little had been written about what implications these technological processes have regarding tourism experiences and imaginaries. Through this study, this gap in research will be attempted to fulfil.

Therefore, by using these background literature and theoretical frameworks, my findings will be presented and supported to answer the research question in discussion chapter. Thus, the next chapter will discuss the methods employed in this study.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The interrelationship between theory and method, and the important questions related to them have been said to be neglected in the tourism research in the past (Small, 2004, p. 255). Basing on the knowledge preserve provided by the previous literature and the theoretical background, as discussed in the previous chapter, this research is set out to achieve a goal of managing to bring together theory and method into ‘a happy blend’(ibid.).

This chapter discusses the research methods, methodology, and design implemented in the process of data collection and analysis of this project. The choice of research methods, information about the chosen field setting and the rationale behind it is also explained. This chapter is also a reflexive contemplation on my own position in the research and touches upon the ethical issues and challenges that I came across during the research process.

### **3.2 The Choice of Research Methodology**

Research is a very long, intense, and contemplative process. The researcher’s journey is full of choices. Thomas (2004) states that ‘at the heart of the research process lies the complex interplay of choices and decisions which mould the nature and direction of research’ (p. 197) . The main task for a researcher is to figure out what research methodology and methods s/he can choose and implement depending upon the nature of the research project. Finn (et al, 2005) argues that the choice of research method should consider ‘the murky waters of ontology, the form and nature of reality, and epistemology i.e. what counts as knowledge’ (as cited in Jordan & Gibson, 2004, p. 216).

The objective of this research project is to explore the use of digital technology in North Norwegian museum narratives to create tourist experience and imaginaries. Based on the research question, qualitative approach was chosen. Qualitative approach is described to be mainly ‘concerned with understanding human beings’ experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach’ (Jackson II, Drummond & Camara, 2007, p. 21). Qualitative method focuses on understanding the human experiences and their reflection about the experiences (ibid. p,22).

Similarly, qualitative method is also described as an approach that is used by individuals or groups to explore and understand the meaning ascribed to a social or human problem.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to the ‘erroneous assumptions’ that qualitative research is a non-rigorous, atheoretical method which is competing with quantitative approach and deals merely with ‘experiences’, David Silverman (2016) elucidates that, this type of approach is in reality rigorous, theoretically driven, complementary to quantitative research, and is very much about social practices as it is about experiences (p.3). This type of research is usually based on the rigorous attention directed towards a phenomenon through observation and the in-depth responses provided by the research participants about their own understanding of the phenomenon or problem in question, among many other methods. It is described as a ‘humanistic, interpretive approach’ and ‘thick descriptive’ because of the details and rich nature of the information accumulated (Jackson II, Drummond & Camara, 2007, p.23). Thus, having qualitative research as my method was the best choice for this research as it helped me explore and focus minutely on the use of digital technology in the museums and facilitated in making a descriptive interpretation of the information collected.

### **3.3 Fieldwork duration and setting:**

The data on which this project is built upon was collected through the fieldwork that was carried out between August 2019 to February 2020. However, between Autumn 2018 and Spring 2019, I did preliminary study at two museums: Alta Museum, and Tromsø University Museum in Tromsø to get a general idea on digital technology incorporated in the exhibitions they housed. Based on the preliminary study, three different museum spaces located in different places in Northern Norway were chosen as the fieldwork setting. They are: Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM) in Tromsø, World Heritage Rock Art Center/Alta Museum in Alta, and Nord-Troms Museum in Storslett. To understand the context, a detailed description on these setting and the individual cases that the research focuses on are provided on Chapter 4.

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<sup>18</sup> The selection of a Research Approach. Retrieved from Retrieved from [http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/upmbinaries/55588\\_Chapter\\_1\\_Sample\\_Cresswell\\_Research\\_Design\\_4e.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/upmbinaries/55588_Chapter_1_Sample_Cresswell_Research_Design_4e.pdf) Last accessed 15 April 2020.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

This section comprises of the detailed explanation on the methods that were used to collect the data for this research. Observation, interview, text, and visual analysis have been used as the main data collection methods. Observations and interviews were carried out during the fieldwork at different museums, lasted 3-5 days with 4-5 hours each. In case of the app, observation and text and visual analysis was done by visiting the app several times over the course of writing this thesis. Secondary sources also proved to be very valuable in the research process. Much needed information related to the fieldwork settings, their context, history, and theory was gathered by using these pre-existing resources.

#### **3.4.1 Observation:**

One of the main methods employed in this research is observation. In social science and in approaches such as ethnography, observation is taken as one of the main methods. Observation is described as, ‘a systematic description of the events, behaviours, and artefacts of a social setting, (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.79). Structured observation has been used in positivist research as a discreet activity where the main objective is to record physical and verbal behaviour of the observed subject. Whereas in constructivist research, unstructured observation is used to understand and interpret the cultural behaviour where the importance is given to the context and knowledge is cocreated by researcher and the ‘researched’ (Mulhall, 2003, p. 306).

It was not only relevant but also a crucial method for data collection because of the subjects that were chosen to be researched as the fieldwork took place in a museum and focused mainly on the exhibitions and digital technologies present in relation to that particular museum setting. Observation, in this context, was not just to see and take note of what is present in the research setting but also it was very important to be able to fully immerse in the setting. Careful and deep observation on the field (both online and offline case of the app) enabled the researcher to pick up relevant information, crucial key points, the way the processes went and ultimately, the meaning behind each of that information.

For this research, depending upon the situation, I have done both participant and non-participant observation. In some cases, during the fieldwork, I have actively participated in the museum visits by taking the role of the audience and interacted with the digital interactive tools in addition to carefully observing my surrounding as a researcher should. To familiarize myself to the setting and to gather data, I have taken the role of the participant who will also observe the ongoing activities that are relevant to this research.

Schensul, Schensul & Le Compte (1991) define participant observation as ‘the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting’ (p.91). In some other cases, I have not been an active participant but rather just a direct observer who is not interacting or participating in the activities or events taking place but rather just silently watching and understanding what is going on from a distant. In few instances, I have also carried out covert observation<sup>19</sup>, mainly in case of observation of visitors in the museums, where those being observed were not aware of being observed by me. This way of observation was mainly instrumental when I did not want to intrude or affect the way the visitors interacted with the ‘interactive digital multimedia platforms’ present in the exhibition spaces.

### **3.4.2. Semi-Structured Interview**

To get the in-depth information about the topic, interviews with the museum personnel have been carried out. Interviews are also mainly important to get the story behind the process that entails the selection, usage and implications of digital technologies and their relationship to cultural heritage presented in the museum. As Patton (1990) eloquently puts ‘... there is a very practical side to qualitative [research] methods that simply involves asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings in order to solve problems’(p.89, as cited in Arksey & Knight, 2011).<sup>20</sup> Interview is described as not just a

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<sup>19</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944783\\_Collecting\\_data\\_through\\_observation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944783_Collecting_data_through_observation)  
Last accessed 20 March 2020

<sup>20</sup> Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/interviewing-for-social-scientists/n1.xml> Last accessed 25 March 2020

research method of a family of research approaches that focuses on ‘conversation between people in which one person has their role of researcher’ (Arksey & Knight, 2011, p. 3)<sup>21</sup>. Alvesson describes qualitative interviews as modes of knowledge production and in contrast to talking questionnaires, they are more loosely structured and ‘open to what the interviewee feels is relevant and important to talk about, given the interest of the research project’ (Alvesson, 2000, p. 13).

Interviews, in this research, were semi-structure with open ended questions based on pre-designed themes. Jordan and Gibson (2004) have listed out the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured in-depth interviews. As ‘an adaptable technique’ (ibid, p.222), this type of interview provides flexibility to both the researcher and research participants as there is no closed question module to restrict them. As all the interviews were carried out in person, face-to-face with the participants in the setting of museum, both verbal and non-verbal ways of communication became valuable insight for the research process (ibid).

However, this method was not without any limitations. Even though this method provides flexibility, it also gives room to steer away from the main topic sometimes (ibid.). So, to limit that kind of straying off, detailed interview guides were designed with the themes and questions that covered the issues that were to be focused in this study. Having an interview guide (refer appendix) gave me the flexibility to steer the interview according to the situation without losing focus on the question in hand. Each field setting was different. So, the themes were similar but questions that were asked were different according to the cases in focus. Interviews were informal and ranged from around 25 minutes to 1 hour. Sound recorder device was used to record all the interviews. Knowing that consciously being taped could be an issue for the participants, prior informed consent was taken from all of them. Later the interviews were transcribed and quotes that were important for the final writing were highlighted. As per the ethical consideration, the recordings were deleted later.

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<sup>21</sup> Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/base/download/BookChapter/interviewing-for-social-scientists/n1.xml> Last accessed 22 March 2020

Interview participants were chosen based on their involvement to the examples in focus. In-depth interviews were carried out with four main participants: Inger Birkelund (ihana!), Lise Brekmoe (Nord-Troms Museum), Rune Normann (Alta Museum), Kjetil Rydland (NNKM). They were connected to the museum presentations as curator, archaeologist, content designer, communication officer or consultant. They were selected and contacted based on the museum visits, referral and recommendations, and careful analysis of their roles in the digital projects and museum activities. Thus, it was established that they were the ones who could provide me detailed and in-depth insight. Prior appointments were made, and time was allocated for the interview. However, in two cases, the interview exceeded the time frame by few minutes, but the participants were fine with that. In two cases, the informants carried on having an informal conversation with me related to the research topic even though the interview had ended.

In these cases, my role quickly shifted from an interviewer to that of an observer and informal conversationalist. Some of the information that were given during the informal conversation were noted in the field diary as they were relevant for the research. Even though major part of the interview focused on interview guide, the participants were given a chance to add some additional comments at the end. This proved to be quite a good technique as a good rapport was built throughout the interview duration and by the end, they did have some additional insight to add to the topic that wasn't controlled by the interview questions and themes.

### **3.4.3 Textual and Visual Analysis**

Based on the research question and theoretical framework, texts and visual elements present on site and online were identified as an important data. Apart from interviews and observation, textual and visual analysis were chosen as the research methods as it was important to understand the underlying meanings that language, photographs, images, videos concealed in the presentation.

Textual analysis is defined as a methodology 'that involves understanding language, symbols and/or pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and

communicate life and life experiences.<sup>22</sup> The cues presented through the textual communication were crucial to understand the bigger picture as these texts in some way reflected the broader historical, political, social, and aesthetic contexts (ibid). Textual analysis mainly focused on the information linked to the art and artifacts in the exhibition. By doing textual analysis, I could consider ‘what the meaning of this text is? Or how does this particular text connect with similar texts present at the time?’(ibid). Attention was paid to figure out which parts of the texts would be more relevant. Hence, textual analysis not facilitated in interpreting both the explicit and implicit messages that were being relayed through the text.

Similarly, visual elements also provided additional insight to the research. Photographs and videos taken during the fieldwork proved to be important sources of information. Mostly used in the visual ethnography, media studies etc., using this method of analysis coupled with multimodal approach helped me take a closer look at the visual elements of research subject, situate the understanding in the context of the setting, and establish a connection between the meanings interpreted through other research methods. Visual analysis also facilitated in the textual analysis and observation process as in some cases, I relied on the photographs of the textual information on interactive screens. As one of the case focused was a mobile phone/tablet application, screenshots were taken to analyse the narratives and presentation.

Use of visual analysis was done in two ways:

- a) through visual data (photographs, videos, screenshots) produced by me during the fieldwork process to facilitate offsite observation and analysis.
- b) by collecting and studying the images produced by the museums to find out the connection with textual elements in the museum presentations.

(Banks, 2007)

Thus, the photographs I took during the fieldwork are used in this thesis. All images are mine unless credited.

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<sup>22</sup> Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/base/download/ReferenceEntry/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i14636.xml> Last accessed 25 March 2020

#### **3.4.4 Field notes and Diary Keeping**

For a good research, one cannot rely on the memory alone. It is very natural for us human to forget the tiny details of the experiences we have had. Therefore, it is always a good idea to jot it down or store it somewhere where we can just flip through it, find the relevant and important information, and refresh our memories whenever it is needed. I have extensively used diary to note down my impressions and reflections after fieldwork. The fieldnotes have been taken in an organized way to keep track of the activities I have carried out, people I have talked to, observations I have made, time I have used, and contemplations I have had. These fieldnotes and diary entries have been very instrumental in archiving important information from the fieldwork and providing depth and character to my writing process.

### **3.5 Challenges**

The main challenge that I faced as a researcher during the fieldwork is the language barrier. As my field setting was northern Norway and as I am an international student, who is not from Norway, I have very limited command over Norwegian language and English is my main language of communication, which proved to be challenging in some cases. I have lived in Norway for half a decade and having taken Norwegian language courses, I can understand basic level Norwegian. However, at times, it was challenging when I interviewed Norwegian informants in English, and they had difficulty translating certain technical words from Norwegian to English. In this case, we have relied on two techniques: one was to ask some other native speaker to translate the word and the other was to search for the translation online. Either way, the challenge has been overcome together with the respondents.

The other situation arose while accessing secondary information related to the research as a lot of information on the official websites, social media pages etc. were primarily in Norwegian. However, as they must cater international audiences, there were always an option to translate the pages in English and in other languages (Spanish, German and in some cases Chinese). Similarly, most of the materials such as guidebooks, information leaflets, information on interactive screens, audio guides were multi-lingual. Therefore, language barrier was relatively

less in this case than relevant scholarly articles published in Norwegian, which were not referred to in this study.

Similarly, the crisis brought by the global pandemic COVID19 has also caused a lot of practical and emotional challenges. As Norway went into complete lockdown from March, the museums were closed and there was no way of doing further research other than relying on materials available digitally. Tourism industry in Northern Norway was hit hard. As millions of others, I lost my job. As an international self-financing student, not having a job, being away from my family who were going through similar crisis, and the uncertainty of future prospect brought by the pandemic affected me mentally and emotionally.

Luckily, the motivation and direction provided by my supervisor gave me immense inspiration, and having supportive partner, friends and guidance provided by university's counselling service were crucial for stress management during this situation. On a positive note, as everything was operated digitally, the relevance of this topic became even more evident on the other aspects of society. Hence, having a good support system, reliance on the materials already collected, and the supplementary digital materials available on the internet helped me overcome this unforeseen challenge.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter consists of methodological choices made and implemented during the research process. Basing on the research question, qualitative approach was chosen. Furthermore, observation, semi-structured interviews, textual and visual analysis were used as research methods for data generation and analysis. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with four research participants and observation took place both on-site in the physical museum setting and off-site but online on the internet. Secondary sources were also valuable part of the research process. Using multiple methods have helped to provide reliability and validity to this research.

## Chapter 4: The Setting

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the research methodology employed for data collection and analysis for this project. The background information and history of these museums, and information about the individual examples that are focused in this study are important to contextualize and carry forward the discussion on the findings. They are also relevant information to situate the museums as important tourism sites in the North Norwegian tourism milieu. Hence, in this chapter, I will shed some light on the setting on which this thesis concentrates on.

### 4.2 Alta Museum, Hjemmeluft, Alta



*Figure 1 View of the fjord from the Alta museum café window, Alta, 2019*

#### 4.2.1 Background

Alta Museum World Heritage Rock Art Centre is in the northernmost town of Alta, Troms-Finnmark county. Known as the northern lights city and meeting point of three cultures: Sámi, Kven, and Norwegian, Alta boasts of having ‘Northern Europe’s largest concentration of rock art made by hunter-gatherers’.<sup>23</sup> These prehistoric rock art dates back to around 7000 years.

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<sup>23</sup> The rock art of Alta. Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/the-rock-art-of-alta>. Last accessed 25 February 2020.

UNESCO lists these rock art as one of the eight World Heritages in Norway.<sup>24</sup> Established in 1991, the museum attracts thousands of visitors of different age groups and nationalities every year. Museumsforbundet shows that in the year 2017, 59,273 and in 2018, 56,500 visitors visited the museum.<sup>25</sup> The museum houses the outdoor rock art area, indoor exhibition area for both permanent and temporary exhibitions, museum shop, café, and administration and research area.

My past visits to the museum have been instrumental in my choice of having the museum as the fieldwork setting. During my first visit to Alta in summer 2018, I stayed at an Airbnb, where the host gave me bunch of tourist brochures from Alta. All of them listed the museum as one of the top tourist destinations. The first time I visited the museum, it was bursting with summer visitors. On a brief chat, the museum receptionist told me that they were mostly cruise tourists from Germany, England, and other holidaymakers from Spain, France, Italy, and Asia. My preliminary observation was that the museum presented an interesting combination of tangible and intangible heritages. These preliminary visits also brought forward how the main exhibition about rock art in the museum juxtaposed the non-digital and digital objects in the same space. The relationship was such that the story of the rock art was collectively woven by the material objects and their virtual replicas, and information presented through the interactive screen installations.

According to the research participant Rune Normann, who is an archaeologist at the museum, digitization of objects with photographs and information is one of the major activities going on in the museum (Interview, 11.12.2019). Similarly, massive documentation of the world heritage (around 6000 figures) is being done by taking photographs, digital tracing of figures and panels, and archiving them in digital archive.<sup>26</sup> This archive is among one of biggest digital activities going on in the museum. The purpose of the archive is collecting all the documentations

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<sup>24</sup> Description on the video. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3wV2vz9Vy8>. Last accessed 25 February 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Tidligstatistikk-2018. Retrieved from <https://museumsforbundet.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Museumsforbundets-tidligstatistikk-2018-1.pdf>. Last accessed 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Retrieved from <http://altarockart.no/> Last accessed 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

regarding the rock art in Alta and be a resource for management, research, and dissemination of world heritage.<sup>27</sup> A huge portion of the archive is accessible by public. So, Normann added *‘The archive is the big thing, which is online. Altarockart.no: it is basically a storage place for all the documentation and say ‘products’, connected to the world heritage’* (Interview 11.12.2019).

The museum also has an app called *Bædi & Børði*<sup>28</sup>, which is a dissemination project focused on children. The app can be downloaded on your phone and linked to the exhibitions using Bluetooth. The idea is to follow signs in the exhibitions and use the app, where these two cartoon figures: *Bædi & Børði* will tell you information about the presentation. For example, when linked to the signs in the outdoor rock art area, *Bædi & Børði* tell the users more relevant information about rock art. Normann further explained, the screens in the exhibits can be accessed online, thus, the editing of the materials can be carried out online (Interview, 11.12.2019).

Walking through the reception to exhibition area will make one experience a sudden change of ambience. Certain factors in the setting such as lights, colours of the walls and partitions, various sounds coming from different directions of the exhibitions, enables this change in experience. Painted footsteps on the ground showed me the direction I should take. It was quite evident how strategically every object, interactive screens, light, sound, and projector were placed to show an interplay between light and darkness. The first thing I asked myself when I entered the Traces in Stone exhibition area was: ‘Is one day enough to see and experience everything?’ Luckily for me, that was not the only time I visited the museum. I got a chance to visit museum again as a student with my Master in Tourism Studies group and later as a researcher for this thesis.

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/the-rock-art-of-alta/the-rock-art-archive> Last accessed 20 Feb 2020

<sup>28</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/baedi-birdy-kommer-til-alta-museum> Last accessed 20 Feb 2020

## 4.2.2 Traces in Stone

Among the four other permanent exhibitions on the first floor, ‘Traces in Stone’ is the one that centres around rock art and makes an extensive use of interactive digital screens to present the information and narratives. The correlation between the outdoor petroglyphs, the indoor boulders and stone tools, and the interactive screens in the exhibition area is the main reason why I chose to focus on this exhibition.

The official museum website states that this exhibition

*‘...is a balanced exhibition between interaction and storytelling, so that visitors have the opportunity not only to read the stories, but also to press, twist, draw and light their way to a deeper understanding and insight about the world heritage of Alta.’*<sup>29</sup>

The central part in the exhibition area hangs a light projection representing Northern lights over a cylindrical installation that shows rippling images of bear, fish, etc that gives an impression as if the surface is fluid. With the dark ambience of the exhibition, the glowing light dropping from the ceiling with smoothly moving teal patterns resembles the dance of northern that graces the arctic skies.

The calming ambience created through careful attention given to small details such as the colour of the information panels, bluish tone dominating the entire exhibition space and lack of large dominating photographs, and deep mellow thunderous sound, makes you prepared to immerse fully in the experience: to enjoy and to learn about rock art in Alta. In the interview, Normann explained that it was a conscious decision *‘...to tone down the light, make the light more blue, have hopefully calming sound in the exhibition’* that set the visitors visiting the exhibition in the mood for learning. (Interview, 11/12/2019). The exhibitions seemed to have achieved this objective.

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<sup>29</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/exhibitions/permanent/the-rock-art-of-alta>. Last accessed 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2020.



*Figure 2 Installation at the center of the exhibition, 2019*

Another striking feature of the exhibition is a huge screen showcasing the day in a life of prehistoric human. The video depicts the time lapse sequence of a human's routine from the dawn to dusk where they sit on the rock bed engrossed in rock carving. Meanwhile, the color of the sky, mood of the scenery changes along with the celestial events. Two ships full of figures and objects, that depicts the sceneries carved on the real rock carving outdoor, also cross each other on the waterscape. The sun appears and disappears, the stars come into sight, so do the constellations and then, we are enchanted by the dance of the green lady 'aurora borealis' herself.

The exhibition, designed by Kvorning Design and Communications, also consisted of boulders and display boxes with stone tools, that were selected and brought from outdoor area, analogue text panels with information about the corresponding display, and various interactive touch screens that visitors could touch, navigate, and learn from. Two enclosed spaces were also present: one was activity where visitors had to use flashlights to be able to view the symbols on the walls, and the other one was the selfie box, where visitors could take a selfie with a vibrant backdrop.



*Figure 3 Traces in Stone, Alta Museum. 2019*

On the first day of my fieldwork, one of the museum employees recommended me to use an audio guide. This hand-held audio device was designed to guide the visitors through both indoor and outdoor exhibitions. Several language options were available in the guide. The information correlated with the displays and were catalogued numerically. So, I had to click the corresponding number, the relevant information played out in headset attached to the device. For e.g. when I pressed one of the numbers on the device, the voice prompted me to try out the virtual rock art carving activity present in the exhibition. However, in my personal opinion, with so many different interactive activities around, having an audio device, although very informative, could be easily distracting as it diverts one's attention from the objects on display and could hinder from having fully immersive and contemplative experience.

With several tangible objects such as stone tools, rocks etc, interactive devices and information panels available in the exhibition, the exhibition seemed like a site that brought learning and fun together. As informed by the research participant, students were one of their target audiences other than the tourists, so, this exhibition served educational and excitement to these target audiences. As I was told that it is not uncommon for the student to come to the museum to do their assignments related to rock art and the area. The digital tools provided them feasibility, flexibility, and accessibility to get the information they need on their own without spending extra money on a museum guide.

## 4.3 Nord-Troms Museum, Storslett

### 4.3.1 Background



*Figure 4 Nord-Troms Museum, Storslett, 2020*

As a student of Master in Tourism Studies, I had a chance to learn about Kven community, multiculturalism, and history of Nordreisa region from our guest lecturer Inger Birkelund. Birkelund, who is a business mentor at our study programme and a business owner of *ihana!*<sup>30</sup> a Kven experience and culture company located in Nordreisa municipality, is also one of the research participants. These lectures sparked my interest in getting more knowledge about the area and when I decided on the topic for my research, I naturally looked for a possibility to carry out my fieldwork here. The region is well-known for its historical background and exchange between different culture: Sámi, Kven, and Norwegians. In addition to that, historically marked with the trade, exchange, and migration between the borders of Norway, Finland, and Russia. So, the cultural heritage of this locality is a blend of these three-populace residing here.

Established in the 1979 according to the eco-museum model,<sup>31</sup> Nord-Troms museum, is located at Storslett, and is an important space for minority culture and history. The establishment of

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<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.ihana.no/> Last accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Retrieved from <https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/4199/article.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> Last accessed 15 March 2020.

this museum reflects the interest and commitment of the community<sup>32</sup> in preserving the little material left after the devastating scorched earth policy, led by the Germans at the end of the WWII, during their retreat after the withdrawal (Interview, 13.02.2019). The museum focuses on six municipalities: Lyngen, Kåfjord, Nordreisa, Storfjord, Skjervøy, and Kvenanagen and emphasizes on the sea Sámi and Kven people and works with cultural changes and meeting of old and new cultures in Nord-Troms area. The historical background and context of the region and the museum, and the permanent exhibition ‘Encounters’ at the museum, which according to the information available on the museum website, uses digital aid as one of the most important tools in the exhibition<sup>33</sup>, led me to choose as another fieldwork setting.

Based on the suggestion from my supervisor, I contacted Birkelund to inquire about the possibility of having her as a research informant, as she was also responsible in project administration of the permanent exhibition titled ‘Encounters’. Not only did she agree to have a conversation with me but also introduced me to another prospective informant Lise Brekmoe, who was the curator of that exhibition. Upon a brief chat, Brekmoe agreed and gave me an appointment for an interview the next day.

At the time of the fieldwork, the museum had one permanent and a temporary exhibition going on. The temporary exhibition was titled ‘Dans med oss’ (translation: Dance with us) produced by the ‘Center for Folk Music and Folk Dance’ and showcased the national and local perspectives of dance. The permanent exhibition, ‘Encounters/ Møter/ Deaivvadit/ Kohtaamissii’<sup>34</sup>, located in the same floor, is the focus of the thesis.

#### **4.3.2 ‘Encounters/Møter/Deaivvadit/Kohtaamissii’**

Like in Traces in Stone exhibition at Alta museum, the first striking element of the exhibition is its dark ambience. When I first entered the exhibition space, I immediately noticed the

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<sup>32</sup> Retrieved from <https://ntrm.no/utstillinger/moter-encounters-deaivvadit-kohtaamissii>/Last accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>34</sup> The title of the exhibition in English, Norwegian, Sámi and Kven languages.

presence of large monochrome images, analogue text labels, and juxtaposition of both non-digital objects such as artefacts and digital aids such as interactive screens, monitors, and iPads. The center of the space comprised of a circular seating area with a hearth in the middle. The interesting thing is that iPads were strategically placed on the four corners of the hearth. The iPads were deactivated when I was there, but I was told by the informants that one could listen to songs (joiks<sup>35</sup> and traditional songs in old Sami and Kven languages).



Figure 5 A section of 'Encounters' exhibition, 2020

The curator of the exhibition Lise Brekmoe shed some light on the main objective of the exhibition:

*'to represent the regional history. So, we try to reach some sort of overarching narrative that encompasses because obviously we are working in six different municipalities, each with very strong identities. Our aim was to build one regional one that overarched those local identities but also share the stories that we thought was most important and most unique to North Troms, which is really the encounters between different identities and culture throughout history'* (Interview 12.02.2020).

Each wall of the exhibition had a theme and was a combination of physical objects and an interactive screen which one could touch to get more information on the objects. Objects placed outside could be touched just as the interactive screen. The digital aids provided massive information about the historical contexts, facts, maps, photographs of the area. The

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<sup>35</sup> Joik is the original music of the Sami people and belong to the genre of oral literature (Gaski, 2008).

objects present in physical form correlated with the digital presentation about it, where the visitors could touch and click and get even more in-depth information.



*Figure 6 Reindeer corral, video display at the exhibition, 2019*

Similarly, one of the main attractions of the exhibition was the ‘reindeer corral’. which comprised of a large rectangular area barred with a makeshift fence and a video projection of a seasonal shift in the North Norwegian landscape and the reindeer herding territory.

My observation and interview with the research participants showed that the exhibition told a narrative. The narrative revolved around the theme of meetings between different cultures in the region. The artefacts, objects, photographs, and the interactive touch screen worked together to share the story of people, their culture, and the cultural diversity of the area. Even though there were no explicit marker showing the direction to the visitors, the exhibition space is designed in a such a way that the visitors are enclosed in a space where they are invited to follow the story, take a walk around the exhibition area, touch, interact, listen, learn, and experience. The exhibition space was divided into various parts and took you on a journey from the coast of Northern Norway to a kitchen of a typical household of the region in the past.

For instance, another noticeable installation in the exhibition area was the ‘Spin the wheel’ feature that linked with the adjoining interactive display screen. To be able to get information regarding the information on the display screen, the visitor had to spin the wheel. Like the traditional spin the wheel activity, the detailed information on topic where the wheel stops would appear on the screen. This activity successfully links objects, story, and digital technology into one thread and is an epitome of ‘edutainment’ because the massive amount of information.



*Figure 7 A section titled 'The Coast' in the exhibition, 2020*

Similarly, shown in the example above is the part of the exhibition labelled 'The Coast'. If we look closely, we can see the combination of physical artefacts related to the life in the coast in the past and an interactive screen where you could touch on different headings, based on the physical objects in display, which would lead you to the detailed description. The large image shows people involved in coastal trade, and the artefacts contain equipment and tools related to coastal life which includes fishing.

This exhibition presented the stories of how three different cultures met in a space and the experiences they created through trade connections. The artefacts that were placed outside the display box could be touched, and the digital aid worked when touched. However, interacting with the video installation or touching the buttons would lead them to a whole new world of in-depth information about the artefacts that were designed by experts on the field. Each object and digital slide told you an exclusive story about history, identity, encounters, and exchanges of different cultures that met in this region. It also showed how each culture co-existed, cooperated in the older days. However, the exhibition also tells us the story about not-so-rosy picture from the history, the one with Norwegianization policy and its impact on Sami and Kven communities.

## **4.4 Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM) Tromsø**

### **4.4.1 Background**

Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (hereafter referred to as NNKM), Tromsø is the starting point of this research. As mentioned in Chapter 1, NNKM has been my case study in one of the term papers

I wrote for a course in tourism studies. The focus of the paper was ‘There is no’ exhibition, which was shown by fictional Sámi Dáiddamusea, a collaborative museum performance between RiddoDuottarMuseat and the NNKM. The objective of the performance was to emphasize on the importance of Sámi art museum for Northern Norway.<sup>36</sup> Writing that paper helped me to understand the relationship between the cultural heritage and museum in Northern Norway and opened up numerous possibilities of research mainly in the increasing use of digital technology and social media for archival and dissemination purposes.

On 10 April 2019, the museum launched an app called ‘Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum App’. The app was launched with an objective to ‘enhance the perspectives of North’ by exploring the works from the museum’s collection in super high resolution.<sup>37</sup> The Second Canvas app features the works that are physically present in the museum space to the virtual space in super-high gigapixel resolution and boasts of access to ‘brushstrokes and craquelure of the paintings’.<sup>38</sup> The users also have an opportunity to get an elaborate description of the art and stories behind them, to download the detailed information about the art works, and even to share their own stories on social media. The app also has offline option which lets the user to download the artworks and view downloaded images even without internet. The app is multilingual; thus, the users have the possibility to view the contents in Norwegian, Sámi, and English. Apart from that, the practical information about the museum like opening hours, entry fee, etc., are also available.

Thus, the release of the app, exactly during the phase when I was making preliminary decisions regarding this thesis, made this choice ever so more logical and relevant. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019, I went to the museum to carry out a preliminary observation and find out the possible research

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<sup>36</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.nnkm.no/en/exhibitions/there-no-1> Last accessed 26 April,2020

<sup>37</sup> App Description. 2019. Retrieved from [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.secondcanvas.nordnorsk&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.secondcanvas.nordnorsk&hl=en_US) Last accessed 27 April, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

participants. Before doing that, I downloaded the app and navigated through it to experience of its usage personally.

As I live in Tromsø and am interested in the art scene, I have been a regular visitor of the museum. It was one of the museums in the locality which did not have any entry fee until December 2018. Fortunately, they still do not charge entry fee to the students. Upon visiting the museum and having a brief chat with a museum employee led me to the personnel responsible for communication and dissemination process of the museum, Kjetil Rydland, the chief of information at the museum. I emailed him and despite being on a vacation, he responded promptly and showed interest to participate in the research project.

On this visit, I also did some observation of the museum space. With the motto ‘art moves’, NNKM was founded in 1985 and houses collection of two thousand art works that are relevant to Northern Norway. Over the years, the first floor of the museum allocated for temporary exhibitions, has showcased thematic works on still life, Norwegian art and craft, Sámi contemporary art, and other solo shows.<sup>39</sup>

The on-going temporary exhibition during the time of my fieldwork was titled: ‘Like Betzy’. This exhibition displayed the works of maritime painter and explorer Betzy Askerloot-Berg that comprised of paintings, photographs and other documentations that told the story of her extraordinary life. By placing her works with her contemporaries such as Peder Balke, the exhibition tells a story of ‘one of the forgotten painters in coastal landscape’.<sup>40</sup> By doing this, the exhibition encouraged the visitors to reflect upon the numerous other Betzys around us, whose lives and contributions are neglected, ignored and silenced. The little notes with facts, figures, and trivia pasted on different nooks and corners of the museum space brought forward the issue of gender disparity in art scene.

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<sup>39</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.nnkm.no/en/content/about-us> Last accessed 18 March 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.perspektivet.no/en/news/betzy-in-folkeparken/> Last accessed 19 March 2020.

Other than the indoor exhibition, NNKM also collaborated with local museums such as Perspektivet Museum to create an outdoor open-air exhibition titled ‘Betzy in Folkeparken’.<sup>41</sup> In Folkeparken, Telegrafbukta, a popular bay in Tromsø, a Betzy box was placed. This box contained art supplies that visitors can use. Inspired by Betzy’s painting, a wall art was also created on the adjoining boathouse in collaboration with WOW- Walls of Women Tromsø.<sup>42</sup> The indoor exhibition was accompanied by installation of temporary signs and wooden boxes around male statues in the city.



*Figure 8 Roald Amundsen’s statue in Tromsø partially covered in ‘Betzy box’.*

Image: @gerdbjrhovde, Instagram,<sup>43</sup> 2019

The wooden box is a trademark Betzy structure, which she used as a makeshift portable studio while painting during bad weather condition.<sup>44</sup> For instance, during the inauguration of Like Betzy exhibition Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen was partially covered in a wooden box and was labelled as ‘Han Roald som Betzy’. This bold performance was a direct answer to the fact that there are no statues of identified female in Tromsø. However, this provoked a lot of strong reactions. But the strongest one came in the end of June, when the ‘Betzy box’ was put around the statue of war hero Carl Gustav Fleischer during the Harstad Festival. Apart from

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<sup>41</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.perspektivet.no/en/news/betzy-in-folkeparken> Last accessed 20 March 2020

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/B0rOBwDAUJU/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/B0rOBwDAUJU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link) Last accessed 20 March 2020

<sup>44</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.perspektivet.no/en/news/betzy-in-folkeparken> Last accessed 20 March 2020

being criticized as vandalism and disgrace, the box also met the aggressive reaction from a man who smashed it into pieces.<sup>45</sup>

The two other floors are dedicated to the permanent collection that comprises of works from early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. An important observation that I made during my fieldwork was that the exhibition spaces (on all the floor including the temporary and permanent ones) were devoid of any kind of digital tools. There were no interactive screens, no digital tools to touch or click in, or any monitor giving you information. All the text labels were analogue. This was very different from the other indoor exhibition spaces in other museums that I did my fieldwork in. The research participant Kjetil Rydland stated that what they wanted to do but haven't quite found the resources or right project for was to incorporate digital technologies in the actual exhibitions and that is more of *'a wish and a goal'* which they have to wait and see how it will be managed (Interview 06.08.2020).

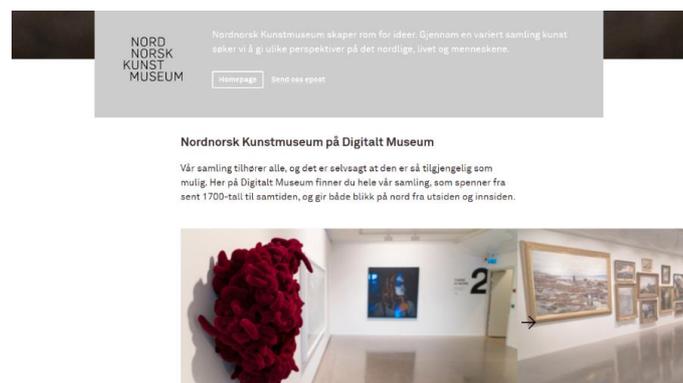


Figure 9 Screenshot of NNKM on Digital Museum, 2020

NNKM has a well-updated official website and an active social media presence such as on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tripadvisor etc. In addition to that, NNKM has a strong digital presence with more than 100 pictures on Google Arts and Culture and publication of entire museum collection on Digital Museum Norway. Tourists are the target audiences for the NNKM<sup>46</sup> on Google Arts and Culture. Rydland explained that the information is available only

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<sup>45</sup> Retrieved from [https://subjekt.no/2019/07/04/reaksjonene-mot-betzy-utstillingen-vitner-om-at-vi-har-blitt-en-nasjon-med-estetiske-analfabeter/?fbclid=IwAR0D5hzEPDjoPWWycw0O9A3tU3yckbCzxJe354PwbY\\_gL07DQ5egm2zbTxk](https://subjekt.no/2019/07/04/reaksjonene-mot-betzy-utstillingen-vitner-om-at-vi-har-blitt-en-nasjon-med-estetiske-analfabeter/?fbclid=IwAR0D5hzEPDjoPWWycw0O9A3tU3yckbCzxJe354PwbY_gL07DQ5egm2zbTxk)

Last accessed 20 March 2020

<sup>46</sup> Retrieved from <https://digitaltmuseum.no/owners/NNKM> Last accessed 20 March 2020

in English as it is connected to Google, which is used by huge number of tourists to get information. Hence, *'this is mostly, from our point of view, seen as marketing'* (Interview, 06.08.2019). On the contrary, NNKM on Digital Museum project is for public service, he added *'we feel that our collection is not ours, it is everyone's, so, information about it should be available for everyone'* (ibid.).

Therefore, there is not a single specific group that this project is targeted on but rather it is acknowledged that the main users would be special interest visitors or visitors who do research about the North or a specific painter (Interview, 06.08.2019). Similar is the case for the app, as it does not have a target group as such, but it is *'for people wanting to know more, the art interested crowd'*. He emphasizes that it has been a movement, a shift in the museum and *'we are still in a process of doing that but working more specifically at different targets and different audiences'* (ibid.) But still the process of transition is still on, so, they keep accessing on the area they have mainly worked broadly and reflect continuously on *'this is good art, we should do it'* but now we think: *'we want to reach that group, what can we do?'* (ibid.).

However, in terms of communication, Rydland strongly emphasizes that the best way to communicate with the museum as a visitor is social media or through an email. Review on Google and Trip Advisor is a way for people to share their experiences and images taken in the museum. He also added that sadly for discussion or dialogue a public space on Facebook is the best place (ibid.).

#### **4.4.2: Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum App**

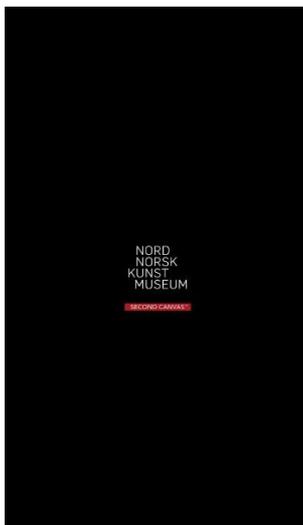
Second Canvas application is an EU funded initiative where museums in collaboration with a Spanish design and animation studio called MadPixel<sup>47</sup> have created a novel way of exploring the artworks through multimedia storytelling and high-resolution images. The app is compatible and downloadable in any smartphones and tablets. There are around 39 Second Canvas apps<sup>48</sup> of different museums, exhibitions, and art centers available on Google play store as of the time

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<sup>47</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.madpixel.es/> Last accessed 20 February 2020

<sup>48</sup> Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=The+Mad+Pixel+Factory&hl=en>

of writing this thesis. Second canvas apps let the users view selected art works from different art institutions in super high giga-pixel resolution. This means that the art works have been digitized in such a way that users can zoom in to the extent of being able to see the minute details of the artworks such as brush strokes in paintings. Digital storytelling method has been applied to give background information about the artworks and artists to the users.



*Figure 10 Welcome image in the Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app, 2020*



*Figure 11 Screenshot of the Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app, 2020*

In Second Canvas NNKM app, seven paintings by different artists, are made available under the theme ‘Views of Norway’. These paintings are: ‘The Minister Laestadius Teaching the Sámi’ by François-August Biard, ‘Coastal Area in Northern Norway’ by Betzy Akersloot-Berg, ‘Reindeer Calf’ by John Anders Savio, ‘Beach Scene’ by Peder Balke, ‘From Reine in Lofoten’ by Eilert Adelsteen Normann, ‘From Finnmark’ by Georg Saal, and ‘Coastal Landscape with boat, moonlight’ by Knud Andreassen Baade. Additional information about the painting is available on all the seven paintings. However, two of the paintings: ‘The Minister Laestadius Teaching the Sámi’ by painter François-August Biard and ‘Coastal Area in Northern Norway’ by artist Betzy Akersloot-Berg, have an additional palette of digital stories that focuses on different sections of the paintings and gives detailed description on the symbols, motifs, techniques used by the artists, stories behind the works and so on. Landscapes, sceneries of coastal area, and the Sámi seemed to be the manifested themes of these selected paintings.

I was curious to know how the seven paintings out of thousands of paintings in the museum collection were chosen to be presented in the app. To which Rydland responded that as the app is an EU initiative, it finances the Spanish design studio MadPixel to offer one day of free digitization of art works from the museum collection. So, to be able to do so, they were to choose 7 to 9 artworks that could be digitized for the app. However, there were certain restrictions and limitations that made it challenging to include all the art works into the selection process. The three-dimensional art works and the artworks with glass in front would take longer time to digitize. So, to utilize ‘one day of free digitization’ to the fullest, these artworks were not selected.

Similarly, some copyright issues also needed to be taken into consideration. Rydland explained that as most of artists in Norway are represented by a visual artists’ rights management group called BONO,<sup>49</sup> every use of artworks or a photography of artworks is charged with a certain fee. That copyright is valid from the year the artist died until 70 years and considering that they had to exclude such artworks as it would cost a big fee especially for an app (Interview, 06.08.2019). With these restrictions in mind, further consultation with the curators were done and the seven paintings that we can view on the app now, was finally selected. He further elaborated: ‘we tried to find things that are both representative of: we wanted Sami art there, we wanted classical landscape paintings, we wanted a bit of visually interesting to zoom into and to explore, modernistic art with just simple shapes wouldn’t work in the app in the same way like a very detailed landscape painting would.’ The time, resources, and other practical constraints faced in the process of incorporating digital technology seems to be issues that are in common in all the museums that I have researched. Digital technology and platforms, on one hand, can provide possibility to ‘accrue new meanings’ to an artefact or heritages but on the other hand, ‘incompatibilities and rights protection restrictions might slow down this flow of

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<sup>49</sup> BONO is an independent Norwegian copyright organisation managing the rights of visual artists. Through BONO, users can obtain the necessary permissions and licenses to use artworks in various contexts, and also get useful information regarding copyright and visual arts. Retrieved from <https://www.bono.no/aboutbono> .  
Last accessed 01 April 2020.

information' (Gowlland and Ween, 2018, p. 4 &5). Further discussion on this issue will be done in later chapters.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

Drawing on the observations (on-site and online), interviews, and using secondary resources, this chapter discussed the setting of the research and gave historical background and general information related to the museum. The chapter also provided an introductory glimpse on the exhibitions and app that are going to be focused and analysed in the later discussion chapters.

# **Chapter 5: The Stories they tell: Digital Narratives, Interactivity, and Experience**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The research is based on the main research question: *how is digital technology being used in North Norwegian museum narratives to create tourism experiences and imaginaries?* The fieldwork gave attention mainly to the current projects in the museum incorporating digital technologies, similar projects done in the past that could shed some light on how the process has come along, and the exhibitions and the app in focus: mainly their purposes, target audiences, the possible outcomes, the design, and the narratives, indigenous and minority's cultural representation in those narratives, and the implications on tourism experience and imaginaries.

In this chapter, I will mainly focus on the narratives that are present in the North Norwegian museums in connection to their relation to digital technology and tourism experiences and imaginaries. Then, by discussing the themes such as 'digital storytelling', 'staging experience digitally' and 'interactivity in museum' with reference to the examples focused in the museum, I will put forward my main argument that: museum narratives facilitated by digital technology contributes in staging the experience for the visitors that affects their pre-tour, on-tour and post-tour narratives (Bruner, 2005). Similarly, through interactivity, museums become a space where visitors take part in the meaning making and interpretation process instead of a passive gazer, and this brings forth the dialogical relationship between museums and visitors.

## **5.2 Digital storytelling in museums**

Traditionally, museums were regarded as a place of education where knowledge was prioritized instead of entertainment. They were 'places for beautiful and rare objects, collected by wealthy people or powerful institution' (Pabst et al., 2016, p.8) but this ideal is radically changing with time and now, museums have gradually developed 'from ornamental collections into something more, something greater, more diverse and complex' (ibid). Local population is being incorporated in the exhibition design process where they can contribute with 'information on

background, usage, and signification’, which has widened the context of the collection presented in the museum and given platform for ‘personal narratives about living conditions, everyday customs, and cultural practices in a region’ (Pabst et al., 2016, *ibid*).

Museum is one of the many cultural spaces where the use of digital technology is growing throughout years. Various methods and modes related to digital technology are being incorporated in museum spaces such as digitization of materials, digital archives, interactive screen installations, digital storytelling and narratives, digital museums, apps, social media pages and so on. As soon as we walk into a museum, there is no doubt that we will encounter one or various forms of such technologies. For instance, prevalence of Wi-Fi/Internet in museums, and visitors’ increasing inclination with taking pictures and selfies and immediately posting on social media via apps such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok etc can be taken as examples of this.<sup>50</sup> The use, implications and pervasiveness of different forms of technologies in the museums have been an intriguing topic in the area of heritage tourism development and it has been stated that new technologies ‘have also impacted ways in which permanent collections in museums are installed and displayed.’ (Park, 2013, p. 193).

Thus, museums have become the space that has tourists as one of their main audiences. Leading them to have the objective to not only educate but to entertain and cater content which provides ‘experience’ and ‘good time’ to the visitors (Johansen & Olsen, 2010). To reach this objective, museums now have the need to develop contents that somehow attracts, intrigues, and interacts with the visitors. This is where narratives come into the picture.

Narratives have been regarded as an integral characteristic of the museum. It has been stated that the ‘real work’ of a museum is ‘storytelling’ (Bedford, 2001). Relaying reliable information about objects, history, and providing interpretations are the main objectives of museums. When digital technology came to be used in the museum spaces, plethora of possibilities, challenges, and discussions came up ranging from the arguments that this is leading museums to innovation, ‘repositioning firms within the heritage tourism market’ (Navarette, 2019, p.200), to opening

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<sup>50</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.carmah.berlin/reflections/auto-draft-15/> Last accessed 25 March 2020

up ‘new routes of participation and engagement’ (Jewitt, 2012). These narratives are conveyed not just through the objects on display, tour guides and the analogue text labels but also through the active use of space, lights, sound, and most importantly using interactive digital technology. Talking about the Second Canvas NNKM app, Rydland informed me:

*‘Seven really high resolution images available in app, for two of these we have developed **digital storytelling**, where we go from detail to detail in the actual painting and try to explain both the actual things like painting techniques, motifs and background for the actual paintings’* (Interview, 06.08.2019).

Digital storytelling is the approach employed by the other examples this thesis focuses on. The aim of these digital storytelling method is to provide information, create experiences, and connect with the visitors. Digital storytelling is essentially regarded the same as ‘age-old tradition of storytelling we’ve always known but brought to life using computer-based tools and potentially delivered via a huge variety of online or multimedia formats.’<sup>51</sup> According to Hartley and McWilliam (2009) digital storytelling situates

*‘the universal human delight in narrative and self-expression into the hands of everyone. It brings a timeless form into the digital age, to give a voice to the myriad tales of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people in their own terms’* (p. 3).

It distinguishes itself from classic storytelling in that it represents the democratisation of the modern world, where anyone with a computer or mobile device can tell their story, using any number of social media, podcast, or other online platforms’.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Retrieved from <https://pro.europeana.eu/post/what-is-digital-storytelling-and-what-has-it-got-to-do-with-cultural-heritage>. Last accessed 25 March 2020

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Narratives created in a digital environment that make use of digital media and technologies is referred to as digital narratives. In all these narratives, there were certain common elements: a team (consisting of curators, conservators, archaeologists, artists, photographers, designers, producers, financial supporters and so on), a good plot/story/point of view that the whole presentation revolved around, and the message/the lesson that was being relayed. These digital narratives allow the integration of elements of traditional storytelling method and addressing different learning styles (Springer, Brazas & Kajder, 2004), and incorporating ‘hypertexts’ that have the ‘ability to encompass stories that include interactive exploration and discovery’ (Madej, 2003, p. 9). Thus, they seem to be an important element of museum presentation that not only play vital role in visitor experiences but also asserted new ways of meaning making and interpretation.

All the research participants agreed that a good narrative is something they try to achieve when curating a good exhibition. The preliminary analysis of the exhibitions and app showed that they primarily focused on the thematic contents. ‘Traces in Stone’ Alta Museum, focused on rock art in Alta and other regions in Northern Norway, its history and present context. In ‘Encounters’, Nord-Troms Museum, the emphasis was on the rich historical context, life ways of, and meetings between different groups of people. However, they do mention implicitly the context and importance of geographical location in relation to the thematic framework. However, in the ‘Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kusntmuseum App’, the geographical location of Northern Norway is explicitly mentioned because the subject of the artworks chosen for the app is landscape of Northern Norway.

*‘There’s always a narrative there so, stick to the narrative’* said Normann when talking about ‘Traces in Stone’ exhibition at Alta Museum. He stressed the need of narrative the consistency of the story, whether it is prehistoric or of modern history. *‘What tells the story that you are going to tell?’* is a question that he thinks one should contemplate on and come up with answer while designing an exhibition in the museum. In ‘Traces in Stone’, objects that were placed in the exhibition were carefully and consciously chosen. When asked about these choices, Normann explained that when it comes to historic exhibitions like ‘Traces in Stone’, there will obviously be a lot of options. However, the responsible team at the museum went with

aesthetics, and ‘with what they (the objects) actually symbolize, who found them, where they were found and so on’ (Interview, 11.12.2019).

Nevertheless, there was something common in the objects that were displayed, the information that were provided through elongated panels with analogue text labels, the interactive screens, and visual projections: they all had a story to tell. The story explicitly is that of the petroglyphs, however, implicitly it is also: the story of the ancient people who did the carvings and made the rock art, the story of the landscape, the nature, the animals, the birds, and the story of the beliefs, lifeways, and cosmology of different time and space brought into now by using digital and non-digital aid.

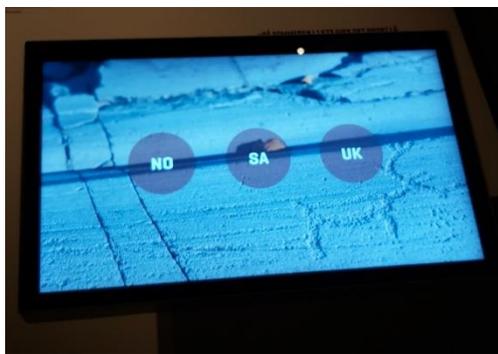


Figure 12 Front page of an interactive screen at the exhibition, 2019

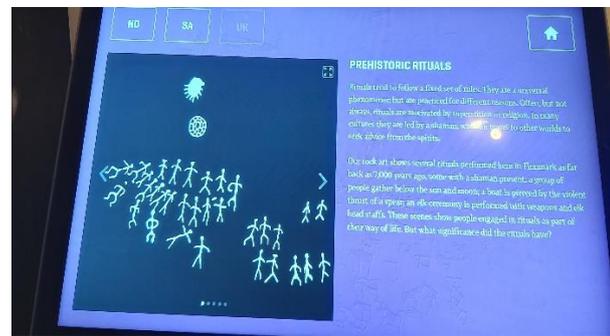


Figure 13 Presentation labelled ‘Prehistoric rituals’ 2019

There is a consistency both design-wise and content-wise. For instance, the background consists of a picture of rock-carving, and the colour, font and other layout schemes were the consistent throughout all the screens, and. The interactive screens have links that can be touched that led the visitors to more detailed information. The first thing visitors encountered on the screen (when it is idle and has not been used) is different language options to choose from. They were: NO (Norwegian), SA (Sámi), and UK (English) (See fig.12). The availability of multiple language options was prevalent in all the museum presentation, be it the text labels in the exhibitions, audio guides, brochures, flyers, and websites.

Let us take a closer look at one of the interactive screens present in this exhibition. It is titled ‘Prehistoric Rituals’ (See fig.13). The images of symbols present in rock art stands on one side of the screen and the description on what the rituals in the prehistoric times were about lies on

the other side. The top part of the slide consists of language option, and the 'Home' button will take you back to the front page. An enlarged picture of rock art with reduced opacity lies in the background. This is considerably a small detail, but it helps to keep the consistency and the ambience of being at the museum of rock art intact. The structure of the text narrative itself starts off with an information on what rituals are in general and then, goes into more specific information such as the following sentence:

*'Our rock art shows several rituals performed here in Finnmark as far back as 7,000years ago, some with a shaman present: a group of people gather below the sun and the moon; a boat is pierced by the violent thrust of a spear; an elk ceremony is performed with weapons and elk head staffs. These scenes show people engaged in rituals as part of their way of life.'* (Observation, 11.12.2019)

The sentences combined with the picture has the characteristics of a structured narrative that creates a possibility of a 'liminal' (Turner, 1969) space, where the visitor from the present time are invited to imagine a scenario from the prehistoric past in their minds through the use of the technology of the future. The last sentence on this presentation is a question: *'But what significance did the rituals have?'*. By posing this question instead of putting up a simple statement or a direct interpretative answer, the presentation opens a possibility for the visitors to contemplate and come up with their own logic behind why the rituals might have been performed and what significance did they have in ancient people's lives.

The information on interactive screens either started with a question or ended with a question. These questions had a function of creating a curious, participatory learning environment for the visitors. Similarly, there were some instances where the narratives directed visitors to situate themselves in the picture and understand the importance of doing it. For example, one of the analogous panels read: 'Under the same sky' (See fig.14). It went on to explain how *'we have lived and died in the same landscape'* (Observation, 11.12.2019) and have participated in understanding our environment and learning to live in it. By using the title 'under the same sky', and the plural pronoun 'we', the narrative suggests a sense of oneness that has little boundary between the prehistoric human, the narrator, and the audience. Thus, it attempts to

include everyone in the single liminal space where everyone becomes a part of the process of knowledge and skill acquisition related to the landscape and its history.

Another example that can be analysed is the presentation titled: ‘The Stone Age Days’ (See fig. 15). The presentation has text block on one side and a picture of a silhouette standing under the sky. The text starts off with the question:

*‘How can we really know how things were in the Stone Age?’ which is asked by school children taking part in museum’s ‘Stone Age Days’ event where they learn about the prehistoric days and the life then by studying rock art and doing activities from stone age’ (Observation, 11.12.2019).*



Figure 14 Analogue text panel ‘Under the same sky’, 2019

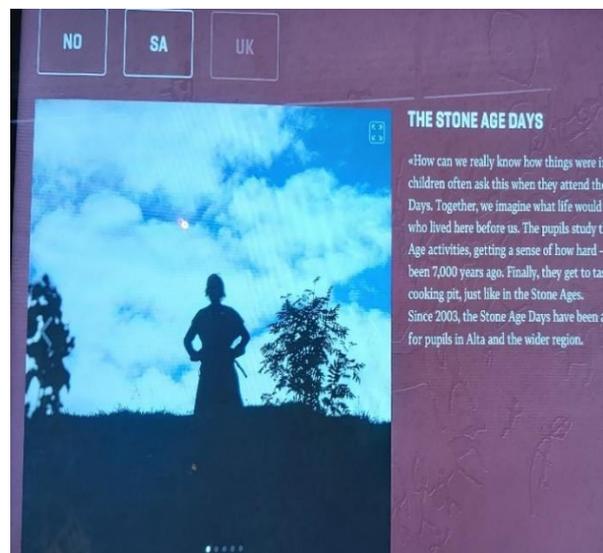


Figure 15 Presentation titled ‘The Stone Age Days’, 2019

Furthermore, the text elaborates:

*‘The pupils study the rock art and do stone age activities, getting a sense of how hard – and fun- life would have been 7,000 years ago. Finally, they get to taste food prepared in a cooking pit, just like in the Stone Age. Since 2003, the Stone Age Days have been a popular pedagogical event for pupils in Alta and the wider region’ (Observation, 11.12.2019)*

At first glance, this presentation gives information about the learning programme that the museum offers for school students in Alta and the other regions. Through this activity that is based on ‘learning by doing’ method, the students get a chance to learn about life back in the stone age days. This means the students learn about the prehistoric lifeways by doing things that humans did back then. Upon closer analysis, we will notice: *‘Together, we imagine what life would have been for those who lived here before us’* (ibid.). By using words such as, ‘together’, ‘we’, ‘us’, the text suggests how the understanding is developed not just through the one way information flow from the museum to the pupil but through collaborative effort and knowledge building process where both parties are involved. At the same time, with this display in the exhibition screen, it is also suggesting that the meaning making process involves the interpretation that the museum visitors make as well. In a sense, it could be understood that museum visitors: tourists, students, local people and so on, are the co-creator of the narratives about rock art in Alta.

Similar is the case of Nord-Troms Museum’s exhibition ‘Encounters’. Brekmoe shared that a great care and work had been put into creating the exhibition both in terms of content and design. She reminisced when she was at university studying about museums,

*‘they used to say that you are always telling stories to a bright 12 years old and I suppose we are still there perhaps slightly older’. So, trying to keep the language ‘not simple, it is not the right word, but **more personal** and **not be so very formal**, try to draw people in and make them feel that these are **real stories of real people** while also actually **being informative** and **creating knowledge about things** you know anything about it. So, that’s the sort of **narrative** and **the language**’* (Interview, 12.02.2020)

In this exhibition, the digital interactive screens were placed with the respective analogue objects and their function was mainly to give detailed and comprehensive information that helped the visitors to get more information and understand the objects better. Like ‘Traces in Stone’ exhibition, there was consistency in terms of presentation and content in the interactive screens in this exhibition as well. The exhibition itself, as Brekmoe explained, is a walkthrough in a certain direction where they started off by getting a general information about how the people in the past met and how the cultural encounters took place. Then, moving onto the

trading posts where people met other villagers, shared news, and bought groceries, then to the kitchen area, which is a focal point for the family gathering where household tasks are done, food is shared and stories are told (Interview, 12.02,2020).

The narrative, then, took you to an outside mining area, which historically is the reason why Finnish migrants came to the area for. The story is told about tar-burning pit which was an integral part of the society back then. Then, the journey took you to the high mountains where the story of the meetings of the local population with the nomadic reindeer herding Sámi population is presented in a scenic way through a huge video projection of Sámi reindeer corral. An important part of the exhibition lies in the center, which is a hearth with a circular seating area. On each side of the square hearth, there are iPads which is used to listen to the old music and stories. The objective of the hearth is to serve as a meeting point for the present day ‘encounters’ of the visitors of the museum so that come together, sit around the hearth, listen to old songs and music, share their stories, reminisce about the past, and co-create experiences (ibid).

The themes of all the cases I have focused is related to the past. The case of ‘Traces in Stone’, Alta Museum deals with the oldest time and space i.e. the prehistory. Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum and Nord-Troms Museum are focusing on the art and artefacts from the distant past. Without a skilful description and details about these objects from the past, coming up with an interpretation will be challenging for the visitors. Therefore, having the digital tools in the presentation of narratives is effective not only in providing in-depth and detailed interpretation but also to create a ‘liminal space...somewhere between the tangible and the imaginary’ (Parry, 2007, p. 72).

To facilitate learning and education, museums often have guides that shows the visitors around, tells stories about the objects and facilitate in making a relationship between the objects and the visitors. Another affordance that the digital storytelling in the museums has is that they can be an effective alternative in absence of guided tours provided by museum ‘human’ guides. Getting a guided tour is not free. Visitors need to pay certain fees, and, in some cases, they also need prior booking for that. Not all visitors can afford and are interested in having a guided tour. The participant observation and my informal interactions with visitors in the museums

have indicated that in the absence of skilled museum guides to show around and guide them, it was quite challenging to find what meaning and significance the objects and artefacts entails. By the small text labels attached to them, you can certainly understand the basic meaning of a cup as a cup or a stone tool in the display box as a stone tool made and used by prehistoric human. However, to really understand the context, story and relevance of those artefacts, you need a more detailed description. This is where digital technology comes in handy.

Research participant from Nord-Troms museum Brekmoe shared how important of digitization is and how efficient having the digital screens in the exhibition is:

*'Because if you don't have a screen and you've got traditional label by the side of any display or anything like that, it's so limited what you can actually show about the object. And what we are doing now is we've got the photograph of the actual object but then we show historic photographs of this object and use over social contexts as well as texts where you can read about it. So, in that respect, I think you get more of an in-depth knowledge that you wouldn't have gotten without the digitalization'* (Interview, 12.02.2020).

By linking together texts through hyperlinks, these digital screens can hold way more information than an analogue text label, and they also let the users go back and forth within the texts and presentation whenever needed. This helps the visitors find the information on the any object from the exhibition right on their fingertips much easily and conveniently.

'Technology is a facilitator in the storytelling of our content and when used effectively, it is rarely noticed' (Wyman, Smith, Meyers, & Godfrey, 2011, p. 465). By having digital narratives that is 'just a click away', the North Norwegian museums make it possible for the visitors to learn, immerse, and get more out of their museum experience without the presence of a human guides. Availability of digital technology at their disposal, strengthens the visitor's 'agency' and provides them ability to 'personalize the master narratives and make them their own' (Bruner, 2005, p. 8). Instead of just going around the museum space looking at the art and artefacts passively and sometimes even cluelessly, the digital technology enables the visitors to gain more flexibility, access, and possibility to get more information and understanding that in

turn shape their ‘on tour’ and ‘post-tour narratives’ (Bruner, 2005). The ‘interest’ of the visitor as the ‘agent’ is regarded as central in its relationship to the interpretation and meaning (Kress & Selander, 2012, p. 8). This is where the importance of staging of tourist experiences digitally and role of interactivity achieved through digital tools in a museum space comes forward in the discussion.

### **5.3 Staging the experience digitally**

What is an ‘experience’? A brief discussion on this is important before we proceed into the staging part. American-Hungarian psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states that human seeks ‘optimal experience’, which are the occasions where we feel exhilarated and deep enjoyment that we cherish for a long time. In ‘Flow: the psychology of optimal experience’, he discusses optimal experience in relation to happiness and that this experience is autotelic and is a state of ‘flow’, which one gets when completely absorbed or concentrated in an activity where nothing else seem to matter (ibid). Therefore, the ultimate goal of experience design is optimal experience (Hilary, 2002 ).

When it comes to tourism, the concept of ‘experience economy’ introduced by pioneer economists Pine and Gilmore (1999) is an important one. They ask: “Why do people pay good money to experience the muscle pain of a fitness center or the enjoyment of a concert?” (p.12), then, answer they give:

*“to be affected by the experience. The experiences we have affect who we are, what we can accomplish and where we are going, and we will increasingly ask companies to stage experiences that change us. Becoming different is more valuable and more desirable than the experience itself” (ibid.).*

They reason that when a person seek experience, they desire “to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages—as in a theatrical play—to engage him in a personal way” (p. 2). Thus, for the experience provider staging the experience becomes a very important responsibility.

Roppla (2012) discusses the development of museums as a participatory based on discovery learning and argues experience as the entry-point for the visitors of the museums. Hence, museums work as a ‘theater catalyzing visitors’ experiences’ and through the experiential quality creates an embodied narrative which is a shift of placement of narratives from signage and space to body of a visitor (Sitzia, 2016).

*‘How is Northern Norway presented in art? Romantically? Real? Idealized?’*. The beginning of the information section on Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app asks the visitors those question (Participant Observation, 10.01.2020). The use of these kinds of questions in the opening paragraph of the description have the function of making the visitors curious about what is going to come up. By creating the curiosity, the presentation opens a stage where visitors with sparking interest proceed for further learning and experiences. Similar vibe resonated in a response Normann gave regarding the interactive digital technology usage in Alta Museum exhibitions:

*‘If you get a spark here, then you will get more excited then you are gonna learn more then you will go to other sites or books or whatever. We are not gonna teach you everything, we are just gonna teach you little bit and I think **‘digital tools are great at that’** when they work.’* (Interview, 11.12.2019)

In ‘Designing for the museum visitor experience’ Tiina Roppola talks about ‘staging curiosity’ where the museums as an authority of knowledge creates the miniature representation of the world and through displays in exhibitions, the story is then passed to the visitors (cited in (Sitzia, 2016, p. 3). Visitor’s curiosity and interest plays a vital role in museum experience, shown throughout the history of museum development as everything ranging from mysterious to extraordinary to monstrous; from nature to culture made it to the ‘cabinets of curiosities’ (Roppola, 2012).

‘Depending on the artist’s background, the period and the style of the art, this northern landscape and its inhabitants can look very different. In this small selection of works from the collection of Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, you will be able to see for **yourself**, in incredible detail’ (Participant observation 10.01.2020), the app description further states. By starting off with a

question that evokes curiosity about North Norwegian art scene and ending the narration off with the last sentence that invites the app users to explore the world **themselves**, the app opens up a possibility for the visitors to learn, engage, participate, and co-create experience. Then, when you enter the artwork section of the app, you will see seven high resolution versions of the selected paintings from the exhibition at Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum that you can zoom in to see every little detail. The app users can also click the information section and read further information about the artworks, artists, the context, and techniques.

#### **5.4 ‘Please touch’: Interactivity and experience**

*"Museums can no longer be defined simply as "a building or place where works of art, scientific specimens, or other objects of permanent value are kept and displayed. They are undergoing "a fundamental shift from being primarily a presenter of objects to being a site for experiences" (Stogner,2009, p. 2)*

The shift from ‘object-centric to experience-centric museum’ (Parry, 2007, p. 81) has brought to light the relationship between interactivity in narratives and experience. After all, the role of museums are centred around objects, narratives, and visitor experience which caters ‘their opportunity to engage with the object, understand why it is on display and to create their own meanings in response’ (Williams, 2011, p. 65). In museums and galleries, good digital storytelling often relies on immersive and/or interactive technologies. The visitor’s journey in both on-site and online spaces (in exhibitions and mobile app) is not just to follow the storyline or the plot. What has been understood from the observation is that much of the experience relies on the interaction one makes with these digital objects placed strategically in different points in the exhibition area.

With the growth of tourism industry and the tourists being one of target audiences for the museums, the goal to make cater their needs to get entertained and also provide experiences that are appealing and attractive has become a priority (Boniface, 1998). Technology mainly interactive ones are taken as a solution to achieve this goal.



*Figure 16 A stone with rock carving block with label 'Please Touch', 2020.*



*Figure 17 A tourist interacting with interactive screen at Alta museum, 2020*

Reaching an agreement on the definition of interactivity is considered debatable, as it is argued that the meaning depends on who you are and the context of reference (Johnson, Bruner II, & Anand, 2006), however, the technologists tend to associate interactivity with applications (such as World Wide Web, instant messaging, online gaming), or features such as multimedia, hypertexts and so on (ibid.) Similarly, it is also defined as ‘the degree to which users of a medium can influence the form or content of the mediated environment’ (Stuer, 1992 as cited in ibid). Interactivity has also been explored in terms of four main facets: a) reciprocity: degree to which communication is perceived to be mutual or reciprocal, b) responsiveness: extent of appropriate and relevant responses, c) the speed of response: the degree to which communication is perceived to be immediate or without delay, and d) non-verbal information: use of multiple channels for communication (ibid).

Wyman, Smith, Meyers, & Godfrey (2011) have stated that

*‘The discipline of integrated media and interactive experiences has followed a path parallel to work in installation art. Where artists find success experimenting with the creation of immersive microcosms, the developers of integrated media environments have taken note. We see this approach both in terms of the kinds of technology we use*

*to deliver content, and in terms of the increasing role of content in shaping the overall visitor experience' (p. 463).*

Making your own rock art-- is an interactive activity in 'Traces in Stone' exhibition that seem to grab visitor's attention (Observation, 12.12.2019). The informal conversation with the visitors during the fieldwork suggests that this activity encouraged participation from the visitors, inspired them to be creative and make use of the knowledge they have gained from the museum visit. Through an interactive screen, the visitors could choose either to draw freehand or from a pre-set template. The drawing screen had a virtual rock, upon which the visitors could draw their desired sketches by touch on the screen. This interactive activity gives the visitors chance to try out rock carving in a virtual environment while being surrounded by other immersive installations such as lights, sounds and video projections that enhances their overall experience.

Normann explained in the interview:

*'We want you to learn something and we believe that by doing something or with **'your whole self'**, not just reading something intellectually, will actually teach you more, not necessarily facts of how old it is or how many they are or whatever but gives you an understanding of what we are dealing with here' (Interview, 11.12.2019)*

This statement shows that the objective of the presentation is not just to facilitate learning but to enable learning by doing. Central to this activity is the bodily engagement using different senses, including the visual one. The embodied experience gives the visitors a chance to imagine what it must have been like for forefathers to engage in the rock carving activity and then, to pretend to be a present-day rock carver. This was very evident in the drawings that visitors made on the interactive screen. One of the visitors I observed and interacted was taking part in the activity by drawing a modern urban scape complete with houses, road, electricity poles and a MacDonald joint. Upon inquiry, he responded that this was the 'modern day rock art of the modern world we live in' (Informal conversation & fieldnote, 12.12.2019). Some other visitors were also observed while they were doing the activity. They were different images such as fish, boat, mountains, other symbols that seemed to be inspired by the rock art in the vicinity. You could also share your virtual rock carving through your email (to yourself or the others), once

you were done. By doing that, you would get a picture of your own rock art (see fig. 19), on the email.

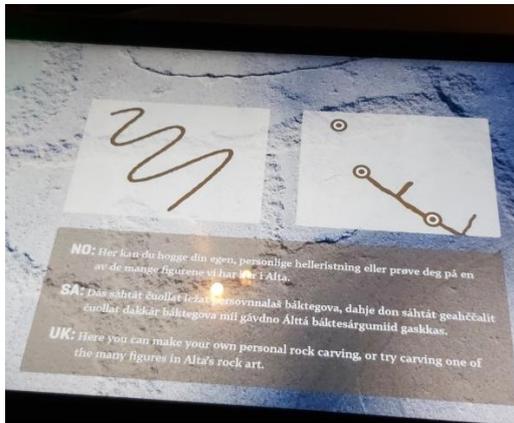


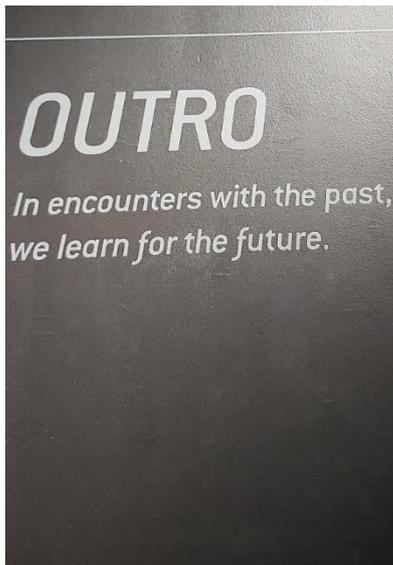
Figure 18. Home Screen of make your own personal rock carving activity, 2019



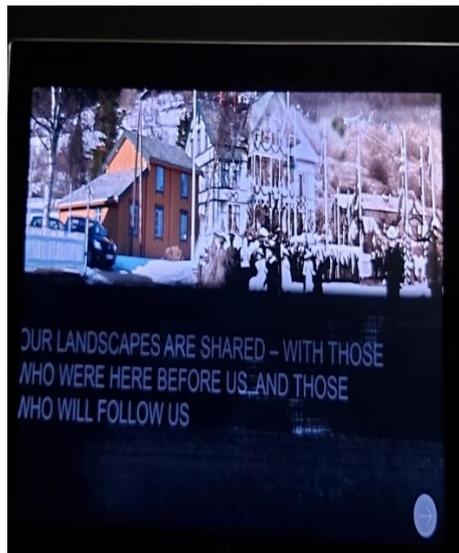
Figure 19 Virtual rock carving I created and emailed on the interactive screen, 2019

These kinds of encounters enabled by interactivity not only affects ‘the relationship between the authoritative character of the official knowledge and visitor knowledge (Jewitt C. , 2012, p. 81) about the context and artefacts but also situates the visitors in the process of producing the experiences themselves. Whether you visit the museum in summer and get an opportunity to see the rock art or you are a winter tourist and the rock art area is inaccessible, as a visitor, you get prior information about the museum through the pre-tour narratives, through travel brochures, museum websites, guidebooks, flyers, word-of-mouth from other visitors and so on. The interactive encounters visitors get in the museum also contribute in modifying their ‘pre-tour narratives’, expectations about their experiences, and affects ‘on-tour narratives’, which eventually leads to implications on ‘post-tour narratives’. (Bruner, 2005, p. 6).

Similar observation was made in the section from the ‘Encounters’ exhibition at Nord-Troms museums titled ‘Outro’. The sign on the section reads: ‘*In encounters with the past, we learn for the future*’ (See fig.20). This section comprises of an interactive screen which has following texts displayed that resonates with the ‘Outro’ text shown above: ‘*Our landscapes are shared with those who were here before and those who will follow us*’ (See fig.21).



*Figure 20 Section titled 'Outro' 2020*



*Figure 21 Interactive Screen showing pictures of the region in the past and present, 2020*

On the screen, the visitors could then touch the arrow navigation button which leads them to a map of the region with red dots on different locations. These dots denoted the presence of links that took the visitors to a world of photographs of the region. These are photographs of the landscape both the recent ones but most importantly, from the distant past.



*Figure 22 Image of Storslett then, as seen on the screen, 2020*



*Figure 23 Image of Storslett now, as seen on the screen, 2020*

On one of my fieldwork visits, research participant Birkelund graciously offered to show me around the exhibition. She stopped by this interactive screen and proceeded to excitedly show me the photos of Storslett sentrum from almost a century ago and compared it to the other from the recent past (See fig. 22 & 23). In the informal conversation, she shared how special it was

to be able to see the photos place where she belongs to from a century ago and connect it with her living experience now.

Similarly, I observed two men (father, in his 80s and son in his 60s duo) using the screen. When I had a small conversation with them, they told me that they were from Storslett and liked to come to the museum occasionally. One of them told me that the interactive screen fascinated him the most because the photographs take him back to the older days when these landscapes were very different from the present days. He mentioned that this time he brought his elderly father to the museum to show him around and revisit the older days through conversation that is ignited by these objects. He added that this museum visit and the interactions with the artefacts and digital installations especially the digitized photos from the past brought back memory (Informal Conversation, 12.02.2020). Both him and Birkelund talked about the positive attributes that these digital installations had, as one could look at pictures from almost a century ago and access massive amount of information which is not necessarily impossible without digital tools but is definitely challenging.

Sitzia (2016) states that ‘human beings remember in narrative’ and that is the overarching element of narrative theory (p.5). These interactive narratives as seen in the museums in focus can influence the experiences of the visitors, especially on the local people from the region that have emotional attachment with the landscape and history.

*‘Some multimedia installations in museums act as releasers of memory in much the same way as objects can make unconscious memories conscious. This they achieved through their power to affect us by ‘touching’ us or ‘moving’ us’*

(Witcomb, 2007, p. 37).

Memory is dependent on storytelling and the key process of memorizing, retrieving and retelling knowledge is narrative’ (ibid, p.5). Through observation and conversation with the visitors, it was deduced that these photographs have special meanings to the local visitors as they served as a tool mainly for evoking memories.

The narratives presented here carefully presented the stories of how three different cultures met in a space and the experiences they created through trade and cultural connection. The artefacts could be touched, and the digital aid responded only when the visitors interacted with it. Through interactivity, the visitors had the possibility to make their own meanings and interpretation of the artefacts. As interacting would lead them to a whole new world of in-depth information about the artefacts that were valid and reliable as they were collected and presented by the experts in the field. These exhibitions were designed in such a way that instead of just walking around passively through the exhibition area, the presence of digital interactive screens and other multimedia installations, such as video, sound and light projections gave an opportunity to the visitors to engage and respond to the arts and artefacts with all their senses. So, the whole experience did not just rely on the visual perception but a bodily engagement to the objects and response.

Brekmoen stated that having the interactive screens in the exhibition also provided flexibility in designing an exhibition and '*flexibility is a massive strength*' (Interview, 12/02/2020). She elucidates that objects tell stories and there is always so many things one could tell through an exhibition. So, having these screens allowed them more flexibility to make something new without having a compulsion to take everything apart. By having that freedom, they could change the content and put in a brand-new exhibits and artefacts.

During my fieldwork at Alta museum, there were always some visitors present in exhibition despite it being an off-season (i.e. tourists). During the week of my fieldwork, schools from the locality had museum trip as a part of their school activity. The museum was abuzz with students and teachers. They had a guide from the museum guiding them around the exhibition in Norwegian.

Apart from being attentive to what the guide was explaining to them, I also observed two activities that these young visitors were engrossed in:

- a) Touching the interactive screens: This action gave them access to the information about rock art and they were also involved in some activity related to the rock art such as making their own rock art; and
- b) Taking pictures (of both: the objects in display and of themselves (selfie)) with their phone camera.

However, these activities were not limited to the school students but also to visitors (cruise ship tourists, travellers, visitors from local area and so on). The informal conversation with some of the visitors revealed that these pictures were taken not just for personal memory but also to share it on social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat.

Similarly, in Second Canvas NNKM app there is a 'Share' option that can be used to share the images on social media platforms. The availability of Wi-Fi for the guests in the museums made sharing the pictures of their museum experiences instant and easy. The 'on-site narratives' provided by the museum wasn't just consumed by the visitors but through interactivity with the digital interactive sources, they also co-created the experience. By taking pictures and sharing them, the visitors modified their experiences of the 'on-site narratives' and articulated their experiences to others (Bruner, 2005, p. 7). So, the process of consumption of the 'on-site narratives' through interactive experiences, then, the conversion of these experiences into the 'first online telling', which is the transformation of 'a sensory occurrence into a plot structure expressed in words' (ibid, p.7) has the possibility to instantaneously turn into 'second telling'(ibid., p7) because of availability of technology and easy access to internet at any given while on tour. Most importantly, the dynamic relationship between interactivity and visitor experience in the museums shows the shift from 'gaze' (Urry,1990) to engage.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Through this chapter, I attempted to discuss the importance of narratives to the museum experience. Stories are an integral part of the overall museum experience. In the examples that I focused, it was evident that by using digital technology, possibility of interactivity and participation are opened for the visitors. The digital aids also played a role in enhancing their experiences by engaging all their senses through bodily engagement enabled through interactivity. These narratives also affected the emotions of certain group of visitors as they evoked memory.

A shift is also observed where from museums went from being a space with objects displayed in glass display boxes and cabinets with a 'please do not touch' labels to an interactive, participatory experiential space where visitors are invited and encouraged to 'touch', 'interact'

and have a dialogue with the objects. So, instead of being a passive gazer, the visitors now have active participation in museum narratives and meaning making process. By incorporating the 'digital' in their narratives, North Norwegian museums are opening up an arena for visitors to actively take part in the interpretation and meaning making process which enables them to have a 'new relationship' with the museum, its contents (objects, artefacts, art, stories) and imaginaries of the North.

## **Chapter 6: ‘Recoding’<sup>53</sup> the Narratives of the ‘Other’: Museum, Digital Technology, and Representation of minority culture**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The discussion on museum, digital technology, and tourism in Northern Norway is incomplete without the touching upon the issue of the minority population and their cultures. Tourism involving heritage is ‘one of the oldest forms of travel for leisure’ (Navarrete T. , 2019, p. 205). The concept that it encompasses the special and the extraordinary objects and places is gradually expanding and it includes ‘ordinary expressions of the past driven by a desire to preserve a more diverse notion of identity’ (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 205). Tourism imaginaries of the Northern Norway rests upon the indigenous people, minority culture, and their identity and heritage as one of the main themes. For instance, ‘authentic’ Sami cultural experience is one of the attractions that are being promoted for the tourists travelling to Northern Norway. In these promotions (through websites, postcards, guidebooks, brochures etc.), Sami people are usually depicted as ‘nomadic reindeer herders’ with close relationship to nature.

This ‘emblematic’ (Olsen, 2003) way Sami people, their culture, and their spirituality (Mathisen, 2010) have been represented in touristic arena and popular media as ‘exotic’, ‘traditional’ and ‘different from the Norwegians’ have been critically analysed (*ibid.*). The museum representation of Sami cultural heritage has not escaped the critical eyes either. Scholars have pointed out that the way Sami cultural heritage has been represented in museums have also been instrumental in promoting the stereotypical ‘image of a static, pre-modern Sámi culture’ with no acknowledgement to the change as if it something ‘without any sense of change, historical sequences or chronology’ (Lien and Nielssen 2011, p.602; Olsen 2000). Therefore,

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<sup>53</sup> The term ‘recoding’ is used by Ross Parry (2007) in his book ‘Recoding the Museums: Digital Heritage and the technologies of change’ not as in coding that software developers and computer enthusiasts understand but as ‘culture’s codifying behaviour and the way we (and the technology) give meaning to things and signifies the ‘fusion of cultural studies and technological studies’ (p.xii). I borrow this term here to signify the use of digital technology by the museums to represent the narratives of indigenous and minority heritages.

representation of these ‘silenced voices’ (Wright, 2011) in North Norwegian museum narratives in focus is important. In case of this research, the silenced voices are that of Sami and Kven people.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to explore what happens when digital technology joins this equation. Taking the concept of ‘emblematic’ Sámi in tourism (Olsen, 2003) and ‘museums as ‘contact zones’ (Clifford,1997) as points of departure, I will discuss the role of digital technology in the articulation of ‘under-presented narratives’ (Roppla, 2012) of minority groups of Norway and the implications of this ‘recoding’ on tourism imaginaries of Northern Norway.

## **6.2 Sámi and Kven: Historical Background**

Sámi and Kvens are enlisted in the minority group of Norway. Sámi people are the inhabitants that are indigenous to Northern Fennoscandia. Sápmi is the land they reside in and it covers the northern areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The total population of Sámi people is approximately 80,000 and about half of them reside in Norway.<sup>54</sup> Traditionally, Sámi people engaged in reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, and small-scale farming activities.

Kven refers to another minority group. They are the Finnish speaking immigrants, who came from Finland and northern part of Sweden and settled in Northern Norway in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and their present-day descendants. Various factors influenced them to venture out for new opportunities to new land such as changed circumstances resulting from Great Northern War,<sup>55</sup> increase in population, decrease in available land for clearing for agricultural purposes, and famine.<sup>56</sup> The increasing possibilities mainly in Northern Norway regarding agriculture, fishing and mining industry led them to follow the traditional migration routes and settle down

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<sup>54</sup> Retrieved from <https://nordnorge.com/en/tema/the-sami-are-the-indigenous-people-of-the-north/> Last accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Retrieved from <https://kvener.no/kven-language-culture-en/> Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>56</sup> Retrieved from <https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/4199/article.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> Last accessed 15 March 2020.

in Troms and Finnmark area, majorly in Troms and Vest-Finnmark, Kautokeino, Karasjok and Tana.<sup>57</sup>

The minority policy of Norway has affected both groups. Throughout the 1800s, the minority policy focused on *assimilation model* which was designed to favour the goals and interest of majority group. The model systematically worked towards integration of minority groups to Norwegian that resulted in loss of their language and culture. Major political and cultural marginalization took place in the name of infamous ‘Norwegianization’ policy, an official nationalistic, educational or security related policy through which constant efforts were made to represent the minority groups in a negative light such as, Sámi as ‘the weak and dying race that needed to be Norwegianized’ (Niemi, 1997) and Kven as ‘the Finnish threat’ regarded to be ‘a threat to national security’.<sup>58</sup> Through implementation of monolingual regulations in schools, using languages other than Norwegian such as Sámi or Kven were forbidden, which led to oppression and endangerment of these minority languages and culture (Minde, 2003).

Through systematic discrimination, stigmatization, and even ‘everyday racism’, minority groups especially the Sámi started associating their ethnic identity to shame which led to hiding their identity in public sphere (Eidheim, 1969; Minde 2003). After the Second World War, resistance against the assimilation policy started to stir up. This stage is described as ‘awakening stage’ (Eidheim H. , 1992) when the revitalization of Sámi identity started. This comprised of re-codifying Sámi culture through revival of the name Sápmi, creation of Sámi flag, emphasis on using Sámi language as the mother tongue (Thuen, 1989). It is the phase of the reappraisal of Sámi self-image, invention of context for a unified cultural fraternity which enabled a new political power element to come forward in Nordic political arena (Eidheim, 1992, p. 3- 4). In 1990, Norway recognized Sámi people as indigenous, ratifying the ILO Convention 169 on rights of indigenous peoples and following the UN conventions on civil and political rights.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Retrieved from <https://kvener.no/kven-language-culture-en/> Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Retrieved from

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169). Last accessed 15 March 2020.

The situation of Kven people, however, did not change much even after the ethnopolitical movement of Sámi people, as the government defined Kvens as immigrants. So, the effect of Norwegianization policy lasted longer for Kvens as Norway recognized them as minority group only in 1999 ratifying the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.<sup>60</sup>

The historical contexts of both Sámi and Kven people are laced with the experience of domination, subjugation, racial stigma, and the consequential loss of language and culture. The discussion on the representation of their cultural heritage in museums is not complete without understanding their historical background and context. Therefore, this section was provided to understand why the representation in cultural institution like museum is important for their identity and heritage preservation as it is important to understand what their past has been like.

### **6.3 Museums, digital technology, and minority culture**

Visual art and language have been the most important elements in reclaiming identity and heritages for the minority population. Visual art such as fine arts (drawing, sculpture, paintings, decorative arts and crafts (handicraft, ceramics, mosaic, tapestry), contemporary art (conceptual art, installations, photography, performance art) and others (applied art) have been used in the case of revitalization process mainly if we take the case of Sámi. From the 1970s protests to resist colonial powers to the recent 'Pile o' Sápmi'<sup>61</sup> by artist Máret Anne Sara, in which 200 reindeer skulls were piled on top of each other and placed in front of Tana District Court, in Finnmark. Sara's art was a protest against the Norwegian state's order to cut back her brother's reindeer herds leading to enforced bankruptcy and disruption of traditional lifestyle (ibid.), visual art has been a strong symbol and medium of resistance and revitalization for Sámi people.

An important space for displaying these visual presentations is a museum. Museums have been recognized to have a significant role in providing 'an understanding of identity, an invaluable

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<sup>60</sup> Retrieved from <https://kvener.no/kven-language-culture-en/> Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>61</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13491/maret-anne-sara> Last accessed 15 March 2020

sense of connection with the past and present, and a springboard for the future' (Park, 2014, p. 186). Museums are also defined as 'places for defining who people are and how they should act and places for challenging those definitions' (Karp, 1992: 4 as cited in Park 2014, p. 189). The role of museum as a space for presenting narratives, expressing traditions, and evoking memory has been acknowledged.<sup>62</sup> The narrative construction in museums, its impact in learning processes, and museum spaces as syntactical have also been explored (Sitzia, 2016). Museum also functions as a space that produces exhibition with historical reference frames presenting textual, visual, and material effects depicting various histories.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, museums have also been criticized for serving the cultural elites by presenting 'non-western' art within the reflective framework of 'white' values (Jones, 1993; Barringer and Flynn, 1998; Simpson, 2001, as cited in Vermeulen & Pilcher, p. 60). Establishment of museums of cultural history was an important step in legitimizing the Norwegian national identity, considering the historical context during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was struggling to achieve national independence (Eidheim, Bjørklund, & Brantenberg, 2012).

In Northern Norway, there are some museums that focus on minority art and culture. The cultural section at Tromsø's ethnographic museum, University Museum of the Arctic University (UiT) Tromsø Museum has two exhibitions: 'Sami culture' and 'Sapmi-becoming a nation'. The Sámi Museums in Kautokeino and Karasjok that are a part of RiddoDuoattarMuseat<sup>64</sup> (which includes two other museums and an art stock in Finnmark), were established to promote and preserve Sámi culture and to strengthen Sámi identity. Kautokeino museum has exhibitions on Sámi culture and on source texts<sup>65</sup> and Karasjok Museum boasts of having the largest collection of Sámi clothing<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Retrieved from <https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/4199/article.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> Last accessed 15 March 2020.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Retrieved from <https://rdm.no/> Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>65</sup> Retrieved from [https://rdm.no/english/kautokeino\\_bygdetun/](https://rdm.no/english/kautokeino_bygdetun/) Last accessed 15 March 2020

<sup>66</sup> Retrieved from [https://rdm.no/no/de\\_samiske\\_samlinger/](https://rdm.no/no/de_samiske_samlinger/) Last accessed 15 March 2020

Alta museum which is mainly popular for the rock art features Sámi culture through temporary exhibitions and has a permanent exhibition on Faith and Religion which covers two epochs in Finnmark's history of religion: Sámi pre-Christian religion and Norway as Roman Catholic land. Another exhibition on 'Pine-tar production', which is a collaboration between Alta Museum and Alta Kven Society, touches upon the issue related to Kven people.<sup>67</sup>

Vadsø Museum, which was established in 1971 as a local museum and is a part of Varanger Museum, has the main responsibility of documenting, preserving, and communicating Kven history. Nord-Troms Museum, located at the Halti Cultural Center in Nordreisa, is another museum which focuses on the meetings between different cultures in the North, also provides a platform to display Kven culture. Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum which is one of the settings for this research is different from the above-mentioned museums because it is a Norwegian museum located in the city of Tromsø that displays the art works related to Northern Norway. It does not necessarily focus on minority art and culture, but it does display some works of art related to Sámi culture.

The relationship between museums, digital technology, and minority culture is also an intriguing one. Through the study of online museums, it has been observed that museums can be 'cultural centers' that are on one hand, 'decolonizing' objects, and on the other hand, providing agency to the marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples (Vermeulen & Pilcher, 2009). As discussed in previous chapter, the museums that are focused in this paper use digital technology to tell their stories that has some implications on tourist experience and imaginaries. Acknowledging the importance of minority culture North Norwegian museum narratives, experiences and imaginaries, this thesis focused on the issue regarding the implications digital technology had when it enters this discussion. Upon the analysis of the data gathered through observation and interviews, two main points have been drawn out:

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<sup>67</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/exhibitions/permanent/fururotter-og-altas-kvenske-rotter> Last accessed 15 March 2020

### **6.3.1 Potential of digital technologies in promoting visibility, inclusion, knowledge preservation and dissemination, and revitalization process of minority groups**

The use of digital technologies in the museums to articulate disadvantaged minority cultural heritage have shown some positive and promising implications. Digital technologies have been argued to have an ability to activate the true meaning of the indigenous objects and purpose in ways that cannot be achieved through the use of static and less immersive, traditional ways of display (Brown, 2007). Taking the case of *'Te Ahua Hiko'* and three dimensional augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) to present New Zealand Maori objects, treasures, and landscape, Brown discusses the potential and challenges of digital cultural heritage. Similarly, digitalization is taken both as a technology and as a process of knowledge sharing that has a new form of access to cultural heritage for source communities (Ngata et al., 2012, Tythacott & Arvanitis, 2014; Basu, 2015, as cited in Gowlland & Ween, 2018). Despite being criticized for rendering 'obsolete old ways of life, artefacts, materials and skills', there is no two ways about the 'unprecedented possibilities' that digital tools, technologies and platforms provide to the knowledge access, retrieval, collection and preservation (ibid., p. 3).

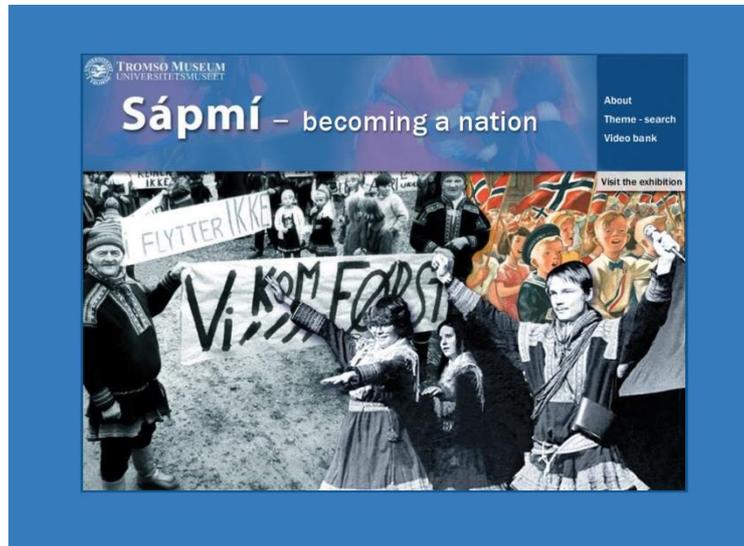
One of the exemplary exhibitions in North Norwegian Museum scene that combines analogue and digital objects to present the narrative of indigenous people is 'Sápmi – becoming a nation' at Tromsø Museum. The exhibition opened for public in the year 2000 and the objective was to 'describe the cultural and political awakening among Sámi after the Second World War to the present' (Eidheim, Bjørklund, & Brantenberg, 2012, p. 95). The exhibition presented the narratives of the 'so called Sami movement' (ibid. p. 96) to the audience that would enable them to make their own individual narratives based on the presented signs materials (ibid. p.97).

The exhibition is also available on the internet<sup>68</sup> and this online exhibition can be navigated in multiple ways and languages. The front page prompts you to 'visit the exhibition' and when you click the link you enter the exhibition space which has four main links: Entrance, Room 1, Room 2, and Room 3. These links are unfortunately redundant at present. However, since there is an

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<sup>68</sup> Retrieved from <http://sapmi.uit.no/sapmi/ExhibitionContainer.do?type=about> Last accessed 20 March 2020

alternative way to navigate the exhibition, these rooms can be accessed by clicking the link video bank. These rooms consist of video presentation based on different issues and questions regarding Sámi identity, ethnicity, life, and so on and are addressed by participants' insight and views about the topic.



*Figure 24 Screenshot of the front page of the online exhibition Sápmi – becoming a nation, Tromsø Museum, 2020*

In the time frame, when this exhibition came out, it could be taken as a novel way of presenting a narrative that gives ‘a convincing and engaging representation of cultural and political development in Sápmi since WWII to the present, an era characterised by the Sami movement and what it has entailed in terms of political visions, debates on identity and indigenusness, cultural and political innovations and the making of institutions as well as the incorporation of Sámi in the modern welfare state (Eidheim, Bjørklund, & Brantenberg, 2012, p. 105). The museums usually need to cater to audiences of different backgrounds and groups. However, by using a ‘new and unexpected theme’ and different modes of presentation such as digital multimedia and online platform, the exhibition can be taken as contrast to the ‘emblematic’ representation of Sami people as ‘exotic and different’(ibid., p.105) and Sami culture as ‘traditional and radically different from modern Norwegian culture’ (Olsen, 2003, p. 3). Instead, it presented Sami people as ‘seeking selfhood and equity in transnational and global space’ (Eidheim, Bjørklund, & Brantenberg, 2012, p. 105) and as any other indigenous populations, involved in ‘global production and circulation of knowledge, conventions of symbols, patterns of consumption and lifestyles’ (ibid., p.105).

The online exhibition is a storehouse of historical information, sound bites, video footages, and other archival materials related to the issue of Sami people, their culture, and revitalization process. By linking the old exhibition on 'Sami culture' with different modes of communication comprising of digital ones, the exhibition played a vital role in making 'Sami culture visible to the public' (Eidheim, Bjørklund, & Brantenberg, 2012, p. 103), multiplicity of identity, experiences, and opinions on individual level (ibid.), and presenting the role of museums as an actor in Sami-Norwegian discourse (ibid.). Therefore, exhibition provided a narrative that took the audience on a journey that linked the historical context of Sami people with the Sami modernity.

Similarly, if we take the case of the exhibition 'Encounters' at Nord-Troms Museum, Storslett as detailedly described in the previous chapter, the diligent use of digital and analogue object presents a narrative about the multicultural experience of the region. The exhibition takes the visitors into a space where multiple voices of the marginalized groups are presented. Visibility is the first and foremost function of this exhibition. The exhibition does not constrict the knowledge dissemination into authoritative monologue of the museum but by letting the visitors interact, it engages in dialogue and negotiation with the audiences. In the arena of minority culture and heritage discussion, where Sámi identity expressions and revitalization process gains the center stage, this visibility is even more important for the lesser known counterpart the Kven community and their culture.

Telling the story of the historical contact between Sami, Kven, and Norwegian people in the region through the material objects is the main objective of the exhibition. However, the strategically placed interactive screens, iPad and multimedia projections brings multitude of separate identities and their experiences into one space. As one can see that the analogue objects and artefacts are not just sitting there lifeless and static but can be touched and felt and primarily because the correlation they have with the detailed information on the digital screens, they get a dynamic meaning and fluidity.

The information on the interactive screen can be accessed in four languages: Sami, Kven, English and Norwegian. According to the research participant Brekmoe, making a choice to

have those languages, mainly Kven along with Sami, was a well thought out choice. She elucidated that by doing so, this exhibition became one of largest exhibitions in Kven language. In addition, this has shown a positive side effect of the digital technology in the exhibition on the museum goes specially the school children who want to learn the language.

She added that:

*'the exhibition is used quite a lot by the schools for language training: Kven and Sami. Kids turn up here with their assignments if they need to find certain words and practice language. That is another side effect that wouldn't have been possible if we were going to use labels just because of the seer amount of the texts'* (Interview,13.02.2020).

Museums are considered as powerful narratives and when technology comes into the picture, it 'enables visitors to assimilate the narratives in museum artifacts and exhibits with their own personal knowledge and perspectives' (Walker, 2006, p. 3). One of the primary functions that these digital tools in the exhibition have is that they enable a good learning environment especially for the students from the locality. Falk and Dierking (2000) state that 'learning is a dialogue between the individual and his or her environment through time' (p. 136). By having interactive exhibitions, museum facilitate self-motivated, interest based and free choice learning for the visitors.

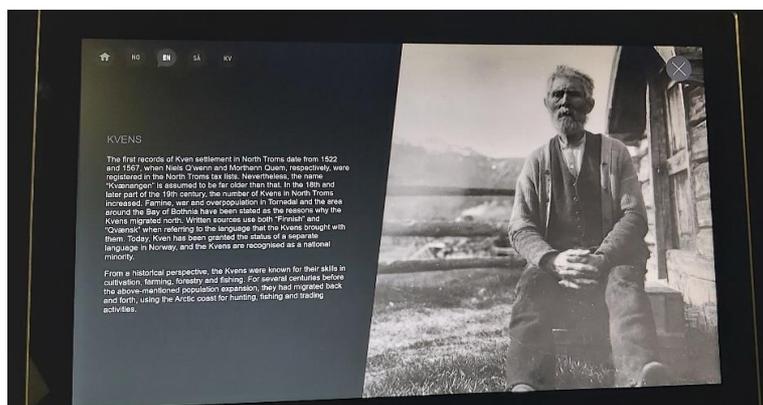


Figure 25 Presentation titled 'Kvens'. NB: Available languages: NO (Norwegian), EN (English), SA (Sami) and KV(Kven), 2020

Research participant Birkelund shed some light on the historical process of the language loss. She shared that around 1885 the national census was carried out by the then government recorded approximately 75% of the people in Reisa valley speaking old Kven language and the

society was multilingual, e.g. her own grandfather could speak Kven, Sami, Norwegian and even a little bit of Russian as there was a trade related contact with the Russians. However, she added that the reality now regarding the Kven language is very different. Not many people can speak Kven anymore (Interview, 12.02.2020). This is the effect of Norwegianization policy that has resulted in considerable loss of Kven culture and endangerment of language.

*“The relationship between language and power makes it a world of unequal languages. Languages of the marginalized people are treated with discrimination at all levels in society, stripped of their instrumental significance...”*<sup>69</sup>

When language are used as a strategy by the colonizers in ‘othering’ the minority groups, the process of being able to use their own language and have information available in a cultural spaces like a museum is important in revitalization process of minority population as they become an instrument in retrieving their lost power. By presenting the material artefacts belonging to Kven culture along with the Sami ones and with access to massive amount of information in their own languages, museum facilitates a big step for minority groups to become visible, and move towards reclaiming and preserving their identity and culture. Moreover, by using digital technology to weave the narratives in context of the socio-cultural encounters between different cultures, the exhibition does not isolate or freeze the different cultures in boxes but rather places it in historical context and shows the process of the encounters. So, this shows that the use of digital technology in the exhibition space is has the function that ‘not only allows to preserve the heritage but allows its stories to be rediscovered and reinvented’.<sup>70</sup>

Inclusion is another characteristic observed in these museum presentations. That was achieved through multilingualism. As discussed above, in case of the exhibition at Halti, information was available in four different languages: Sámi, Kven, Norwegian and English. These multilingual presentations have different affordances according to the audience who consume it. For

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<sup>69</sup> Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0852/f71d8a79859489cfa663ea148815d9b0cf00.pdf> Last accessed 25 March 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Kenderdine, S. (2014). How will the museums of the future look? TEDX Gateway 2013. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhtwFCA\\_Kc&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhtwFCA_Kc&t=18s) Last accessed 17 April 2020

instance, for the tourists who do not have any previous knowledge about the language, having encounters with these information in Sámi and Kven languages have visual advantage because they can act as a sign or a marker that will contribute in making the experience ‘authentic’. However, for visitors who have prior knowledge about the minority culture and their languages, this information will help them to understand and interpret objects in the context of the region and its history.

Roppola (2012), in ‘Act5: (de)constructing inclusion’, discusses how in order to have inclusivity as their goals, museums need to have a shift in their narratives that collects, includes, ‘new, other, and under-presented narratives’ and make use of prior knowledge of the visitors along with ‘existing individual narrative’ to communicate better (p.23-24). As the visitors in the museums consists of people from the minority community and from other ethnicity, nationality, age group and so on. By using Kven and Sami languages to disseminate information especially through digital medium can be seen as museum’s way of inclusion of different ‘under-presented narratives’ (p 5-6).

The use of multiple languages in communication and dissemination process of the museums (as seen in Alta and Nord-Troms) could also act as a strategy to make the visitors at home and it shows that museums are aware of their visitors and through the use of multiple, especially the minority languages, they are conveying the message: ‘we’re thinking of you’ <sup>71</sup>(p.34).

However, in some cases, the selection of languages of presentation can also contribute in creating the boundaries about the target audiences and distinguish who the exhibition is mainly for. This was observed in Alta Museum, when the fieldwork was carried out with the temporary exhibition: ‘Kampen om Alta’ (Battle of Alta)<sup>72</sup>. The exhibition took place in the basement floor of the museum and was designed as a separate space with two large display boxes. The center piece comprised of an interactive display screen with two headsets on each side that to listen to the sound on the video or audio files. The exhibition focused on the conflict that arose because of the construction of hydroelectric power plant. The exhibition told the story about this long

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<sup>71</sup> Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0852/f71d8a79859489cfa663ea148815d9b0cf00.pdf> Last accessed 20 April 2020.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/exhibitions/temporary/kampen-om-alta> last accessed 20 April 2020.

withstanding conflict from the viewpoint of several different actors such as protestors, indigenous Sami community, media, police, politicians, builder and so on<sup>73</sup>.



*Figure 26 Interactive screen at Kampen om Alta, temporary exhibition at Alta Museum, 2019*



*Figure 27 One of the displays in the same exhibition, 2019*

The exhibition also consisted of two smaller exhibitions on Civil Disobedience and Sámi rights and prompted the visitors to contribute to the discussion by expressing what they would break the law for? Other than the material objects, the texts and the digital archival contents that could be accessed through the interactive installation was interestingly only in two languages: Norwegian and Sámi. A couple of cruise tourists and other travellers from outside that I met in the exhibition during the fieldwork made a remark that they couldn't learn much about the interesting issue which relates to Sámi people, as they did not understand either of the languages used in the narrative. This brought forward the question: could this way of using language in museum representation related to minority culture could be not just a strategy of representing the 'silenced voices' but also of categorizing 'exclusivity' of the target audiences and a negotiation strategy to have dialogue with the desired audiences?

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<sup>73</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.altamuseum.no/en/exhibitions/temporary/kampen-om-alta> Last accessed 21 April 2020

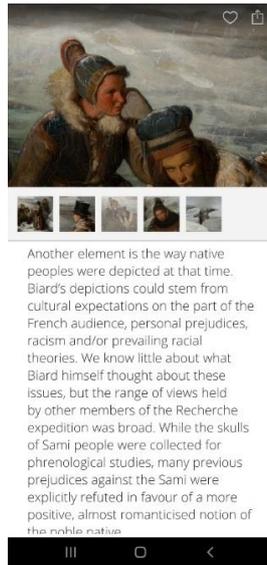
### **6.3.2 Potential of digital technologies in promoting stereotypical and ‘emblematic’ image, and unequal power relations, in absence of ‘self-representation’ and collaboration with minority groups**

The representation of minority culture by the museums have often been under harsh scrutiny (Gowlland & Ween). Simpson (1996) revisits the history and makes a cultural reflection on how museums have been criticized as a space serving the cultural élites and reflecting ‘white values’ (p. 7) which did not give any importance to interpretative ability of the disadvantaged, ethnic minority groups. ‘Misconception, stereotyping and inaccurate’ are some of the criticism that museum representations of indigenous culture have received (ibid). Unequal power relation is one of the concerning issues that is often debated when it comes to museum representation of indigenous people. Especially when it comes to digital initiatives related to indigenous people, it has been observed that indigenous people’s encounter with heritage is often ‘amplified’ because of their ‘weak’ position in the relations with heritage institutions and nation-state (Gowlland & Ween, p. 7).

In Second Canvas NNKM app, out of seven chosen artworks, two artworks were related to the Sámi. ‘The Minister Læstadius Teaching the Sámi’ (1840) by François-Auguste Biard which takes the viewers back to the time when Læstadianism, a major religious movement was going on in the Arctic Region. The prominent figure of this movement of Lars Levi Læstadius wanted to save the souls of Sámi people living under poverty and alcoholism in that period by converting them from their ancient animistic belief system.<sup>74</sup> The description in the app not only provides information on the artist, the subject of the art, history, and art technique but also attempts to correct the misrepresentation of the context that is done on the artwork by the artist. The narrative in the app tells us that even though the artist Biard was in the Recherche expedition to the arctic in 1839 and had met Læstadius in person, he had painted this particular painting in his studio in France based on the oil studies he had done in his journey. But he did not entirely get everything right. Description on the paintings points out where his depiction was wrong.

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<sup>74</sup> ‘1 of 5 The preacher. Information on The Minister Læstadius Teaching the Sámi’ by François-Auguste Biard’ available on Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum App. 2020, Last accessed 17 April 2020.



*Figure 28 A screenshot of description on Biard's painting, Second Canvas NNKM App, 2020*

For instance, the description tells us that the tent presented in the painting is wrong considering the winter setting. It is then explained that Sámi people would use a lavvo considering it is winter instead of the summer tent as depicted in the painting. These minute details make the storytelling in the app particularly fascinating and urges the users to be aware that not all the representation is correct.

Similarly, another artwork featured on the app is by the first Sámi painter John Anders Savio titled 'Reindeer Calf' (1928). Story on the app tells the users how deeply unfair Savio felt for not being considered 'an artist of his own right' but an 'illustrator of Sámi culture'.<sup>75</sup> By giving the users a look into an artist's personal opinions through digital storytelling, the app gives them an opportunity to make their own interpretation. This also shows how through these new form of curatorial practices that enable interactivity and communication, 'museums can be transformed into cultural centres that are 'decolonizing' their objects whilst simultaneously providing social agency to marginalized groups such as indigenous people' (Vermeulen & Pilcher, 2009, p. 60). Superficially, representation can be considered as 'a mirroring activity'

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<sup>75</sup>Description on 'Reindeer Calf'(1928) John Anders Savio. Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum App. Last accessed 17 April, 2020.

like in case of art shows ‘what is already there’ (Arnold, 2014, p.13) but at the same time it constitutes much more than what meets the eyes as it evokes our senses within. Hence, in a deeper level, representation shows what is not present superficially but rather ‘metaphysical ideas, experiences, as related to our environments, or the material world’ (ibid., p.69).

During the interviews, when asked about museum’s role in the representation of ethnic minority culture Rydland from responded that the museum *is not obligated by any statutes to represent Sámi cultural heritage. As the director (meaning the then director Jérémie M McGowan) wanted the museum to play an active role in the society, so, it was very much the museum’s and the director’s own vision to what they want to do* (Interview 06.08.2019).

Similarly, when inquired about the involvement of members from the ethnic minority whose culture was being represented in the museum in relation to ‘Encounters’ exhibition, Brekmoe responded that even though *stories being told in the exhibition are based on the objects and artefacts contributed by the members of the public, there was not really any consultation with them*. She explained:

*‘A steering group working with us which mainly were academic experts, professionals, were someone with good knowledge of Sami culture, fisheries consultants’, contribution from the members of the public was done in case of the information on historic photographs and the music selection for the hearth in the center of the exhibition’* (Interview, 13.02.2020).

Post-colonial theorists argue that ‘self-representation’ (Guttorm, 2009, p.51) and ‘collaborative museology projects’ (Peers & Brown, 2003, as cited in Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 7) could be some ways to address this issue. If we take artworks for instance, self-representation does not present the experience of the artist as a part of a collective (community) but also his/her own experience as a person. Mikela Lundahl (2001) suggest using the term ‘double representation’ to signify this (as cited in Guttorm, 2009, p. 55). By having collaborative museology projects, the source communities gain voices to express their dissatisfaction towards the colonial nature of the past and in some cases, even present practices (Gowlland & Ween, p. 7).

For instance, in 2017, NNKM created quite a stir in the North Norwegian art scene with ‘There is No’ exhibition, where this prominent art museum ceased to exist for two months between 15<sup>th</sup> of February to 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2017 and was replaced by a fictional museum performance called ‘Sámi Dáiddamusea’, that was a home to art works by 60 different Sámi artists.<sup>76</sup> The project was a collaborative effort between Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum and RidduDuottarMuseat. The point of departure for this exhibition was: ‘there is no word for art in Sámi language’.<sup>77</sup> By providing space for Sami artists to present their culture and identity by themselves, this museum performance sought to inquire the role of the museum both within Sámi and Norwegian context and aimed to address the questions related to the absence of Sámi art within Norwegian art institution and history (There is no, 2017, p. 4).<sup>78</sup>

Even though it is not necessarily a digital initiative, the ‘self-representation’ and ‘collaborative’ elements of this exhibition is exemplary when we discuss the issue of representation of minority culture in museum space. Similarly, only digitized reproduction of a 3D objects within a virtual digital platform is not enough to address the issue of representation and achieving inclusivity, engaging in new ways of classifying materials is essential for this process because they allow interactivity and dialogue between the curators and visitors (mainly people from minority groups) (Vermeulen & Pilcher, 2009, p. 60).

In case of museum initiatives related to minority culture that include digital technology, concerns have been expressed that the even though the digitalization projects are presented ‘as acts of reconciliation with indigenous peoples’ (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 7) and these tools are recognized for providing ‘new routes of participation and engagement’ (Jewitt, 2012, p. 74), these initiatives maybe be potentially problematic because the exclusive control over the digital data and the circulation process will belong to mainstream institutions not the indigenous communities (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 7). Therefore, instead of strengthening the museum’s role as ‘contact zone’, the structures of ‘digital heritage system’ might make the matter worse by strengthening the unequal power relations where the digital initiatives such as digitalization

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<sup>76</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.nnkm.no/en/exhibitions/there-no-2> Last accessed 20 April 2020

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> There is no. 15.2-16.4. (2017). Sámi Dáiddamusea Brochure.

projects ‘continue to be prone to the pitfalls of the colonial legacies of museums and can perpetuate colonial unequal practices’ (Boast & Enot, 2013, as cited in Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 7).

The reason is the practice that is based on ‘ownership of knowledge, management of digital heritage and imposition of inappropriate classification systems’(ibid.). This could also make an impact on the meaning and interpretation of the objects that is made by the visitors especially the tourists who do not have any prior knowledge about the history and the sensitivity of the issue. As these presentations often do not reflect the views ad values of minority people, they remain ‘silent or marginalized’ (ibid. 8) thus, retaining or even promoting their ‘stereotypical’ image.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the relationship between digital technology, museums, and minority culture. Through detailed discussion on historical context of minority groups of Norway: Sami and Kven people, and then, analysis the representation issues in museums in focus, the chapter drew two main arguments. One, museums role as ‘contact zones’ where colonial encounters do happen. the digital technology usage opens possibilities to contribute to their revitalization process by providing visibility, disseminating knowledge, and promoting inclusion.

However, as Gowlland and Ween (2018) suggested that ‘Heritage is not fixed, but a fluid concept shaped by communities, often co-produced as a part of interactions with different national and global structures such as international heritage institutions and museums (p.5). So, the second argument discussed how the lack of ‘self-representation’ and collaboration with the minority groups in the museum presentation could retain and even promote the ‘stereotypical’ image asserted to them as they do not have a say in the process of curation, content making and decision making regarding the representation.

What has been observed and analyzed in this chapter is that, even though digital tools give ‘new routes of participation and engagement’, it still depends on the visitor’s prior knowledge about the issue for making interpretation. If the representation on pre-tour narratives already exoticified,

stereotypical then, the images they see in the screens and the objects only strengthens the stereotypes. In addition to that, the lack of present-day context in the museum presentation can be a bit problematic as it will hinder in making a link between past and present and moreover ‘reconnecting the artefact to a history’ (Ngata et al. 2012 as cited in Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 8). In that case, the images and contents chosen to display, and inclusion of languages serve to exoticify and reinforce the consumption of standardized signs and markers of emblematic minority identity. Therefore, the museums could use these digital tools and technology to create a space for audiences and indigenous minority people to have a dialogue.

An observation has been made that ‘if recognised by museum-goers, collaboration within the museum can act as a metaphor for self-representation and self-determination in social, political, and economic spheres’ (Krmpotich and Anderson, 2005: 378 cited in Vermeulen & Pilcher, 2009). It is essential then, to use these tools not in an object-centric way that focuses merely in giving a detailed description of the objects but more as an empowering tool for the people from minority culture to collaborate, represent their culture themselves, and to assert their identity the way they want. They choose the image they want to be identified with. Thus, digital technology can facilitate in case of museum representation of minority culture as a way of ‘mirroring fluidity of the culture through its own fluidity’ (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 6).

## **Chapter 7: The balancing act: Digital and Non-digital objects in the museum experience**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the dynamic between museum, digital technology, and minority culture. In this chapter, based on the examples from the museums, I will reflect on an important question: what place does digital technology have in museums of Northern Norway? Taking ‘Recoding the museum: Digital heritage and the technologies of change’ (Parry, 2007) and ‘Nuts and bolts of digital heritage: Bringing the past into the virtual present’ (Gowlland & Ween, 2018) and taking the previous debates on the dynamics between digital and non-digital as dichotomous (digital vs non-digital), I will discuss the complexity of the relationship that digital and non-digital object in the museums and argue that the finding from my study shows this relationship to be a collaborative one.

Instead of going digital vs non-digital, these museums present a narrative that provides a multifaceted experience of learning and entertainment to their visitors by strategically using digital and non-digital objects in a balanced way. However, achieving this balance is not an easy task and the cases that I focus on this research brought forward certain complexities that need to be discussed. They are a) The digital as museum object b) Authenticity and c) Practical challenges of using the digital technology in the museums.

### **7.2 The digital as museum object**

Half a century after McLuhan’s seminal work (1964) where he discussed the idea of media as an extension of man and famously stated ‘the medium is the message’ (as cited in Parry, 2007, p. 9), the discussion on the significance of technology in cultural spaces like museums is still ongoing (Jewitt, 2012; Witcomb, 2007). Much of this discussion is based on the difference between virtual and material world (Witcomb, 2007, p. 35). Digital technology in museums have either been perceived as a threat (loss of ability to distinguish what is real and the copy, loss of aura and institutional authority and so on) or as a positive asset, where these losses are

taken as a ‘new democratic associations’ (where loss of authority of the museums suggests the shift in role of a curator from an authority to facilitator) (Witcomb, 2007, p. 35).

With the technological advancement, the growing use of computers, internet, interactive media, virtual reality, holograms and so on have been an emblematic representation of emergence of ‘new museum’ (ibid, p. 37). However, the role of digital in the museum presentations are often said to be limited to an interpretative tool rather than a ‘material expression of its own’ (ibid., p. 36). The use of interactive multimedia screens for instance, is limited to add ‘an interpretative layer’ (ibid, p. 36) to pre-designed museum narratives that focus particularly on the ‘real’ objects and artefacts. In case of the museums in this study, similar expressions were observed.

Research participant Rydland said:

*‘...to be the museum we want to be, we have to have a digital presence. If we did not have an online presence or a social media presence, that would be a great disadvantage to us. And we also want to use digital technologies and digital help where we see it fit’ (Interview, 06.07.2019).*

Having a digital presence is indeed important for museums considering the time we live in. From reaching out to the audience through the social media as a marketing strategy to digitalization of artworks, photographs, objects for preservation purposes, digital technology has become an essential aspect of museum environment.

Rydland further elaborated that having a good digital project,

*‘...gives something extra... it’s either broadening the experience of actually being in the museum or giving you stuff that you can’t see in the museum like, in the Second canvas app, would be the ability to see extremely small details and also learn more and broaden the experience’ (Interview, 06.08.2020)*

Research participant Birkelund shared that despite being criticized for the dark design and less ‘real’ artefacts by some local visitors, Inger added that there has been a lot of appreciation of

the exhibition from the local community because it lift the stories and the people to a higher level. Similarly, she added that as landscape is important to them, taking landscape and northern lights from outside and placing them virtually in exhibition space increases their values. She expressed:

*‘The hearth in the middle of the exhibition where we can sit and listen to old stories and songs in both old Sami and Kven languages and old music that are nearly forgotten and lost due to political and religious reasons...I have talked to a lot of people who really appreciate the way of using digital instruments to bring out the intangible heritage’*(Interview, 12.02.2020)

The interactive installations and app have ‘affective possibilities’ (Witcomb, 2007, p. 36) like an artefact that they refer to. By affective possibilities, it means that these touchscreen installations and app had the capacity to ‘engage emotions’ (ibid), disseminate information, evoke memory and bring forward different socio-political narratives. However, considerable scepticism regarding the status of the digital as a museum ‘object’ persists.



Figure 29 ‘Encounters’ exhibition at Nord-Troms Museum, 2020

The cases of the three museums in this research shows that the presence of digital in their presentations was not as standalone. The ‘real’ objects were always an ‘entry point’ (ibid. p. 42) for the narrative. Whereas the digital interactive screens and the app had the role of adding interpretative layer to the narrative. For instance, the exhibition ‘Traces in Stone’ wasn’t a digital exhibition, it was an exhibition about rock art, where material artefacts from the

prehistoric times such as stone tools, boulders excavated from the rock bed were on display along with the interactive screens.

During my fieldwork at Alta Museum, I had an informal conversation with two tourists who particularly stated that they wished the exhibition was more digital and interactive, so that it would appeal the younger generation more (referring to their teenager children visiting the museum with them) so that would take their attention away from their phones (Informal conversation, 10.12.2019).

When I mentioned this to the research participant Norman, he responded that they can't go overboard with the digital products because they are not 'that type of place' meaning: '*we have to acknowledge that we are a museum with objects in the core of our existence*' (Interview, 11.12.2019). Furthermore, he added that there are several ideas that they could do digitally in terms of augmented reality, 3D models, holograms, interactive rooms but then:

*'we would just be an attraction where **what is really told** in that attraction is not really important anymore.... We want you to focus on what we are actually telling you in this exhibition'*

(Interview, 11.12.2019).

It is important for the museum presentation to not divert the attention from the main story as telling the story through different medium becomes an important aspect of museum experience.

Normann elucidated:

*'...we have to balance the whole thing: being or maintaining our position as a museum with our knowledge at the core of the whole thing with the objects representing that and also including the digital part to sort of be relevant and also to have more options and possibility in terms of what we disseminate and how we do it. So, you don't wanna have that book on a wall situation but you don't wanna go all the way to digital freakshow of a room where you don't really know what you are doing and it's just cool to have augmented reality'* (Interview, 11.12.2019).

This statement shows the importance of striking a balance between digital and the non-digital in the context of museums like Alta museum which is also a World Heritage and has the central objective to preserve the heritage (rock art).

We can take Digital Museum Norway as an example. Both Alta Museum and NNKM have digital version of their museum collection on this virtual space. The digital museum has been recognized as ‘the ultimate museum without walls’ (Malraux, 1967, as cited in Geismar, 2012, p. 267). Rydland stated:

*‘The ‘Digital Museum NNKM’ project is more for public service, we feel that our collection isn’t ours, it’s everyone’s. So, information about it should be available to everyone’* (Interview, 06.08.2019)

This kind of availability of museum collection online in virtual space could also signify the shift in museum’s perspective about ownership that is open for public.

In Alta Museum, having interactive screens in the exhibition also acted as a negotiation strategy to deal with the issues of seasonal tourism such as, decrease in number of tourists in winter in Northern Norway. Normann reflected that around 80% of the museum visitors come to Alta museum in summer because that’s when rock art is visible and accessible (Interview, 11.12.2019). In winter, the rock art is hidden beneath the snow and people are more focused in experiencing northern lights. So, the exhibition works as *‘an experience or a taste of what rock art actually is’* to the limited amount of people who visit the museum in winter (ibid.)

The narratives facilitated by digital technology helps them to understand more about the rock art in interesting way so that they will be *‘intrigued in the whole subject, now you want to come back during the summer to see the ‘real’ thing’* (ibid). He emphasizes the importance of ‘real’ object as the main attraction for the visitors and added that *‘we can’t copy the whole thing, but what we can do is to make it interesting in the same way or equally interesting’* which was the goal of the exhibition (ibid.). So, the use of digital technology in the exhibition contributes in enhancing the ‘on tour narrative’ but at the same time works as a negotiation strategy in the absence of the ‘real’ experience to create a different kind of ‘pre-tour’ narrative. Making the presentation interesting is essential in this process to encourage the visitors to interact with the interactive digital presentations. Afterall, the whole experience depends on visitor’s willingness and interest to participate, interact and engage (Chronis, 2012).

Similar affordance can be seen in the presentation of Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app. The app can serve as a pre-tour narrative that shapes the tourist imaginary and experience before they visit the physical museum in person. It can also act as an on-tour narration as it can be an effective interpretation tool that provides rich context and information on the selected paintings presented on museum wall. 'Share' button available on the app helps the visitors to share the digitized version of the selected paintings instantly to any social media platform of their choice with their version of narrative through their own caption and messages. The narratives are human construction and they have significant power in promoting a local story of place uniqueness or strengthening 'meta-narratives' of national significance (Chronis, 2012).

The presence of digital objects in a virtual space shows that the fluidity of these objects could reflect 'the fluidity of culture' (Gowlland & Ween, 2012, p. 6). The relevance of the setting, context of the site, objective of the exhibition, and museums play a vital role in deciding what and how objects (digital and non-digital) to be presented. After all, much of criticism related to the use of digital technology in the cultural institution is not towards the technology itself but toward how those technologies are used (Parry, 2007, p.62). Museologist Šola (1997) contemplated on the entry of the 'marvel' of information technology entering the museum 'fortress' is like a 'Trojan horse' (p. 147-8 as cited in *ibid.*).

Similarly, despite having been recognized for offering 'new opportunities of interaction' (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 5), digital objects have been considerably othered. The reason behind this seems to be the fear that the 'real' objects will lose their significance if their digital representation dominates the museum presentation. Nord-Troms museum research participant Brekmoe expressed similar concern. Acknowledging that digital technology does offer flexibility and possibility to disseminate immense knowledge, it was still concerning that they would outshine the object. She explained:

*'there's always a worry... that actually do the object serve the purpose at all? Why don't you just have the screen because you have got the photographs of what the object looks like, you know?'* (Interview, 13.02.2020).

Discussing that having the interactive screens works for the purpose of finding out more about the object, she added: *'there's a balance'*. However, the concern that *'the objects get/play less of a significance because of it'* looms in the background (Interview, 13.02.2020). This fear lies in the heart of the debate related to digital and non-digital dichotomy. The fear that digital resources and surrogates being readily available on the internet might result in low number of visitors in the physical museums, ultimately leading to people 'less likely to make a special trip to a museum to see an original object if they can see a quite reasonable facsimile at their home workstation -especially if they can 'play' with it'(cited in Parry 2008, p. 62).

Most of these views are said to be rooted in the dystopian idea of technological determinism where human and technology are placed in the binary opposites. In 'Do museums still need objects?', Geismar (2010) argues that this view about objects sees digital technologies in the museums as merely a remediation of the authentic stuff instead of 'new objects' added to the collection (cited in Geismar 2012, p.267). This brings us to the next issue i.e. authenticity and that will be discussed in next section.

The importance of digital as museum objects are complex, contested but cannot be ignored as they are being used by the museums narratives to give the visitors an opportunity to interact, understand and make their own meaning of the subjects of art and artifacts and through the option of 'sharing' your experience spontaneously, they also give visitor's a chance to present a 'post-tour narrative' where they can 'retell' and 'reconstruct' (Rickly-Boyd, 2010, p. 259), their own meaning that ultimately affects the experience and imaginaries of the tourism site one is visiting.

### **7.3 Authenticity**

'Authenticity' holds a special place both in tourism studies and this discussion about digital technology in museums. From the idea of 'staged authenticity' introduced by MacCannell (1999) to the critical analysis of authenticity discussed by Cohen though 'constructed authenticity' (1988), authenticity has gained a lot of attention in tourism scholarship. In case of digital technology in museums, the question of authenticity arrives because of contrasting status of museum's landscape and digital landscape. In this dichotomy, museum stand on one side as

‘the places that the public trusted’ (Miller, 2002, p. 23, as cited in Parry, 2008, p. 63) while on the other side stands digital environment which is taken as ‘pervasive deceit’ (Lynch, 2000, p. 33, as cited in *ibid*). On similar note, the ability to circulate has been recognized as one of the important dimensions of digital heritage objects (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 5). This circulation takes place through the many digital versions of a physical heritage objects which in turn, leads to accumulation of meanings (Gowlland & Ween, 2018). The question of authenticity comes when these versions are available in multiple locations and are open for manipulations using various software (*ibid*).

While talking about digitization process of rock arts at World Heritage Rock Art Center, Alta, Normann explained that impermanence is inevitable and that needs to be taken into account that *‘everything decays at some point, also the traces in stone’*, which are 7000 years old now. Even though they might last 7 thousand years more, but at some point, their decay is inevitable. So, to get as much knowledge as possible, it is *‘incredibly important to digitize as much as possible and in as many ways as possible’*. However, he added specifically that it is important to acknowledge the fact that *‘digitizing/digitalizing something in the world will never replace’* the original. *‘It will never be the same thing’*. *‘It may look like a 3D model, it’s not the same thing’* (Interview, 11.12.2019).

Parry (2007) discusses this opposing nature of the ‘virtual’ as in computers and ‘real’ related to the material objects and artefacts and states:

*‘Computers appeared to generate only facsimiles and representations, whereas museums were institutions that prized and prided themselves upon the presentation of the original and something called ‘the authentic’. It was on this point that a great deal of ‘anxiety’ came to be placed, and in some cases some quite hysterical polarisation ensued between notions of the ‘virtual’ and the ‘real’*’ (p.61).

All the museums that are focused in this study charge some entrance fee. There are additional charges for guided tours and use of audio guide devices. However, the online version of these exhibitions and collections available on Digital Museum Norway and Google Arts and Culture can be accessed for free. The Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum App is free of charge

as well. There is no other fee voluntary donation or any form of charges to go to the museum's website and access the exhibition.

This absence of fee in online experiences shows 'equity' (Navarette, 2019, p.207) and open data access. As museums allows the consumers to experience their collection online, the indication towards the digital heritage tourists gets evident. But as they do not make any contribution to the economy of the museums directly, these digital tourists remain neglected. However, this also brings into focus that the revenue generation for museum depends upon the visitor's physical visits to the museum and that could be linked to the desire of experiencing the 'authentic' 'real' 'tangible' heritages. This desire directs us towards the more utopian view that some scholars have towards the future of the museum. That is museums 'emerging as a sanctuary from the flatness of modern digital life' (Parry, 2008, p.62). As the everyday lives become more and more technology oriented, the imaginaries about museums as a 'sacred spaces for the unmediated savouring of relics' (Wallace, 1995, as cited in Parry, 2008, p.62-63) could also be something that brings the visitor to the physical space.

Similarly, in 'how do we trust the digital?', Parry argues that the reason why digital objects, surrogates and models in museum context raised the question of authenticity and trust is because of the 'pixel generated by computer could only mimic three dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface' (Parry, 2008, p.66). Furthermore, another criticism was that the digital reproduction 'undermined and withered' an object's aura (ibid., p. 64). However, despite these concerns, museums are increasingly incorporating digital into their processes.

Discussing on how they deal with the issue of authenticity and the relationship digital plays in relation to non-digital objects in the context of 'Encounters' exhibition, respondent Brekmoe stated that:

*'I think, because we got both things next to each other...it is much easier for everyone to separate those two worlds because they are so close together and it is very obvious that that is actually a cup and this is a digital representation of it. So, I have not really seen this as a challenge as such in this context because they are just aligned and they are kind of equal to some extent but representing very different ways of being'* (Interview, 13.02.2020).

Through its dynamics and fluid ways, digital interconnects different elements of the narratives and provides layered meaning to any object in display. Thus, through interactivity and virtuality, it provides museums with ‘a liminal space, a space somewhere between the tangible and the imaginary. This is threshold, indeed, upon which museums have always thrived’ (Parry, 2008, p. 72). Birkelund stated that authenticity in the exhibition was mainly achieved through the non-digital objects but in her opinion, digital could also be considered authentic in the way of showing the history and knowledge and make it reachable to people. However, she added that it is important to have more than only a digital exhibition. (Interview, 12.02.2020).



*Figure 30 Placement of digital interactive screen and analogue artefacts at Nord-Troms Museum. 2020*

The way the story about the art, artefact and material objects are told becomes an important aspect of authenticity of museum experience facilitated by digital technology. As authenticity is the ‘result of negotiations between producers and consumers’ (Gordon, 2004 as cited in Bohlin & Brandt, 2014, p.5), the compatibility of the story told, and visitor’s own conception of past becomes important (ibid). If not, dissonance might occur leading to rejection of story that ultimately hampers the authenticity (ibid). In cases such as rock art whose sustainability is concerning, and the preservation process needs to take its vulnerability into consideration. Then, digital technology might become a good alternative to provide visitors with virtual experience where the ‘feeling of authenticity can could be strengthened by digital interpretations’ designed by experts related to the sites (ibid.).

‘Authenticity of a digital presence has been achieved by museums by developing a strong brand online’ (Navarrete, 2019, p. 211). The value of digital presence was strongly felt recently on the onset of deadly virus COVID 19<sup>79</sup> affecting our lives since March 2020. The infectious virus outbreak that started in Wuhan, China slowly spread around the world and reached Norway in March 2020. As a precautionary move, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg declared ‘Norway is closed’<sup>80</sup> and all public areas including museums, galleries, universities, schools, theatres, cafes, restaurants, and so on were closed. Tourism was badly hit as borders closed and travelling was not possible anymore. However, in this scenario, digital technology came as a strong alternative. For instance, all the classes, seminars, examinations at the universities turned digital, people started working from home using digital workspace, artists and musicians started doing digital exhibitions and concerts. Kurant Visningrom located at Tromsø did a live stream of exhibition by artist Erin Sexton titled ‘Contingency Planning’ using a digital platform (as the exhibition was supposed to open around the time when Corona virus hit the city)<sup>81</sup>. Similarly, instead of just being dormant in that period, the museums such as Alta museum used their Instagram account to promote their exhibitions and artefacts in the museum digitally.

One of such Instagram posts presented a film where a museum archaeologist discussed what can the rock art located in Alta can tell us about the prehistory (Observation, 10.05.2020). New strategy of promotion and marketing was taken by the tourism providers as well as cultural institutions such as museums. A popular hashtag started doing round i.e. #dreamnowvisitlater (See fig. 31). Videos and photographs of popular attractions such as Rock art in Alta was presented with hashtag #dreamnowvisitlater, which relayed a hopeful invitation for future travel planning when the lockdown is over, and life is back to normal. This showed that by using these digital tools, museums were ‘tapping into old resources to make new ones’ (Navarrete, 2019,

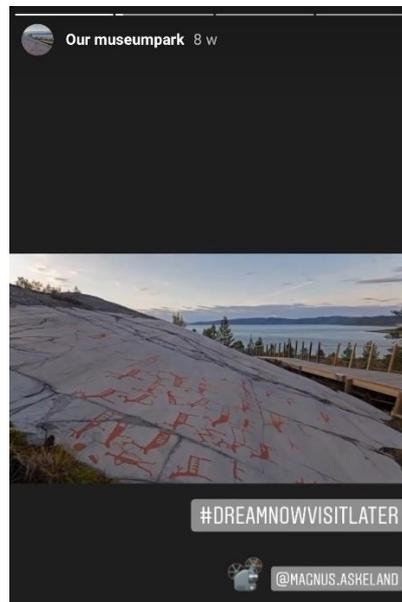
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<sup>79</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel-coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-knowledge-about-covid-19/facts-about-novel-coronavirus/> Last accessed 29 April 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/norway-is-closed-coronavirus/> Last accessed 29 April 2020

<sup>81</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B97frQmJcf3/?igshid=dco32i9b0o9d> Last accessed 29 April 2020.

p. 211) reaching their markets and making their presence felt ‘online’ digitally even when in a dire situation brought by a global pandemic.



*Figure 31 Screenshot of Alta museum’s Instagram story during the pandemic with #dreamnowvisitlater, 2020*

Understanding the difference in ontological status of the digital and material artefacts could also ease this dilemma a little. Gowlland and Ween (2012) reflects on how digital objects have different ontological status than that of material artefacts as they are defined in terms of ‘relationships’ rather than ‘substance’. So, digital objects are ‘relational objects’ (Herle 2008, Hui 2012, Ngata et al 2012, cited in Gowlland & Ween, 2012, p. 5) as they are created out of relations between ‘bits of data’ and their existence lies on the web of social relations such as that of museum and audiences, museums and source communities. Along the same line, when we take the minority culture into focus, the issue of authenticity is address through the understanding of the term ‘hybrid’ and of the idea that ‘one only needs to look to tool technology and the move from soft stone, to hard stone, to metal to mechanical, and most recently to digital devices, over the last eight hundred years (Brown, 2007, p.78).

Therefore, borrowing the concept of ‘emergent authenticity’ by Cohen (1988), that it is ‘a negotiable and constructed concept, in contrast to the ‘primitive concepts’ of authenticity as a given or objective concept’ (p.371), in case of authenticity of digital objects one needs to understand that ‘the conception of authenticity and heritage are largely dependent on individual

perceptions informed by cultural capital' (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2003 as cited in Navarrete, 2019) p. 201). Determining the authenticity of the digital objects lies on the understanding the visitor has. When the issue of authenticity of an object related to the conservation and restoration processes in the museum are continuously questioned (Parry, 2008, p. 73), questioning the authenticity of the digital in museums is not a unique problem. Nevertheless, 'the digitization of activities in society contributes to the expansion of both concepts: authenticity and heritage, to include a digital variant' (Navarrete, 2019, p.201.). Similarly, when it comes to the 'desire of exploring the authentic artefacts in person', digital contents could be combined with tangible artefacts to 'ensure that details and other education content are being communicated to the visitors at the same time as they handle the objects' (Vaz, Fernandes, & Veiga, 2018, pp 45- 46).

## **7.4 Practical challenges regarding digital technology in museums**

Acknowledging that use of digital technology along with non-digital objects in a balanced way, ideal museum experiences can be achieved as the process transforms museums from 'prescribed, authored, physical, closed, linear and distant' space to a more 'dynamic, curative, imagined, open, radial and immersive' space (Parry, 2008, p. 72). However, it is not an easy process.

As Normann commented: *'it's a balancing game of making a digital product that appeals and actually making it work on a daily basis. It's quite hard'* (Interview, 11.12.2019). Similar responses were given by the other participants as well. There are various practical challenges that arise while incorporating digital technology in the museum experience:

### **7.4.1 Technical Problems**

One of the main problems that was observed during the fieldwork in Alta Museum and Nord-Troms museum was the technical problem with the digital technology in the exhibitions. Often, the interactive screens were out of order. Sometimes, they had an error message displaying on the screen (See fig. 32).



Figure 32 One of the screens at Nord-Troms museum exhibition 'Encounter' displaying an error message, 2020



Figure 33 Hearth at Encounters exhibition with deactivated iPads, 2020

In Nord-Troms museum, at the time of my fieldwork, the focal point of the exhibition: 'the hearth' had some technical issues. The iPads on each side of the hearth, that were supposed to enhance the visitor's experience by playing old music and transporting them to the past, were out of order (See fig. 33). Brekmoe cleared that: *'They are deactivated'* and that they were still working to fix it. The problem was that the iPads do not allow update notification to be turned off. So, when visitors came in and they saw notification update notification to the newest software update, they would click it which would make the entire app crash. (Interview, 13.02.2020).

'Deactivated' iPads and crashed interactive installations hamper visitor's experience and affect the smooth sequence of the intended museum narratives. Solving these technical problems require skills and training, and absence of a tech-expert in the museum prove to be problematic. As Normann clarified that, in case of 'Traces in Stone', there was no technical expert handling the issue.

*'We are archaeologists making an exhibition and we don't have a tech genius in the building so, how do we maintain this. How do we keep up with the technology that is supposed to keep up with our subjects? It's very very hard, we can't really manage it right now'* (Interview, 11.12.2019).

Hiring the technical expert to deal with these technical problems and troubleshooting day-to-day issues regarding the digital processes should be priority when adding digital aspects to a

museum presentation. However, issue of cost in using and maintaining digital technology in the exhibitions comes forward.

#### **7.4.2 Cost**

All the participants of this study said in unison that digital projects, apps, and digitization and digitalization are expensive resource demanding process. The availability of resources becomes the defining factor in designing an ideal experience that does justice to the content, intention, and interpretation of the museum narrative. Limited budget, human resources and time can affect this process. Rydland stated that as you need to invest a lot of resources in making the digital work, reflection on: '*who do you want to reach and why?*' and most importantly, why is having digital aspect '*better than the actual museum?*', is important (Interview, 06.08.2019). Looking beyond the 'finished product' and taking a closer look at the internal practical processes that includes 'cost, skills and labour or sheer materiality, involved in developing digital solutions, digitising objects and documents, delivering data and keeping the system running' also brings us closer to comprehending the inner workings of 'digital tools and platforms, how they come into being, how they are maintained and abandoned, through human agency as well as the agency of the digital' (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 10).

#### **7.4.3 Sustainability of digital technology**

'How long can the digital aspects be maintained and stay relevant?' This is a big question that concerns the museum practitioners involved in bringing a balanced experience to life. The complexity involved in designing and initiating the project that includes digital aspects does not end there. The sustainability of these initiatives is a huge issue that requires continuous attention.

As 'driven by technological optimism' (ibid, p. 10), digital technology grows into being inseparable part of our lives, if more digital platforms, systems and objects are added to the museum environment, this will also lead to them quickly becoming 'obsolete and turn into digital ruin' (ibid).

This concern was raised by all the research participants. Brekmoe contemplated:

*'there's always a possibility that in five years' time this exhibition is probably gonna be outdated in terms of technology usage and there's always the software and all those things....So, I would say that's probably the biggest challenge because everything is so fluid in the world we live in now when even USB ports are becoming extinct and going on to something else. For 'how long is this actually gonna be a valuable and servable exhibition?' is an interesting question'* (Interview, 13.02.2020).

How are the museums going to deal with the rapidly changing digital world and how are they going to keep the relevance of the digital with/in the exhibition alive are some questions that needs careful consideration. Afterall, the sustainability of digital heritage initiatives are not just about being able to store and transmit huge amount of data but also to be able to address all the technical complexities and bringing together the 'technicians and humanities academics' in one platform (Gowlland & Ween, 2018, p. 11).

These practical challenges effect the museum narratives. For instance, as the technical problems experienced in digital devices disrupt the structure and coherence of the narratives, the intended ideal museum experience of learning and being entertained will be hampered. These technical glitches could affect the smooth creation of 'on-tour' narratives of the tourists and as there is no negotiation strategies to deal with these circumstances on the spot and this will ultimately affect the post-tour narratives and imaginaries that are to be made or maintained.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how scepticism looms around the digital 'objects' in the museum presentation despite having numerous positive implications and affordances. Museum as a space where the question regarding the authenticity of objects after undergoing restoration and conservation processes already exists, having digital aspects adds more doubt to this dynamic. Furthermore, added by the practical challenges of resources, costs, time, maintenance and sustainability, digital technology in the museums seemed to be more of a nuisance than a boon. However, because of the time we live in, 'interaction between real (empirical perception of

material culture- objects) and their virtual ontologies (the digital representations)<sup>82</sup> seems to be almost inevitable and this creates an idea of a museum that is ‘a meta-museum’ as artifacts, sites and objects ‘exist in relation and in interaction with cultural processes’.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, these digital museum practices have also been recognized for the challenge they pose on conventional understandings of museum collections, perception of authenticity, replication, and the visitor experience (Geismar, 2012).

Therefore, it is essential strategy for the museums to move away from the ‘binary opposition’ of real and digital representations and instead optimise their already existing strategy of finding a balanced ‘reciprocal model of engaging with things’ (Hogsden & Poulter, 2012, p. 82 as cited in King, et al., 2016). As suggested by scholars that we need to move away from a binary opposition between real objects and their digital representations, and instead explore the possibilities offered for “an alternative reciprocal model of engaging with things.” (King, et al., 2016, p. 78). Most importantly, it is important for museum professionals to be aware that technology should be used as a medium not as an end (Israel, 2011, McMullan, 2015, Olesen, 2016 as cited in Vaz, et al., 2018 ) and museum experiences should ideally be something that incorporates museum themes harmoniously with digital contents to communicate with their audiences effectively and provide ‘an incredible experience to visitors while using them’ instead of just being a ‘system that is usable’ (O’Brien & Toms, 2008 as cited in Vaz, et al., 2018, p.31).

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<sup>82</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/virtual-archaeology-museums-and-cultural-tourism/> Last accessed 29 April 2020.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis attempts to make a discussion based on the research question: *'how is digital technology being used in North Norwegian museum narratives to create tourist experiences and imaginaries?'*. Acknowledging the multi-faceted and complex nature of digital technology, this study explores the dynamics that come forth when cultural institutions such as museums adopt these technologies in presenting their narratives. These narratives are linked to tourism experiences and imaginaries. Two permanent exhibitions: 'Traces in Stone' (Alta Museum), 'Encounters' (Nord-Troms Museum) and a museum app (Second Canvas Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum app) are taken as cases for in-depth exploration and interpretation. The study relies on interviews done with four main research participants, who had a professional connection with the museum projects. Observation, and textual and visual analysis are also used as research methods.

Digital technology has been widely used by cultural heritage institutions such as museums to digitize their materials for archiving and preservation purposes. Rapidly increasing use of ICT and strong presence on the internet through social media have also been felt. In case of examples considered in this study, museum presentations incorporated interactive multimedia touch screen in their premises to tell the story. Digital storytelling is also acknowledged as a strategy being used by the museums to reach the goal of education added with entertainment for the visitors. Digital technology is mainly used in the experience design to articulate stories of the art, artefacts, and history of people, region, and culture. The narrative element of this digital presentations has been observed to bring a shift in the role of tourist from being a passive 'gazer' to an active 'engager'. The 'real' objects have a story that took place in some distant past which were articulated extensively using 'virtual' technology. The stories follow a coherent structure, the interactivity calls for a bodily engagement, and these characteristics facilitates the visitors to have a fully immersive experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

These narratives were situated in the context of the setting. Diverse examples: prehistoric rock art in the past and retrospect presented through various multimodal tools; regional history and stories of encounters between different people and cultures in a location in Northern Norway, and digital presentations of landscape paintings of Northern Norway showed that these narratives were instrumental in 'on-tour narratives' of the tourists, memory making process,

and creating a 'liminal' space for the visitors where past and present fused. These digital narratives share the qualities constituting the staging of experience for their visitors and serve as a strong element contributing in formulating a tourism imaginary of the Northern Norway. Similarly, the interactivity that is possible through these digital mediums were crucial in promoting participation and engagement, which led the visitors to co-create the experience. This also brought forward the shift in museum's role from an authoritative institute to an engaging one. This is opening an arena for visitors to actively take part in the interpretation and meaning making process. This shift enables the visitors to have a 'new relationship' with the museum, its contents (objects, artefacts, art, stories) and tourism imaginaries of the Northern Norway.

Another important aspect that is explored in this research is the representation of minority culture. As discussed before in previous chapters (refer Chapter 1 and 6), the indigenous and minority cultures of Norway occupy a special space when it comes to discussion of identity, museum, and touristic representation. The minority cultures of Sámi and Kven people have been used as themes in these museum narratives, explicitly in 'Encounters' exhibition at Nord-Troms Museum and 'Second Canvas NNKM App'. Taking the concept of 'museums as contact zones' and 'touristic representation of emblematic Sámi' as the points of departures, this thesis attempts to understand what happens when digital technology enters this arena. Acknowledging the museum's role as 'contact zones' where colonial encounters do happen, the findings show that the usage of digital technology in representation of minority cultures have made a contribution to the revitalization process of Sámi and Kven people by providing visibility, promoting inclusion, and disseminating knowledge about these cultures. However, a strong need to incorporate minority groups in curator practices, content designing and decision-making processes has been identified, so that self-representation and collaboration could be promoted. Lack of self-representation and collaboration can promote and retain 'the stereotypical' image asserted to them by the colonial understanding of the past.

Similarly, despite these digital tools and mediums provide new routes of engagement and participation, the interpretation still depends on visitor's prior knowledge. The argument has been made that the lack of present-day contextualization of the subject in the museum presentation could be problematic as this will hinder the process of making connection between

past and the present. In case of minority culture, this will contribute in stereotyping, exotifying, and presenting a culture that is frozen at some point in the past. By incorporating 'self-representation' of minority culture would add a present-day context to the narrative, the museum could effectively use the digital tools and technologies to articulate the change and the fluidity of these culture.

However, findings show that using digital technology in the museum is challenging. There are complexities and limitations related to incorporating digital with the non-digital to tell a story. The thesis discusses the complexity related to situating digital as a museum object because of the debates related to technological determinism, materiality of digital objects, and digital as a threat to the non-digital objects. Similarly, it is observed that having an interactive digital device in a museum is seen to be more of a secondary interpretative tool rather than an important museum object. Furthermore, the authenticity of digital objects is also in a constant scrutiny. Taking Cohen's concept of 'emergent authenticity', it is argued that authenticity is 'a negotiable and constructed concept, in contrast to the 'primitive concepts' of authenticity as a given or objective concept' (Cohen, 1991, p.371). In case of authenticity of digital objects one needs to understand that 'the conception of authenticity and heritage are largely dependent on individual perceptions informed by cultural capital' (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2003 as cited in Navarrete, 2019, p. 201) .

Other operational and practical challenges related to using digital technology are revealed during this research as well. As stated by the research participants, incorporating digital technology in museums is expensive, risky as many technical problems were encountered, and there are possibilities of the older technologies getting redundant quickly because of the rapidly developing new technologies. These challenges could affect the narratives and thus, the overall experiences of a visitor. Therefore, instead of having a standalone digital presentation, the most effective strategy for the North Norwegian museums was to have a balanced way of using digital and non-digital objects in their presentation that did justice to the museum narratives, enhanced visitor experience, and affected tourism imaginaries of Northern Norway.

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# Appendix

## Interview Guide

(Questions were adapted according to the field-setting)

### 1. Digital Technology Usage

- a. What are the current digital projects initiated at the museum?
- b. How is digital being incorporated in narratives?
- c. What were the past digital projects?
- d. Do you have any target audiences while designing these kinds of digital projects?
- e. How has the response from the audience been?  
How engaged are the audiences?
- f. How do you think the use of digital technology contribute in articulation of cultural heritage to the audience?
- g. (Other way around) how much does the audience's expectation and perception affect the selection of collection, exhibitions, or presentation?
- h. How does digital presentation differ from the other mediums of presentation such as the traditional or physical presentations on the museum walls?
- i. Apart from reaching wider audiences, what other implications do digital technology have in the museum's experience?
- j. What is the best digital technological option this museum provides to a visitor to communicate their experience?

### 2. North: Concept and cultural heritage

- a. What are the elements that are considered in bringing the cultural heritage of the 'North' into the gallery walls?
- b. How does digital processes help in articulating the imaginaries of the North to the audience? (What is the impact of digital technology/processes in representation of cultural heritage of the North?).
- c. Sami and Kven Culture: How does presenting Sami cultural heritage which is perceived to be traditional work in terms of digital representation?
- d. What role does this museum play in bringing forward sensitive issues like indigenous northern cultural heritage?
- e. How does the museum interpretation differ from the say touristic representation?
- f. If you are representing minority culture and heritage: Are the members/representatives of the minority group involved in the process? How?
- g. If not, why not?

### **3. Museum Specific: Exhibitions and App in focus**

- h. What kind of technologies are being used? How? Why?
- i. How effective are the interactive interfaces for experience?
- j. What other implications do they have?

### **4. Museums in Digital museum of Norway:**

- k. Tell me more about this collaboration.
- l. Who makes the decision on what to digitalize or present?

### **5. Online exhibitions on the website**

- m. How has those exhibitions been received?
- n. Do you have any record on the numbers of visitors that have visited the online exhibitions?
- o. How different are the reactions and reception between physical exhibitions and online exhibitions?
- p. Why online exhibitions?
- q. What are the strengths and challenges of having online exhibitions?

### **6. Future Prospectus and Sustainability**

- r. The main challenges that the cultural institutions such as museums are facing today are attracting visitors and articulating the contents to promote experience as well as education. Do you think digital technology will play a role in addressing these challenges? How?
- s. Are there any other challenges in implementing the digital strategies?
- t. What about sustainability?

